EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).)*

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Empowering youth Participation for Inclusive and plural Communities — EPIC_IDEA
Participant:	Istituto Cooperazione Economica Internazionale (ICEI)
PIC number:	932287177

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	D18.1 (WP18)		
Event name:	National Youth Camp in Italy #2		
Type:	Event		
In situ/online:	In situ		
Location:	Montesilvano, Italy		
Date(s):	23 – 25 May 2026		
Website(s) (if any):	https://icei.it/en/progetti/epic_idea/		
Participants			
Female:	25		
Male:	19		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 Italy:	44		
Total number of participants:	44	From total number of countries:	1

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

INTRODUCTION

The second National Youth Camp in Italy took place in Montesilvano (Abruzzo) from 23 to 25 May 2026, involving a total of 44 participants, including young activists, youth workers, and technical staff from seven Italian cities: Milan, Reggio Emilia, Turin, Montesilvano, Pontedera, Portomaggiore, and Casalecchio di Reno.

The event benefited from the support of the Municipality of Montesilvano. This collaboration is part of the work carried out by ICEI as coordinator of the Italian Network **"Città del Dialogo"**, which is part of the **Intercultural Cities Programme of the Council of Europe**. Within this framework, ICEI actively cooperates with the

Municipality of Montesilvano in the organisation of events and initiatives aimed at combating discrimination, promoting intercultural dialogue, and strengthening youth participation.

The objectives of the activity were:

- **Sharing experiences among young people**, fostering peer-to-peer exchange, mutual learning, and the sharing of practices, experiences, and ideas developed in different local contexts.
- **Providing moments of in-depth training on Future Thinking methodologies**, exploring how young people can become active agents of change in their local communities and at national level, focusing on topics such as arts and culture, sport, political participation, mental health and well-being, social gathering and entertainment, work, and opportunities.
- **Defining objectives, activities, and working methods for local anti-rumours actions**, supporting young participants in the development of initiatives aimed at challenging stereotypes, misinformation, and discriminatory narratives.
- **Preparing young participants for the following "Policy Lab" activity** with representatives from their respective municipalities, strengthening their capacity to engage in dialogue with local institutions and contribute to the definition of youth-oriented policies.

CONTENTS OF THE EVENT

<u>Activity 1: Welcoming & Team Building</u>

The first activity of the Youth Camp was dedicated to welcoming participants and building a shared group identity. The activities took place at the Youth Centre of Montesilvano, **Spazio Mincio 14**, a building confiscated from organised crime and returned to the city as a space for social gathering, youth empowerment, and community participation. Participants were welcomed into the space by youth workers, the group of young activists from Montesilvano, and representatives of the Municipality, who introduced the history, origins, and organisational model of the Youth Centre.

The creation of Spazio Mincio was the result of a participatory process promoted within the framework of the project **DiverCities – European cities for diversity and participation**, coordinated by ICEI between 2022 and 2024. Through this process, the Municipality of Montesilvano collected the needs and requests expressed by local young people regarding the creation of a dedicated space that could be co-managed together with them.

The Youth Centre was officially inaugurated in July 2025 during the **EPIC_IDEA project**. In order to give greater visibility to this participatory process and recognise the role played by young people in the creation of the space, the Youth Camp was organised directly within the premises of Spazio Mincio. This choice allowed young leaders from Montesilvano to become active protagonists of the event rather than simply participants.

The local youth group was directly involved in the organisation and facilitation of the welcoming activities, getting-to-know-each-other moments, and team-building sessions. Working in coordination with the project team, they contributed to creating a collaborative atmosphere based on mutual trust, participation, and shared commitment. The team-building activities were designed to encourage interaction among participants coming from different cities and backgrounds, facilitating the creation of connections from the very beginning of the camp. Activities included, for example:

- **Ice-breaking games and energisers**, aimed at helping participants become familiar with each other in an informal and engaging way.
- **Speed-dating introductions**, where participants had short conversations in pairs to share personal information, experiences, and expectations for the Youth Camp.
- **Collective mapping activities**, in which participants located their cities on a shared map and presented their local youth realities, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Group challenges and collaborative exercises**, encouraging participants to work together, communicate, and identify common values and interests.
- **Reflection moments on expectations and motivations**, allowing participants to express what they hoped to gain from the experience and what they wanted to contribute to the group.

The welcoming and team-building phase played a key role in establishing a positive group dynamic and creating conditions for meaningful exchange throughout the following activities of the Youth Camp.

Activity 2: "The City of the Future" - Future Thinking Lab

The workshop took place on the second day of the Youth Camp. Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to indicate their preferred topic for the activities, choosing from the following issues relevant to urban contexts: **mobility, arts and culture, sport, environment, political participation, housing, mental health and well-being, social gathering and entertainment, work and opportunities.**

The working groups (9), each composed of 5–7 participants, were formed according to the preferences expressed, around the following topics: **arts and culture (2), sport (1), political participation (1), mental health and well-being (2), social gathering and entertainment (1), work and opportunities (2).**

Overall, the workshop aimed to build on the Future Thinking process previously launched with youth workers and young people, outline a long-term intervention perspective for youth centres, and lay the foundations for dialogue between young people, civil society organisations, and municipalities.

Structure of the activity

The workshop was organised into two sessions and divided into four phases.

Phase 1 – Identifying the Issue
Each group identified a problem related to its chosen topic, drawing on the personal experiences of its members within their local urban contexts. This phase was guided by a board on which groups were asked to summarise the issue and answer a series of questions at both the micro (personal) and macro (social) levels.

Phase 2 – Building a Desirable Future
Guided by a prompt card containing a series of questions and imagining themselves in the year 2036, the groups developed a scenario in which the identified problem had been overcome. They visualised this future through collage-making, freehand drawing, and shooting short videos.

Phase 3 – Soft Backcasting
Starting from their imagined future, the groups identified the barriers that would need to be overcome, possible allies and opponents, and defined their own role in the transformation process leading towards the desired future. During this phase, participants also worked using a dedicated board.

Phase 4 – Plenary Session
Each group presented its work, after which all the collages were combined into a single collective collage.

Results:

- **Sport**: sport was described as a field increasingly affected by profit-driven dynamics and privatisation, limiting people's ability to access sporting activities. As a result, there is a risk that practising sport will cease to be a collective experience and instead become a privilege. The envisioned response focuses on reclaiming public spaces, parks, and gardens as places for free, informal sports activities, while fostering a broader shared awareness capable of counteracting individualism and unhealthy competition.
- **Political Participation**: regarding political participation, participants highlighted a perceived distance between young people and public institutions, from which they feel unrepresented. This is closely linked to the growing spread of political misinformation. The proposals that emerged emphasise schools as the primary setting for civic and political education, alongside simplifying participation and candidacy mechanisms, envisioning young people as active protagonists of change.
- **Mental Health and Well-being**: the two groups working on this topic developed remarkably similar analyses. Existing services were acknowledged, but they were considered poorly known and perceived as either lacking professionalism or being economically inaccessible. Participants also highlighted the difficulty of communicating with much older generations because of the generational gap. Added to this is a strong social stigma, whereby asking for help is still widely regarded as a sign of weakness.
- The proposed solutions include awareness-raising campaigns, increased funding, and more qualified professionals. Furthermore, young people see themselves as natural intermediaries between those in need of support and those responsible for providing it.
- **Social Gathering and Entertainment**: the issue identified in relation to this topic was the shortage of freely accessible public gathering spaces, together with the conflict between private use and the social function of public spaces, further exacerbated by a widespread perception of insecurity. The group developed a highly concrete proposal centred on the regeneration of a public park through the creation of safety measures, social activities, cultural spaces, and areas designed for different segments of the population, with the aim of creating a shared, multifunctional public space.
- **Work and Opportunities**: the two groups working on this topic reached similar conclusions: school and university education are perceived as rigid and poorly aligned with the actual dynamics of the labour market, generating uncertainty and distrust regarding young people's professional futures. The proposals focused on strengthening connections between schools, businesses, and employment services through career guidance, dedicated educational hours, and hands-on experiences, with young people acting as mediators between the worlds of education and work.
- **Arts and Culture:** the two groups addressing this topic offered complementary perspectives. On the one hand, they highlighted the difficulties young artists face in finding spaces and recognition to express themselves. On the other hand, they pointed to an imbalance between "traditional" and "contemporary" culture, which ultimately excludes both young people and migrant communities. The common thread was the need for genuinely accessible spaces and events capable of fostering dialogue between different cultural languages, overcoming competition and hierarchical distinctions between different forms of culture.

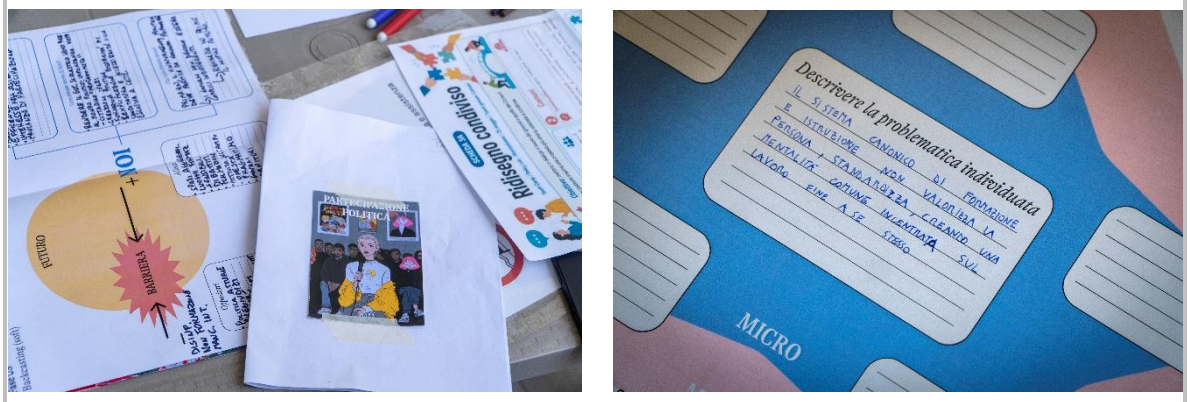

Figure - examples of materials and activities

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Participation and Engagement

Overall participation throughout the activity was high. Most groups remained active and engaged during all phases of the workshop, thanks in part to the practical and creative nature of the activities (guided worksheets, collage-making, and freehand drawing), which also encouraged participation from those who were less comfortable with verbal discussion. Some declines in attention were observed during the more abstract phases of the process, particularly when groups were asked to imagine scenarios set far in the future. During these moments, the support provided by facilitators and educators proved essential in helping participants maintain focus. By the end, fatigue had understandably begun to set in due to the intensity of the activities. Nevertheless, during the final plenary session, the young participants presented their future scenarios with pride and conviction, giving rise to a discussion that actively involved everyone present.

The level of difficulty in translating reflections into concrete proposals varied considerably depending on the topic. Political participation proved to be the most challenging theme, with the group struggling to identify solutions that were both realistic and actionable within the imagined future. By contrast, topics such as social gathering and entertainment and sport more readily lent themselves to practical reasoning and operational proposals.

The groups working on work and employment opportunities approached the activity with particular enthusiasm, demonstrating how pressing and personally relevant this issue is. Aware that they were at a crucial stage of life (16–18 years old) in which important decisions about their future must be made, participants envisioned a range of solutions spanning institutional and legislative measures as well as educational and training-related initiatives.

The tone of the future visions also varied across topics. The groups working on mental health and employment addressed darker and more worrying issues, including stigma, self-harm, precarious employment, and anxiety about the future, while nevertheless arriving at constructive proposals. In contrast, the groups focusing on sport, social gathering, and arts and culture adopted a more optimistic and solution-oriented approach from the outset, concentrating on the regeneration of spaces and shared community practices. Finally, the group addressing political participation alternated between a critical stance towards public institutions and a strong sense of civic advocacy, ultimately concluding that young people themselves must become the protagonists of change.

Conclusion:

The engagement confirmed the effectiveness of an approach that combines critical reflection and creativity: starting from young people's lived experiences and projecting themselves into a desirable future made it possible to bring out real and deeply felt issues, expressed with a level of awareness and maturity that cannot be taken for granted given the participants' age.

The work carried out on the nine topics produced a rich and diverse map of young people's needs in the territories involved, providing concrete material on which to build the subsequent moments of activities with municipalities and youth workers.

Beyond the individual contents that emerged, the most significant value of the workshop was methodological: providing young people with the appropriate tools and time to develop concrete proposals, rather than only expressing generic demands. The engagement shown during the final plenary session, despite the fatigue

accumulated, confirms that the format succeeded in generating an authentic sense of ownership and belonging towards the work carried out, representing a solid starting point for dialogue with municipal administrations in the following days.

Activity 3: Co-creation and Realisation of an Anti-rumours Mural

The third and final activity of the Youth Camp was dedicated to the co-design and creation of an **Anti-rumours mural** in the outdoor space of the Youth Centre Spazio Mincio 14 in Montesilvano. The activity represented the final creative and collective moment of the three-day programme, allowing participants to transform the reflections, discussions, and ideas developed throughout the Youth Camp into a visible and lasting message for the local community.

The mural was conceived as a participatory artistic process, where young people were not only involved in the execution phase but were the main protagonists of both the conceptualisation and the realisation of the artwork. Starting from the themes explored during the previous activities — including stereotypes, discrimination, social inclusion, participation, diversity, and the role of young people as agents of change — participants worked together to identify the key messages and visual elements they wanted to communicate through the mural.

The activity was facilitated through a non-formal education approach, using creativity and artistic expression as tools for dialogue, reflection, and collective learning. The young participants were supported by an external artist with expertise in participatory art processes and non-formal education methodologies. Her role was not to impose an artistic vision, but rather to accompany the group throughout the creative process, helping participants translate their ideas and values into a shared visual language.

During the design phase, participants engaged in discussions and brainstorming sessions to identify the main concepts they wanted the mural to represent. Through collaborative exercises, they explored how images, symbols, colours, and words could convey anti-rumours messages and promote a more inclusive vision of society. This process encouraged participants to reflect on the power of narratives and the importance of challenging simplified or discriminatory representations of people and communities.

Once the concept was defined, participants actively contributed to the preparation and painting of the mural, working collectively on the different phases of artistic production. The practical dimension of the activity strengthened group cohesion, cooperation, and a sense of ownership over the final result. The creation of a shared artwork in a public space also allowed young people to leave a concrete mark on the Youth Centre and on the wider community, transforming the space into a place that reflects their voices, ideas, and commitment.

The mural activity represented a meaningful conclusion to the Youth Camp, connecting creativity with civic engagement and demonstrating how artistic practices can become powerful tools for participation, empowerment, and the promotion of inclusive communities. By contributing directly to the transformation of the Youth Centre's outdoor area, participants experienced themselves as active contributors to their local environment and as protagonists of positive change.

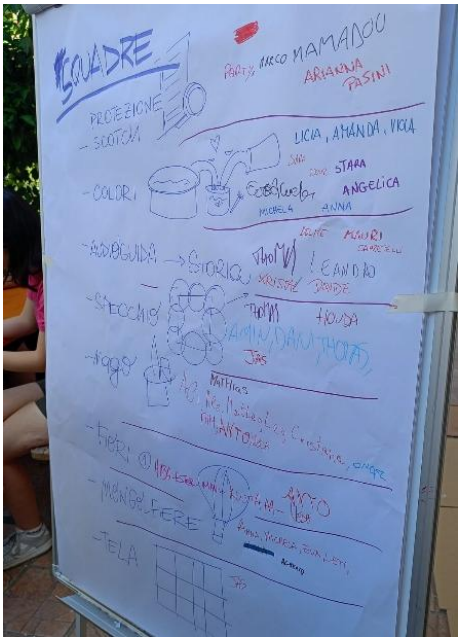

Figure – collective design and realization of the Anti-rumours Mural

The activities carried out during the Youth Camp represented the starting point and the foundation for the upcoming **Policy Lab (WP21),** with representatives from their corresponding municipalities. In particular, the **"The City of the Future" Future Thinking Lab** provided a valuable framework for collecting and structuring young people's perspectives, needs, concerns, and proposals regarding their local communities."

Through the exploration of future scenarios, the identification of current challenges, and the development of possible solutions, participants produced a rich set of reflections and ideas that can be used as a basis for dialogue with local institutions. The proposals and insights developed during the Future Thinking activities will support young participants in entering the conversation with municipal representatives with greater awareness, confidence, and a clearer understanding of the concrete changes they would like to promote in their territories, thus engaging constructively with decision-makers.

Furthermore, the anti-rumours activities and the collaborative creation of the mural contributed to reinforcing the connection between reflection and action, demonstrating how young people can actively contribute to shaping more inclusive communities through both civic participation and creative expression.

EVALUATION

Overall feedback from the Mentimeter shows a very high level of satisfaction among participants and the overall Youth Camp experience rated highly positive across key indicators. The group dynamics and social dimension emerged as the absolute highlight, with participants repeatedly praising the inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment created, as well as the strong sense of community, mutual support from youth workers, and opportunities to connect across different youth centers. The activities of the 'Anti-rumors Mural' and "The city of the future" were also awarded high ratings, showing an overall activity satisfaction. Participants reported strong educational outcomes, noting that their expectations were largely fulfilled and that they learned new things, achieved personal growth, and new social competencies. Areas for improvement mainly centered on practical and logistical management, including pre-arrival communication, spaces and local transport, food options, and the pacing/organization of schedules, with several young people expressing a desire for more free time, varied group activities, and better structured evening leisure. Overall, the sentiment expressed by participants was deeply emotional, grateful, and energized, confirming that the Youth Camp successfully achieved its goals of fostering youth connection, peer exchange, active participation, and personal empowerment.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Youth Camp successfully created a space for exchange, learning, and active participation among young people, youth workers, and local stakeholders from different Italian contexts. The combination of non-formal education methodologies, Future Thinking approaches, participatory activities, and creative practices allowed participants to explore complex issues, share experiences, and develop concrete ideas for change.

The activities were positively evaluated by both young participants and youth workers, who particularly appreciated the opportunity to meet peers from different cities, exchange perspectives, and work together on topics that directly affect their everyday lives. Participants highlighted the value of having a dedicated space

where their voices could be heard, their experiences recognized, and their ideas transformed into proposals and collective actions.

Youth workers also positively assessed the methodology adopted throughout the Camp, recognizing the effectiveness of combining reflection, creativity, and practical engagement in supporting young people's empowerment and active citizenship. The participatory approach adopted throughout the event contributed to strengthening the sense of ownership among participants, who were not only beneficiaries of the activities but active contributors to the design and implementation of the different moments.

The Youth Camp therefore represented an important milestone in the broader process of promoting youth participation, creating the conditions for continued dialogue between young people, civil society organizations, and municipalities, and laying the groundwork for future collaborative actions at local and national level.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).