

IncludeYOU

Youth Participation & EU Youth Goals

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

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INTRODUCTION

Youth participation is at the heart of the European Union's vision for a democratic, inclusive, and sustainable future. Through the EU Youth Dialogue and the EU Youth Goals, young people are directly involved in shaping the policies that affect them. This module explores:

1. EU Youth Dialogue and Youth Goals.
2. Focus on Youth Goal #9: Space and Participation for All.
3. Examples of youth-led democratic initiatives.

THE EU YOUTH DIALOGUE

The EU Youth Dialogue is a structured process of consultation between young people and decision-makers. Its aims are to:

- Engage youth voices in shaping EU policy.
- Strengthen democratic participation at local, national, and European levels.
- Ensure youth perspectives are included in long-term strategies like the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027.



EU YOUTH GOALS

The EU Youth Goals were adopted in 2018 after consultations with over 50,000 young Europeans. They represent 11 thematic priorities for improving young people's lives, covering:

- Education and learning.
- Employment and inclusion.
- Sustainable environment.
- Civic engagement and participation.

They act as a roadmap for youth-friendly Europe.





WHY YOUTH GOALS MATTER

- They give policymakers concrete guidance based on youth voices.
- They encourage cooperation between EU institutions, governments, NGOs, and youth organizations.
- They ensure that young people are not just subjects of policy, but co-creators of Europe's future.

YOUTH GOAL #9: OVERVIEW

“Space and Participation for All” emphasizes the need for:

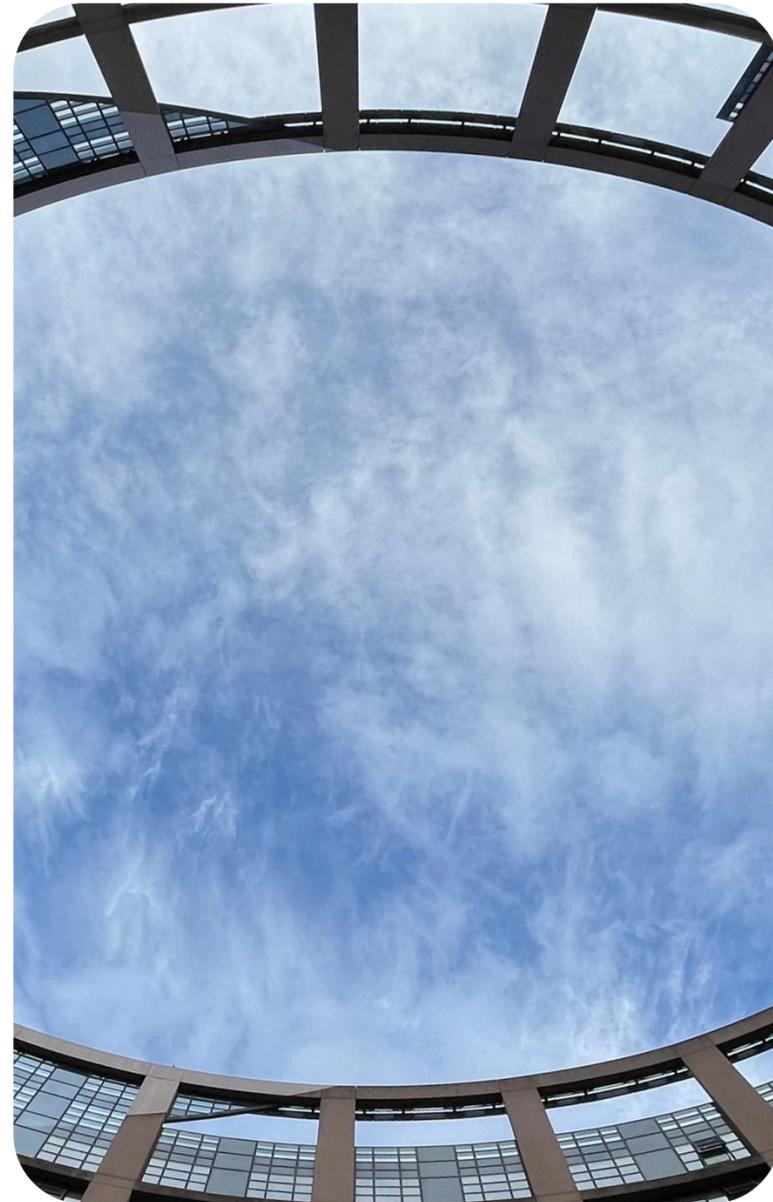
- Accessible and inclusive spaces for young people to meet, organize, and engage.
- Strong youth organizations and councils.
- Meaningful involvement in decision-making processes.
- This goal is about creating structures and opportunities for young people to be active citizens.



BARRIERS TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Despite progress, barriers remain:

- Lack of awareness about opportunities.
- Distrust of political institutions.
- Limited access to civic spaces, especially for marginalized youth.
- Tokenism, where youth are consulted but not listened to.



CREATING YOUTH SPACES

To make Youth Goal #9 a reality, we must provide:

- Physical spaces: youth centers, cultural hubs, and safe meeting places.
- Digital spaces: online platforms for debate, activism, and co-creation.
- Political spaces: seats at the table in councils, parliaments, and EU forums.



MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Participation must go beyond symbolic gestures. It requires:

- Access to information and resources.
- Training in civic competences.
- Opportunities for co-decision, not just consultation.
- A culture of respect between youth and policymakers.





ROLE OF YOUTH COUNCILS

Youth councils across Europe play a vital role by:

- Acting as advisory bodies to governments.
- Ensuring youth voices are heard in local and national policy.
- Creating a pipeline of future leaders.

They embody the vision of Youth Goal #9 by institutionalizing youth participation.

EU SUPPORT FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- Erasmus+ Youth Participation Activities fund projects empowering youth to engage democratically.
- European Youth Forum represents millions of young people across member states.
- Conference on the Future of Europe integrated thousands of youth voices in shaping EU priorities.



EXAMPLE: FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

The Fridays for Future movement shows how grassroots activism can influence policy. Youth demanded urgent climate action and succeeded in pushing the EU to adopt stronger Green Deal commitments. It demonstrates the power of collective youth mobilization in shaping European priorities.



EXAMPLE: EU YOUTH CONFERENCES

Every 18 months, youth and policymakers meet at the EU Youth Conferences. These conferences:

- Review progress on Youth Goals.
- Produce recommendations for EU Council Presidencies.
- Provide direct dialogue between youth and ministers.



EXAMPLE: YOUTH-LED PLATFORMS

Across Europe, youth create platforms such as:

- Digital activism groups using social media for advocacy.
- Community initiatives tackling local issues (housing, environment, inclusion).
- Youth parliaments simulating democratic processes.

These initiatives showcase creativity and ownership of democratic life.



EXAMPLE: ERASMUS+ INCLUDEYOU PROJECT

The IncludeYOU project (2024–2025) brings together youth councils, NGOs, and policymakers to foster participation. Activities include:

- Youth dialogues with decision-makers.
- Workshops on digital civic engagement.
- Round tables on EU Youth Goals.

It is a practical example of Youth Goal #9 in action.

DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

Young people are increasingly active in digital democracy:

- Online consultations and petitions.
- E-participation platforms in the EU (e.g., European Citizens' Initiative).
- Youth using social media for political campaigns.

Digital spaces complement traditional participation.



INCLUSION IN PARTICIPATION

To truly achieve Goal #9, youth participation must be inclusive:

- Migrants, NEETs, minorities, and youth with disabilities must have equal access.
- Support measures (translation, mentorship, financial aid) are necessary.
- Diversity strengthens the legitimacy and richness of youth participation.

LONG-TERM IMPACT OF YOUTH GOALS

- Stronger democratic institutions connected to citizens.
- Increased youth trust in politics and the EU.
- Skills development: leadership, negotiation, advocacy.
- A generation empowered to shape Europe's present and future.



CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Ensuring continuity beyond project cycles.
- Avoiding tokenism in youth involvement.
- Balancing digital and physical participation spaces.
- Sustaining resources for youth organizations.



CONCLUSION

Youth participation is not optional it is essential for democracy. The EU Youth Dialogue and Youth Goals provide the framework, while Youth Goal #9 emphasizes the need for spaces and meaningful participation for all. Youth-led initiatives show that when young people are empowered, they can transform Europe into a more democratic, inclusive, and sustainable society.





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