



# IncludeYOU

## Leadership, Advocacy & Critical Thinking

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

[www.includeyou.eu](http://www.includeyou.eu)

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# INTRODUCTION

Young people are not only participants in democracy but also potential leaders, advocates, and innovators. Leadership, advocacy, and critical thinking are interconnected skills that enable youth to:

- Drive social change.
- Influence policies at all levels.
- Challenge misinformation and shape public debates.

## LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH WORK

Leadership is the ability to inspire, guide, and mobilize others towards shared goals. In youth contexts, leadership emphasizes:

- Collaboration rather than command.
- Empowerment of peers instead of hierarchy.
- Innovation in solving social challenges.



# LEADERSHIP STYLES

Different leadership styles can help youth adapt to contexts:

- Transformational leadership: Inspires vision and collective action.
- Servant leadership: Focuses on meeting community needs.
- Democratic leadership: Encourages group decision-making.
- Adaptive leadership: Responds flexibly to changing challenges.





## CHANGEMAKER LEADERSHIP

A youth changemaker is someone who:

- Identifies challenges in their community.
- Mobilizes peers to take action.
- Combines vision with practical solutions.
- Acts with integrity, inclusivity, and resilience.



# SKILLS FOR YOUTH LEADERS

Key competences for youth leadership include:

- Communication and active listening.
- Conflict resolution.
- Strategic planning.
- Emotional intelligence.
- These skills ensure that leaders inspire trust and bring others along.



## ADVOCACY DEFINED

Advocacy is the process of influencing decisions and policies to improve young people's lives. It involves:

- Raising awareness of issues.
- Engaging stakeholders.
- Mobilizing communities.
- Pushing for systemic change.



## ADVOCACY LEVELS

Advocacy can occur at multiple levels:

- Local: lobbying municipalities for youth spaces or services.
- National: campaigning for education, labor, or climate policies.
- European: engaging in EU Youth Dialogue and influencing EU legislation.



# ADVOCACY TOOLS

Effective advocacy uses a variety of tools:

- Petitions and campaigns.
- Policy papers and position statements.
- Media outreach and storytelling.
- Public demonstrations and events.
- Direct dialogue with policymakers.





## ADVOCACY IN PRACTICE (LOCAL LEVEL)

Example: Youth councils lobbying local authorities for more inclusive youth centers.

- Strategy: Surveys to gather youth opinions.
- Action: Present findings at municipal council.
- Impact: Creation of safe spaces where youth can meet and organize.

## ADVOCACY IN PRACTICE (EU LEVEL)

Example: Youth participation in the EU Youth Dialogue.

- Youth present recommendations to EU ministers.
- Input shapes the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027.
- Demonstrates how advocacy at the European level influences real policy frameworks.



## BARRIERS TO YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Lack of awareness about rights and processes.
- Limited access to policymakers.
- Tokenism (youth consulted but not listened to).
- Resource constraints for youth organizations.
- Overcoming these barriers requires empowerment, training, and institutional commitment.



## CRITICAL THINKING DEFINED

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information, question assumptions, and make evidence-based judgments. For youth, it means:

- Evaluating policies critically.
- Detecting bias in media and political discourse.
- Distinguishing facts from misinformation.



# CRITICAL THINKING & MEDIA LITERACY

In the digital age, youth are exposed to overwhelming information. Critical thinking is essential to:

- Identify reliable sources.
- Understand how algorithms shape opinions.
- Resist manipulation and propaganda.
- Media literacy protects democratic participation.



# CRITICAL THINKING IN POLICY EVALUATION

When evaluating policies, critical thinking involves asking:

- Who benefits and who is excluded?
- What are the long-term consequences?
- Is the policy evidence-based?
- Are youth voices represented?

# LINKING LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY & CRITICAL THINKING

These three skills are interconnected:

- Leadership motivates people to act.
- Advocacy provides the tools to influence change.
- Critical thinking ensures decisions are well-informed and democratic.
- Together, they empower youth to be effective changemakers.



## CASE STUDY: GRETA THUNBERG

- Leadership: inspired millions with Fridays for Future.
- Advocacy: addressed the UN and EU Parliament.
- Critical thinking: challenges political inaction using science-based evidence.
- A powerful example of youth influence on global policy debates.

## CASE STUDY: EU YOUTH CONFERENCE

At EU Youth Conferences, young delegates:

- Lead workshops on policy recommendations.
- Advocate for youth rights directly with ministers.
- Apply critical thinking in formulating proposals.
- Demonstrates institutionalized youth leadership and advocacy.



## LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Investing in youth leadership, advocacy, and critical thinking creates:

- Resilient democracies.
- Empowered communities.
- Youth who can navigate complexity and misinformation.
- Stronger trust between youth and institutions.



# CONCLUSION

Youth leadership, advocacy, and critical thinking are essential for building a democratic and inclusive Europe. By equipping young people with these competences, we ensure they are not just participants, but shapers of the future.





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