



Youth Participation Strategy

A strategy for enhancing youth participation in democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

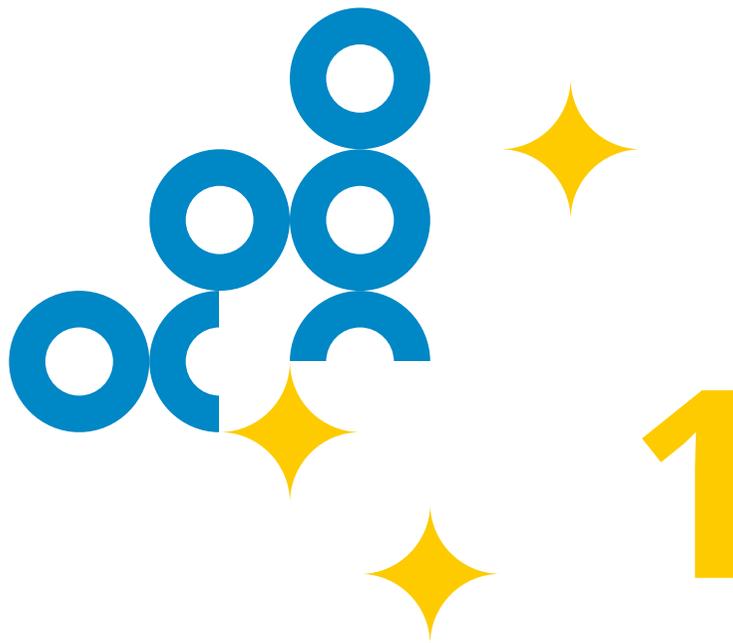


Find additional resources on youth participation including a **Glossary** on
→ www.participationpool.eu



Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Background	7
2.1	Policy context	8
2.2	Understanding youth participation in democratic life	14
2.2.1	Defining youth participation in democratic life	15
2.2.2	Forms of youth participation in democratic life	19
2.3	Lessons from past programme implementation	24
3.	Aims of the Youth Participation Strategy	27
4.	Stakeholders of the Youth Participation Strategy	29
5.	Ways the programmes can support youth participation	32
5.1	Promoting participation for all	33
5.2	Skills development and volunteering	34
5.3	Youth sector development	35
5.4	Activism and decision making	36
6.	Implementation activities	37
7.	Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy implementation and impact	44
7.1	Co-steering group	45
7.2	Evaluation of the strategy and outcome indicators	47



1

Introduction

Young Europeans are actively engaged. In 2019, a Flash Eurobarometer survey¹ found that three quarters of young people had been involved in some form of organised movement, more than seven in ten young had voted in local, national or European elections, and one third had been involved in organised voluntary activities in the preceding 12 months. However, whilst young people's participation in political elections increased notably between 2014 and the time of writing², they are still less likely to engage in traditional forms of participation (those based on representative democracy) than older generations³. Despite this, they are not, as a generation, unmotivated or disinterested in politics and society around them⁴. Instead, many are highly aware and active.

¹ Flash Eurobarometer 478 (2019)
→ [How do we build a stronger, more united Europe](#), Brussels, European Commission

² Based on newest available data in 2020
→ [Flash Eurobarometer 478](#)

³ Kitanova, M. (2019)
→ [Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis](#), *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(7), 819-836

⁴ Sloam, J. (2016)
→ [Diversity and voice: The political participation of young people in the European Union](#). *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 18(3), 521-537

Young people are increasingly now involved in **'alternative forms' of participation**,⁵ including youth activism, community volunteering, online activism or youth social movements such as the climate activism movement. Related to this shift, youth civil society is also in a time of transition, moving from being based around structured hierarchical models of representation and participation to a more networked and diverse sector⁶. At the same time, many youth civil society organisations⁷ are also raising concerns about infringements on their freedom of association, assembly and expression, and what has been termed the **'shrinking space for civil society'**.⁸

Across Europe, it is now necessary to **consider how our democratic societies recognise and support a range of approaches to youth participation** and engage a diverse range of young people in democratic life. At the same time, it is still a concern that many young people feel disconnected from our democratic structures and institutions,⁹ and there is an ongoing need to enable young people to participate in democratic institutions and political structures both directly and indirectly.

Encouraging youth participation in democratic life in Europe is embedded in Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The EU Youth Strategy¹⁰ builds on this. It is based around the terms **Engage, Empower and Connect** and places youth participation right at the forefront of youth policy. The European Youth Goals, which have been integrated as an annex to the EU Youth Strategy, also identify the importance of youth participation among young people themselves. The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes ('the programmes') further build upon this policy base by setting the objective of enhancing youth participation in democratic life.

It is well recognised that these **EU programmes have already made a significant contribution to enhancing youth participation in democratic life, but even more is possible**. The Commission has proposed new specific formats designed for this purpose. This Youth Participation Strategy seeks to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Goals related to youth participation. It intends to enable a variety of actors to harness more effectively the full potential of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes in order to foster youth participation in democratic life.

⁵ London School of Economics (2013)
→ EACEA 2010/03: Youth Participation in Democratic Life, London, LSE enterprise

⁶ Day, L., et al. (2020)
→ Study on the landscape of youth representation in the EU. Final report, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union

⁷ Deželan, T., Laker, J., Sardoč, M. (n.d.)
→ The Shrinking Space for Civil Society and its impacts on Young People and Their Organisations: An Executive Summary, Brussels, European Youth Forum

⁸ Youngs, R., Echagüe, A. (2017)
→ Shrinking space for civil society: EU Response, Brussels, European Parliament

⁹ London School of Economics (2013)
→ ibid

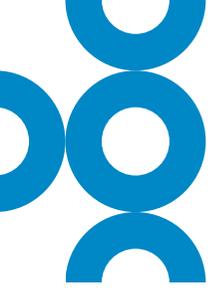
¹⁰ Council of the European Union (2018)
→ The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, Brussels, Official Journal of the European Union

The Strategy was developed by **SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre (SALTO PI¹¹)** following a consultation process that involved the input of the European Commission, National Agencies, decision makers, experts and practitioners in the field. For this purpose, an expert group was established that included these perspectives and worked from September 2019 to June 2020. A series of consultations with Youth Councils, National Agencies and other stakeholders was also conducted throughout spring 2020. The strategy itself is a 'live' document that will be regularly updated and revised by SALTO PI through a co-steering group comprised of stakeholders and young people. This strategy is designed to provide a framework for ongoing collaboration between strategy stakeholders that will last until at least the end of the EU Youth Strategy in 2027.

The document itself is intended **for stakeholders who have a role in supporting the implementation of the programmes**. It is not intended as a guide or toolkit on youth participation for programme applicants. However, the strategy is also accompanied by SALTO Participation & Information's Participation Resource Pool ([→ www.participationpool.eu](http://www.participationpool.eu)) and a forthcoming Toolkit on Youth Participation, which can be used by young people, youth workers, trainers or others seeking practical support and guidance on the development of youth participation within specific projects. National Agencies also produce extensive resources on participation for project applicants.

¹¹ → SALTO PI supports the capacity building of young people, youth workers, National Agencies in charge of youth programmes, the European Commission and other stakeholders in involving young people in decision-making processes.





2 Background



Policy context

Participation for all citizens is enshrined as a fundamental right in **the Treaty of the European Union**: 'Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen.' Regarding young people in particular, Article 165.2 of the the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) stipulates that 'Union action shall be aimed at encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and **encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.**'

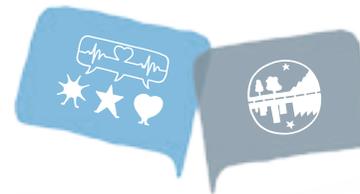




The European Union has been prioritising the promotion of young people's civic engagement and youth participation in democratic life for a long time through the consecutive EU Youth Strategies, and non-formal learning programmes (YOUTH, Youth in Action, and the Erasmus+ Youth, and European Solidarity Corps programmes).

The **EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027**, adopted in 2018 and based around the terms **Engage, Empower and Connect**, places youth participation right at the forefront of youth policy. Its objectives talk of 'fostering youth participation in democratic life' and 'supporting social and civic engagement'. Its guiding principles stipulate that 'all policies and activities concerning young people should uphold young people's right to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies affecting them by means of meaningful participation of young people and youth organisations'. The strategy clearly connects the concepts of social inclusion and democratic participation.

The **European Youth Goals** are an integral part of the European Youth Strategy. They are the outcome of the 6th cycle of the Structured Dialogue with young people. They identify 11 cross-sectoral areas that affect young people's lives and point out which challenges need to be addressed. Member States and the European Commission are invited to draw inspiration from the Youth Goals and have already done this in agreeing on the Work Plan for the Youth Strategy 2019–2021. Several areas of the goals are related to youth participation.

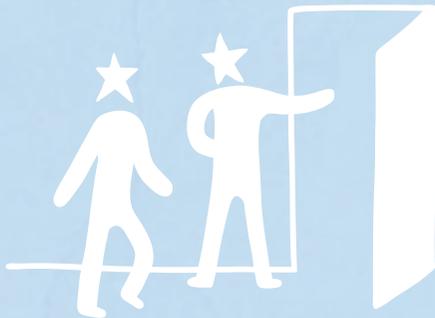




Youth Goal #9 - 'Space and Participation for all'

is specifically aimed at strengthening young people's democratic participation at all levels of decision making. It states that 'young people are underrepresented in decision-making processes which affect them although their engagement is crucial to democracy'. In order to tackle this, this youth goal has defined the following targets:

- Ensure young people can adequately influence all areas of society and all parts of the decision-making processes, from agenda setting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation through youth-friendly and accessible mechanisms and structures, ensuring that policies respond to the needs of young people.
- Ensure equal access to everyday decision making for all young people from different backgrounds.
- Increase youth participation and thus equal representation in the electoral process as well as in elected bodies and other decision-making organs at all levels of society.
- Provide youth-friendly, relevant and comprehensive information that is developed by and in tandem with young people, in order to enable youth participation.
- Ensure sustainable funding, common recognition and development of quality youth work in order to strengthen youth organisations and their role in inclusion, participation and non-formal education.





Youth Goal #1 - 'Connecting EU with Youth'

aims to foster the sense among young people of belonging to the European project and to build a bridge between the EU and young people to regain trust and increase participation. The youth goal defines the following targets:

- Guarantee meaningful youth involvement and dialogue in all stages of EU decision making by improving existing participatory mechanisms and creating new ones.
- Ensure equal access to quality impartial and youth-friendly information about how the EU works, how to engage in it and what opportunities it offers.
- Introduce and increase education about Europe and the EU in formal and non-formal settings.
- Institutionalise the assessment of youth-friendliness, and the impact and effect of EU policies.





Youth Goal #8 - 'Quality Learning'

focuses on education and highlights the link between learning and participation within one of its targets:

- Ensure that young people have access to citizenship education to provide them with solid knowledge on political systems, democracy and human rights, which is also attained through community-based experiences to promote active civil participation.





Youth Goal #3 - 'Inclusive Societies',

Youth Goal #6 - 'Moving Rural Youth Forward'

illustrate the importance of outreach and ensuring that young people from a diverse range of backgrounds have information about and access to participation and decision-making processes. These goals contain the following targets:



- Strengthen outreach of information to marginalised young people, to ensure they are aware of the spaces, opportunities and experiences available to them. (Target within, Inclusive societies)
- Ensure that marginalised young people are participating in all decision-making processes and are key players, particularly in processes concerning their own rights, wellbeing and interests. (Target within, Inclusive societies)
- Ensure that young people in rural areas are actively participating in decision-making processes. (Target within, Moving Rural Youth Forward)

The EU Youth Strategy and Youth Goals will also find their reflection in the new generation of EU funding programmes. The proposals of the European Commission for the legal base of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes for the 2021–2027 period explicitly state that these programmes should be coherent with the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027. Both programmes include objectives and specific actions related to enhancing youth participation in democratic life.

The **Erasmus+ programme** (legislative proposal for the 2021–2027 period of the programme) regulation stipulates that it ‘should encourage youth participation in Europe’s democratic life, including by supporting participation projects for young people to **engage and learn to participate** in civic society, raising awareness about **European common values** including fundamental rights, **bringing together young people and decision makers** at local, national and Union level, as well as contributing to the European integration process.’ The promotion of active participation is included in the specific objectives of the programme. It is further explained that ‘the Programme will **address the Europe-wide trends of limited participation in**

democratic life and the low levels of knowledge and awareness about European matters that have an impact on the lives of all European citizens.’

The **European Solidarity Corps** (legislative proposal for the 2021–2027 period of the programme) regulation defines the programme as a means to help **strengthen cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe** and abroad and to address societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with a particular focus on promoting social inclusion. One of the specific objectives is to provide young people, including those with fewer opportunities, with easily accessible opportunities for engagement in solidarity activities in Europe and abroad.

The new generation of funding programmes puts emphasis on youth participation at both the level of objectives and at action level, with a range of formats designed to provide more opportunities to encourage youth participation. The European Solidarity Corps programme has the strong potential to encourage youth participation through its solidarity projects and volunteering as well as through stimulating the active citizenship of European Solidarity Corps participants throughout their lives.



Understanding youth participation in democratic life

Defining youth participation in democratic life

Whilst 'youth participation' has been around as a topic for decades, there is a wide array of definitions and theoretical models of the concept. This strategy should help shape a common understanding of youth participation in the context of EU programmes. The EU Youth Strategy, the European Youth Goals and the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes don't include a specific definition of youth participation; however, they do point in a certain direction. The youth participation these policy frameworks and programmes aim to enhance is youth participation **in democratic life**, which can be understood in two interconnected ways.

1

Youth participation as youth voice and involvement decision making^{12 13}

This involves young people expressing their views in order to influence or be involved in decision-making processes. This can refer to a range of different decision-making processes, from governmental political or policy decisions, to how a community space is used, to the running of a youth organisation.

2

Youth participation as civic action and youth activism¹⁴

This involves young people taking individual and/or collective action with the intention of making a change to the world around them. This can mean taking political actions such as organising or being involved in protests, as well social and civic activity such as community improvement initiatives at local level or volunteering for a cause or civil society organisation.

¹² Lundy, L. (2007)
→ 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, British Educational Research Journal, 33(6), 927-942

¹³ see Arnstein, S. R. (1969)
→ A ladder of citizen participation, Journal of the American Institute of planners 35(4), 216-224 or Roger Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation

¹⁴ Earl, J., Maher, T., Elliott, T. (2017)
→ Youth, activism, and social movements, Sociology Compass 11(4)

Young people's human rights form an underpinning basis for youth participation, and young people have the right to participate in democratic life through rights such as the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association¹⁵ and children's right to have their opinion taken into account when decisions are made about their lives.¹⁶

Youth participation in democratic life can be both individual and collective. Young people can participate in democratic life individually, for example by casting a vote or taking part in an online consultation. They can also participate in democratic life collectively, by working with groups or organisations of young people, or as part of multi-generational movements.

However, it is important to recognise that **young people are not a homogenous group**. Whilst they share many common experiences as a result of being part of the same generation, their lives are also intersected by gender, geography, sexuality, ethnicity and many other factors. The topics of concern and areas of interest may vary between different groups of young people, and there is not necessarily a single 'youth view' on an issue. For example, a 2019 Eurobarometer¹⁷ identified that

young women were generally more concerned than men with environmental issues, and the older a young person was the more likely they were to be concerned with employment issues. Different groups of young people have varying experiences of the world we live in, as well as varying views and opinions.

It is valuable to think about the spaces in which youth participation happens and how a space can enable or even inhibit youth participation¹⁸. For example, it can occur in schools and educational institutions, where young people may be involved in a school's council or similar activities. It can happen in more public spaces such as a town square or street through volunteering, campaigning and street action, etc., as well as through activism in online spaces and forums. It can also happen within political institutions, such as in the municipality council, a political party, or a National or European policy making body, where young people might be involved in meetings with decision makers. We might also think of it as happening within a youth organisation or youth programmes, where young people could potentially be involved in deciding or contributing to how that organisation or programme is run.

¹⁵ articles 10 and 11
→ [European Convention on Human Rights](#)

¹⁶ Article 12
→ [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

¹⁷ Flash Eurobarometer 478 (2019)
→ [ibid](#)

¹⁸ Partispace (2018)
→ [Making Spaces For Youth Participation Accessible And Available, Policy Brief 3](#)

Youth participation in democratic life can relate to power and agency.

Youth participation can mean sharing and distributing decision-making power away from those that typically control decisions and resources towards the young people they seek to engage. It can also mean working to promote young people's ability to exert power and influence within society and their individual or collective agency. Developing youth participation projects or initiatives therefore requires the consideration of power changes and asymmetries of power within young people's lives¹⁹.

As a result, youth participation in democratic life has a political dimension.

However, 'political' means more than just party politics and political institutions. As well as these forms of politics, the political dimension of youth participation includes young people influencing how power is held or enacted in community spaces, through educational institutions, on the street or within any manner of public and civic spaces. Youth participation involves enabling young people to critically identify the asymmetries of power that occur in their lives (either as a result of youth or other intersections) and to take critical action to reshape them²⁰.

At the same time, the connection between the concept of **European solidarity** and of youth participation can be considered. Whilst the European Solidarity Corps concept of solidarity is still evolving, it is clearly connected to empathy, human rights, active citizenship and inclusion²¹; therefore, solidarity has a direct relationship to youth participation. Enabling young people to contribute to sustaining European values and building the European project through their volunteering and civic activism is a clear agenda of the programmes. This also gives an indication of the types of youth participation and the values underpinning them that the programmes seek to promote.

Based on these various ways of understanding of youth participation, for the purpose of this Youth Participation Strategy, the SALTO Think Tank has developed **a definition of youth participation in democratic life** that fits the context of the programmes.

Youth participation in democratic life is about individual young people and groups of young people having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, contribute to and influence societal decision making on matters affecting them, and be active within the democratic and civic life of our communities.

¹⁹ Ohana, Y. (2020)

→ What's politics got to do with it? European youth work programmes and the development of critical youth citizenship, Bonn, Jugend für Europa

²⁰ Ohana, Y. (2020)

→ ibid

²¹ SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre (2020)

→ 4Thought for Solidarity, Vienna, IZ - Verein zur Förderung von Vielfalt, Dialog und Bildung



Definition of youth participation in democratic life:

Individual **young people** and
groups of young people



having the **right**, the **means**,
the **space**, the opportunity
and, where necessary, the **support**



to freely **express their views**,
contribute to and **influence** societal
decision making on matters affecting
them, and **be active within** the
democratic and civic life of our
communities.



Finally, it is important to distinguish between young people's participation in democratic life and **young people's participation in their private or personal lives**²². Just as young people have a right to be involved in influencing societies' decisions and actions, they also have a right to make decisions about their own

lives, such as their choice of schooling, health care and determining their own actions. This private sphere of youth participation is highly important, particularly for those who are sometimes denied these rights, such as young migrants or young people with disabilities. However, this is not the focus of this strategy.

²² Thomas, N. (2007)
→ 'Towards a Theory of Children's Participation', International Journal of Children's Rights 15(2), 199–218

Forms of youth participation in democratic life

Young people are sometimes described as being disengaged with politics and less keen on participating in political activities than previous generations. However, it is not the case that all young people are somehow politically apathetic; on the contrary, most are often engaged, aware and highly informed of the issues that

affect their lives. Instead, it is generally understood that young people are less likely to be involved in traditional forms of participation (i.e. those linked to representative democracy) than previous generations but are increasingly involved in so called 'alternative forms of participation'²³.

²³ London School of Economics (2013)
→ *ibid*

1

Traditional forms of participation

refers to involvement in representative democracy, for example through voting, standing for election, or joining a political party or trade union²⁴. This form of participation is typically based on bodies with democratically elected hierarchical structures and formal processes. It could be argued that involvement in a youth representative body, such as a youth council or youth led non-governmental organisation, is a traditional form of participation.

However, this also depends on how the youth body operates in practice. Increasingly, the youth NGO sector is transitioning from democratic representative forms of participation to a diverse and networked civil society, and youth organisations are embracing a wide variety of different approaches to youth participation²⁵.

2

Alternative forms of participation

simply refers to **any form** of participation **other than the traditional forms**. By definition, new ways of participating can always be created or developed to provide an 'alternative' approach to what is already in practice. This makes the term somewhat subjective and dependent on context²⁶. Currently, the term alternative forms²⁷ of participation is commonly used to refer to:

- Campaigning or youth activism based around single issues or causes that allows young people to express their identity as part of a youth movement, AND/OR -
- Participation which extensively utilises digital tools and spaces, AND/OR -
- Innovative approaches to involving young people in policy making or implementation (such as co-production, or deliberative democracy methods such as citizen's juries) AND/OR -
- Youth activism which changes the way public spaces are used AND/OR -
- Other approaches still to be developed...

²⁴ Crowley, A., Moxon, D. (2017)
→ [New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe

²⁵ Day, L., et al. (2020)
→ [Study on the landscape of youth representation in the EU. Final report](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union

²⁶ Crowley, A., & Moxon, D. (2017)
→ [ibid](#)

²⁷ Crowley, A., Moxon, D. (2017)
→ [ibid](#),
& Partispace (2018)
→ [ibid](#)

In comparison to traditional forms, alternative forms arguably have greater potential for non-formality, openness and autonomy amongst those involved, and they can facilitate a 'do it yourself' form of participation.²⁸ For example, the Fridays for Future and youth climate movement have shown the potential of these **cause-driven new social movements**. Another example is the **indignados** movement in Spain, which had its origins in social networks and organised resistance to extensive austerity measures implemented by the government and the staggering youth unemployment rates across Spain.

It is sometimes said that alternative forms of participation are more effective at **reaching young people with fewer opportunities**. However, whilst it is known that young people with higher education attainment²⁹ or with greater family income³⁰ are more likely to engage in voting and join political parties, there is limited comprehensive research indicating that any one form of youth participation is more inclusive than another. It has been identified that any form of participation can be inclusive if there is a commitment to inclusion during its implementation, and to address factors that exclude particular social groups of young people³¹. This means it is the way a particular form of

participation is implemented that makes it inclusive, rather than the form of participation. For example, a recent research identified that youth organisations were very effective at supporting young people's participation at local and national level, whilst there was a potential lack of inclusion in youth civil society organisations operating at EU level.³²

At the same time, it is important not to forget the **value of democratically led youth civil society** organisations, such as the National Youth Councils, to democracy. An independent and empowered civil society is a vital component of a healthy democratic system³³. In these structures, young people are elected by their peers to speak on behalf of, and democratically represent, other young people.

²⁸ Farrow, A. (2018)
→ [SALTO Think Tank on Youth Participation: closer to the edge of participation and activism](#), Tallinn, SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre

²⁹ Berinsky, A.J., Lenz, G.S. (2011)
→ [Education and Political Participation: Exploring the Causal Link](#), Political Behavior 33, 357–373

³⁰ Cammaerts, B., et al. (2016)
→ [Youth participation in democratic life: Stories of hope and disillusion](#), Springer

³¹ Pirvulescu, C., Moxon, D., Banari, R., Kost, R., Capecchi, D. (2019)
→ [A seat at the table for everyone](#), Tallinn, SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre

³² Day, L., et al. (2020)
→ [ibid](#)

³³ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' Resolution
→ [CM/Res\(2016\)3 on a participatory status for international non-governmental organisations with the Council of Europe](#)

Overall then, this strategy is based on a commitment to **recognise and support both traditional and alternative forms of participation**. Both forms can be understood as complementary to each other, as youth-led organisations may have policy positions or official stands on topics addressed by cause-driven social movements, or digital participation approaches might help drive young people to the polling booth. The programmes can support a range of youth participation forms and practices, acknowledging that different styles or forms can work for different young people in different circumstances. The recognition of alternative forms of participation has the potential to respond to the changing modes of engagement of young people, and to support innovation within the youth sector in order to improve quality.

However, this does not mean that young people should no longer be encouraged to take part in the formal political process or that democratic values shouldn't be promoted. Young people's engagement with traditional forms of participation remains a crucial part of healthy democracies in Europe. The democratically elected **youth organisations remain an important space where young people express their voice in society** and fundamentally contribute to the quality of democracy in the long term.





Lessons from past programme implementation

Promoting youth participation in democratic life and civic engagement has long been a specific objective of the EU youth programmes, as identified in Article 160 of the Treaties. This Youth Participation Strategy can therefore **build on the lessons learned from several decades of implementing the EU programmes**, primarily Erasmus+ Youth and its predecessors, as well as evaluations of the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018. Some additional lessons can also be drawn from the first years of implementation of the first generation of European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020).

Considering the **impact of the programmes on individuals**, it is understood that the programmes have been very effective in developing young people's competencies in relationship to youth participation and civic engagement.



The work of the RAY network has identified some important messages. Their RAY-MON research³⁴ on **the effect and outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth Chapter** identifies that 94% of respondents believe that they developed one skill (such as discussing political topics seriously) that was relevant and helpful for participation and active citizenship. In addition, 88% believed they developed two skills, and 62% believe they developed three skills in strengthening citizenship and participation.

The RAY Networks RAY-LTE research³⁵ project on the **long-term effects related to participation and active citizenship** indicates that there are positive effects on learners, such as their awareness-raising effects, a better understanding of societal and political processes and interrelations, a deepening, updating and/or strengthening of existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as well as stimuli and motivation to participate in civil society and democratic life. This research indicates the potential of the programmes, in particular for **encouraging the participation of young people with fewer opportunities** in democratic life. However, it concludes that 'while most projects strengthen, either directly or indirectly, active citizenship and youth participation, **most beneficiaries are not aware**

that the programme seeks to support democratic citizenship and participation in civil society and democratic life – in part because the underlying concepts remain either unexplained or too abstract.' Considering volunteering and civic activism, it has been identified that the former **European Voluntary Service (EVS)** had an effect on the participation of volunteers in civic and political life.³⁶ Often, the volunteers were already actively engaged in society before their participation, but the volunteering experience showed them other ways to be active and could give them additional motivation to increase their level of engagement in the local community once returned home. An important part of EVS was the idea of **strengthening European identity and attitudes**. In fact, EVS volunteers already had a strong relationship to Europe and this remained stable over time for most alumni. Additionally, **after EVS, two thirds of EVS volunteers were more interested in European topics** and four out of ten felt more European³⁷. The newly operational **European Solidarity Corps 2018–2020** builds on this notion, and the volunteering and solidarity opportunities offered within the European Solidarity Corps draw direct inspiration from the implementation of EVS.

³⁴ Böhler, J., et al. (2018)
→ RAY-MON 2017-2018: Effects and outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme: Transnational Analysis, Vienna, Generation and Education Science Institute

³⁵ Bárta, O., et al. (2018)
→ Long-term effects of Erasmus+: Youth in Action on participation and active citizenship. Draft Interim Transnational Analysis (RAY-LTE study, 2015–2019), Vienna, Generation and Education Science Institute

³⁶ Brandenburg, U., et al. (2017)
→ Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European voluntary Service, Brussels, European Commission

³⁷ Brandenburg, U., et al. (2017)
→ ibid

Similarly, the programmes' focus on **social inclusion** and successful **work with young people with fewer opportunities cannot be overlooked**. One in four Erasmus+ Youth programme participants are said to be young people with fewer opportunities³⁸. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have an equal right to participate in democratic life as any young person. It is therefore important that programme developments in the area of youth participation happen in an inclusive way, with specific attention to the needs and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

However, moving beyond individual participants' learning, the **mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme** indicated that whilst outcomes for individuals and learners were very positive, the outcomes for organisations were less well developed.³⁹ RAY-MON research⁴⁰ and EVS evaluations⁴¹ generally confirm that whilst community or organisational impact can be seen as a result of the programme, it is generally more limited than the effect on the individual. Most significantly, the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme indicates there is **little is evidence of an impact of the programmes on systems and policies**.⁴²

This means that, alongside supporting the learning of individual participants, the programmes will in future need to place even more focus on the impact that programme-funded projects have at **a community, institutional, societal or political level**, and improve the funded projects' effectiveness at enabling young people to create community, social and political change⁴³.

Finally, at policy level, it is understood from **evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018**⁴⁴ that there is a need to create explicit links between the programmes and objectives set at EU political level, through instruments such as the EU Youth Strategy. In this regard, there is a clear message to ensure that developments occurring within this Youth Participation Strategy take full account of the current EU Youth Strategy and act to better enable the programmes to be tools for the implementation of this strategy.

³⁸ Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2014)
→ Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, Brussels, European Commission

³⁹ Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2018)
→ Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014–2020). Commission Staff Working Document, Brussels, European Commission

⁴⁰ Bammer, D., et al. (2015/2016)
→ Exploring Erasmus+: Youth in Action Effects and outcomes of the ERASMUS+: Youth in Action Programme from the perspective of project participants and project leaders, Vienna, Generation and Education Science Institute

⁴¹ Brandenburg, U., et al. (2017)
→ ibid

⁴² European Commission (2018)
→ ibid

⁴³ Ohana, Y. (2020)
→ ibid

⁴⁴ Eid, L., et al. (2017)
→ Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU, Brussels, European Commission



3

Aims of the Youth Participation Strategy

The **overall ambition and scope** of the Youth Participation Strategy is to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy in fostering youth participation in democratic life as well as the European Youth Goals relating to youth participation **by using the full potential of the Erasmus and European Solidarity Corps programmes.**

These programmes can enable individual young people and groups of young people to have the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary,

the support to freely express their views, contribute to and influence societal decision making on matters affecting them and be active within the democratic life of our communities.

More **coordinated action** through the programmes and a stronger vision on the possibilities for their contribution to youth participation will substantially increase the extent to which young people across Europe are able to participate in democratic life.

This Youth Participation Strategy shall work towards achieving the overall objective by coordinating action on different levels and by different actors by pursuing the following specific aims:



Aim 1 - Embedding:

Promote the principles of youth participation across all actions and activities of the programmes*.

Aim 2 - Support:

Enable effective support for programme* applicants and beneficiaries to develop and implement youth projects with a quality youth participation dimension.



Aim 3 - Information:

Increase awareness of the impact of the programmes* on youth participation in democratic life.

Aim 4 - Research:

Encourage a knowledge-based approach to youth participation in democratic life within the programmes* by enabling stakeholders to utilise the findings of research on youth participation.



Aim 5 - Involvement:

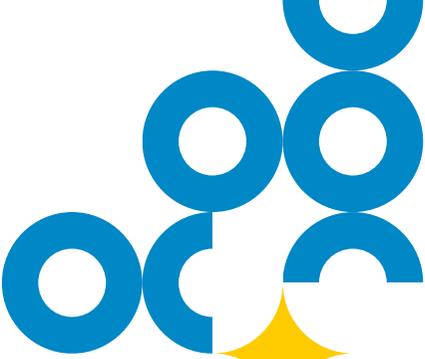
Encourage National Agencies and other actors to involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation in the programmes*, and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.

Aim 6 - Inclusion:

Dedicate specific attention to the participation in democratic life of young people with fewer opportunities.



*Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes



4

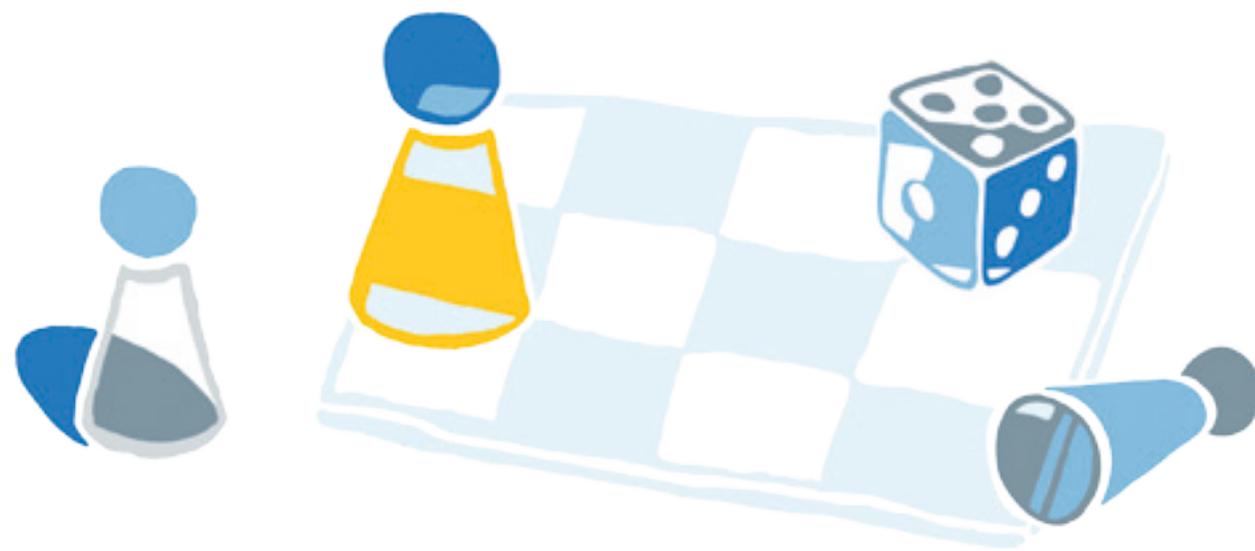
Stakeholders of the Youth Participation Strategy

This strategy is not intended to function as a resource or practical guidebook on youth participation for youth workers, trainers or young people involved in developing programme applications. Instead, its ambition is to have a strategic impact on the implementation of the programmes and the support provided to programme applicants.

As a result, the primary stakeholders of this strategy are those who are involved in supporting the implementation

of the programmes, so that they in turn can better support programme beneficiaries around youth participation, and improve the overall impact the programmes have on youth participation in democratic life.

Strategy stakeholders are actors who have a concrete role in the implementation of activities and measures defined within the strategy, and who will be able to contribute to the strategy's ongoing development and revision through the **co-steering group**.



Key stakeholders are as follows

SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre

has a role in supporting the capacity building of young people, youth workers, National Agencies in charge of youth programmes, the European Commission and other actors in the field of participation and information. Through this mandate, the SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre will take responsibility for the coordination, monitoring, evaluation and ongoing revision of the Youth Participation Strategy. This will be done through convening a **co-steering group** that will be jointly composed of strategy stakeholders and young people. In this way, the SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre hopes to lead and enable a wider variety of stakeholders to implement the various activities and measures defined in the strategy (see Chapter 6). SALTO PI will also implement various cross-cutting activities and measures within the strategy, particularly to foster capacity building among stakeholders.



National Agencies

have a central role in the programmes, providing information on Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, selecting projects to be funded, monitoring and evaluating Erasmus+, supporting applicants and participants, and promoting Erasmus+. This makes their role crucial to enabling and driving this strategy. Collaboration between National Agencies and other stakeholders on the topic of participation will be essential.



The SALTO network

can contribute to the success of the strategy through its resource centres in the youth field. The missions of the different SALTO resource centres are connected and they can mutually reinforce each other. The strategy can serve to inform their work, and certain measures to enhance youth participation can be implemented by other SALTO resource centres.





Youth information providers

are crucial in communicating the opportunities the programmes offer and can play an important role in giving a central place to youth participation in their communication. Youth information networks including EURODESK, and networks representing the programmes' alumni can take up this role.

Youth organisations

can play a role in supporting, communicating and advocating for the strategy, as well as implementing the activities and measures within it. This includes both **youth led organisations** and **youth worker or trainer-led organisations** as well as organisations from representative bodies such as the European Youth Forum to organisations focused on development of the youth sector.

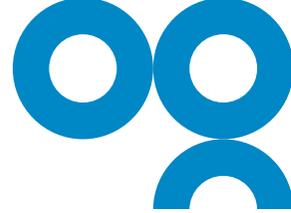


National and Local Youth Councils

along with other **participation initiatives, or youth movements** whose purpose is to **support young peoples' voices at national and local level**. These actors have a key role to play in enabling young people to be directly involved in the management and implementation of the programmes, along with the strategy as a whole. This can be realised through collaboration with National Agencies and the strategy **co-steering group**.

Researchers and youth participation experts

can contribute to delivering the strategy by helping develop understandings of youth participation underpinned by a knowledge based approach, as well as monitoring the results and impact of the strategy. Specific stakeholders include the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, and notably the European Pool of Youth Researchers (PEYR), European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCY), the RAY network and the Youth Wiki Correspondents.



5



Ways the programmes can support youth participation

The programmes and the specific projects funded under them can enhance youth participation on many levels and in many different ways, reflecting the variety of participation practices, the different opportunities the programmes offer and the diverging needs of the actors and young people involved.

Through effective collaboration, it is envisaged that the stakeholders can support programme applicants, potential applicants and programme beneficiaries in taking a quality approach to youth participation. By increasing the number of projects funded under the programmes with a quality youth participation dimension, the programmes as a whole will make an impact on young people's participation in democratic life across Europe. There are a number of different

actions under which applicants can apply to develop projects within the programmes. Every action within the programmes has the potential to fund activities that foster youth participation in democratic life. SALTO PI's forthcoming toolkit on youth participation explores in detail how different actions can be used for participation.

Alongside the development of quality projects, the programmes and programme stakeholders have a strategic role to play. This can be achieved by aligning their own work with identified national and local needs relating to youth participation. Working in this way means programme stakeholders can develop key activities and direct resources towards initiatives that will improve the work of the youth sector overall, as well as having a broader impact on youth participation in democratic life.



Promoting participation for all



The first way is about encouraging outreach work to involve a wider and more diverse range of young people in youth participation in democratic life, through supporting media and information literacy, communicating possibilities to young people and reaching out to young people from all backgrounds.

Media and information literacy is often recognised as a pre-condition for youth participation⁴⁵. Having access to information about participation opportunities, accurate news and media about political and social life as well as the ability to interpret it fosters and facilitates young people's participation in democratic life. The programmes have the potential to support activities that **communicate the various possibilities** for youth participation for young people, such as involvement in the European Youth Dialogue, joining a local youth

council or information about a youth space within which a young person can develop a project or idea. Without knowledge of these opportunities, a young person cannot begin to participate.

Furthermore, this project can be used as a tool for **outreach to involve wider and more diverse ranges** of young people in youth participation in democratic life⁴⁶. The programmes and the projects funded under them have a responsibility to ensure that youth participation opportunities are **available to young people from all backgrounds**. This means supporting projects and approaches that reach out to young people with fewer opportunities to enable their participation in democratic life, as well as providing dedicated initiatives to support the voices of those who are less likely to be heard.

⁴⁵ Alton, G., et al. (2013)
→ [Media and information literacy: policy and strategy guidelines](#), Paris, UNESCO

⁴⁶ Pirvulescu, C., Moxon, D., Banari, R., Kost, R., Capecchi, D. (2019)
→ [ibid](#)

Skills development and volunteering

The second way is about promoting the development of young people's competencies for youth participation through non-formal education and volunteering.

Non-formal education, which is central to the programmes, is an important vehicle for citizenship education and the **development of competencies for democratic culture**⁴⁷ amongst young people⁴⁸. Within the non-formal education tradition, it is understood that young people learn about participation through practical application⁴⁹. Therefore, an important element of any project that aims to promote youth participation in democratic life is to enable young people develop their critical citizenship competencies and critically and actively apply them in their realities⁵⁰. It is also possible to create pathways from one participation initiative to the next, allowing young people to advance and apply their skills over time. Young people might develop their skills at a local level before going on to be involved in more complex or detailed youth participation activities at national or European levels.

Motivating young people to volunteer also provides a foundation for youth participation. The act of taking part can be motivated by a desire to help others, being useful to society or to defend a cause.⁵¹ Volunteering can be based on solidarity between young people and others around them and a desire to contribute to society.⁵² Actions such as Volunteering and Solidarity Projects under the European Solidarity Corps programme are particularly relevant to this dimension. Projects and initiatives funded under the programmes can encourage and motivate them to make a change to their communities through their own voluntary actions and civic activism.



⁴⁷ Barrett, M., et al. (2018)

→ [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture – Volume 1](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe

⁴⁸ Recommendation

→ [CM/Rec\(2010\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

⁴⁹ Reflection Group on Youth Participation (2014)

→ [Revising youth participation: current challenges, priorities and recommendations](#), Strasbourg, EU-CoE Youth Partnership

⁵⁰ Ohana, Y. (2020)

→ [ibid](#)

⁵¹ Anderson, B., et al. (2016)

→ [Formal, Non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities. Partispace: Spaces and Styles of Participation.](#)

⁵² London School of Economics (2013)

→ [ibid](#), 11

Youth sector development

The third way is about creating civic space for young people, and capacity building the youth sector to support youth participation.

A key feature of the programmes is that they **enable young people to take the lead in developing and implementing projects**, either as part of a youth-led organisation or an informal group of young people. This enables projects to be run in a participative manner, either through youth workers working collaboratively with young people to share decision making, or through young people independently running projects. **Creating and protecting civic space for young people**, in which they can come together to pursue collective goals and initiatives, is a vital part of democracy and youth participation⁵³. By encouraging young people to lead projects, the programmes provide resourcing for the youth sector and youth civil society to create youth civic spaces and enable people to organise around civic issues and common causes.

On a broader level, a variety of programme actions can **enable collaboration, training, capacity building and innovation of practice** between the various youth sector actors. The Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2), Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA), Networking Activities (NET) and European Solidarity Corps are well suited for this. Jobs and traineeships under the European Solidarity Corps may further enable young people to take on leadership roles in organisations. Using the programmes to build and sustain the capacity for youth workers, youth organisations, youth leaders and other actors to support youth participation is a way of investing in the structures that can make participation and civic engagement happen.

⁵³ Deželan, T., Laker, J., Sardoč, M. (2020)
→ Safeguarding Civic Space For Young People In Europe, Brussels, European Youth Forum



Activism and decision making



The fourth way is about enabling young people to be civically active and be involved in public decision making. **Enabling young people to take action and have an influence** on the world around them is crucial to the effective implementation of youth participation activities⁵⁴. Developing projects with this aim is a key way in which the programmes can support youth participation. This can mean projects that **connect people to public decision making**, such as through advocacy campaigns, social movements or deliberative democracy initiatives⁵⁵, or projects which directly enable young people to take some form of independent action to improve their community⁵⁶. The new Erasmus+ Youth Participation Action is well suited to developing these kinds of initiatives; however, other actions in the programmes are still highly relevant.

Alongside this, the **EU Youth Dialogue** (EUYD) provides a participation format where young people take part in dialogue with national and European decision makers that feeds into political processes.

The EU Youth Dialogue is very successful at engaging a diverse range of young people in EU policy making⁵⁷, and it produces both national and European findings and outcomes that reflect the developments young people wish to see across Europe. By developing close links to the EUYD, the programmes have significant potential to respond to the concerns of young people, including using the outcomes of EUYD to inform the annual priorities defined for each programme. The way in which the programmes are implemented, and their specific priorities, will have an impact on young people's lives. It is therefore important for programme stakeholders to **engage with young people when making decisions about programme implementation**, and to find methods to do this at both European and national level. In addition, supporting projects that contribute to **the achievement of the European Youth Goals** is a way of helping achieve a vision set out by young people.

⁵⁴ Kiilakoski, T. (2020)
→ [Perspectives On Youth Participation](#),
Strasbourg, EU-CoE Youth Partnership

⁵⁵ Crowley, A., Moxon, D. (2017)
→ [ibid](#)

⁵⁶ Yurttagüler, Y., Martinez, R. (2020)
→ [Compendium "The future of young people's political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities"](#), Strasbourg, EU-CoE Youth Partnership

⁵⁷ Moxon, D., Bárta, O. (2020)
→ [The 7th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue. Findings from EU Youth Dialogue Activities in the Member States and across Europe. Creating opportunities for youth](#)



6

Implementation activities within the strategy

In order to foster the sort of youth participation activities described in Chapter 5, this strategy focuses on developing the work of programme stakeholders, along with improving their ability to support programme applicants, potential applicants and beneficiaries. To achieve this, each aim within the strategy will be underpinned by a series of implementation activities that contribute to achieving this aim. These are shown within this section.



Aim 1

Embedding

Promote the principles of youth participation across all actions and activities of the programmes.



Activity 1a:

Support national level planning for youth participation. Support National Agencies, in cooperation with relevant National Stakeholders, to develop national approaches (e.g. national action plans) on supporting youth participation in democratic life through the programmes.



Activity 1b:

Encourage National Agencies to appoint a contact person for youth participation (e.g. participation officers) in order to also create a network of people that can connect at European level. SALTO PI supports the network.



Activity 1c:

Encourage strategic collaboration between National Agencies on youth participation. Support a network of youth participation contact persons within the National Agencies through providing capacity building offers on youth participation, such as annual training. Promote the use of strategic cooperation projects between National Agencies to foster youth participation.



Activity 1d:

Develop quality guidance criteria on youth participation. This will focus on how youth participation can be realised as part of the key actions supported under both programmes and be supported by training for application assessors and evaluators on the criteria.



Aim 2 Support

Enable effective support for programme applicants and beneficiaries to develop and implement youth projects with a quality youth participation dimension.



Activity 2a:

Develop tools and support for promoting the use of Youth Goals in programme projects: These will focus on using Youth Goals as a framework to make connections between different projects by linking them to the shared eleven policy goals, helping demonstrate to participants the power and impact of each project's contribution to the Youth Goals, and raising the visibility of the European dimension within projects.



Activity 2b:

Develop tools to increase the quality of youth participation in programme-funded projects. These tools should be usable by National Agencies with programme applicants, potential applicants or beneficiaries to enable them to improve the quality of youth participation in their project. Tools will include handbooks and checklists on how to implement quality youth participation at project level.



Activity 2c:

Develop and deliver training modules on supporting/implementing projects with a quality youth participation dimension. Training will initially be targeted at National Agency Staff in order for them to systematically implement and replicate training for potential and current programme applicants and beneficiaries. Training will link to existing competency models such as Youthpass or the European Training Strategy framework⁵⁸, and be undertaken through TCA and NET activities.



Activity 2d:

The SALTO PI Participation Resource Pool will act as a central online point for making information and resources on youth participation available for youth workers, youth leaders and strategy stakeholders.

⁵⁸ SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre (2014)

→ [European Training Strategy. A set of competences for trainers working at international level](#), Bonn, Jugend für Europa

Aim 3

Information Increase awareness of the impact of the programmes on youth participation in democratic life.



Activity 3a:

Production and dissemination of accessible information on youth participation targeted at potential programme applicants which communicates the possibilities for youth participation that the programmes can enable as well as giving advice on project implementation. It will be attractive, accessible and user friendly in order to be engaging for those new to youth participation or the programmes.



Activity 3b:

Sharing of inspirational practice examples across the programme networks.

Through the production of case studies and examples of practice and their dissemination through the SALTO PI Participation Resource Pool. Particular emphasis will be placed on areas identified as in need of development across the programmes, such as the use of digital tools within youth participation, and new or innovative practices.



Activity 3c:

Production and dissemination of information on youth participation targeted at decision makers

which communicates the value and impact of the programmes on youth participation in democratic life, how programme projects may directly connect young people to public decision making and the role that decision makers have to play in youth participation.

Aim 4 Research

Encourage a knowledge-based approach to youth participation in democratic life within the programmes by enabling stakeholders to utilise the findings of research on youth participation.



Activity 4a:

Monitoring new research on youth participation, such as the results of Horizon 2020 research, the work of the RAY network, Youth Wiki correspondents, EKCYF and PEYR as well as other relevant research networks and actors. Particular focus will be placed on identifying research into the impact of youth participation, alternative forms of youth participation such as co-creation, as well as outreach and the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities.



Activity 4b:

Production of tools and information to make the key findings of research on youth participation understandable to programme applicants, or potential applicants, as well as strategy stakeholders. The SALTO PI Participation Resource Pool will provide a central point to access and interpret relevant research and data on youth participation, in an accessible understandable format.



Activity 4c:

Disseminate key findings from research on youth participation through National Agency officers training. To enable them to take a knowledge-based approach to their work and be informed of relevant research findings.



Aim 5 **Involvement**

Encourage National Agencies and other actors to involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation in the programmes, and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.



Activity 5a:

Pilot models for youth involvement in decision making within national programme management and implementation. Pilot a variety of models to enable National Agencies and other actors to take account of young people's views when making decisions about the management and implementation of the programme. Aside from formal representation, this could also take the form of consultation, co-creative processes, advisory groups and feedback-mechanisms and it should align with underlying legal and institutional frameworks. Following the pilots, a process disseminating the learning and practice to other National Agencies will be developed, so that their own approaches to youth involvement can be informed by this work.



Aim 6 Inclusion

Dedicate specific attention to the participation in democratic life of young people with fewer opportunities.



Activity 6a:

Develop a toolkit on supporting projects to promote the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life. This will be developed as a tool for all stakeholders and will harmonise with the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and the work of SALTO Inclusion and Diversity. It will cover topics such as involving young people with fewer opportunities in youth participation activities and how marginalised voices can be amplified.



Activity 6b:

Develop a 'Youth participation access youth check tool'. Work with a cluster of stakeholders to develop and pilot a tool to support inclusive youth participation. The tool will enable stakeholders to audit the backgrounds of young people involved in youth participation in a given context, identify which social groups are more excluded from youth participation activities in that context and put in place steps to reduce barriers to exclusion from youth participation in democratic life for young people with fewer opportunities.





Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy implementation and impact

7





Co-steering group

In keeping with the spirit of participation and the aim of promoting the principles of youth participation across all actions and activities of the programmes, this strategy will be monitored, reviewed and supported throughout its lifetime by a co-steering group jointly composed of stakeholders and young people who are

connected to the strategy and the programmes, such as youth representatives and programme alumni. It is envisaged that young people will comprise at least half of the group, and particular attention will be paid to ensure the group is inclusive of young people with fewer opportunities. By making a strong commitment to quality youth participation at the centre of the strategy, it is hoped this co-steering group can serve as a model of practice that can inform the learning of other stakeholders (e.g. at national level) who are developing approaches to young people's involvement in programme management.



The Group will have the following functions

1

Advise on the coordination of the implementation activities and encourage strategy stakeholders to become involved in their implementation.

2

To support accountability and transparency within the strategy by providing a focal point for stakeholders to steer the implementation activities within the strategy.

3

To support the monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the strategy by:

- Publishing a set of annual performance indicators (such as a simple Red, Amber, Green rating) identifying the progress on each implementation activity to all stakeholders.
- Undertaking specific consultations with groups of young people and youth organisations on the approaches to implementation activities and the strategy delivery overall.
- Taking into account how conclusions of the EU Youth Dialogue may be realised, and built upon, through the implementation activities within the strategy.
- Working with external researchers to identify suitable data and approaches to evaluate the strategy impact against the strategy outcome indicators.
- Advising on the precise implementation of upcoming activities within the strategy.

4

The group will be hosted and convened by SALTO PI who will take responsibility for publishing any updates to the strategy as a result of the group's work.





2

Evaluation of the strategy and outcome indicators



A full participatory evaluation of the implementation and impact of the strategy will be conducted as it approaches the end of its life cycle, supported by interim evaluation activities leading up to this point. Furthermore, the evaluation will also take into account the quality of the implementation activities and extent to which they were realised. The strategy will be evaluated using the outcome indicators shown in this section.



These outcome indicators will also serve as a guide during strategy implementation to further express the change the implementation activities are intended to realise. In turn, this change is intended to make a contribution to the realisation of the European Youth Goals by improving the overall impact of the programmes on youth participation in democratic life.



Aim 1 Embedding

Promote the principles of youth participation across all actions and activities of the programmes.



Outcome indicators



National Agencies are effective at using the programmes to promote youth participation in democratic life in their countries and collaborating with national stakeholders on this topic. National Agencies recognise that the Youth Participation Strategy is valuable in helping them in this work and in taking ownership of the strategy.



There are effective strategic collaborations on the topic of youth participation in democratic life between National Agencies, which help improve the quality and common understanding of youth participation in democratic life across the programmes.



A shared understanding of quality youth participation is established across the programme stakeholders.



National Agency staff and National Agency application evaluators and assessors are easily able to recognise and support quality participation within programme applications.

Youth goal targets

Space and Participation for all T1⁵⁹

Space and Participation for all T1

Space and participation for all T6⁶⁰

Space and participation for all T6

⁵⁹ Space and Participation for All T1: Ensure young people can adequately influence all areas of society and all parts of the decision-making processes, from agenda setting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation through youth-friendly and accessible mechanisms and structures, ensuring that policies respond to the needs of young people.

⁶⁰ Space and Participation for All T6: Ensure sustainable funding, common recognition and development of quality youth work in order to strengthen youth organisations and their role in inclusion, participation and non-formal education.



Aim 2 Support

Enable effective support for programme applicants and beneficiaries to develop and implement youth projects with a quality youth participation dimension.

Outcome indicators

Building awareness of, and supporting applicants to work with, the European Youth Goals through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps becomes part of programme stakeholders practice. An increasing number of projects can be directly linked to the Youth Goals. Connections on shared European topics between projects facilitate mutual learning and the visibility of the European dimension across projects.

A supportive environment for programme applicants to implement projects with a quality youth participation dimension is put in place by National Agencies and their stakeholders at national level, which is strengthened by the work of the European Commission and SALTO Resource Centres.

Programme stakeholders and programme applicants have access to high quality training on youth participation. Key staff within National Agencies are trained on quality youth participation.

Youth goal targets

All Youth Goals

Space and participation for all T1, T6

Quality Learning T7⁶¹

Space and participation for all T1, T6

Quality Learning T7

⁶¹ Quality Learning T7: Ensure that young people have access to citizenship education to provide them with solid knowledge on political systems, democracy and human rights, attained also through community-based experiences in order to promote active civil participation.

Aim 3

Information Increase awareness of the impact of the programmes on youth participation in democratic life.

Outcome indicators

Potential programme applicants are informed about the possibilities for youth participation in democratic life that the programmes can enable, and are more likely to consider submitting programme applications with a quality youth participation dimension.

Strategy stakeholders, programme applicants and potential programme applicants are more aware of the range of possibilities for using the programmes for youth participation, along with the different ways in which youth participation can be supported with the programmes.

Strategy stakeholders are able to better inform decision makers and public bodies on the way in which the programmes can contribute to youth participation in democratic life, and how programme funded projects may link to public decision making.

Youth goal targets

Space and participation for all T6, T7⁶²

Quality Learning T7

Space and participation for all T6, T7

Quality Learning T7

Space and participation for all T6, T7

⁶² Space and Participation for All T7: Provide youth-friendly, relevant, comprehensive information, also developed by and with young people, in order to enable youth participation.

Aim 4 Research

Encourage a knowledge-based approach to youth participation in democratic life within the programmes by enabling stakeholders to utilise the findings of research on youth participation.

● Outcome indicators

- SALTO PI will be fully aware of current research on youth participation in democratic life, and is able to highlight key findings to youth participation to the programme networks.
- Programme stakeholders will have better access to and understanding of research and data on youth participation on democratic life and will be able to utilise research findings when planning their work and implementing the programmes.

Youth goal targets

Connecting EU with youth T7⁶³

Connecting EU with youth T7



⁶³ Connecting EU with Youth T7: Institutionalise the assessment of youth-friendliness, impact and effect of EU policies.

Aim 5 **Involvement**

Encourage National Agencies and other actors to involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation in the programmes, and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.

Outcome indicators

National agencies have a meaningful approach to involving young people in programme decision making at national level and taking account of their views when making decisions. The views and priorities of young people are valuable for the implementation of the programmes at national level.

Increase the impact of EU Youth Dialogue at national and local levels, and ensure that the conclusions of youth dialogue inform the implementation of the programmes.

Youth goal targets

Youth Organisations and European Programmes T7⁶⁴

Connecting EU with Youth T1

Youth Organisations and European Programmes T7

⁶⁴ Youth Organisations and European Programmes T7. Ensure participation of young people in governance processes of European youth programmes



Aim 6 Inclusion

Dedicate specific attention to the participation in democratic life of young people with fewer opportunities.

Outcome indicators

To increase the quality and number of programme projects that build the capacity of young people with fewer opportunities to participate in democratic life.

To enable equal access to the participation dimensions of the programmes to young people with fewer opportunities, and enable the voices of young people with fewer opportunities to be heard through programmes activities.

Youth goal targets

Inclusive societies T3⁶⁵, T6⁶⁶

Moving Rural Youth Forward T4⁶⁷

Inclusive societies T3

Moving Rural Youth Forward T4

⁶⁵ Inclusive societies T3: Ensure that all marginalised young people have equal access to formal and non-formal learning environments, addressing all the dimensions of inclusion.

⁶⁶ Inclusive societies T6: Ensure that marginalised young people are participating in all decision-making processes and are key players, particularly in processes concerning their own rights, wellbeing and interests.

⁶⁷ Moving Rural Youth Forward T4: Ensure that young people in rural areas are actively participating in decision-making processes.



Acknowledgements

Title

Youth Participation Strategy

Publisher

SALTO Participation & Information
Resource Center,
c/o Estonian NA for Erasmus+ and
European Solidarity Corps
Tallinn 2020
Tõnismägi 5A | 10119 Tallinn, Estonia
→ participation@salto-youth.net
→ www.salto-youth.net/participation

Coordinated by

Georg Feiner,
SALTO Participation & Information
Resource Center

Expert group

Members:

Airi-Alina Allaste, Andreas Karsten, Corina Pivulescu,
Dan Moxon, Johanna Tradinik, Marco Frimberger,
Marko Kovacic, Marlene Kremer, Michael Piccinino,
Rasmus Benke-Åberg, Reet Kost, Sabrina Apitz and
Sofie Van Zeebroeck, as well as unit EAC/B3 of the
European Commission.

Facilitation:

Christina Engel-Unterberger

Strategic consultants

Dan Moxon and Corina Pivulescu,
with additional support from Wout Van Caimere

Illustrations and Layout

Jörg and Mandy Krühne
→ www.kreativraum.de



Thank you for co-creating this document!

SALTO PI is very grateful to all organisations and individuals who contributed to various consultations and co-production meetings leading to this strategy. We want to highlight the active engagement of a great number of representative of National Agencies for the Erasmus+ Youth in Action and the European Solidarity Corps programmes, representatives of the European Commission's Youth Unit, members of the SALTO PI Think Tank on Youth Participation, youth representatives from National Youth Councils, European Youth Organisations, the European Youth Forum and Erasmus Students Network, youth researchers and youth work trainers as well as representatives of public administration.

Thank you!

ISBN: 978-9949-481-91-0

Creative commons licence



This work is published under licence:

Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

This publication was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained in this publication. Special thanks are due to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies from Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany and Italy for supporting the development process of the Youth Participation Strategy through Transnational Cooperation Activity resources.

