



IncludeYOU

Education & Youth Empowerment

Project No: 2023-3-EL02-KA154-YOU-000184071

www.includeyou.eu

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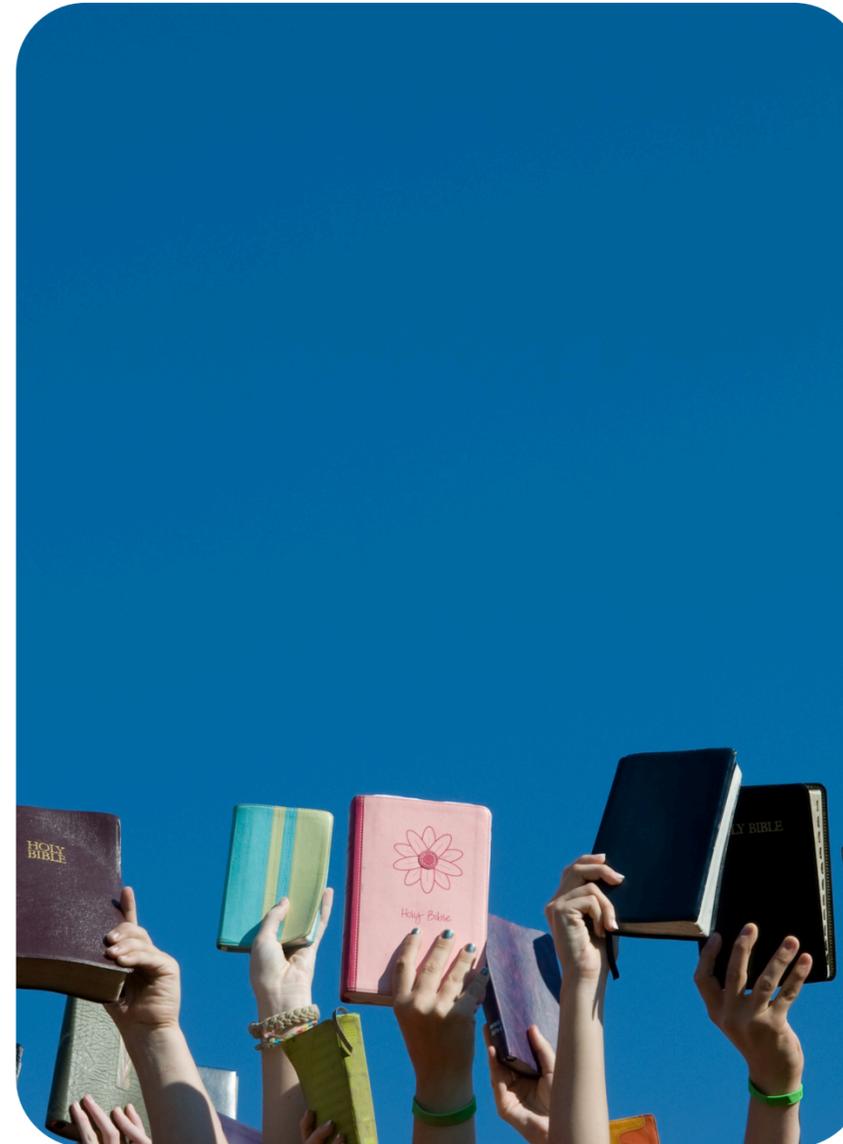
INTRODUCTION

Education and youth empowerment are closely connected. When young people gain access to quality education, they develop not only knowledge and professional skills but also critical civic competences. Empowerment comes when education is lifelong, inclusive, and participatory. This presentation introduces three key pillars:

1. The right to education and lifelong learning as a foundation.
2. Civic education as a tool for democratic participation.
3. The ways schools, NGOs, and communities foster youth participation in practice.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right to education is universally recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enshrined in the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Education ensures equality of opportunity, breaking down social barriers and enabling personal growth. It is not only about preparing young people for employment, but also about equipping them to live responsibly as citizens. Ensuring access to quality education is therefore the cornerstone of youth empowerment, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized groups.



LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning means that education does not stop at the end of formal schooling. It includes:

- **Formal education:** schools, universities, vocational training.
- **Non-formal education:** workshops, volunteering, youth exchanges, civic training.
- **Informal learning:** daily experiences, cultural exchanges, digital self-learning.

In the modern world, where change is constant, young people need to keep updating their skills. Lifelong learning allows them to adapt to technological, social, and democratic transformations. It also nurtures resilience and strengthens their participation in civic and community life.





CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education teaches young people about their rights, responsibilities, and the workings of democracy. It prepares them to participate meaningfully in political and social life. Civic education is more than theory: it is about developing skills such as critical thinking, debate, negotiation, and respect for diversity. Without civic education, young people risk being excluded from decisions that shape their futures. Projects like IncludeYOU demonstrate how youth dialogues and debates with policymakers help make civic education a lived experience, not just a classroom subject

EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR DEMOCRACY

Democracy is stronger when citizens are informed, active, and critical. Schools play a central role by teaching civic values and encouraging active participation. For example, through student councils, debates, and simulations, young people can practice democratic engagement. An empowered generation of youth not only votes but also takes leadership roles, contributes to policymaking, and fosters inclusive societies. Education ensures that democracy is not just a political system, but a lived culture.



THE ROLE OF NGOS

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are crucial actors in youth empowerment. They provide non-formal learning opportunities outside traditional classrooms. NGOs offer safe spaces for young people to express themselves, gain confidence, and develop practical skills in leadership, digital literacy, intercultural communication, and advocacy. For instance, ASEID (Spain) works to promote social inclusion, multiculturalism, and employability among young people. These organizations make education more flexible, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of youth.



COMMUNITIES AS CATALYSTS

Communities provide the environment where education and empowerment become real. Local councils, youth groups, and grassroots initiatives bring young people together to work on local challenges. Youth councils, in particular, serve as bridges between young citizens and policymakers. When communities engage youth in decision-making, they create a sense of ownership, belonging, and responsibility. This local participation lays the groundwork for larger democratic engagement at regional, national, and European levels.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth participation goes beyond being “consulted”; it is about having a real voice in shaping policies and influencing the decisions that affect daily life. According to the EU Youth Dialogue, participation must be inclusive, meaningful, and democratic. The IncludeYOU project emphasizes creating easily accessible youth contact points, dialogue spaces, and participatory labs where young people can directly interact with policymakers. This approach develops not only confidence but also practical competences in leadership and advocacy.



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Despite progress, many barriers still prevent young people from fully participating:

- Inequalities in access to education (economic, gender, disability, migration status).
- Youth apathy or distrust towards institutions and politics.
- Socioeconomic exclusion leading to disengagement.
- Digital divide, leaving some youth without access to online participation opportunities.
- Removing these barriers requires coordinated efforts from governments, schools, NGOs, and communities.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Barriers can be overcome through inclusive and innovative practices:

- Governments must ensure equal access to quality education and civic spaces.
- Schools and NGOs can establish youth-friendly platforms for expression.
- Digital tools (social media campaigns, e-participation platforms) make participation accessible to wider audiences.
- Training youth workers ensures that disadvantaged groups are also empowered.
- Inclusion is key: when every young person feels represented, participation strengthens democracy.



ROLE OF SCHOOLS

Schools are more than academic institutions they are laboratories of democracy. By integrating civic education into curricula, promoting debate clubs, and supporting student councils, schools nurture democratic values. Partnerships with NGOs expand opportunities for non-formal education, volunteering, and international exchanges. Schools also play a role in promoting lifelong learning and critical thinking, equipping young people not only with knowledge but also with the competences to act as engaged citizens.



ROLE OF NGOS

The International Daphne Youth Education Association (Turkey) demonstrates the transformative role of NGOs. Working with refugees and disadvantaged groups, Daphne Youth provides language courses, human rights education, and entrepreneurship training. Its projects promote tolerance, peace, and integration. Daphne Youth's work with Syrian refugees illustrates how NGOs not only educate but also empower marginalized youth to actively participate in society.



ROLE OF COMMUNITIES

The Hungarian NGO Fiatalok Egységben Egyesület showcases how communities can foster youth participation. By organizing projects on arts, sports, intercultural learning, and civic engagement, they connect young people with both local and European issues. Their “Vote for Europe” project, for example, promoted democratic values and encouraged youth to take part in European policymaking. Communities like these strengthen young people’s civic identity and sense of belonging.



EU FRAMEWORK

The European Union has placed youth participation at the heart of its Youth Strategy (2019–2027). The three pillars are:

1. Engage – promoting democratic participation.
2. Connect – fostering solidarity and inclusion.
3. Empower – supporting youth through education and employment.
4. The European Youth Goals, especially Goal #9 “Space and Participation for All,” provide clear targets. Projects like IncludeYOU align with these priorities by creating participatory formats where youth shape policies directly.

KEY ACTIVITIES

The IncludeYOU project organizes four main activities:

1. Youth Networking Dialogue in Greece – strengthening youth participation in EU processes.
2. Pilot Workshop on Smart Youth Engagement in Turkey – focusing on digital competences.
3. Round Table in Belgium – connecting EU institutions with youth according to European Youth Goal #1.
4. Policy Debate in Greece – engaging youth and policymakers in direct dialogue.
5. These activities blend education with real-world democratic practice.



EXPECTED IMPACTS

IncludeYOU and similar projects expect to generate several positive impacts:

- Increased participation of youth in local and European political processes.
- Stronger collaboration between schools, NGOs, and public institutions.
- Enhanced leadership, negotiation, and critical thinking skills among youth.
- Creation of inclusive, youth-friendly democratic spaces.
- The emphasis is on sustainable empowerment: not just temporary activities, but lasting structures for participation.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

The long-term benefits of education and youth empowerment include:

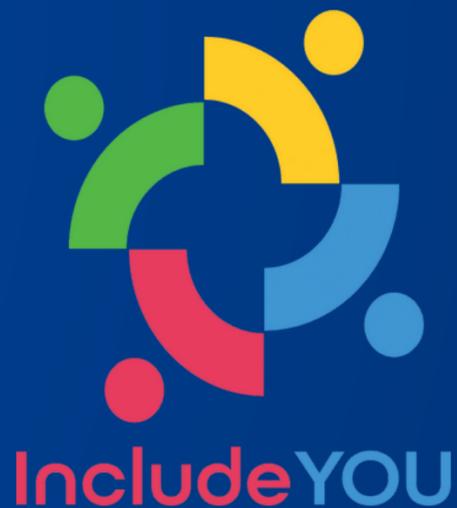
- A generation of active citizens who shape democratic futures.
- More inclusive societies where diversity is valued and protected.
- A stronger European identity rooted in solidarity and civic responsibility.
- Sustainable participation mechanisms that ensure young voices are always part of policymaking.
- In short, empowered youth today become the leaders, innovators, and change-makers of tomorrow.



CONCLUSION

Education and empowerment are inseparable. The right to education guarantees equality, civic education prepares youth for democratic life, and participatory structures ensure their voices are heard. Schools, NGOs, and communities must work hand in hand to create spaces of inclusion and engagement. Projects like IncludeYOU prove that when young people are trusted and empowered, they contribute to building a more democratic, just, and united Europe.





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