



Connect ACT Youth

Focus Groups

Report of initiatives by partners



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- The organizer: **Solidarity Tracks, Greece**
- Date and place of the activity: **13th of November 2023, Lefkada, Greece**
- Number of participants: **16**

We welcomed the participants to our space and then held an energizer to "break the ice" and get to know each other.

Later, we all sat together at the round table where we presented the [Connect Act Youth project](#) and the importance of virtual and real spaces for youth.

After the project was presented to them we divided them into 3 groups where they had to discuss and write down their ideas. The time they had was 1 hour.

Then we all discussed together and exchanged views.



The Focus Group discussion centered on the use of virtual tools and technologies in managing both virtual and physical community spaces. Key topics included the integration of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) for immersive experiences and the use of online collaboration platforms for communication and document sharing. The group also discussed social media integration for community building and live events, along with gamification platforms for enhanced user engagement. Additionally, strategies to make virtual spaces more engaging, accessible, and user-friendly were explored, alongside methods for evaluating their impact on youth development.

– *Recommendations of the participants:*

1. Implement VR and AR for interactive learning and immersive experiences in youth spaces.
2. Adopt platforms like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom for better communication and collaboration among youth.
3. Engage youth through social media platforms and gamification for community building and enhanced participation.
4. Create virtual spaces with intuitive designs, personalization options, and inclusive accessibility features.
5. Offer varied programs such as coding workshops, art exhibitions, and environmental initiatives.
6. Encourage youth leadership through advisory boards, mentorship programs, and inclusive decision-making processes.



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ASSOCIATION OF ACADEMICIANS UNION

- *The organizer:* **Association of Academicians Union, Turkey**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **13th of November 2023, Ankara, Turkey, Gazi University.**
- *Number of participants:* **23 students from Gazi University**

Firstly, the participants were welcomed by Tayfun Findik and the purpose of the Meeting was presented – to establish a youth-driven vision for the management of public spaces, in collaboration with public authorities. To get to know each other and understand the point of the meeting, some short activities and icebreakers were carried out.

Discussion flow:

1. Understanding the youth's perspectives
 - Young participants share their opinions about how public spaces are currently operated.
 - Talk about their hopes, worries, and expectations for public areas
2. Presentations by Slovenia People's University of Postojna and 4 Visioner Conculancy
 - Both NGOs focused on education and gave presentations about what is a community space and how they can manage.
 - People's University made their presentation about youth engagement with community spaces and their needs in these spaces.
 - 4 Visioner Conculancy's presentation focused on changing technology and its effects on the community spaces along with how to use them in those spaces.
3. Interactive Part of the meeting
 - With Q&A between NGOs and participant students a better discussion environment created.
 - Participants found an area to brainstorm with each other and learn along the way.

Recommendations from Participants:

1. To include youth in decision-making related to public spaces, ensuring their views and needs are prioritized.
2. To incorporate educational elements, like skill or art workshops or seminars, benefiting students and other young individuals.
3. To use current technology to improve access and utility of community spaces, making them more appealing and functional for youth.
4. To create online forums or platforms where students can directly engage with authorities, share feedback, and brainstorm improvements for community spaces.



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- *The organizer:* **Euroteam, Czech Republic**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **12th of November 2023, Bojnice**
- *Number of participants:* **10 young participants aged 15-19, 4 youth workers**

Objectives:

- Discuss and compare youth opportunities in different towns.
- Discuss the best methods of online informing of youth.
- Discuss opportunities given by Erasmus+ and Visegrad fund programs.

Outputs from the discussions:

The youngsters participating in World Café 2 discussed and compared activities organized for youth in different towns. They shared their experience with the work of NGOs in their towns, opportunities that institutions of formal education offer to them and shared their experience about engagement of young people in youth activities, programs and reasons why young people do not want to participate or what are the reasons of their passive attitude towards youth events and opportunities. Output from the discussions was that young people in all those towns the participants were coming from are much more informed about youth opportunities by their schools and universities than by youth institutions, NGOs, associations and other bodies working in educational and youth sector apart from institutions of formal education.

During discussions on informing young people about the main issue that appeared was lack of information. Before this World Café 2 some of the participants also had a meeting with young students from a high school and there they learned that they miss information about various international activities or European programs. From time to time they see some adverts or posts about some projects, but they are not much aware of these programs, methods of work, aims, typical activities or financial issues. They would appreciate higher informing about those events and programs, preferably online. They would also appreciate possibilities to learn about youth programs by people working in NGOs or associations and discuss with them opportunities and possibilities to participate in their projects personally.

Regarding online activities, their suggestions matched suggestions of the group from World Café 1 who preferred Instagram and facebook communication tool to webpages. Discussion also included using other social network like Tik Tok but this was found both by participants and leaders as an inappropriate tool. The highest preference (showed by voting) was Instagram channel of the organizations and facebook post for reaching deeper information.



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The biggest part of the discussions was then focused on particular international programs, such as Erasmus+ youth, program of Norwegian funds and Visegrad funds. Leaders discussed with the participants those opportunities, rules, financial issues, presented examples of projects, their programs, activities, cooperation etc. and discussed with the participants areas of their interest. This discussions brought mutual advantage, the young participants learned about those programs, the leaders learned about preferences of youth regarding international projects. The main leader of the activity presented the participants also the program of Visegrad fund, explained differences from Erasmus+ youth and details of cooperation within Visegrad fund program. Further discussions was led about differences in cooperation within Erasmus+ as for program countries and partner countries, here examples of both ways of cooperation was presented to the participants again and discussions about pros and cons of both types of cooperation was held. During the discussions the participants showed their high interest in engagement into the work of the NGO and involvement into international project activities, particularly into Erasmus+ youth exchanges. Leaders and participants agreed on further discussions in the next year and deeper informing of youth about such possibilities.

Recommendations from Participants:

1. Organize various information events for youth to make them aware of different international youth projects, particularly Erasmus+ youth. Deepen virtual cooperation with youth and ways of informing them and sharing experience with them to aim at higher involvement of youth in youth projects.
2. Focus on deeper virtual cooperation with young people, foster promotion of youth activities focused on youth.
3. Try to attract more young people into youth work, think about creating youth groups that could work either independently or as a sub-organization or an interest club connected to the NGO or that would cooperate with the NGO on some basis.





- *The organizer: **Globers, Spain***
- *Date and place of the activity: **30 of October 2023, Public Library.***
- *Number of participants: **17***

Welcome and Introduction by Nazareth Peral (5 minutes)

- Briefly welcome all participants and set the tone for the meeting.

Purpose of the Meeting (5 minutes)

- Outline the objective of the meeting: To establish a youth-driven vision for the management of public spaces, in collaboration with public authorities.

Icebreaker activity and separate the focus groups

- A short icebreaker to create a comfortable atmosphere for open discussion. Going upstairs and separate in smaller groups.

Understanding youth perspectives in Comaruga and Roda de Bará(15 minutes)

- Young participants share their thoughts and ideas on the current state of public spaces.
- Discuss their expectations, concerns, and aspirations related to public spaces.

Presentation by public institutions. Local secondary School Andres Cunill and, Neighborhood association and library (Former youth centre) (15 minutes)

- Representatives from public authorities provide insights into current policies and initiatives. Participative Public Budget in Vendrell...what it is and how to apply for it?
- Clarify the role and constraints of public authorities in managing public spaces. Why the youth centre still closed?

Open discussion and write down the reflection (20 minutes)

- A free-flowing conversation between youth participants and public representatives to encourage participants to express their views, concerns, and suggestions openly.

Proposals for collaborative vision (20 minutes)

- Brainstorm ideas and proposals for a collaborative vision on public spaces management.
- Highlight key themes and concepts discussed during the meeting.

Open floor for feedback (10 minutes)

- Participants to ask questions, seek clarifications, and provide feedback on the presented proposals.

Next Steps and Action Plan (10 minutes)

- Discuss the potential next steps, including setting up working groups, timelines, and responsibilities.
- Determine how to formalize the vision into actionable policy recommendations.

Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

- We thank participants for their contributions and commitment to fostering collaboration.
- Reiterate the importance of youth involvement too in shaping public space management.



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Recommendations from Participants:

1. Encourage youth participation in planning and managing public spaces to ensure these areas meet their needs and interests.
2. Foster partnerships between youth, schools, and local organizations for community-enhancing projects.
3. Educate and engage youth in the process of applying for public budgets to fund their community space initiatives.
4. Address concerns regarding closed youth centers and explore possibilities for their reopening and effective use.
5. Formulate a clear action plan with defined steps, timelines, and responsibilities to transform the collaborative vision into practical policy recommendations.
6. Establish ongoing sessions for feedback and review to ensure the youth's vision for public spaces aligns with ongoing development and changes.



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- *The organizer:* **FIIT Timis County Youth Foundation, Romania**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **17th of November 2023, Lugoj, Romania**
- *Number of participants:* **11**

FIIT held an activity which included a focus group, discussion and a consultation with stakeholders. During the activity SWOT analysis have been done:

Strengths:

- Experience of the House of Culture's activity;
- free activities of the Children's Club;
- lively project ideas;
- Cultural Hub on Banatului Street;
- collaboration with schools and other available spaces;
- youth staff: teachers, auxiliary staff;
- concerts at the Lugoj Youth Centre.

Weaknesses:

- Project implementation and visibility;
- infrastructure;
- lack of skills in attracting private funds;
- responsibility and seriousness of young people;
- Art gallery - lack of management;
- lack of communication, sharing spaces (meetings, collaborations, etc.), monthly programme;
- lack of cultural education;
- lack of effective organisational culture;
- skatepark - not maintained.

Opportunities:

- Educate young people about the work of an NGO (fundraising, NGO formation, etc.).
- volunteering opportunities;
- sharing FITT experience on fundraising;
- private volunteers (e.g. company employees);
- opportunity to co-manage the cultural hub;
- rental opportunities and partnerships;
- cultural evenings in city venues (e.g. cafés) and with other people (e.g. seniors);
- activity/project ideas: painting, IT, sex education + online campaigns, financial/entrepreneurial education, civic education, project writing; chemistry/physics experiments;
- career counselling and guidance (meeting with specialists, business and trade school, arts).

Threats:

- NGO - private - public environment disunity.
- Youth-specific activities and services



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Young participants also discussed and expressed their needs in terms of activities and services:

- Painting;
- IT;
- Sex education: workshops + online campaign;
- Financial or entrepreneurship education;
- Civic education;
- Chemistry/physics experiments;
- Food education + nutrition;
- Counselling and career guidance;
- School 'Other and Green Week' - activities taken seriously;
- Culture: theatre, dance, art, etc.;
- Cultural education;
- Organisational culture.

Recommendations from Participants:

1. Organize meetings with authors, actors, and other role models to inspire and guide young people.
2. Facilitate sessions with professionals, like lawyers and specialists, for career advice and mentorship.
3. Establish programs for business, crafts, and arts education, focusing on specialized skills like welding and mechanics.
4. Create an arts circle for ages 14-35, with funding for participatory and transformative art projects.
5. Implement learning by doing methodologies, with auxiliary staff and teachers offering practical training courses.
6. Maintain a public calendar of monthly activities, utilizing online platforms (Instagram, TikTok) and physical spaces (notice boards, schools).
7. Set up WhatsApp groups or similar channels for easy communication among NGOs, youth groups, and cultural actors.
8. Consider collaborations or initiatives with CCPT Lugo for future youth-focused projects.
9. Focus on creating infrastructures that cater specifically to the needs of young people.
10. Establish dedicated platforms, like WhatsApp channels, for cultural and youth community engagement and information sharing.



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VITATIIM

- The organizer: **VitaTiim, Estonia**
- Date and place of the activity: **9th of November 2023, Narva, Estonia**
- Number of participants: **15**

Together with Narva Gymnasium students Vitatiim organised a Focus group workshop, where the students were presented with international opportunities and activities of the youth space and NGO with hopes to encourage and involve future-youth leaders in Youth Space management.

Recommendations from Participants:

1. Students recommended to organise more hands-on workshops where they could attend and learn new skills and leadership.
2. To collaborate with the school for projects .
3. Inform and facilitate participation in international youth programs to broaden their global perspective and leadership skills.
4. To be included in diverse cultural events and attend/ organize a cultural night with volunteers of the organization.



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- *The organizer: **Arrimage Goodiles, Guadeloupe***
- *Date and place of the activity: **24th of November 2023, Guadeloupe.***
- *Number of participants: **17***

Arrimage Goodiles organized a Focus group inviting young people and local policy makers to discuss their visions on the management of youth spaces.

Young participants of diverse backgrounds shared their experiences with public community spaces, discussing their needs and aspirations, participants also brainstormed to formulate a shared vision for the management and use of public spaces. A policy maker provided insights into the possibilities and limitations within current frameworks and discussed how youth input could shape future policies.

During the activity, opportunities for young people to take lead roles in managing and improving the spaces, thus fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility, were discussed.

Participants discuss how public spaces can be utilized for educational, cultural, and recreational activities beneficial to youth and provided feedback on proposed ideas and strategies, ensuring the evolving needs and preferences of young people are met.



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Recommendations from Participants:

1. To encourage active participation of young people in planning and managing public spaces.
2. To ensure public spaces cater to a wide range of needs and interests, reflecting the diversity of the youth population.
3. To utilize public spaces for educational, cultural, and recreational activities that are beneficial and appealing to young people, versus only kids and elderly.
4. Establish channels for ongoing feedback from youth to adapt and evolve public spaces according to changing needs.
5. To provide more freedom for youth to take on leadership roles in managing and improving these spaces, fostering a sense of responsibility and community engagement.
6. To adapt policies to be more youth-inclusive, based on insights and suggestions from young participants.

These recommendations aim to create more youth-friendly, engaging, and beneficial public spaces in alignment with the visions and needs expressed by the young participants.





- *The organizer:* **The Starry Start of Talents Foundation, Bulgaria**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **26th of September 2023, Sofia, Bulgaria**
- *Number of participants:* **7**

The workshop incorporated a variety of interactive activities to encourage engagement and open dialogue among the participants. We talked about strategies and activity recommendations for focus groups on the topic of youth spaces and this is the recommended activities we came up with :

1. Mapping Exercise

Provide a map of the local area to participants. Ask them to mark spots they consider 'youth spaces' using markers or stickers. Following this, engage in a group discussion where participants explain their choices. Encourage them to articulate what characteristics or features make these spaces attractive or unattractive to young people. This exercise helps identify existing spaces and understand the criteria for defining youth-friendly areas.

2. Ideal Space Design

Provide art supplies like paper, markers, or digital tools if available. Ask participants to design their ideal youth space visually. This could include drawing or creating a blueprint that represents facilities, activities, colors, and layouts they envision. After completion, encourage each participant to explain their design choices and discuss common themes or differences among the designs. This activity helps visualize and articulate the elements that matter most to the participants in a youth space.

3. Role-Playing Scenarios

Present scenarios that might occur in a shared youth space (e.g., disagreements over space usage, conflicts among groups). Assign roles to participants and ask them to act out how they would handle these situations. After each role-play, discuss the outcomes, alternative approaches, and how conflicts could be resolved amicably. This activity fosters empathy, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills among participants.

4. Visual Preference Survey

Compile a series of images or short videos showcasing different youth spaces (e.g., parks, community centers, libraries). Ask participants to rate these spaces based on criteria such as attractiveness, safety, inclusivity, and functionality using a scale or by discussing their opinions. Through this, understand the varied preferences and priorities of the participants regarding different aspects of youth spaces.



5. Open Discussion Circles

Organize facilitated group discussions where participants can freely share their experiences, opinions, concerns, and aspirations related to youth spaces. Encourage active listening, and ensure everyone gets an opportunity to contribute. This open format allows for diverse perspectives to emerge and facilitates organic conversation about youth space needs.

6. Experience Mapping

Provide templates or software for participants to create a timeline or visual representation of their experiences in various youth spaces. This could include detailing positive or negative experiences, the activities they engaged in, and the environment's impact on their experiences. Use this activity to delve into specific elements that contribute to positive or negative experiences in youth spaces.

7. Brainstorming Sessions

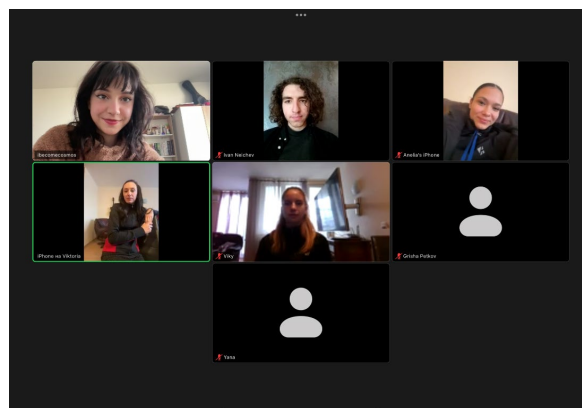
Encourage participants to brainstorm ideas for improving existing youth spaces or creating new ones. Use techniques like mind mapping or idea generation games to facilitate a free flow of innovative suggestions. Group similar ideas together and discuss the feasibility and potential impact of each idea. This activity fosters creative thinking and allows participants to contribute their ideas for better spaces.

8. Role Reversal Exercise

Divide participants into groups and assign them roles such as space designers, policymakers, or decision-makers. Ask each group to propose changes or policies they believe would enhance youth spaces. Afterward, allow groups to present their proposals and engage in discussions about the pros, cons, and practicality of the proposed changes. This activity helps participants understand different perspectives and priorities that influence decisions about youth spaces.

Conclusion:

The workshop on youth spaces provided a platform for participants to voice their opinions, share experiences, and collectively envision spaces that cater to their needs and aspirations. It highlighted the importance of inclusivity, safety, and creativity in designing spaces that truly resonate with the youth, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment within the community.



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- *The organizer:* **Międzynarodowe Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne Krzywy Teatr, Poland**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **30 of November 2023, Żyrardów, Poland**
- *Number of participants:* **2 participants + listeners**

The involvement of about 10 young people, the support of the Mayor of Żyrardów and the consistency in striving to create a place in the city for young people resulted in the city gaining additional space and the association gaining a headquarters that it did not have before. In this space, we have created space to create a podcast studio.

To mark the creation of the podcast studio, a young leader invited the Mayor of Żyrardów, Lucjan Krzysztof Chrzanowski for the exclusive live podcast in which they discussed the creation and the opening of the new space, youth involvement and motivation to take leadership roles in managing and improving public spaces and turning them to thriving youth spaces.

During the live session the listeners could share their thoughts and ideas through chat.



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Recommendations for other municipalities:

1. Involve local youth in discussions to understand their needs and aspirations for community spaces.
2. Partner with local government for support and resources in developing youth-centric spaces.
3. Utilize available spaces creatively, like converting unused areas into functional spaces for youth activities.
4. Leverage community support and fundraising to renovate and equip spaces for youth activities.
5. Encourage youth to lead and participate in the development process, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.
6. Implement creative ideas like this podcast studio to engage youth and provide platforms for expression and skill development.





- *The organizer:* **ENVERÇEVKO, Turkey**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **30 of November 2023, Ankara, Turkey**
- *Number of participants:* **8**

Youth workers met with local a decision-maker in an informal setting, in the meeting participants focused on discussion about the local and regional policy on the management of spaces intended for young people. The good practices and examples were shared with the local decision-maker and recommendations were provided.

– *Recommendations:*

1. Engaging young people in the planning and design of public spaces to ensure they meet their needs and interests.
2. Establishing regular meetings or forums for young people to provide feedback and suggestions on the use of spaces.
3. Advocating for adequate funding and resources to maintain and improve youth spaces, making them safe and appealing.
4. Fostering partnerships between the municipality and local organizations or NGOs to provide varied and sustainable programs in youth spaces.
5. Collaborating on organizing training programs or simply giving speeches for young people to help develop leadership and management skills, empowering them to take active roles in the management of these spaces.



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- *The organizer: **Centro Fonti San Lorenzo, Italy***
- *Date and place of the activity: **29^h of November 2023, Centro Fonti San Lorenzo Aps***
- *Number of participants: **11***

Focus group have gathered to discuss the management of youth spaces and prepare recommendations for better involvement of youth and local decision makers.

– *Recommendations from Participants:*

1. Establish forums or workshops where young people can voice their opinions and needs regarding youth spaces.
2. Create panels comprising both youth representatives and local decision-makers to ensure shared decision-making.
3. Make the process of policy and decision-making transparent and accessible to the youth.
4. Encourage programs that cater to diverse interests and backgrounds, ensuring inclusivity.
5. Provide mentorship and leadership training to equip young people with the skills needed to effectively manage and contribute to youth spaces.
6. Run awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of youth spaces and the role of young people in their management.
7. Implement a system to regularly evaluate youth spaces and gather feedback for continuous improvement.



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- *The organizer:* **Euro Jugend, Germany**
- *Date and place of the activity:* **29th of October 2023, Aachen, Germany**
- *Number of participants:* **4**

The Euro Jugend youngsters involved in a Radio Ragazzi project made an interview with a policymaker to discuss youth space management. The discussion involved:

Understanding Youth Perspectives: sharing experiences and expectations for public spaces, highlighting the need for areas that support their educational, social, and recreational needs.

Collaboration with Public Authorities: discussions on how public authorities can better support youth initiatives.

Recommendations: proposals included creating more inclusive and diverse youth spaces.

Actionable Steps: emphasis on the importance of translating the ideas into actionable policies, with the potential for setting up working groups or committees involving both youth and decision-makers to oversee the implementation of the recommendations.

- *Recommendations from Participants:*

1. Consistent communication channels to be established between youth and policymakers for ongoing collaboration.
2. Support and fund youth-led projects will receive support
3. Mentorship opportunities are to be provided by organization to guide and empower young leaders.
4. Organization will utilize digital tools for effective promotion of youth space.
5. Collaboration will take place with local businesses, educational institutions, and NGOs for resource sharing and support.
6. Youth committee to be developed and involved with public space management.



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