Youth Participation in Youth Information Services

A GUIDE DEVELOPED BY ERYICA AND EURODESK

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european youth information
and counselling agency

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Message from our Steering Group young contributors

As an ERYICA Youth Ambassador, I was delighted to be a part of the Steering Group for this publication, primarily because I strongly believe that the inclusion of young people in democratic processes has significant potential and value in many different areas. Youth participation practices often contribute not only to positive youth development but also serve as a key enabler for strong communities, thus directly influencing the quality of our civic lives as well as our destiny as a society. Therefore, it's crucial to empower young people in taking an active role as a new generation of changemakers, while providing reliable information which is essential to making participation opportunities accessible, fostering trust, and mentoring them to become responsible citizens in accordance with the universal human and civil rights principles, along with each method splendidly presented in this Guide.

Rafaela Landikusic

For and with young people - this is the central point of what we want to achieve with this publication. Generational change in viewpoints, the way we consume information and the way we experience life is happening much faster than in humanity's past. There is a palpable difference even among young people right now, depending on whether we belong to the Millenial or Gen Z generation. Therefore, it is crucial that when we are trying to convey a message or deliver information to a young person, the people delivering it are using the right tools, the right channels, and most importantly, the right communication style. Understanding what young people need right now in terms of information has never been more difficult, which is why putting young people at the centre of this process must now be the basis on which information services for young people will be built, starting with this publication, which gave young people like us the voice to shape the youth information services of the future.

Caterina Rende Dominis

Yaiza Neidy Cangundu Jiménez

At the moment information is led, consciously or unconsciously, by "adultcentrism". It is a reality that we, young people, are not always given the space and opportunity to express ourselves, to make informed decisions, and to have our voice taken into account. We need to make youth information a safe space to achieve our own autonomy. I believe that the best way to achieve this is by participating and coming together to raise our voices. We have to empower ourselves and lead the media and information landscape. We need to become real agents of information and participate in its production, delivery and critical assessment.

Foreword from Eurodesk President

Eurodesk is a European youth information network whose mission is to inform young people about European opportunities which can empower and encourage them to become active citizens. Young people are at the forefront of our activities, which is why Eurodesk constantly seeks ways to engage, inform, and communicate with them efficiently. Our goal is to mainstream this approach in all our actions.

Participation in society is of key importance to the development of young people. Learning does not only happen at school but also through experience. Giving young people a chance to influence the services meant to support them is an excellent way for them to grow as active citizens while contributing to making our services relevant and youth-friendly.

Young people bring new and fresh ideas to the table. They are a driving force that help us improve our services to reflect their needs and interests, and use the right methods to reach and engage them in our activities. This is why it is our responsibility, as youth information workers, to use participatory approaches to ensure meaningful youth engagement when designing our services. It is also our responsibility to ensure that all young people can participate and be heard in our services, by employing inclusive measures.

Although we are all convinced about the need to support youth participation, finding meaningful and efficient ways to do it is not always easy. This is why Eurodesk, together with ERYICA and young people, published the Guide on "Youth participation in youth information services". This Guide will help you develop your approach to engaging young people, actively listening to their views and needs, and adequately responding to them. This publication also offers practical tools beneficial for your daily work as a (youth information) professional working with young people.

The Guide focuses on youth information workers and services but is valuable to a wider audience working and communicating with young people – teachers, policy and decision-makers, and governmental or non-governmental organisations. It puts participatory concepts into context and provides examples of good practices and concrete tools to support your daily practice working with young people.

I want to thank the authors of the publication, the teams at ERYICA and Eurodesk, and all the young people who contributed to the development of this vital resource.

Lorena Baric
President of Eurodesk

Foreword from
ERYICA President

Dear reader,

It is with great pride and excitement that I welcome you to "Youth participation in youth information services". This publication is a collaboration between ERYICA and Eurodesk and is the result of many months of hard work and co-operation. Over many years, the members of both organisations have built up a wealth of experience of working with young people to promote, integrate and place youth participation at the heart of the youth information services they provide. This publication gathers that treasure of experience in one place and makes it available to all youth information stakeholders in order to further promote best practice in youth participation. The overall message from the publication is that youth participation is not an optional extra for quality youth information services; it is an imperative.

As you make your way through this publication, you will be reminded that youth information services must provide space for young people to be involved in real decision making within the services. For this, there needs to be youth participation in our governing bodies, advisory panels and in our service design processes. Young people are also themselves creators of information and so must be involved in the co-design of materials, content creation and in peer-to-peer delivery. Real engagement for young people is needed in the process of evaluating our services, consulting on how to improve things and delivering more effectively to all young people in our communities. Finally, in our process of quality control and, in particular, as our services proceed through the ERYICA quality label, the youth review element of the process is a crucial aspect of the award.

The imperative to facilitate quality youth participation with and for young people promotes democratic engagement and activism. When young people are actively engaged in decision making, the decisions we make are better and the outcomes more impactful. Active citizenship is an essential aspect of a healthy democracy and as young people assert their right to information under international law, they will gain knowledge of a whole range of other sets of rights in our society to which they are entitled. Our amazing youth information providers assist young people in this way every day. This new publication will, I know, add value to this important work and bring inspiration to more information creators and providers.

Happy reading to you all and I wish you a successful implementation.

Dr. Patrick J. Burke
President of ERYICA

Project partners

eurodesk

Eurodesk is a European youth information network that aims to make information on learning mobility comprehensive and accessible to all young people and those who work with them. It is a support organisation of the Erasmus+ programme and a policy instrument of the EU Youth Strategy. With a network of national coordinators connected to local information providers in 37 European countries, Eurodesk raises awareness on learning mobility opportunities and encourages young people to become active citizens.

As a service, the Eurodesk network answers enquiries and provides guidance for mobile young people across Europe in their own language, keeping in mind their needs and social background. Eurodesk updates and manages content on the European Youth Portal, on the eurodesk.eu and national websites and youth portals and on its social media channels.

Eurodesk federates over 2100 local youth information providers, so-called 'multipliers', that are regional or local organisations working with young people and delivering youth information to them (e.g. youth centres, youth information centres, associations, municipalities). Despite their variety, the core of their mission as Eurodesk multipliers is to provide information about mobility opportunities to young people. Through its networking and information tools, Eurodesk offers multipliers quality training and support, and access to youth information services and tools.

More information can be found at *eurodesk.eu*.

european youth information and counselling agency

The **European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)** is an independent European non-governmental, non-profit association established in 1986 and based in Luxembourg. At the time of drafting this publication, the association comprises 41 national and regional youth information coordination bodies and networks (non-governmental and governmental) from 25 countries.

ERYICA aims to uphold the right of young people to full and reliable information, which helps them make the choices they face in their lives and promotes their autonomy, ability to think critically, and active participation in society. ERYICA's role is to foster European and international cooperation in the field of generalist youth information work and services; to develop, support and promote quality youth information and counselling at all levels; and to ensure that the information needs of young people and the principles of the European Youth Information Charter are respected.

ERYICA also advocates at the national and European levels for the inclusion of youth information and counselling in youth policies and other mainstream policy areas affecting young people. Since its creation, the Agency has cooperated extensively with the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and more recently with UNESCO.

More information on ERYICA's activities and projects can be found at *eryica.org*.

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What is Youth Participation in Youth Information Services?

1.1 **Why should youth information services support youth participation?**

Youth participation is essential to quality youth information. It supports the human rights of young people, contributes to democratic life and is an invaluable way of improving the work of youth information services. Youth participation can be defined as "young people having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities, so as to contribute to building a better society"[1]. This chapter explores some of the concepts, theories and legislation that underpin youth participation, and how they relate to the work of youth information services. It provides a starting point for any youth information worker who wants to gain a stronger understanding of what youth participation is. This will help support them in planning and implementing youth participation activities within youth information services.

One of the foundations for youth participation is the human rights of young people. Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to everyone in the world, from birth until death. Youth participation is about promoting the right of young people to form and express opinions and to support their rights to participate in political and public life. Youth information[2] and youth participation go hand in hand in the protection and promotion of young people's human rights.

Human rights are protected in law by a variety of international treaties and conventions. Some of the rights most directly connected to youth participation are:

➜ Article 10 of the *European Convention on Human Rights* which protects **the right to freedom of expression**.

➜ Article 11 and Article 3 (of Protocol No.1) of The European Convention on Human Rights which protect the **right to participate in democratic and civic life**.

➜ Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) which protects the **right of under-18s to have their views taken into account** when they express opinions.

There are also international conventions which protect the rights of specific groups of people such as the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Human rights are the basis for youth participation. Youth information services have always been a key part of enabling young people to fully realise their human rights. Taking a participative approach to youth information is crucial to this goal.

Another key foundation for **youth participation is democracy**. Youth information and youth participation are deeply linked when it comes to promoting democracy. They both enable young people to be democratically and civically active in our communities and societies.

[1] Council of Europe (2015) Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life available at, https://rm.coe.int/168071b4d6
[2] Council of Europe (2015) Young people's access to rights through youth information and counselling available at, https://rm.coe.int/16807023d9

'Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.'

Youth participation provides the opportunity and support for young people to become active citizens. It can enable young people to develop their skills to participate in democratic life, and to be active in influencing the world around them. Youth information services which work in a participative way can enable young people to be active citizens and leaders in our communities.

Social research has identified some important **trends in young people's democratic participation**.[3] Young people are highly politically motivated, but they have low levels of trust in formal politics, public institutions and traditional forms of participation. Many young people are more likely to participate in alternative forms of participation such as cause-based activism like the environmental movement. They often prefer involvement based around a single issue or topic over joining or supporting a formal structure or organisation. Research

also indicates that **social media and the online world** plays an increasingly important role in young people's participation. It provides space, methods and online communities through which young people can express themselves politically, and new methods and tools through which public and democratic bodies can connect directly to young people. However, the rise of information disorder (sometimes called 'fake news') and disinformation may be contributing towards a growth in extremist beliefs and a breakdown in trust in our democracies.

A final practical benefit of youth participation is that **taking a participative approach enables youth information to be based on the needs of young people**. Listening to young people about the sorts of youth information they want and gaining their feedback on the work of youth information services is common sense. Finding out what young people want and need, working with young people to develop new ideas, and evaluating existing work are all crucial. This form of 'service-user' feedback and 'co-production' improves the quality of youth information and helps ensure it is what young people want and need.

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[3] *European Parliament, Directorate-General for Communication, Deželan, T., Moxon, D., (2022) Influencing and understanding political participation patterns of young people: the European perspective, European Parliament, available at* https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/740120

Youth participation policies and standards

Across Europe there are a range of different legislations, policies and standards that promote the participation of young people:

→ The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers has produced a number of recommendations to Member States covering the citizenship and participation of young people, participation in local and regional life, youth civil society and the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

→ The *European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2022* aims to foster youth participation in democratic life. It supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society. It stipulates 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 EU Youth Strategy is supported by the SALTO PI *Youth Participation Strategy for enhancing youth participation in democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.*

→ Article 6 of the ERYICA *European Youth information Charter* identifies that youth information should be 'Participative'. It states that quality youth information means:

> *6.1 Young people participate in the production, dissemination and evaluation of youth information, at different levels and in different forms.*

> *6.2 Youth information services offer platforms for peer-to-peer activities.*

> *6.3 Young people are encouraged to give feedback as an integrated part of the ongoing development of youth information services.*

→ The *Eurodesk Strategy 2022-2027* aims for 'broader participation of young people in EU public consultations and processes, including the Youth Dialogue and other consultative activities, as well as in learning mobility programmes (European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+ and other opportunities)'.

→ Many countries also have national policies and programmes supporting youth participation. Details of these can be found on the *EU Youth Wiki* and the *European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy*.
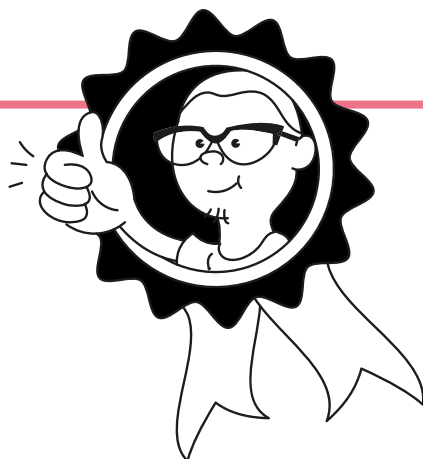
1.2 Youth participation as involvement in decision making

To help understand more about what youth participation is, one way of thinking about youth participation in information services is as 'involvement in decision making'. This approach focuses on how young people are involved in the decisions made by youth information services. This is based on the idea that there are decision makers who make key decisions about how youth information services operate.

The role of youth participation is to enable young people to express their views and opinions to these decision makers. It means ensuring that young people's voices are listened to by decision makers when they make decisions. In relation to youth information services, a decision maker could be:

→ **Project leaders** - who take decisions about how an information campaign or project is run.

→ **Senior managers** - who take decisions about how a youth information service is managed and operated.

→ **People involved with governance** - such as the board of a youth information service if the service is a civil society organisation or publicly funded organisation.

→ **Politicians and policymakers** - who are active in taking decisions about policy or legislation that affects youth information.

→ **Funders** - who make decisions about what funding youth information services receive and what can be done with it.

→ **Any other individuals or group of individuals** - who have an active role in directing the work of youth information services.

All of these groups are responsible for a wide range of decisions that all affect the youth information that young people receive. These decisions include things such as the topics, the information material, channels, and methods used, how the service's budget is spent, which staff are hired, or what the strategy of the service is. By enabling young people to influence these decisions, they are able to influence the work of the youth information service, and ultimately, what youth information young people receive.

The Lundy model of participation

Lundy's Model of Participation[4] can be used for understanding what is needed for young people's involvement in decision making to take place. There are four elements to the model. They each describe the different components which are required for youth participation to occur and emphasise the importance of listening to young people's views.

Young people need safe, inclusive opportunities to support their participation.

Space

Voice

Young people's right to express their views and opinions must be valued and encouraged.

The Lundy Model of Participation

Young people's views must be taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate.

Influence

Audience

Young people's views must be communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen to them.

For youth information services, these four elements can be described as:

➔ **Space** - youth information services need to actively provide opportunities and support for young people to participate. This can mean dedicated participation projects and initiatives, as well as creating space through one-to-one conversations and consultation activities.

➔ **Voice** - when accessing youth information services, young people need to be able to freely express their views and opinions on the service if they wish to do so. Their right to express their opinion should be valued and encouraged.

➔ **Audience** - youth information services need to listen to the things that young people say about the service. People with responsibility for running or managing the service must be committed to receiving and keeping track of the views of young people. There should be processes in place so that the things young people say are communicated to someone with the responsibility of listening to them.

➔ **Influence** - the things that young people say should have influence and impact on how the youth information service is run. Young people's views should be taken seriously and taken into account when making decisions.

[4] *Lundy's Model of Participation has been adapted specifically for this guide. The original first appeared in 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, 927–942. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033*

Advice from young people...

participation is about LISTENING

"I think that the biggest support is actively listening to the young person. If you are somebody that manages the same projects everyday, at a certain point, you can get into a sense of repetition and forget you know, how things work? And maybe you forget how it is not to know or to be naive. So you need to get into the mindset of the young person, try to empathise as much as possible, and have the patience to answer any sort of question, or explain any misunderstanding that the person might have about anything in the project. Even if things seem trivial, or you might think they are obvious, they are not necessarily that obvious for the young person. So the biggest support is listening, trying to help and being patient...There's always a way to value contributions."

**Caterina, Croatia/Italy
ERYICA Youth Ambassador**

Advice from young people...

participation is about LISTENING

"Systematic responses to questions and feedback make me feel that my voice matters. A perfect example of a tool that made me feel heard is the Portal for young Europeans created by the European Commission with the support of Eurodesk, where we were able to describe important issues, both for the local society and in Europe as a whole. The last important element is change. We exchange our opinions and listen in order to change something specific or simply improve. If I see that a youth information service like Eurodesk is implementing new projects based on young people's opinions or improving others then I am sure that my voice counts and that I have been heard."

**Kacper, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist**

Advice from young people...

participation is about LISTENING

"I think we need to give young people the knowledge and tools. They also should be listened to constantly. Young people must be taken seriously and shown that their opinions and ideas are valuable."

**Maria, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist**

Advice from young people...

participation is about LISTENING

"In one of the projects I'm involved with - if we make a proposal, our director, even though he's super, super busy, always finds the time to attend our weekly meeting to give us our follow-ups, and provide advice for the future, to tell us updates. Things that I feel are very, let's say, special. And I think this means that we're appreciated, this shows that kind of attention. It's really the next level of feeling that you belong there. I think that on a very personal level, it makes you feel that you are being listened to."

**Maylinda, Albania
EYCA Youth Panel Member**

1.3 Sharing power with young people

When youth information services involve young people in their decision making, it is important to be clear about how much power and influence young people can have over decisions. Enabling young people to take decisions within your organisation or project requires a commitment from the decision makers who hold power. They must be genuinely willing to share decision making or take account of young people's views when decisions are made. This involves being able to accept criticism from young people, and recognise the difference between an individual's personal feedback and feedback supported by wider groups of young people. Being open and transparent about the level of influence young people have is crucial.

Shared decision making or youth-led decision making

Consulting

Informing

Non-engagement

Hart's Ladder of Participation
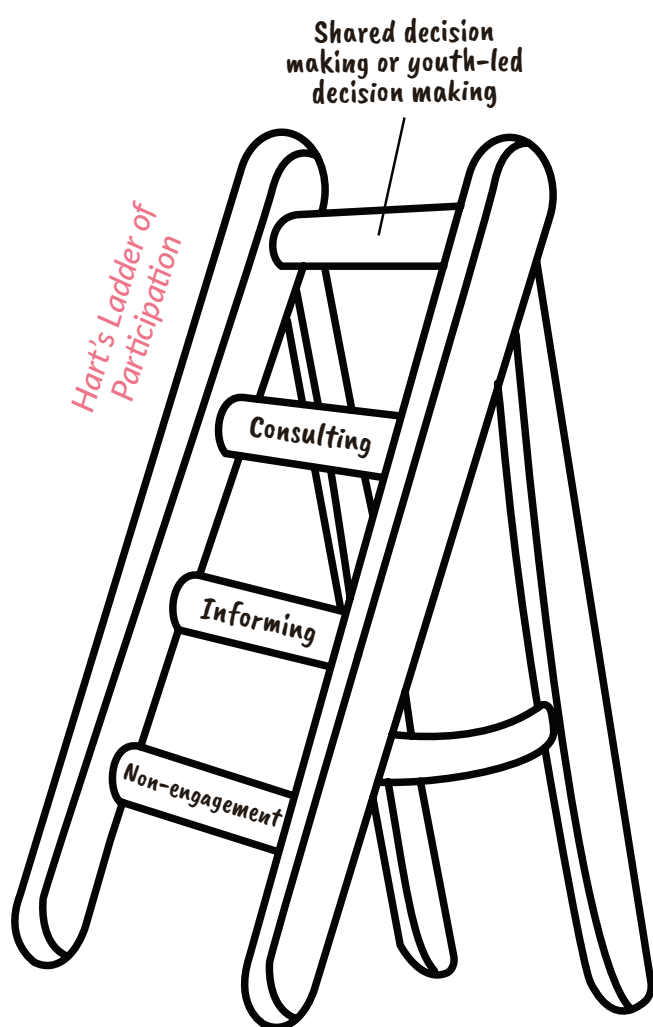
The Ladder of Participation

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation[5] can be used to think about the level of influence and power young people have when decisions by youth information services are made. Each rung of the ladder shows a different level of involvement that young people can have when decisions are made. The higher up the ladder, the greater the level of involvement.

The levels are:

→ **Shared decision making or youth-led decision making -** this occurs when decisions are made jointly between youth information service decision makers and young people. It can also occur when young people have the power and influence to make decisions about the youth information service for themselves.

→ **Consulting** - this occurs when youth information service decision makers seek the views of young people but do not give them the power and influence to be involved directly in making the decision.

→ **Informing** - this occurs when youth information service decision makers inform young people about the decision being made and their outcomes, but do not seek young people's views.

→ **Non-engagement** - this occurs when youth information service decision makers take decisions without informing young people.

[5] *Hart's ladder of participation originally appeared in Hart, R.A., 1992. Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship. Innocenti. This diagram shows a simplified version developed specifically for this publication.*

The top rung of the ladder represents the highest level of involvement, however, not all decisions can be made at this level. The level of involvement will vary from decision to decision. It is important to be clear about the level of involvement for each decision and communicate that transparently and openly.

Shared and youth-led decision making requires in-depth and extensive work with young people. This takes commitment from both young people and the youth information services. This level of involvement may be best used for the most important decisions, or the decisions that young people are most interested in getting involved with.

Some young people may not want to participate in an in-depth way or they may consider that their involvement is not very important in some decisions. Creating the opportunity for young people to give their views quickly and simply through consultation activities (like an evaluation survey) may be more valuable in these situations.

There may also be situations where decisions cannot be shared with young people for legal, ethical or financial reasons. In these situations, young people should be informed about the decisions if possible.
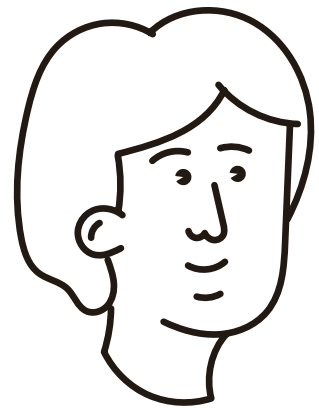
Advice from young people...

What are the key drivers to get you involved?

"Level of engagement depends on what the issue is about. If it is closely related to my interests and what is close to my heart, I am always willing to get involved and contribute. Priorities also stem from the future of the community in which I live. Commitment comes from making other people's lives easier because of this cause. The level of involvement also depends on the people with whom I act. If they influence positively, it is easier to get involved. The main elements that cause commitment are also, in some cases, what I will gain by participating in these tasks, and what it will give me in my career path."

Anna, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist

Young people as active citizens and leaders

Not all youth participation is based on involvement in decision making. Another important approach is **young people being active and doing things for themselves**. Rather than relying on the decision makers to implement the change young people want to see, young people can be change makers and implement things directly.

For youth information services, this can mean working in partnership with young people to enable them to plan, deliver and evaluate youth information activities. This can involve peer-to-peer delivery of youth information, young people creating youth information content themselves or other things where young people are active in the delivery of youth information services.

It is also important for young people to be able to take a leadership role within the participation activities that are run by youth information services. By taking the lead in youth participation activities, young people can shape and direct the way that youth participation occurs within youth information services. This helps improve the quality and youth-friendliness of youth participation activities, shares power with young people, and makes sure youth participation activities meet the needs and interests of young people themselves.

These approaches link non-formal education methods and experiential learning closely. In these methods, young people learn by leading and implementing their own solutions and ideas, working collaboratively with youth information services to do so (See Chapter 2).

Advice from young people...

supporting young people to be leaders

"Young people shouldn't be a part of the project just to deliver certain results, instead you should inspire them to actually lead the process. They should be given a chance and opportunity to really go and work on something. Because some young people are very eager to help and could have this hidden potential. But if they don't have the place to express that, then things go unseen. So create more opportunities, let's say smaller pieces of projects, or something that they can really work on. This allows them to develop ideas and express themselves and build their leadership skills."

Rafaela, Croatia
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people...

supporting young people to be leaders

"To participate in a governing body of an organisation requires, first of all, appropriate social skills. People who are resilient to criticism can handle difficult situations and can face any challenges will certainly do well in such a function. You also need a goal, and perhaps even more: a mission that will make you strive for the best possible solutions."

Anna, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist
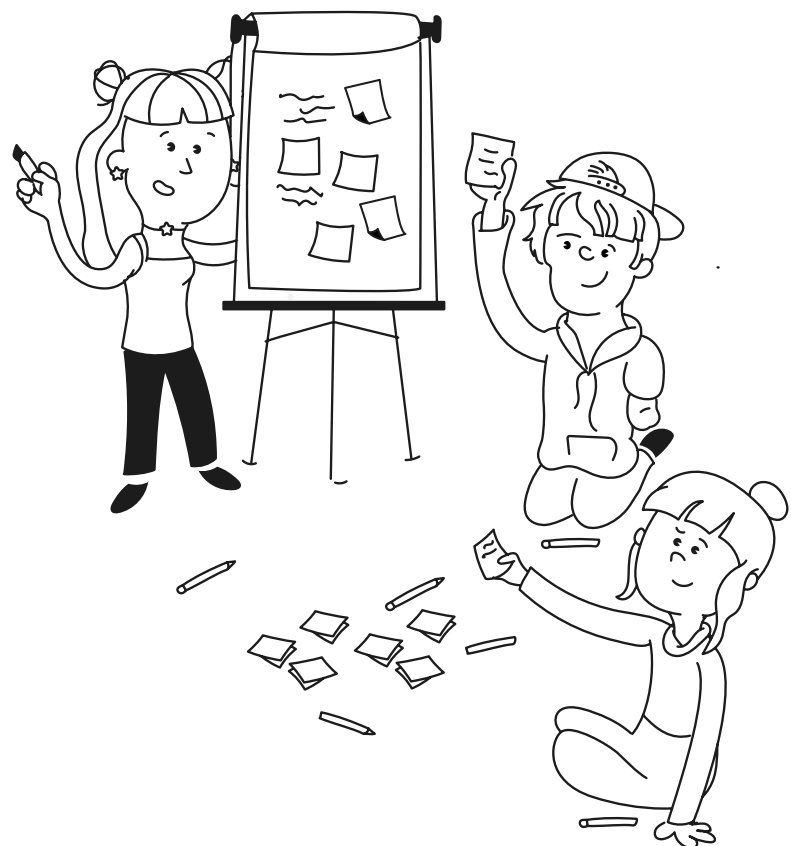
1.5 Youth information leads to participation in democratic life

An important link between youth information and youth participation is that having **access to quality youth information enables young people's participation in democratic life** and promotes their active citizenship. Information and young people's ability to assess and use it is a prerequisite for their active participation in society and their responsible citizenship[6]. Having equal access to quality and free information enables young people to make use of their rights, to make responsible decisions and to participate in society in all its social, economic, civic and political dimensions. Young people also need the skills and media literacy to make sense of this information and to use it effectively.

According to the European Youth Information Charter, **quality youth information is empowering**. This means:

➜ Youth information services empower young people and foster their autonomy.
➜ Youth information services provide young people with media and information literacy skills to act in a safe and responsible way.
➜ Youth information services promote active citizenship and participation.

Access to quality youth information can enable them to:

➜ Be informed and aware of their human rights and rights to participate.
➜ Understand what opportunities and possibilities they have available to them to make their voices heard.
➜ Be aware of how political processes occur and how political decisions are made.
➜ Know how to responsibly participate in political and civic decision making, such as through voting.

This guide is about how young people can participate IN youth information services. This is a separate topic to the role that youth information plays in enabling young people to participate in democratic life. For more about how access to youth information services can enable youth participation in democratic life, you can read the Council of Europe and ERYICA kit *'Young people's access to rights through youth information and counselling'.*

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[6] *Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth information available at https://rm.coe.int/09000016805b251a*

1.6 Youth participation in youth information services - a definition

Eurodesk and ERYICA have developed a definition of youth participation in youth information services to support this publication.

Youth participation IN youth information services

It means enabling young people to have the right, means, space and support to:

→ Participate in the production, dissemination and evaluation of youth information, at different levels and in different forms.

→ Lead and develop peer-to-peer youth information activities.

→ Give feedback as an integrated part of the ongoing development of youth information services.

→ Take an active role in the co-design and leadership of youth information services.

The goal of youth participation in youth information services is to enable young people to influence the content and types of youth information that young people have access to, as well as the way that youth information services undertake their work.

Youth participation IN youth information services sits alongside the vital role that having access to quality youth information plays in enabling young people to actively participate in democratic and civic life.
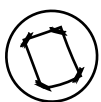
Poster on page 21

Youth participation in youth information services can take place through a variety of different models and formats, and new ones are developing all the time. Some of the most common formats include:

Creating youth information with young people 1

This group of methods focuses on how young people can influence decisions about the type of youth information that is created. It enables them to influence the topics, formats, content and platforms used for youth information. It can also allow them to be directly active in the creation of youth information.

These methods can involve:

→ Working with young people as content creators.
→ Young people co-designing information campaigns and material with youth information professionals.
→ These methods are explored in Chapter 3 of this guide.

Involving young people as peer-to-peer educators 2

This method enables young people to be active in the delivery of youth information. Young people practice their active citizenship and experiential learning by taking on roles in disseminating youth information to other young people. These methods are explored in Chapter 4 of this guide.

Young people co-steering youth information services 3

This method enables young people to be active in the delivery of youth information. Young people practice their active citizenship and experiential learning by taking on roles in disseminating youth information to other young people. These methods are explored in Chapter 4 of this guide.

Evaluation, assessment and feedback 4

This group of methods involves putting in place simple, systematic approaches that can enable any young person to express their views on the quality of the information they receive. They sit lower down on the ladder of participation but are a vital part of enabling a youth information service to listen to the views of young people and to adapt the service accordingly. These methods are explored in Chapter 6 of this guide.

No one model or format is more effective than another. They each achieve different goals and serve different purposes. A quality youth information service is likely to use a range of different models to support youth participation. Different models and formats might even be used in the same project. All of the models are supported by the same principles and approaches to youth participation, which are explored in Chapter 2.

Youth Participation in youth Information Services

What?

It's all about enabling **young people** to have the right, means, space and support to:

→ **Participate** in the production, dissemination and evaluation of youth information, at different levels and in different forms.

→ **Lead** and develop peer-to-peer youth information activities.

→ **Give feedback** as an integrated part of the ongoing development of youth information services.

→ **Take an active role** in the co-design and leadership of youth information services.

Why?

→ Enable young people to **contribute** to the relevance and quality of youth information

→ Ensure that youth information services can be **influenced** and **led** by young people

This compliments the role that access to quality information plays in enabling young people to participate in democratic and civic life.

How?

Many different models to support youth participation:

1. **Creating youth information with young people**
   They can influence content creation and become content creators.

2. **Involving young people as peer-to-peer educators**
   They are active in the delivery of youth information.

3. **Young people co-steering youth information services**
   They can influence decisions about the running of youth information services and their projects.

4. **Evaluation, assessment and feedback**
   They can express their views on the quality of the information they receive.

Making Youth Participation Meaningful

Being meaningful

Like any area of youth information services, when it comes to youth participation in youth information, doing things in a quality way is always important. We refer to youth participation as "meaningful" when the activities engage with young people in a high quality and effective manner.

This chapter explores what is required to support youth participation activities in a meaningful way and what this means in practice for youth information services. No matter what models and formats of youth participation are used, the topics discussed in this chapter will be relevant to all of them. The same set of guiding principles can be applied to all youth participation activities.

Principles for Youth Participation

To ensure that it is meaningful and of good quality, youth participation in youth information services should be:

Transparent and informative
Young people must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their rights to participate in youth information services, how their participation can take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact.

Accountable
Young people should be provided with clear feedback on how their youth participation has led to any change. Young people must be informed as to how their views have been interpreted and used and, where necessary, provided with the opportunity to challenge and influence the results.

Relevant
The youth information topics which young people are giving their view upon must be of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. Space should be created to enable the young people to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important.

Respectful
Young people's views should be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities themselves.

Safe and sensitive to risk
Activities relating to youth participation in youth information should be safe and keep young people safe from harm.

Young people-friendly
Environments and working methods should be adapted to young people's capacities and abilities. Enough time and resources should be made available to ensure the young people are adequately supported and prepared to have the confidence and opportunity to participate. Young people will need differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to evolving capacities and competences.

Inclusive
Youth participation in youth information must be inclusive and avoid replicating existing patterns of discrimination. It should encourage opportunities for marginalised young people to be involved. Young people are not a homogenous group and youth participation in youth information needs to provide for equality of opportunity for all, without discrimination on any grounds.

Supported by training
Youth information workers and youth information services need preparation, skills and resources to facilitate youth participation in youth information effectively. Young people also need access to training to help them take on leadership roles.

Voluntary
Youth participation should be done on a voluntary basis based on the commitments and interests of young people involved.

(2.2) Who should take part? Being relevant and inclusive

One of the most important things to consider in any participation activity is **who needs to take part?** Before any activity can take place, considering how to recruit participants, and who to recruit, is vital.

Participation can't happen without young people so one of the starting points for planning youth participation activities to involve young people in youth information is to consider:

➔ Which young people is the activity most relevant to?
➔ Which young people might face barriers to being included?
➔ What can be done to recruit and activate participants?

The answers to these questions will connect to the theme and topics of the youth participation activity and which areas of youth information are going to be discussed.

Being relevant

The topic or theme of any participation activity should be of **relevance and interest** to the young people taking part. This means that young people need to be able to **draw on their personal experience and knowledge** to express a meaningful view on the topics being discussed.

We can think of young people as **'experts by experience',** and one of their main sources of expertise and experiences is being a young person! Every young person has experience of growing up in today's society. This means they have an understanding of their own needs and the issues affecting them. As a result, young people are in a good position to identify what youth information they currently have access to and think about what sorts of youth information they would like to see. Sometimes they might need support to be able to do this, such as explanations of what sort of youth information could be made available to them or discussions to reflect on what their needs might be. This support will help them to express a view on their youth information needs.

Some young people might also have a more **in-depth experience as users of youth information services.** Perhaps they are a regular visitor to the youth information service website, or have taken part in youth information counselling. This gives them a direct experience of the quality of that youth information service. Young people who have this experience are in a strong position to give their views on how well the specific youth information service is run, and how it might be improved. Young people who have even more in-depth experiences, such as those who have volunteered for the service, will have the most relevant experience when it comes to more complex topics like making strategic plans for the youth information service.

To be motivating, participation activities need to focus on the topics that young people identify as **interesting and important** to them. It is important to listen to young people's voices on which topics and themes they themselves see as most relevant. Taking time to ask young people which areas within your youth information service they want to get involved with is crucial. Topics that young people are most interested in will also be the most motivating for them to get involved with - participation is voluntary!

Resources for inclusion

The methods and tools you can use to make sure youth participation activities are inclusive are the same as the methods you can use in any youth project.

You can find more resources to support the social inclusion of young people here:

📎 The *SALTO Inclusion and Diversity's website*
📎 *Engage in inclusion* A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects
📎 *Inclusion A to Z: A compass to inclusive international youth work*.
📎 The EU-Council of Europe Youth partnership *T-Kit 8: Social inclusion*

Valuing diversity of experiences

When recruiting young people to a new participation activity you should think about **the target group** for that activity. In most cases, the target group will be working with young people from a range of social backgrounds and ages who have a range of views, interests and experiences on the topic of youth information. Working with a diverse range of young people is important because **young people are not a homogenous group**, their views, experiences and needs are different.

Intersections such as gender, ethnic background, sexuality, age and disability affect young people's lives. Consider a youth information campaign on sex and relationships. The information needs and views of a young person from LGBTQIA+ backgrounds on this topic might be quite different from other groups of young people. Young people from LGBTQIA+ backgrounds may want additional support and information around same sex relationships or dealing with discrimination. Or think about a young person with a learning disability. They might face additional barriers and problems when trying to use a youth information service website - they might find the content difficult to understand, or the interface hard to navigate. Age is also an important factor. The views and experiences of a 13-year-old high school student can be substantially different from the views of a 26-year-old young person who might be a parent in the early stages of their career.

Advice from young people...

make sure the project is relevant to participants' interests

"The activity should be something that is connected to the young person's interests. If a young person is surrounded by other like-minded young people that want to take part in something similar, I think that this is a great motivator to take part in participation projects."

Caterina, Croatia/Italy
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people...

make sure the project is relevant to participants' interests

"If the thing young people participate in is related to their values, and the things they care about, it's more motivating for them."

Yaiza, Spain
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Removing barriers to inclusion

To work with a diverse range of young people in a participation activity it is important to think which young people might be excluded from taking part. Putting in place specific steps to properly include these young people within the activity is crucial. Youth participation in youth information must be inclusive and **avoid replicating existing patterns of discrimination** and barriers within society. This means fully supporting the voices of those young people who may be marginalised.

Taking an inclusive approach to youth participation means removing barriers of participation which some young people may experience. When running youth participation activities, you should:

1. Identify which groups of young people are, or may be, excluded from your youth participation activities.

2. Identify what the barriers are for those groups who are excluded.

3. Put in place steps (and resources) to reduce those barriers.

There are several types of barriers and they can hinder participation both as a standalone factor and in combination with other factors[7]. The barriers to participation may be practical or structural. They can relate to policies and practices, or beliefs that limit or prevent a set of people's access to opportunities. Although social research indicates that young people from lower educational backgrounds and from lower income backgrounds are less likely to take part in political participation[8], patterns or exclusions are complex and may not be the same in every youth participation activity or youth information service.

The **steps needed to remove barriers** to participation will vary depending on the context and needs of the young people who are currently excluded. The best way to identify how to remove barriers is to begin a dialogue with the young people who are currently excluded to support them to identify what they need.

Advice from young people...

providing one-to-one support

"If you have a young person who is shy or unsure about getting involved, try to motivate communication with the young person much more than with the other participants. So, give double the attention to that young person. Because they might feel double as uneasy as the other participants. So really open the door and try to invite the young person in because when they start making these first steps, then it becomes much easier."

**Caterina, Croatia/Italy
ERYICA Youth Ambassador**

Common steps taken to remove barriers to participation can include:

➔ Providing additional one-to-one support - to help build participants' confidence and understanding.

➔ Removing financial barriers - by providing transport to activities or ensuring that participants do not have to take time out of paid work.

➔ Ensuring activities use simple, easy to understand language, and use the native languages of participants.

➔ Creating clear ground rules and procedures for challenging discriminatory behaviour (such as racism, sexism and homophobia) to ensure the environment is safe for all to take part in.

➔ Additional support for young people from marginalised backgrounds to take leadership roles within activities.

➔ Ensuring that participation activities focus on the issues affecting marginalised groups rather than just majority issues.

[7] *Salto Inclusion and Diversity, Inclusion A-Z, available at https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3141/InclusionAtoZ.pdf*

[8] *Dezelan, T. and Moxon, D. (2021) 'Influencing and understanding political participation patterns of young people'. Strasbourg: DG COMM European Parliament. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2861/740120*

Working with specific target groups

For some activities, rather than aiming for a diverse range of participants, it can be important to work with a **specific target group** during your participation activities. For instance, if you are developing a youth information campaign aimed at young refugees, it should be young refugees themselves who participate in designing that campaign. This ensures that the young people most affected by the youth information campaign or project are the ones able to shape the decisions about how it develops. This keeps the participation activities directly relevant to the participants' lives and empowers those who are most affected to influence the campaign or project. Participation activities targeted at specific social groups can help provide a safe, accessible space that enable young people from marginalised groups to participate. They allow young people to focus on issues and concerns that are most relevant to them.

To identify **the relevant target group** for your participation activity, think about:

➜ Which young people does the theme or topic of the activity affect most?

➜ Are there any young people who have specific experiences that are directly relevant to the theme of the activity?

➜ Are there any marginalised young people who might have specific experiences and needs relating to the activity themes?

Advice from young people...

how to remove barriers?

"The most important thing is to reach as many young people as possible. Most information about activities reaches people from big cities who are already involved in projects. It is worth focusing on reaching smaller towns in order to increase the chances of young people in the villages and to involve new people, who do not have access to information about the activities."

Caterina, Croatia/Italy
ERYICA Youth Ambassador
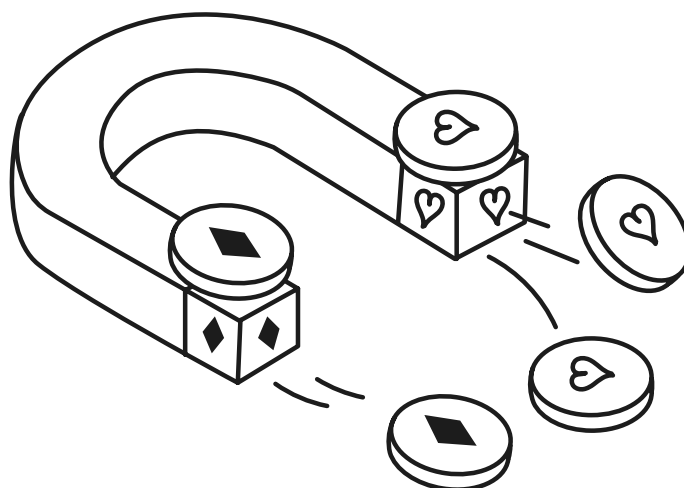
2.3 Recruiting participants: Reaching out to new participants
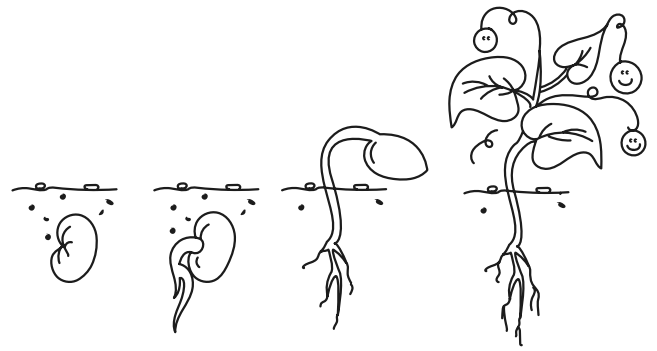
If you are clear which young people you want to recruit for your participation activities, you are **ready to start recruitment**. This means informing young people in your target group about the opportunity to participate and motivating them to want to join the participation activity.

Youth information workers can draw on the competences they have in designing and developing communication campaigns to promote youth participation activities. There are two key areas to consider:

➜ **Developing messages about the participation activity** - what information do you want your target group to hear about that will motivate them to join the activity?

➜ **Identifying which channels to share your messages through** - where can you go to reach out to your target group? How can you distribute your message to them?

Messaging and benefits

Getting the messaging right about youth participation activities is crucial for recruiting new participants. It is a good idea to create messages that **highlight the benefits of joining the participation activity**. Put yourself in the shoes of your target group and think about the answer to the following question: What is in it for me? The answer to this question will help you to shape more effective messages.

It is important to emphasise **personal and social benefits** as well as the **opportunity to create change** and have influence. Some of the personal and social benefits of participation activities can include:

➜ Learning and developing new skills or experiences,
➜ Fun and enjoyment,
➜ Developing valued relationships,
➜ Feeling valued by having your views taken seriously.

Communicating the **possibility to make change and have influence** can be more complex. The goals of youth participation activities are to enable young people to influence and shape the world around them. For youth information services, this means enabling them to influence the kinds of youth information young people have access to. However, it cannot always be guaranteed that all of the changes young people ask for during the activity will occur (see Section 2.6 for more on this). When recruiting participants, it is important to avoid over-promising what changes can happen as a result of a participation activity. This can lead to participants having expectations of creating a change that the activity cannot deliver. This will create dissatisfaction after the activity and participants may leave the project in frustration. When communicating it is important to be transparent and honest with participants about the scope, purpose and potential impact of the participation activity, including any limitations.

Advice from young people... making sure the project benefits participants

"It's important to make projects with the people that are going to work in the long-term process, because then they feel that the project is a safe place. They can talk about whatever they need. Make sure it is a safe place where you can talk about the topic, and no one is going to dismiss you because of your age. Having a leader figure with previous training about working in groups who will facilitate the process is important. Make this safe place from the beginning of the project. So do activities to get to know each other. Because you need to trust that people don't mind if you say something wrong or that's not related to the topic. These kinds of things make people empower themselves, and know that they can do things without other people telling them what to do."

Yaiza, Spain
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people... **making sure the project benefits participants**

"It's about personal development. Some young people are already pretty active in participation projects, and they're very driven or ambitious. For them, many will take every opportunity that comes their way. Others might be on a more passive spectrum and need to be motivated in their own way. It could simply be about something that is very close to them on a personal level, so they feel a genuine connection to the cause of the project. But some people just want to travel, make new friends, get some new experience, and develop some new skills. It really depends. Either way, I think the key is to create different opportunities for young people to get involved in, explore the value of it, and truly empower them in civic life."

Rafaela, Croatia
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people... **making sure the project benefits participants**

"You need to know that what you are participating in is going to have some results that are tangible."

Yaiza, Spain
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

One tool for thinking about the benefits of joining a participation activity is a **features-to-benefits conversion**. When planning a participation activity, write down a list of all the key features of the project. Next, try to describe each one as a benefit to the young people taking part. This will help you think about how you communicate about your project during recruitment. If you find you do not have enough benefits, you might also need to change your project design!

Feature	Benefits
The purpose of our youth event is to conduct a consultation on environmental issues and youth information.	→ The event focuses on an issue that is important and interesting to many young people (the environment).
The event will bring together young people with senior decision makers from the youth information service.	→ Participants will feel heard and be listened to seriously by people in power.
The outcomes of the event will be used to inform the youth information services' new annual strategy.	→ The event may lead to social change that will improve the lives of young people and their communities.
The event takes place on Saturday, in the youth information centre. It will use non-formal education methods. Lunch is provided.	→ The event will be fun and interactive. → The event is held at a time and place that is convenient and youth-friendly. → There will be opportunities to meet other young people and build relationships with others. → Free pizza.

Advice from young people... **making sure the project benefits participants**

"Young people like to see what are the benefits of the activities, with clear goals to achieve. It is important to set measurable goals, and clearly defined tasks and to clarify what they will learn and why it will be useful."

Maria Bajorek
Eurodesk young journalist

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Choosing communication channels

Many youth information workers will already be familiar with the idea of **communication channels**. Communication channels are methods used to distribute information so it can reach target audiences. Communication channels can be used to communicate information and messages about the possibility of joining a participation activity. Some of the channels that can be used to recruit young people to youth participation activities are:

➜ Social media channels.
➜ Word of mouth - talking directly to potential participants.
➜ Word of mouth - existing participants talking to new recruits.
➜ Presentations and publicity delivered through partner organisations.
➜ Promotion through schools and educational institutions.
➜ Street-based outreach work.

Being asked to participate by someone you know and trust is highly motivating, and is one of the key things that can persuad e young people to take part in a participation activity. This makes face-to-face methods of communication highly effective. For example, giving a presentation about an upcoming opportunity in a school or youth centre can have more impact than placing posters around the school.

One-to-one discussions can also be particularly important when recruiting young people from marginalised backgrounds. These young people may feel uncertain about taking part and be unsure if the project will be welcoming and accessible to them. One strategy is to visit partner organisations, like NGOs who focus on marginalised groups, and meet directly with young people to talk to them about upcoming participation activities. This allows young people to get to know the youth information workers supporting the activities and build up relationships of trust before the activity. Peer-to-peer approaches can also be used in a similar way.

Social media channels, publicity posters and other forms of communication also have a role to play. In any instance, investing the time and resources to recruit participants should be part of the plan for any participation activity. It is also important to continually provide access to information about how young people can participate in your youth information service. This makes sure that any young person in contact with your service can be informed about opportunities available to them.

When planning recruitment for a participation activity, make sure you **inform a much larger number of young people than you are aiming to recruit**. Not everyone who hears about the project will want to participate. If the goal is to recruit 10 participants, aim to inform 100! This will make recruitment more effective. It also helps promote accountability and transparency by making the opportunities to participate more visible.

Advice from young people...

informing young people about the opportunity to participate

"Inform young people fully of what they're getting involved in. They need all the facts before before participating. Give more background and context about the organisation, about the project itself, about the programmes that make it possible to how young people can be involved after the activity. So definitely, I think a big barrier that young people face to participation is that they don't know how to participate and they don't know where to do it. So they need information in every sense of the word."

Caterina, Croatia/Italy ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people...

informing young people about the opportunity to participate

"It is important to share new opportunities, because, especially for young people in rural areas, they don't always know what's going on. You have to bring things closer to them."

Maylinda, Albania EYCA Youth Panel Member

Recruitment and outreach planner

Who will the theme of the activity be relevant to?	→ Any young person - the theme affects everyone → Young people who have experiences of accessing youth information services → Young people who have in-depth experience of our youth information service, like volunteers and ambassadors → Young people from a specific social background: ....
What is the target group for recruitment?	....
What barriers might marginalised young people face to taking part in the activity?	→ Accessibility barriers → Communication barriers → Financial barriers → Discrimination barriers → Transport barriers → Language barriers → Lack of a safe space → Concerns about not being welcome → Lack of awareness about the activity → Lack of interest in the opportunities offered → Other:
What steps will be put in place to remove these barriers?	....
Describe the benefits for young people joining the participation activity? What would motivate them to take part?	....
What channels will be used to inform young people about the possibility of joining?	....

(2.4) Providing space and support during youth participation activities

Just like any other youth project, being **youth-friendly** is a key part of running participation activities. For meaningful participation to occur, young people need space and support to take part effectively. Time and resources are required to ensure the young people are adequately supported, prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to participate. Different young people may need different levels of support. It is important to design your activities in an accessible way that meets the needs of the young people involved.

The environments and working methods should be adapted to meet the capacities and competencies of the participants. The goal should be to ensure that participation is fun, accessible and understandable to all. Some things to consider are:

→ Making sure that **meeting times are suitable** for the young people involved. Different age young people will have different needs, participation activities may need to fit around their formal education, work or family commitments.

→ Holding activities in **venues and spaces that are relaxed**, comfortable and welcoming to young people. Activities held within spaces and places that young people are already accessing (such as a local youth centre) can help people feel familiar and comfortable in the setting.

→ Making sure that the topics discussed are presented in an **easy to understand, accessible manner**. It might be necessary to produce accessible and clear material to share with young people before the activity takes place.

→ Using non-formal education methods and techniques to make the process **interactive, fun and engaging** for everyone. Creative methods such as art, music and game-based learning can also be used to help young people express their views and voices.

Advice from young people...

supporting young people and making safe spaces

"It is important to communicate at the outset that the space in which you operate is a place where no one is judged and their views are respected, even if there is a difference in them. Therefore, it is extremely important to verbally communicate this respect. It is also necessary to take care of the physical space, preferably one in which young people feel comfortable, as this will make it easier for them to share their thoughts. Inclusive language, in which no one is left out and respected for who they are, is also extremely important today. An approach of understanding, respect and inner warmth will certainly help the young ones too."

Anna, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist

Building **a safe space and culture of dialogue and mutual respect** in activities is crucial. Participation activities need a diversity of views and opinions to be expressed to be successful. It is important to create an environment where the views of everyone are valued. Young people's views should be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities themselves. Youth information service decision makers and supporting workers involved need to have a genuine commitment to valuing the views of young people. It is important to create safe environments where young people are welcome and encouraged to express their views, and where differences of views are expected and encouraged. Negotiating ground rules and setting expectations at the start of activities can help with this. Informal activities such as icebreakers and team building exercises can also help build relationships and trust between participants.

When providing space and support for youth participation activities **the role of a supporting worker** is vital. A skilled youth information worker who is trained in non-formal education methods and understands youth participation can help support young people throughout the participation activity. This can mean acting as a facilitator and hosting activities. One-to-one support for the young people involved can also be vital, and may be needed before, during and after the activity. Like any youth project there is a need for someone to plan, design and develop activities as well as to provide ongoing support for young people to take part in them.

Advice from young people...

supporting young people and making safe spaces

"Participation and interaction with youth information workers should be a two-way process. Young people should be able to learn something, but also the youth information workers should let young people teach them something in return, and really be willing to learn something from young people. It should be a collaborative process of give and take."

Rafaela, Croatia
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Providing space and support digitally

Not all participation activities have to take place face-to-face. Digital communication tools such as social media, the internet, instant messaging and video calling are an increasing part of our lives and youth participation activities are no exception to this. Youth participation activities can take place entirely in a digital format, or they can be a hybrid approach of using face-to-face activities and digital methods. When using digital tools within a participation activity, all of the general principles for meaningful youth participation apply. However, there are also some additional aspects to consider about how young people are supported whilst using digital tools:

1. **Digital tools create a unique space for participants to interact and communicate** with each other, and with youth information workers. This **space needs to be moderated and kept safe**. Unlike a physical space, such as a project meeting or youth information centre, digital spaces have a much broader range of ways through which participants can interact. Depending on the digital tools used, digital spaces can be continuously accessible (such as a WhatsApp chat) or only open at certain times (such as a video call). Digital tools can allow anyone with an account to express their view (such as a public social media comment thread), or they can be restricted just to specific participants (such as an invite only Facebook group). These possibilities can create extra challenges for how the space is moderated and kept safe for users by the youth information workers. It is important to consider how the general principles for supporting young people in this chapter can be applied within the digital spaces, and then choose and operate digital tools in a way that best supports this.

2. **Data privacy needs to be respected.** The youth information service must be in compliance with personal data privacy laws in their country. Before using any digital tool it is important to assess how these might apply, and how project participants' data rights will be respected.

3. **Digital tools and spaces may not always be inclusive.** Whilst digital tools are a common part of many young people's lives, this does not mean that all digital tools are inclusive to all young people. Access to devices and data, software usability issues or lack of media literacy competencies may all be factors that exclude some young people. Just like a face-to-face project, it is important to **assess who might be excluded** and take steps to overcome this.

4. **Identify the tools and spaces that young people use.** Digital usage habits vary greatly, especially between generations. Your organisation might use a particular piece of video chat software for its staff, but this does not mean that young people will like or be familiar with this software. Using tools that young people are not familiar with creates additional barriers and steps to engaging participants. However, sometimes this may be necessary. In this case, support to help participants use the tool may be needed.

For more support around running digital youth participation activities, try these resources:
- Youth part: *Guidelines for successful e-participation by young people*
- The *Digital Youth Work EU* website

Advice from young people... how best to inform young people?

"We should tailor all content appropriately to our target audience and skillfully choose the appropriate form of communication. Thus, it is worth ensuring that we are present on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn. Face-to-face meetings are also important, so in order to include as many young people as possible, informational meetings should be organised in schools and universities. It is also important to participate in various fairs and especially job fairs, travel fairs or career days. It is worth preparing outdoor advertisements, especially in urban-rural spaces (bus stops, schools, galleries, etc.). Taking care of the effectiveness of the information, it is also essential to remember that many people learn about the opportunities to participate from their friends from schools or universities. This shows that long-lasting results will come from taking care of those who are currently active, as they are the ones who can continue to pass on the knowledge they have gained and encourage others to take action."

Kacper, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist

Space and support for young people to lead

Supporting young people to take the lead in youth participation activities is a way of sharing power with young people, and giving them control over the way in which their participation happens. This helps ensure that the topics focused on are more relevant to participants (as they will have been chosen by young people themselves) and also ensures that the methods used are youth-friendly.

Young people taking the lead can mean both:

➜ Supporting young people to plan, design, deliver and evaluate **youth information projects** - *such as through peer-to-peer education*, and

➜ Supporting young people to plan, design, deliver and evaluate **activities for youth participation** - *such as young volunteers designing a consultation with other young people, or taking the lead in facilitating meetings*.

Collaboration between youth information services and young people is required for both of these approaches. **Young people need effective support and training** to help them to take on leadership roles. **Non-formal education methods and experiential learning** are ways of supporting this. Using experiential learning, youth information services can work collaboratively with young people to develop their work and to enable young people to be active leaders in the delivery of youth information services. This approach can support young people to begin leading the changes they want to see. The learning process is described in the cycle of experiential learning:

Experience
What is young people's current experience of youth information?

Reflecting & planning
Identifying improvements, issues and developing a plan of action to address them.

The Cycle of Experiential Learning [9]

Evaluating
What was learnt from implementing? What needs to happen next?

Implementing
Youth information services & young people work together to implement a plan of action.

[9] *This model is based on Kolb, D.A.,et al , 2001. Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions. Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles 1, 227–247. It is adapted here specifically for youth information services.*

The cycle has four stages:

1. **Experiencing** - the cycle starts from young people's experience of accessing youth information and using youth information services. This experience informs their views and opinions about the quality of youth information they are receiving.

2. **Reflecting and planning** - in this stage, young people reflect on their experience of youth information. They identify strengths and weaknesses as well as areas for improvement in the youth information services. Based on this, the young people and youth information services work together to develop plans for action and improvement.

3. **Implementing** - next, youth information services work with the young people to implement the plans for action. This could mean young people actively developing new content, delivering a new project, running a consultation event or a variety of other things. In any instance, young people should be actively involved in the implementation, taking a role in leading it.

4. **Evaluating** - after the plan has been implemented, young people and youth information services work together to evaluate what difference it made. Did it improve the youth information in the way young people were hoping?

At this point the cycle starts again. Young people will have a new experience of information services, based on their experience of trying to implement their actions. They can begin again to reflect on these experiences and identify further areas for development and improvement. Their leadership skills and competencies will also have developed, enabling them to take on more and more leadership within the process as the cycle repeats.

Advice from young people...

supporting young people to be leaders

"Whenever you think the group is ready to start participating alone, you will have to be with them, even if you let them start doing their things by themselves. So I think that you have to be patient and go with a group until they are ready to start doing things by themselves. And that could be a year, that could be two years, but it's a solid standard - you have to be with them."

Yaiza, Spain
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people...

supporting young people to be leaders

"They need to be shown the way and, above all, motivated at the very beginning of this journey. During this, one must invariably provide mental support. It is important to appreciate their work, as being a leader is extremely difficult. There should also be training for leaders to help them manage the group and expand the competence and skills necessary for decision-making and group management."

Anna, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist

Checklist: Space and support for youth participation

If you can check every item, you can be confident that young people will be well supported and the environment and working methods are youth-friendly.

Checklist

O   The activity will take place at a time that is suitable and accessible for the young people involved.

O   The activity will take place in a space (physical or digital) that is welcoming, accessible, and friendly for the young people involved.

O   Information about topics to be discussed during the activity will be shared with young people in a way that is easily understandable to them.

O   The methods and formats used during the activity will be friendly, fun and accessible to the young people involved.

O   During the activity steps will be taken to ensure a diversity of opinions is valued and the contributions of all young people are listened to.

O   The methods, information and formats used in the activity will be adaptable to meet the needs and capacities of a range of different young people.

O   The youth information workers who will be supporting the activity have the relevant competences and attitude, training and guidance to support youth participation effectively.

O   During the activity steps will be taken to ensure that the space is safe and supportive for all young people taking part.

O   The youth information service decision makers involved in the activity have a genuine commitment to youth participation.

O   The activity provides opportunities for young people to take a lead in how youth participation activities are designed and run.

Notes

Describe how you will be supporting young people during the youth participation activity. What steps will you take to check all of the boxes above?

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....

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2.5 Following up with change: Being accountable and transparent

Youth participation in youth information services is about enabling young people to influence and create change. In any participation activity it is important to be transparent about the **scope, purpose and potential impact or changes** that the participation activity can lead to. Youth information services need to be **accountable to the young people involved**, showing clearly how and where they have made changes based on the views expressed by young people about youth information.

Accountability and transparency are especially important for youth participation activities that enable young people to express their views to youth information service decision makers. In these activities **young people make recommendations and suggest ideas for change**. There is an expectation that the decision makers act upon and try to implement these recommendations. This means approaching participation with a genuine commitment to acting on what young people say and taking their views into account.

However, even decision makers who are fully committed to listening to young people will not be able to take forward all of the ideas and suggestions made during a participation activity. There may be several reasons for this:

→ **The decision makers involved may not have enough authority** - e.g. young people identify the need for a national law on youth information. The youth information service managers involved in the activity cannot implement this themselves, as only other government levels and legislators can make laws.

→ **The decision makers involved may not have enough budget and resources** - e.g. young people suggest a new youth information centre should be built in the city centre. The youth information service managers involved in the activity agree, but do not have the budget for this.

→ **There may be genuine problems with the ideas suggested** - e.g. young people suggest that TikTok should be used as the main channel for a new youth information campaign. The youth information service is government run and so is prevented from using TikTok as it is run by Chinese State Media.

Another factor is the time required to implement changes. This is especially the case for bigger more complex ideas. It can also be challenging to make change quickly when youth information services are based in public entities, which will be affected by a range of political priorities and agendas subject to change. Take the example above where the youth information service managers and young people both agree that a new youth information centre should be built. The youth information service managers could begin to raise some funding for this, and eventually a new centre might be created. This process will take several years. This means that many young people involved in the original participation activity will not see the direct benefit of the changes. They may be too old to need youth information services by the time the centre is built!

Any participation activity needs to communicate several things clearly to the young people involved:

1. **What is the scope and purpose of the activity?** Which topics and issues will the activity focus on? Which topics and issues fall outside of the purpose of the activity?

2. **What will happen to the things that young people say during the activity?** How will these be communicated to decision makers? How do decision makers expect to use them?

3. **What happened after the activity?** What changes did decision makers make? What changes are being planned? Which changes are they unable to make and why?

Advice from young people...

giving feedback

"It's important to provide feedback because this will determine if you will participate in another project, are you going to stay there and participate more? Let young people know what they have done. Tell them that they have participated in a project and the project has succeeded. Some results are thanks to them, because they made that happen. And it's a moment in which you can tell people just be patient, because this is going to have a result, you can't see it now, but in the future, you're going to have these results. You have to make at least one meeting to motivate people and to make them remember that they are in this process."

Yaiza, Spain
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

This can be achieved by creating a feedback loop. This involves clear communication before the activity about its scope and purpose, followed by feedback after the activity about how their views have been taken into account:

Informing participants

Before make sure everyone is fully informed of:

1. The purpose of the activity,
2. The topic of the activity,
3. What changes can (and cannot) be realistically expected,
4. How young people's views will be communicated to decision makers.

Communicating with decision makers

During or soon after the activity views and recommendations made by young people are communicated clearly to decision makers.

Youth participation feedback loop

Giving feedback

After the activity feedback is given to the participants and other young people about:

1. The changes that were made or planned based on the results of the activity,
2. Which changes could not be implemented, and why.

Making decisions

Decision makers meaningfully engage with the results of the activity when taking decisions. In most case this will happen after the participation activity.

The feedback given to young people after an activity should be[10]:

➜ **Full:** Decision makers need to explain what they agreed and disagreed with about young people's suggestions. They need to outline how and when the ideas will be taken forward.

➜ **Friendly:** The feedback should be communicated in a way that is youth-friendly and understandable.

➜ **Fast:** Feedback needs to be delivered quickly after an activity.

➜ **Followed-up:** The feedback should be part of a process of ongoing dialogue with further opportunities for young people to engage in youth participation activities.

You can use the feedback planner tool on the next page to help plan what feedback you will need to give to young people after your participation activity.

[10] *This concept of Full, Friendly, Fast and Followed-up feedback is adapted from Lundy, L. (2018) 'In defence of tokenism? Implementing children's right to participate in collective decision-making', Childhood, 25(3), pp. 340–354. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568218777292*

Feedback planner

Suggestion or recommendation made by young people during the participation activity	FEEDBACK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE These three columns will tell what feedback needs to be given to young people.		
	Names of decision maker the recommendation was shared with	Action the decision makers took	Areas that could not be acted upon by the decision maker, and reasons for this

Principles for Youth Participation

Transparent & informative

young people friendly

Inclusive

Supported by training

Respectful

Voluntary

Relevant

Accountable

Safe & sensitive to risk

Co-funded by the European Union

eurodesk

y eryica

european youth information and counselling agency

Creating Youth Information with Young People

3.1 Creating youth information the participatory way

Creating youth information with young people enables them to get hands on with influencing the sorts of information a youth information service is producing. It involves young people directly in making decisions about the youth information that is produced. This can include the **topics, content, and design of youth information** as well as how youth information is disseminated.

This model of participation can feel **highly relevant** to the young people involved. All young people are consumers of information, and they will see the outcomes of their involvement quickly. When the information they help create is disseminated, participants will easily be able to identify the influence their participation has had.

This chapter outlines two models for involving young people in the creation of youth information:

→ **Young people as content creators** - this method enables young people to create individual pieces of youth information and become 'young journalists' or content producers.

→ **Co-designing youth information campaigns and material** - this method enables young people to plan and design youth information campaigns and material by working collaboratively with youth information workers.

Advice from young people...

how to enable all young people to participate?

"One of the ways is to reach young people through local youth workers who are familiar with young people and their needs. In this way, the trust of young people can also be strengthened."

Maria Bajorek
Eurodesk young journalist

3.2 Young people as content creators

Supporting young people to become content creators, sometimes called **"young journalists",** is a simple and effective way to enable young people to participate directly in youth information services. This method of participation is based on young people taking on voluntary roles to produce news articles, social media posts or other forms of youth information. This information can then be disseminated by the youth information service, or young people might also take a role in dissemination (see Chapter 4). By being involved directly in content production, **young people take decisions and influence the content that is produced**.

Training and support for young people is a key part of this method of participation. Participants need to develop the skills needed to create quality youth information. The opportunity to develop media and information literacy and journalistic skills is also one of the things that can motivate and attract people to the project - making it particularly but not exclusively suitable for young people who are seeking a future career in this area.

Quality control and editorial support is also needed. Any content produced by young people should conform to the same standards and quality that the youth information service applies to all of its work. It is important to have processes in place so that the young people understand and are supported to meet any quality requirements. This means being **transparent** and clear about how any pieces of content young people produce may need to be approved or edited by the youth information service. It is important to make sure participants are fully **informed** about this at the start of the project.
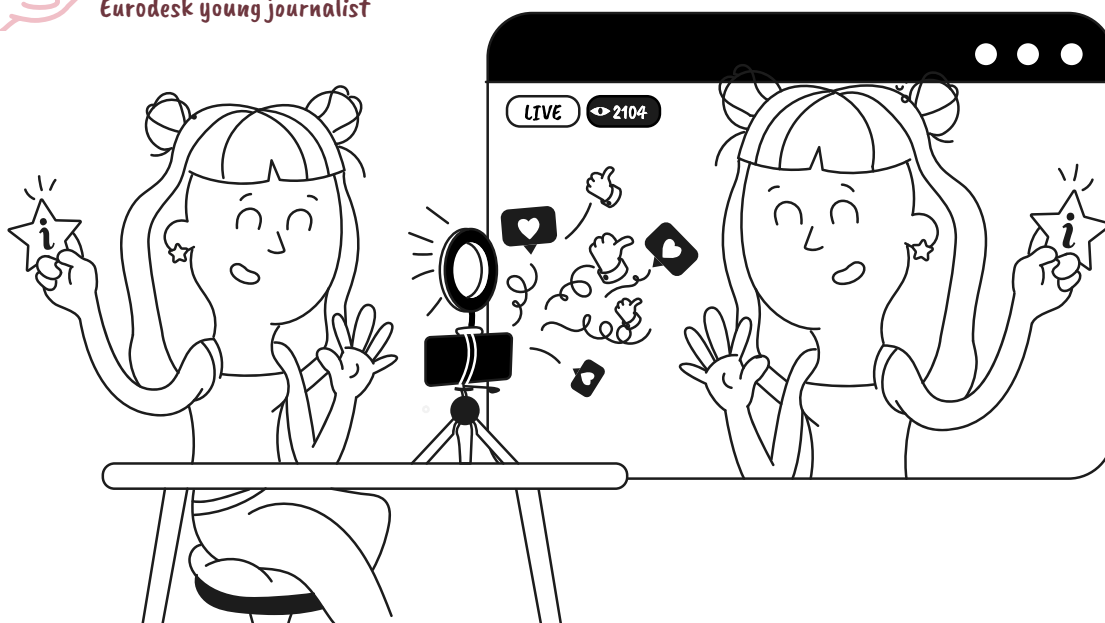
Supporting young people to create quality youth information

When involved in content creation, young people will need training and ongoing guidance from the youth information workers. Young people bring valuable youth perspectives and ideas to the table; everyone has something to convey to their community or the larger public. However, creating quality content also requires specific expertise and skills. No matter if it is an article for a website, or a set of social media posts, successfully developing youth information requires learning a range of different competences. Young people involved in content creation will need training to develop these competences.

Based on their own experience, **Rafaela Landikusic, a young journalist from Croatia**, advises that basic training for content producers is needed in several areas:

1. **The importance of objective writing** - if we're reporting on something we don't agree with or are in favour of, it is still necessary to objectively deliver the facts about it, without trying to influence the audience, but provide enough credible data for them to form their own opinion on it.

2. **The need to verify information** - with social media as one of our main sources of information, it is easy to mistakenly include a fake story element in our article; it is important to be responsible and double-check our sources.

3. **Avoiding plagiarism** - the piece we're writing should be our own, even if the story is mainstream, it should include the writer's factor of originality, and all sources must be cited in an accurate way.

4. **The purpose of storytelling** - the writing should be clear for anyone to understand the heart of the matter that is being portrayed.

5. **Style** - technical information about appropriate style or story structure for the content being created. Design training might also be needed if graphical content is involved.

Depending on the needs of the young people this initial training on media and information literacy can be delivered through a short webinar, meeting, or a simple toolkit.

After the training, youth information workers can then take on a role similar to an editor and support the young people to develop specific pieces of content. According to Rafaela, an 'editor' can offer help to develop an initial idea and prepare a first draft. This is a great way to approach someone who is still preparing a story, or wants to write but is unsure and needs more input or inspiration. After a draft is ready, an editing process begins in which the editor points out everything that needs to be clarified, shortened, or changed in any way. During the process, the editor should also be available for any questions or further suggestions, while being attentive and striving to help produce a good quality article.

Good practices and initiatives

Žinau viską (I know all)
Youth Journalists
Lithuania

The "I know all" youth journalists programme, run by the _Lithuanian Youth Council, LiJOT- Eurodesk Lithuania_, connects young people who are interested in journalism, writing, photography, and other types of media creation. This programme gives young people an opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills necessary for journalism and provides a step towards career development. The young journalists are responsible for writing stories on the project website _"Žinau viską"_. They post about opportunities and news for young people. They also produce an annual magazine, in which they interview well-known specialists who can provide advice for young people.

Top Ton Pro
France

Watch streams recordings of the Top Ton Pro streamers

The "Top Ton Pro" is run by the organisation _Info Jeunes Occitanie_ (CIDJ France). The project allows young people (either supported through professional integration or as volunteers) to carry out Twitch lives for other young people and to interview a professional about their job. The aim is to provide peer-to-peer information, through a channel that they use, on jobs in short supply and professional paths chosen by young people. Some of the skills mobilised by this project are: getting information about the job beforehand, meeting a professional to prepare for an interview, learning how to work as a team, gaining confidence in front of the camera, and developing journalistic and media skills. A group of 10 young people took part in the organisation of 5 "Top Ton Pro" lives. Around 20 people were connected live and 500 watched them as replays.

The pool of European young journalists

In light of the European Year of Youth 2022, the *pool of European young journalists* was created by Eurodesk and the European Commission. It aimed to give a voice to young people by involving them in content creation and providing visibility to their projects. The European pool of young journalists consisted of 11 young people from 5 countries. They produced storytelling content (articles, videos and podcasts) on the European Year of Youth dedicated page, *accessible through the European Youth Portal,* on topics relevant to young people. This ensured the provision of peer-to-peer information and the building of a youth community behind the European Year of Youth and European Young Journalists. These young people were also involved in events all around Europe organised during the Year of Youth. To support their work, the young journalists received training from experts in the field of journalism.

3.4 Co-designing youth information campaigns and projects

Co-design is an in-depth and extensive way of involving young people in the production of youth information. Rather than just involving young people in creating single pieces of content, co-design involves young people in **developing the entire information campaign or project from start to finish**. Co-design can be used in all stages of the project or campaign design process, but works especially in the early stages of developing ideas and planning.

Co-design methods are based on **young people working directly with youth information workers** to collaboratively plan and shape the information campaign or project. They typically involve a series of facilitated co-design workshops which bring together both groups into dialogue to reach shared decisions about campaign or project design.

During the workshops, youth information workers and young people **share power when making decisions**, and a high level of participation is aimed for (see Chapter 1, the Ladder of Participation). Both groups bring differing points of view and expertise on how the campaign should develop. The approach enables young people to become an active part of the creative development whilst still drawing on the expertise of youth information workers.

Further resources

Resources for co-design workshops can be found in:

📎 Ideo.org's *'Field guide to human centred design"*
📎 Co.Create. *Trainings videos on co-design* and *best practice report.*

You can also read the section on service design in Chapter 6. Service design is a specific form of co-design methodology used at the service level.

Other key components of co-design include:

➔ **Drawing on the lived experience of the campaign audience or project target group** - young people involved in the co-design process should be the intended audience of the youth information campaign or project. In some cases, this might mean a representative and inclusive group of young people. However, if the project or campaign is targeted at a specific group of young people, these young people should be the ones involved in the co-design process (see Chapter 2).

➔ **Continual involvement from start to finish** - co-design involves young people across the entire process of campaign or project design, from framing the issue to developing and testing draft content. Youth information workers working on the project or campaign need to commit to postponing design decisions until after they have received feedback and dialogue from young people and then they should develop ideas and solutions based directly on this feedback.

➔ **An outcome focus** – co-design process needs a clear scope and end goal. In the case of youth information this means creating, running and evaluating a specific youth information campaign or project. Once the campaign or project is completed, the co-design process comes to an end. A new co-design process can then be launched for a new youth information campaign or project.

➔ **An iterative process** – ideas, activities and content for the campaign or project should be continually tested and evaluated with young people. This can mean testing initial drafts and prototypes as well as gaining audience feedback after content has launched. This allows changes and adaptations to be made throughout the duration of the campaign or project, based on young people's feedback.

Stages of co-designing a campaign or project

Co-design workshops happen in a series of stages. **Workshops are led by a facilitator** using a range of **creative facilitation methods** designed to structure the discussion to achieve key outcomes. The exact process can vary, but it is common for multiple workshops with participants and youth information workers to take place. Different young people can be involved in different stages of the process. This can be particularly valuable, as it allows co-design to happen on a long-term basis, even over several years, without requiring extended commitment from the same participants.

Stage 1
Understanding and defining the issues

Participants learn from each other and define the issue and challenges that the information campaign is intended to address. This stage focuses on defining the campaign audience or target group, understanding their information needs, and gathering insights about the issues. This can be particularly important if the audience or target group is from a background whose experiences may be very specific, such as young refugees or young people from LGBTQIA+ backgrounds.

The goals and objectives of the information campaign are agreed upon. Key objectives, activities, messages, themes, content types and channels are defined.

Stage 2
Developing potential campaign or project ideas

Stage 3
Prototyping concepts and user testing

In the case of information campaigns, campaign content is co-designed and prototyped. The prototypes are tested with the campaign audience to gain early feedback. In the case of projects, activities and tools can be developed and piloted on a small scale.

After the initial planning process is complete, two more stages can occur:

The youth information services disseminate campaign content, or launch the project. Young people can be actively involved in dissemination or delivery.

Stage 4
Implementation

In a long-term campaign or project, user feedback can also be brought back into co-production workshops after implementation. This allows the earlier co-production stages to be repeated. Workshop participants can refine and improve the initiative as it moves forward, based on the new insights from the user feedback.

Stage 5
User feedback and evaluation

User feedback is gathered and the effectiveness of the campaign or project is evaluated (see Chapter 6 for more on evaluation).

3.5 Good practices and initiatives

Web radio
Italy

The organisation _Associazione Link_ runs the youth web radio _Agoradio_. Topics for the podcast are open to proposals from young people and they are also linked to the implementation of specific projects run by the organisation. Young people participate in the process of producing the podcasts, as well as disseminating them through social media platforms. The project has been running for three years and the organisation identifies it as a powerful tool to promote active citizenship and participation, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Once a month the participants in the web radio project meet to discuss the previous month's activities and make plans for the coming month. The organisation also provides specific training sessions for young people on presentation skills and the technical aspects of web radio.

Young Scot advises other organisations who want to co-design an information campaign for young people to:

→ Give young people control designing information campaigns and ensure they are led by young people for young people.
→ Allow young people's voices to be heard.
→ Empower young people to be system changers and influencers by sharing power,

#MakeTimeTo mental health information campaign
Scotland, UK

This project was created by _Young Scot_ – the national youth information and citizenship chzarity in Scotland (UK). As part of our _#AyeFeel initiative_, Young Scot launched a campaign called _#MakeTimeTo_, fully co-designed with young people. It encouraged young people to make time for themselves and their mental health. The campaign was designed with 25 young volunteers (aged 14-25-years-old). The goal for our young volunteers was to create a campaign that encouraged young people to #MakeTimeTo prioritise their mental health. Involving young people at the core of the information campaign ensured the final idea was based on the needs of current and future citizens. This campaign was a great success, reaching over 3,341,588 people, with 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the advertising is clear that young people should make time to look after their mental health.

Eurodesk
BeEurope project

Throughout the European Year of Youth, Eurodesk developed the BeEurope show to put the spotlight on young people living in Europe and understand "what it means to be a young European in 2022". With 14 episodes and 15 youngsters from different European countries, the aim was to interview and explore how younger people experience their European identity and seize the opportunities dedicated to them. Most of the interviewees participated in European programmes (projects abroad, youth participation initiatives, youth exchanges, volunteering, etc.) and the topics of the podcasts were connected to their interests (e.g. sustainable development, LGBTQIA+, solidarity). The show was a great way to share those experiences and inspire others.

The BeEurope show was co-hosted by Harry McCann, a member of the 2022 pool of European young journalists and Mirea Pla Mateu, a young intern at Eurodesk Brussels Link. The young interviewees, together with the guidance of their national coordinators, chose the topics that they wanted to talk about during the show. The project was therefore co-designed by young people for young people, making it as close as possible to their interests and personal realities.

The show was recorded live on Twitch.

All episodes are available on YouTube and Spotify.
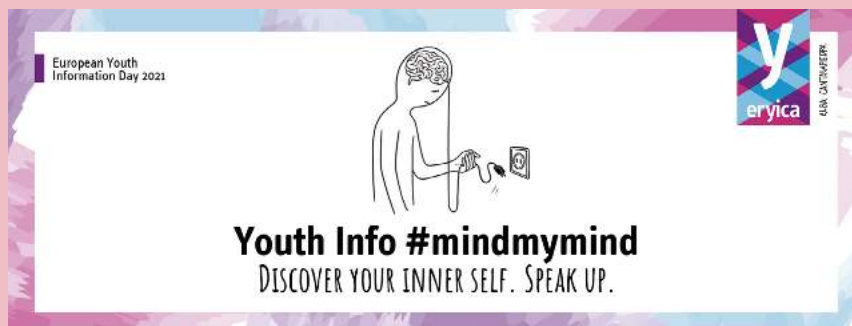
ERYICA
#mindmymind campaign

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to pay special attention to young people's mental health. Following a consultation with ERYICA members, who highlighted the most recurrent issues raised by young people in touch with youth information services, it was decided that the theme for the European Youth Information Day (EYID) 2021 campaign should be mental health.

Although strategically designed by the ERYICA Secretariat, the campaign was co-designed with young people. In the first phase, young Europeans were asked how the previous year's situation had affected their mental and emotional well-being. More than 1,800 responses were r eceived from young people of 42 nationalities. These testimonials helped a young designer to draw ten images that brought together the different feelings of young people. These were the basis of the awareness-raising campaign on the importance of fighting the stigma around mental health issues and normalising the need to ask for help. The campaign was disseminated during the first two weeks of April on the occasion of EYID21. It reached more than 170,000 impressions and was translated into 16 European languages. The full report on the campaign can be accessed *here*.

How best to give feedback to young volunteers to keep them active and motivated?
Tips from Kacper Król, young journalist

The development of any competence is a long process, which consists of many elements. The key issue, on which most often depends, is the feedback we get from the other person. Therefore, it is worth considering what effective feedback should look like - so that we ourselves will be able to present it effectively to others. Feedback occurs whenever a certain task is carried out, and basically refers to two aspects: whether the task was carried out as intended, and how the task was carried out. And this is the first, very important conclusion - when presenting feedback, we must take care not only to assess the effect of the evaluated action, but also the entire process that leads to it. For it often happens that the goal has not been fully realized, but the person we are evaluating has developed - so we must note this and include it in our feedback. In this way, the person to whom the feedback is given will be able to learn a lot about his work and use the tips received in the future. It is through feedback that we can easily and effectively learn lessons from our actions and find out ways to further develop and find motivation for action. Feedback can take many forms:

1. **Corrective** - if we're reporting on something we don't agree with or are in favour of, it is still necessary to objectively deliver the facts about it, without trying to influence the audience, but provide enough credible data for them to form their own opinion on it.

2. **Praising** - with social media as one of our main sources of information, it is easy to mistakenly include a fake story element in our article; it is important to be responsible and double-check our sources.

3. **Educational** - the piece we're writing should be our own, even if the story is mainstream, it should include the writer's factor of originality, and all sources must be cited in an accurate way.

4. **Motivating** - the writing should be clear for anyone to understand the heart of the matter that is being portrayed.

5. **Relating to the purpose of the task** - technical information about appropriate style or story structure for the content being created. Design training might also be needed if graphical content is involved.

6. **Objective** - that the feedback should be objective is extremely important from the perspective of the person to whom the feedback relates. We need to ensure that an excess of emotion does not cause us to make unfair judgments or prejudices in our evaluation.
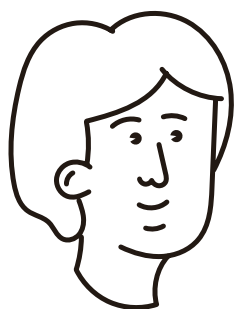
Involving Young People as Peer Educators
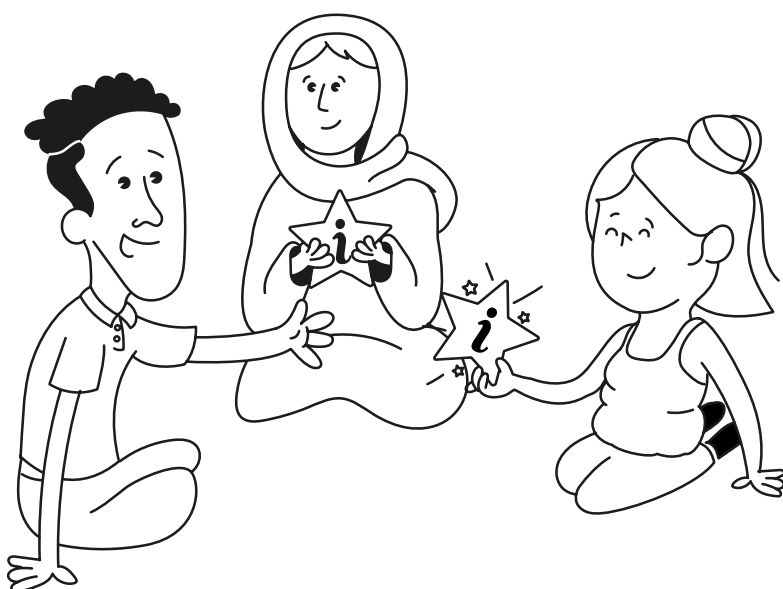
4.1 What do peer educators do?

This chapter outlines the way peer-to-peer education can be used as a model of youth participation. Peer-to-peer education enables young people to take **active leadership roles** within youth information services. It involves **peer educators** who provide quality first-hand information to other young people and refer their peers to youth information services. They also work with the youth information services to prepare, develop, and disseminate the information content.

Peer educators are young people who voluntarily carry out informal or organised youth information activities with their peers. They do this at youth information centres, youth centres and clubs, places of education, youth associations, leisure and recreation venues and other youth spaces.

Peer education can be **as simple as talking informally** with a friend about a particular issue of concern. It can also be based around peer educators **running structured peer education activities** to other groups of young people, to deliver information on specific topics.

By delivering youth information activities, young people gain direct influence over the youth information that is shared with other young people. Peer educators develop their skills and potential throughout the project. They can **learn from their experiences** and work collaboratively with the youth information service to improve the quality and outreach of the youth information activities they deliver. Peer educators allow for a decentralising of youth information and the possibility to establish a direct connection with young people through a model of horizontal communication between equals.

Peer educators act as **transmitters of information in a double sense** by collecting the concerns and needs of young people they are working with. They share these concerns with the youth information service, and can provide feedback on the current quality of youth information. The service can then use this information to develop new youth information and outreach tools.

Advice from young people...

support to peer educators

"Those who already work as peer educators should be listened to - they know best what each of them needs. Those who could potentially be peer educators should be trained and it would really help them to have some useful tools. All of the youth should be acknowledged, that they can be peer educators and have a big influence on their peers."

**Maria Bajorek
Eurodesk young journalist**

Advice from young people...

recruit and support peer educators

"To encourage young people to spread information close to their hearts, it is necessary to point out the reasons that can cause it to grow into something much bigger. Also, offer them appropriate conditions and specific cooperation. Young people often learn about the programs from their friends and choose to do so because they hear vivid stories that convince them. It is therefore important to reach out to young people and meet them in their communities. Social media also plays an important role, but it's critical that young people with experience also appear in those media."

**Anna, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist**

4.2 Recruiting and motivating peer educators

Any peer education project begins with the recruitment of peer educators. When recruiting and selecting young people, it is important to consider **what is meant by a 'peer'**. The word peer comes from the Latin word 'par' which means equal to or 'on par with'. Peer education is based on the principle that youth **information delivered by an equal is often seen as more credible and trustworthy** than one delivered by authority figures. Young people being educated by peer educators need to identify with them as someone who is 'like' themselves and in some way equal to them.

"A peer is a person who belongs to the same social group as another person or group. Peers are individuals who share related values, experiences and lifestyles and who are approximately the same age."

Peer-to-Peer in Youth Information
Training manual for youth information workers, trainers and peer educators

The 'peer' aspect can also be based on **other parts of a person's identity and background** such as ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, health status, or living location.

When recruiting and selecting peer educators, it is important to think about the young people they will educate. In general, peer educators should come from the same group as the young people they are working with. Examples could include:

➔ Young people delivering peer education to other young people in their school,
➔ Young immigrants delivering welcoming programmes to new immigrants,
➔ Young people delivering programmes to young people in their neighbourhood that they are friends with.

No two people are exactly alike, so the extent that someone is perceived as a peer by participants will vary from person to person.

Above all, peer educators need to be motivated and interested in taking on voluntary roles. Being a peer educator requires an extended commitment from young people. To be attractive and motivating the role should provide benefits to the young people involved. These can include:

➔ The opportunity to develop new skills as a facilitator or trainer,
➔ Formal recognition for the voluntary work undertaken - through accreditation and validation,
➔ The opportunity to address youth information issues that the peer educators are personally motivated by.

Benefits should be communicated clearly during recruitment (see Chapter 2). It is also important to communicate transparently what commitment is required for the role, as well as what support is provided. Developing clear guidelines, or even a job description, can be useful.

4.3 **Training and supporting peer educators**

After recruiting peer educators, it is necessary to provide initial training to **help participants develop their competences in peer-to-peer education.** Training can be delivered in a variety of formats, but non-formal education techniques which support a group of young people to work collaboratively together are recommended.

An initial peer educators training should enable young people to:

➜ Develop their understanding of the role of a peer educator, and what peer education is,
➜ Develop the communication skills relevant for peer educators - such as presentation and facilitation skills,
➜ Learn how to use different youth information tools with other young people,
➜ Plan and design activities to run with their peers.

By using a group work approach, participants can learn together and share experiences. They can plan and develop peer-to-peer activities that they will run together after the training. This allows them to learn from each other both during the training and through the delivery of their activities.

Following the initial training, peer educators then deliver the activities they have planned to their peers. Depending on the competences and needs of the peer educators, they may still need ongoing support from a youth information worker during this period. This support can range from accounting and collaborating with peer educators during delivery, to simply providing a point of contact for further advice and guidance.

After peer educators have delivered the activity they planned, a second training can be held. This can be used to support peer educators to reflect on and evaluate the success of their work. It also provides a valuable point for them to give feedback to the youth information service on the sorts of youth information tools they need to move forward. Future peer-to-peer activities can be planned building on what has been learnt. The cycle experiential learning (Chapter 2) describes the learning process peer educators go through. Following this cycle enables peer-to-peer educators to develop their skills and potential whilst also improving the quality of youth information that is delivered.
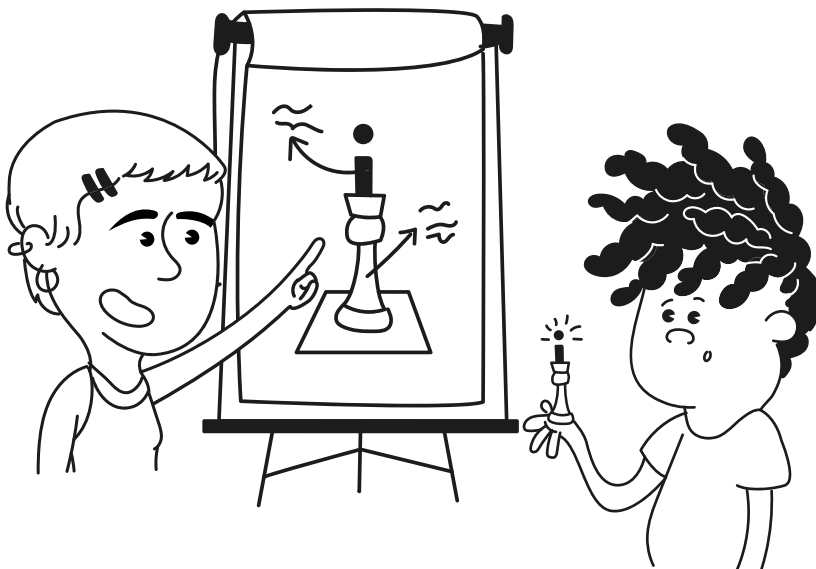
Peer-to-peer training resources

For more support around running digital youth participation activities, try these resources:
🖉 *Peer-to-Peer in Youth Information: Training manual for youth information workers, trainers and peer educators*
🖉 European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO): *Toolkit*
🖉 The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership *T-Kit 6: Training Essentials*

4.4 Good practices and initiatives

Solidarity for Fashion
Greece

The youth initiative *"Solidarity for Fashion"* was created in the youth incubator run by *Hellenic Youth Participation* and funded as a European Solidarity Corps project. Through a participatory process, the young people selected their initiative and designed a 12-month project. It focused on the effects of fast fashion on the environment and on people, while highlighting the local circular businesses in Athens. The team included 20 people (18–30-year-olds) divided in smaller groups to lead focused parts of the initiative such as communication, events, and awareness. They implemented two roundtables, three swap parties, and the Mind your Local Business event. This was a three-day event which included forty sustainable local businesses in Athens, fifty-four campaigns, upcycling workshops and collaborations with local NGOs. The project was recognised as a good practice by the Greek National Agency and selected for showcasing within the EU Regions Week 2021.

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Wanderlust Guides
Germany

*Fernwehlots*innen* (Wanderlust Guides) is a training seminar for peer educators run by Jugendstiftung Baden-Württemberg and sponsored by Eurodesk Germany. Young people who take part in a training seminar become a Wanderlust Guide and take on the role of raising awareness about international opportunities with other young people in their school. The seminar is aimed at students from grade 9 onwards (14+ years old). It lasts for either one or two days and is usually run on the weekends for twenty participants per seminar. The seminar content includes communication training, exercises and games about international and intercultural issues, and roleplays on how other young people can be supported in going abroad during or after school.

Through the seminar participants gain:

→ An overview of the different possibilities of stays abroad (such as work and travel opportunities, au pair placements, work camps, volunteer programmes, Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, language stays and pupil exchanges).
→ The skills to inform their class and interested classmates about programmes abroad.
→ The possibility to expand their career and study orientation by including a stay abroad.

After the seminar, the young people give short presentations to their classmates and provide information and advice to interested students as needed. Those who give the presentations have the opportunity to gain a Qualipass certificate.

Correspondentes Xuvenís
Spain

"Correspondentes Xuvenís" (Youth Ambassadors) is run by Xunta de Galicia in Spain and involves about 500 people between 12 and 30-years-old. A young correspondent is someone who, voluntarily and responsibly, dedicates part of their time to disseminating youth information to other young people. They volunteer in educational centres, associations, youth centres and work in collaboration with a teacher or a youth (information) worker. A youth correspondent's role is to spread information from young people to young people, and to collect information requests to transfer them to the youth information services. Far from being a messenger, Youth Ambassadors are a multiplier in two ways. First, they collect the concerns and preferences of young people in the field in which they volunteer and try to provide them with timely information on these topics. Secondly, after the needs of young people are transferred to the youth information service, the correspondent is sent a weekly resume of youth information which can then be shared with young people.

Eurodesk Young Multiplier project
Italy

Eurodesk Italy implemented the *Eurodesk Young Multiplier* project to facilitate secondary school students' access to EU youth programmes. In partnership with 30 Eurodesk multipliers and 76 educational institutes from 12 Italian regions, 1,276 young people were trained as "Eurodesk Young Multipliers", in the capacity of informing other young people about the opportunities available to them. The training programme focused on providing them transferable skills and guidance pathways.

The **Eurodesk Young Multipliers** got access to a special virtual space where they could find up-to-date links to a selection of currently active European opportunities. This enabled them to continue their peer-to-peer communication activities over time. At the same time, the schools had the opportunity to set up a **Eurodesk Corner**, a physical space dedicated to disseminating European opportunities. Through the Eurodesk Corner, Eurodesk Young Multipliers were able to actively disseminate information with a peer-to-peer approach, both through online tools (e.g. creation of a dedicated section on the institute's website, posts on its social channels or peer communication groups), and through the implementation of activities in the local area during local events and/or events of relevance for the youth sector (in particular, the activities to be developed during the European Year of Youth).

Peer-to-Peer Map and Guide
Spain, Portugal and Andorra

The ERYICA Ibero-Insular Working Group has created an *online tool* for Youth Ambassadors (peer educators). The tool is based on two elements, a map of peer education activities and a guide on being a young correspondent or ambassador. The map function allows peer educators to provide information on the activities they are running. These activities can be displayed and searched by area using the map function. Across the region there is a wide diversity of correspondent programmes and types of Youth Ambassadors. Although most programmes are linked to youth information centres, some are linked to educational centres instead. The age range and recruitment processes also vary. For this reason, the guide aims to create a common framework of what it means to be a young correspondent or ambassador. It includes information on guidelines on the tasks to be undertaken by youth correspondents, and the importance of youth participation and information.

Young People Co-steering Youth Information Services

5.1 Taking charge at service level

Every day, youth information services make decisions about the way they are run and the services they provide. This includes operational decisions such as planning projects, setting opening hours or hiring new staff. It also includes strategic and governance decisions, such as developing annual plans and setting budgets. Enabling young people to actively influence these decisions is a key part of youth participation in youth information services. When youth information service decision makers share organisational decision making, we call this co-steering youth information services.

This chapter outlines several models for co-steering youth information services. It covers:

→ **Steering groups** - where young people join groups or committees which give guidance on a specific area of work.

→ **Involvement of young people in governance bodies** - where young people become members of the governing body of the youth information services.

→ **Service design methods** - where co-design principles are used to design the youth information services collaboratively with young people.

5.2 Steering groups and similar structures

'Steering groups' can also be called expert groups, action panels, advisory groups, youth committees, shadow boards, and many other terms. Steering groups are **small groups of people** - usually no more than 20 - who provide guidance on a specific area of a youth information service's work. This could mean giving guidance on a new project, the work of the organisation as a whole, or on one specific topic. Steering groups **meet on a regular basis**. They can be run as a permanent structure, or they can last for a fixed length of time, linked to a particular project.

The **level of power over decision making that steering groups have can vary** depending on how they are set up (see Hart's ladder in Chapter 2). Steering groups can have direct decision-making power over an area of work; taking decisions about how the youth information service operates in that area. They can also play an advisory role, giving recommendations to youth information service decision makers (such as senior managers or board members) who then take the groups' views into account when making decisions.

Steering groups usually have a fixed group of participants. They can be comprised of:

→ Young people only,
→ An equal mixture of young people and youth information service decision makers,
→ One or two young people, who join a steering group of youth information service decision makers.

Creating a steering group

Deciding the scope and purpose - before creating a steering group, be clear about the purpose of the group and the level of decision-making power it will have. Youth information service decision makers need to agree if they are willing to hand over decision making to the group, or if it will play an advisory role. Agree which areas of decision making the group is responsible for and which areas it can give advice on. This can be recorded in a 'terms of reference' and communicated transparently to all participants and decision makers.

Recruiting participants - as well as the guidance on recruitment in Chapter 2, there are several things to consider:

➜ A diverse and inclusive membership is usually important to steering groups.

➜ Participants can benefit from having direct experience of the youth information service. They can use these experiences to inform discussions.

➜ Youth information services with membership structures can invite their members to nominate young people for a steering group. This gives the participants a democratic basis to represent members.

➜ Collaboration with youth councils and other democratic youth-led organisations can be valuable. Elected youth representatives can bring the views of young people other than themselves to the steering group.

➜ Steering groups can be difficult to motivate young people for as participants often do not see the direct benefits of their involvement. Consider how the group can offer development opportunities and other benefits for participants.

➜ Recruit new members regularly. Even the most dedicated participants will want to leave the group eventually, so finding new participants is vital.

➜ The group should be designed in a way that is motivating and interesting for young people to take part in. Young people need to find something beneficial for themselves in the experience, and the value of taking part should be communicated clearly to them.

Advice from young people... how to organise meetings

"Make it a little bit less formal. Formality is something that young people go through throughout their entire education. The beauty of participating in these kinds of activities and projects is the fact that they shed this kind of formality that has been instilled from the education system. Activities need to have this kind of approach and appeal to make it more stimulating and also to be more open and more active during the activities themselves."

Caterina, Croatia/Italy
ERYICA Youth Ambassador

Advice from young people... how to organise meetings

"It is helpful to have some workshops and training, so young people can develop their skills. There needs to be some time for a little bit of everything, sometimes a time to network with everyone, time to really get serious. Everything should be planned, but also not too strict, you know, flexible? If we're talking about younger people, it's great to involve games and icebreakers. But you still have to have concrete and brief meetings. It's important to combine these things with informal approaches but always get to the main message and balance those two things."

Rafaela, Croatia
ERYICA Youth Ambassador.

Advice from young people... how to organise meetings

"Before scheduling a meeting on the calendar, it's worth considering whether the meeting is really necessary. Perhaps there is another way you can achieve your goal. Asynchronous communication - emails or internal messaging - has its downsides, but sometimes it is sufficient. Also, consider whether you have enough time to prepare for the meeting; you will be much more productive when the agenda is properly outlined. Think carefully about who can realistically help you achieve your goal and who will be affected by the outcome of the meeting."

Kacper, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist

Running meetings - steering groups can use a formal committee style process. This can involve electing a chair who sets the agenda, keeping minutes and procedures for voting or speaking. Non-formal methods can also be used. A youth information worker can facilitate the group to hold discussions and make decisions. The meeting style can be decided by participants based on their needs and preferences. Non-formal methods are more accessible and engaging. However, if the group has a significant level of decision-making power, it may be necessary to follow formal procedures.

Providing support - steering groups require ongoing support from a youth information worker such as:

➔ Acting as a bridge to liaise between the steering group and other parts of the youth information service,

➔ Preparing accessible information and topics for discussion,

➔ Delivering training sessions, and 1-to-1 support to help young participants develop their competences for the role,

➔ Coordinating the recruitment of new members and the practical aspects of meetings.

Integration - the steering group should be integrated into the work of the youth information service. The steering groups should develop a plan of work that fits with decision making in other parts of the organisation and vice versa. Youth information service decision makers should understand how the steering group work relates to their own work and how they can collaborate with the group.

Advice from young people...

how to organise meetings

"Avoid putting too many boundaries on what young people can ask, don't start with 'oh, don't ask for this, because this is too much'. I'm not saying that we should not be realistic. But as young people, we have the freedom to express ourselves. We can ask as much as we want! Don't put too many boundaries on us. Because this way, it feels like we're controlled by adults. Older people telling us, okay, you can participate but only until this level."

Maylinda, Albania
EYCA Youth Panel Member

Feedback mechanisms - these are needed to give young people in the steering group feedback on what changes have happened as a result of the guidance they have given to the organisation. It is important to clearly communicate any barriers to making changes based on the things they say, and how long changes may take to occur (see Chapter 2 for more advice). Participants also need to understand clearly what influence they can and cannot expect to have.

Keeping expectations realistic - young people will be involved on a voluntary basis. They are likely to have limited availability and practical experience of steering groups. They will require more support and time to carry out work than other parts of a youth information service.

what are the best ways to collect feedback from young people on our services? Can young people take the lead in evaluating services and how?

Advice from young people...

"I believe that taking the initiative in evaluating services by young people is a necessary element for ultimate success and paradoxically reaching them. The biggest advantage of using tools such as Quizizz, Crowdpurr or Kahoot! is that the data is collected automatically, on the fly. Many people forget to collect feedback already during a specific initiative. I believe that the best feedback is the one collected as soon as possible. So it's a good idea to interact with young people during events and collect feedback from trainers, coordinators and volunteers."

Kacper, Poland
Eurodesk young journalist

5.3 Involving young people in governance bodies

Involving young people in the governance of a youth information service is an advanced model of youth participation. It gives young people direct decision-making power over the entire youth information service. Nearly all youth information services have a governance body that oversees their work. In a non-governmental or semi-public organisation this can be an elected board or committee. If the youth information service is part of a larger organisation it may be a senior stakeholder group. Governance bodies are accountable, and in most cases legally responsible, for the entire running of the organisation. They act as the highest level of decision making within a youth information service.

Young people can take several roles when joining governance bodies:

→ **Full members of the governance body** - attending meetings and taking on the same responsibilities, accountability, legal obligations, and voting rights as other board members.

→ **Observers or associates of the governance body** - attending meetings to participate in discussions without voting rights or responsibility for the decisions that are made.

→ **Forming, or taking part in, a sub-committee** - this is similar to a steering group or advisory group, but it is formally linked to the main governance body.

Board Members

Governance roles - where to start?

Most youth information services have governing documents, such as a constitution or articles of association. These outline the running of their governance body as well as who can become a member of it. Governance of organisations is also determined by national and EU legislation. This specifies what sort of organisations can exist, how they should be governed, and who can sit on governance bodies. For instance, within the EU, members of the board of an association must be identified as UBO (Ultimate Beneficiary Owner). Each EU member state has a UBO registry and all associations must also comply with this EU regulation. In national legislation it is also common for people under the age of 18 to be prohibited from taking part in governance of some types of organisations. Proper legal advice should be sought, as a variety of legislation will determine what roles a young person can legally take on in a governance body.

Any young person that joins a governance board also needs to be fully aware of the legal duties they take on when becoming a member. The young person will usually need to be publicly identified through the organisation's legal documentation, and board membership will carry with it a variety of personal legal responsibilities. Assessing the implications of these for any young people who might take on the role is crucial. Creating a role that young people may not want to assume afterwards due to the legal implications may not be wise.

The governance body should take these factors into account and decide what roles it wants to create for young people. This requires open discussion about the level of power and influence and legal responsibility the organisation is willing to give to young people. Organisational documents may need to be changed to allow for young people's involvement. This may require a formal process, such as a vote by an organisation's members.
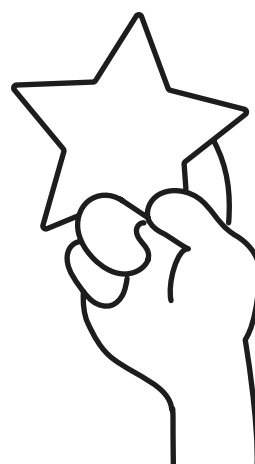
The first steps to involvement in governance will often mean creating roles for one or two young people to join the body. However, it is possible to have an entirely youth-led governance body, or an equal mixture of young people and other stakeholders. A key decision is how young people will be selected. The governance body may wish to follow its democratic procedures and ask their members to vote for young people to join. They might also invite an existing youth steering group to nominate a candidate, or simply nominate an existing young volunteer. The young people involved will require a high degree of commitment and interest in the running of the organisation, just like other members of the governance body.

Supporting young people in governance roles

Young people need support and information when joining governance bodies. The role is complex and can be daunting. This can include:

➜ **An induction process or training** - providing information about what governance is, what the organisation does, and the legal responsibilities of being a member of a governance body or joining it in any other form.

➜ **Personal support such as mentoring and accessible information** - this can be provided by an existing board member or a supporting youth information worker. It can mean being available to meet with the young person before and after meetings to ensure they fully understand the process and information sent out.

➜ **Reviewing the way meetings are held** - it may be necessary to consider how things can be explained more clearly - prior to or during the meeting - or to make sure the times and venues are accessible to young people. This can be challenging as these needs might conflict with the needs of staff and other board members.

Effective collaboration between existing members of the governance body and young people involved is vital. A personal commitment from existing members to collaborate effectively with young people is key.

5.4 Good practices and initiatives

spunout
Action Panels
Ireland

spunout's core philosophy is "by young people, for young people", and its Action Panels are a key part of this. _The Action Panels_ work to share what information young people need with the organisation, to create solutions for these information needs, and to be the voice of young people. The Action Panel structure, with over one hundred 16–25-year-olds currently involved, is one of the main ways spunout amplifies young people's voices. The structure developed from one initial panel to five regional Action Panels across Ireland and the national panel, which is made up of representatives from each regional panel. Consultations are held with each panel three times a year to find out what information young people need and what campaigns or projects we can run based on these needs. Feedback from these consultations is shared with the spunout content team and is used to form the basis of the campaign plans for the coming year. Action Panels are also included in the organisational structure with nominations from the panel to the organisation's Board of Directors. This gives spunout's leadership the possibility to stay in touch with the views of young people from across the country.

European Youth Card Association Youth Panel

The _European Youth Card Association_ (EYCA) Youth Panel is an initiative that was co-designed and requested by young people who use the European Youth Card. The Youth Panel aims to involve cardholders in the governance of the Association and to provide the EYCA Board with insights into the lives of young people, so as to make the best strategic decisions for their ultimate beneficiaries. The EYCA Youth Panel brings together 10 young people from Europe, across the countries of their membership, for a 2-year mandate. Young people are selected through a process which involves an open call, interviews, shortlisting done by the EYCA Board and Youth Panel representatives and voting by their member organisations. The Youth Panel meets every other week online and at least 3 times a year in person. They are guided and supported by a Coordinator, who is a youth worker with a trainer profile, ensuring there is a structured learning process, with meaningful participation and effective communication between EYCA's member organisations, EYCA's office and the Youth Panel.

Youth panel members attend EYCA statutory meetings such as the board and regional meetings. EYCA members recently voted for the Youth Panel to become a statutory body of the Association, giving the Youth Panel a built-in role in the governance of the organisation.

The scope and purpose of the Youth Panel is to:

➔ Develop position papers and suggest new approaches to improve the European Youth Card services.
➔ Suggest new project initiatives.
➔ Ensure a youth perspective on EYCA policy positions, in particular related to the EU Youth Goals or priority areas of the Council of Europe.
➔ Represent EYCA in EU Youth Conferences and the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe.
➔ Participate in local, national and European youth activities as representatives of EYCA.

Youth Work Ireland National Youth Action Group

The _National Youth Action Group_ (NYAG) is made up of young people aged 16 – 25 years, from _Youth Work Ireland's_ member youth services. Youth Work Ireland is the largest youth organisation in Ireland, and its work includes supporting youth information. The role of NYAG is to act as young people's voices in the governance of Youth Work Ireland and to "youth proof" all our policy positions. Opportunities range from local, national and European level work. They meet 3 times a year mainly in Dublin and as the need arises through online meetings. An annual training residential is also held for participants. The purpose of the group is to:

➔ Be a sub-group of the national board to 'youth proof' Youth Work Ireland activities.

➔ Ensure youth membership of the national board.

➔ Ensure voting rights for young people at Youth Work Ireland's annual General Meeting.

➔ Connect with young people all over Ireland so that they are listened to and their voices are heard!

Nominations for the group are normally made directly by Youth Work Ireland's member youth services. However, a young person who is linked to a member organisation can express an interest directly to Youth Work Ireland who will support them with membership arrangements.

5.5 Service design methods

Service design is a specific type of co-design methodology (see Chapter 3) that is used for **designing, or re-designing, youth information services** in a participative way. It can be used both to innovate new services or to rethink and strengthen existing services. Service design involves **collaborating with young people to plan all elements of a service** in order to improve its quality, and the interaction between the youth information service and young people. Collaboration between the 'service user' and the service finds effective design solutions by basing them on the needs of young people and the competences and capabilities of the youth information service.

Service design's central principle is about keeping people's needs at its core by actively involving young people and other stakeholders in all stages of service development. This makes it suitable as a tool for enabling youth participation. It actively involves young people throughout the design process enabling them to directly take part in decisions about service design. The process starts with the young people the service is being designed for and ends with new solutions that are tailored to suit young people's needs.

Further resources

For more support you can:
- Watch the ERYICA *DesYIgn YouTube Playlist*
- Take part in the *DesYIgn online training course*
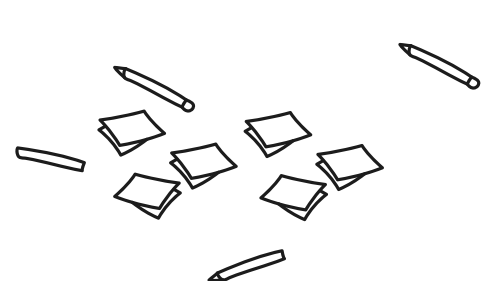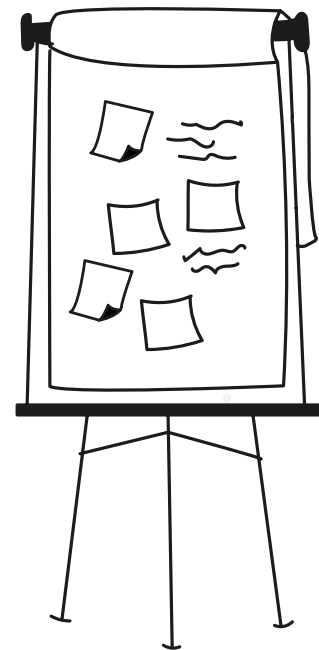
Stages of service design

During the discovery phase the aim is to deeply understand the problem, see the world through young people's eyes and get to the route of the real challenges and barriers they face. The focus is on learning as widely as possible about young people's needs, behaviours, experiences and challenges before coming up with solutions. This includes learning from what already exists and learning about the broader context. This stage uses a combination of methods such as personal interviews, focus groups and involving young people as partners to create youth personas with the aim of developing a comprehensive understanding of their needs.

This phase is where new ideas are developed and solutions are tested. It involves developing a range of ideas, debating the pros and cons of each one and deciding which ones to pilot. These prototypes are then built and tested with young people and gather feedback. Prototypes are improved iteratively; learning from what doesn't work is equally as important as learning from what does.

Discover

Define

Develop

Do it

During this phase time is spent analysing and looking closely at the information, data and evidence gathered from the previous phase in order to decide what's most important to focus on. These insights are used to inform the design solutions that will be developed. It is used to establish the direction of the design project. The outcome of the define phase is to clearly understand the challenge from the perspective of the target users and to have a set of insights that will form the basis of the design and inspire solutions.

During this phase solutions are fully implemented and launched. This includes scaling up prototypes, allocating resources and establishing a procedure for monitoring and evaluation. This phase is an ongoing process. It involves continually learning, and making adjustments to the project to ensure it continues to meet the needs of young people.

[11] _Arielle Tye, The DesYIgn Toolkit, ProMo-Cymru in collaboration with the DesYIgn consortium available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ab1130ff7c50083fc9736c/t/61448b78dcc56158d0f46178/1631882113014/DesYIgn+toolkit+June+2021.pdf_

3.3 Good practices and initiatives

Youth Checkpoints project
Wales, UK

ProMo-Cymru and *Youth Cymru* were commissioned by the *Money and Pensions Service* (MaPS) to research and test ways to provide money guidance for young adults (18-25) in Wales who are about to enter the workforce (including apprenticeships).

Using a service design methodology, the Youth Checkpoints project created and tested 3 prototype services. The aim was to provide MaPS with learning and recommendations based upon user feedback to guide future developments. Through a combination of primary and secondary research, the project consulted with over 6,000 young people, 60 practitioners and undertook a literature review of existing evidence. The prototypes were developed for and targeted at practitioners who already support young people in their day-to-day work.

They included:

➜ A helpline service to which practitioners could refer young people,
➜ Training for practitioners to support young people on financial capability,
➜ An accessible website and set of resources for practitioners to use with young people.

Following six weeks of prototype testing with 25 practitioners and 10 young people, as well as critical analysis and evaluation, a series of research recommendations on money advice were developed. A copy of the report can be downloaded *here*.

Eurodesk Qualifying Training Programme

Eurodesk Brussels Link has developed a training programme for its local, regional and national multipliers. One of the modules is based on service design, as a method to design youth-focused communication strategies, tools and campaigns.

The multipliers (Eurodesk mobility advisors) are invited to reflect on how they can bring new methods and learnings to better understand their target group and design their services to fit their needs. One of the important steps of service design is to always cross-check your assumptions and findings with your target group. Methods are provided to consult and engage young people in defining the youth information service's communication strategy. Learners go through various steps such as building personas, user journeys and solving design challenges through various sessions.

The training course is available to members of the Eurodesk network (more information on *eurodesk.eu*).

Byström Guidance Centre development workshops
Finland

Byström Guidance Centre is part of the City of Oulu Youth Services. Employees of the guidance centre take part in development workshops twice a year. In the spring of 2022, the centre decided to create a development workshop specifically for young people. The aim of the workshop was to develop the services that Byström Guidance Centre provides from a young person's perspective, giving young people the chance to be involved in developing the very service they use. To recruit participants the guidance centre held an open call for young people, targeting those who had some experience in their services, and inviting individual young people to join directly. This resulted in 15 young people taking part in the workshop.

The workshop was facilitated by an external specialist to minimise the influence of the employees. During the workshop, the facilitator used various methods to inspire the young people to discuss four themes: meetings, communication, services (inc. groups and events) and free topics chosen by participants. The results of the workshop were forwarded throughout the organisation and many of the young people's ideas were put into practice. A second workshop is planned a year on, where young people will be asked to evaluate how well the guidance centre has succeeded in responding to the results of the first workshop.

Gaining Feedback from Young People during Evaluation and Planning

6.1 Evaluations, monitoring, auditing and assessment

This chapter outlines the ways evaluative tools, such as project or service evaluations, auditing, monitoring and needs assessment can be used to enable youth participation. These are similar tools, which are all based on the process of **systematically exploring and analysing something**, such as a youth project, a youth information service or the views of young people on youth information. This is done to better understand the qualities and nature of things being explored. It allows youth information services to identify **improvements** to their work based upon the findings. Evaluative tools all involve collecting data then making judgements about what can be learnt from this data.

Project or service evaluations, auditing and monitoring can be used to listen to the views of young people **about existing work** of youth information services. They involve exploring how effective youth information services or projects are and what young people think of them.

➜ **Project and service evaluations** - identify the effectiveness and functioning of a specific project or service, to examine that project or service in detail.

➜ **Quality auditing** - compare a project or service to a benchmark or set of quality standards, to identify if the project meets these standards.

➜ **Monitoring** - routine gathers data about the day-to-day running of services on an ongoing basis, to support the management of these services.

Needs assessments form part of planning youth information services. Rather than analysing an existing initiative, needs assessments focus on exploring what sort of youth information young people need in general. When young people's views are sought during assessments they can be used as a way of listening to young people's views on their own needs.

Young people can also **participate in running and developing any of the tools above** by being involved in their design and helping carry them out.

6.2 Enabling youth participation with user feedback data

Not all approaches to evaluation, auditing, monitoring and assessment enable youth participation. To support youth participation they must, as a minimum, gather **user feedback data**. Collecting ensures the views of young people are captured as part of the evaluation. This involves exploring topics like:

➔ What do young people say they enjoy and value about the youth information service?

➔ What do young people identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the service?

➔ How do young people believe the service could be improved?

  What sort of youth information do young people say they want and need?

➔ What sorts of youth information services, products or topics would they like to have access to?

User feedback data can be gathered from **existing users** as well as **potential service users** (young people who do not currently use the service). Other forms of data, such as engagement data (who takes part and how?) and impact or outcomes data (what difference does the service make?) are all important parts of evaluation and assessment. However, without user feedback data, an evaluation does not include the views of young people, and will usually not be a method of enabling youth participation.

User feedback data needs to be **systematically analysed** after it has been gathered. This is a key step in any evaluative process. For a specific evaluation or assessment initiative, this is usually done at the end after all the data has been gathered. However, in the case of monitoring, when service user feedback is collected on an ongoing basis, data should be analysed on a regular basis.

Practical methods for gathering user feedback data

There is a wide range of tools that can be used to gather feedback from young people during evaluation and assessment. Some of the most common are based on social research such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

Creative workshops and methods can also be highly successful. Participants take part in a series of creative activities, based around the theme of the evaluation, and the discussions are recorded as part of data collection. These methods can provide a **more interactive and fun way of engaging** with young people and are more attractive to a range of different young people. Examples include theatre and storytelling workshops, video-making and photography, and arts workshops.

This photo was taken at a Lego making workshop the European Youth Conference held during the Czech Presidency of The Council of the European Union. Participants in the workshops were asked to design spaces and places for accessing youth information about sustainability. During the workshop facilitators discussed and recorded the ideas young people came up with whilst they built their models.
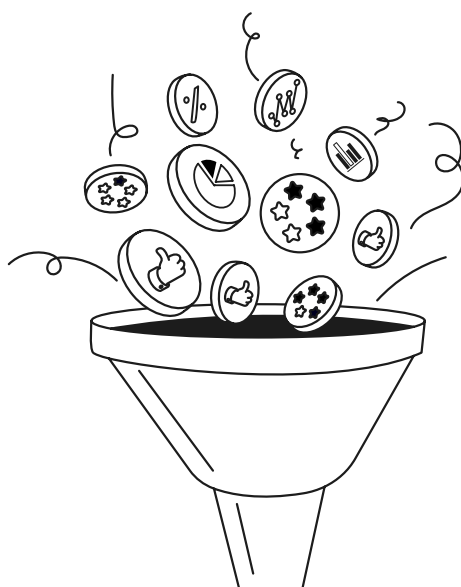
Public installations can be used to gather user feedback. An object is placed in the youth information centre which young people can interact with to **give their views and opinions**. This can be as simple as a comments box, through which they can post their comments and feedback on the service. But more interesting and attractive approaches can be developed. The photo below shows a "wishing and feelings" tree. Anyone who passes by is invited to share their wishes and feelings by writing a comment on paper and tying it to the tree. Comments are regularly read by service managers to gain feedback.

Monitoring tools can be used to gather day-to-day user feedback on youth information services' work. A simple feedback tool can be used at the end of every activity, or published regularly on websites and social media channels. By using the same tool or set of tools for all projects and activities, feedback for the whole youth information service can be gathered, and different activities or pieces of content can be compared. Findings can be regularly analysed and used to inform the planning and management of the youth information service on an ongoing basis. Monitoring tools are usually simple and easy to use, to encourage more young people to give feedback through them.

(The text above was auto-translated to English, original text is in Dutch)

WAT WAT *is a youth information service based in the Flemish Community of Belgium. They use a simple tool based around smiley faces on their website as a way of monitoring service user data.*

Further resources

Designing effective evaluation, assessment and monitoring is beyond the scope of this guidebook. There are many other aspects that need to be considered alongside the role of youth participation. These resources can provide further support on evaluation design:

- Ondřej Bárta - *Evaluation in the Youth Field*
- Kaz Stuart, Lucy Maynard and Rouncefield *Evaluation Practice for Projects with Young People A Guide to Creative Research*
- The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership *T-Kit 10: Educational Evaluation in Youth Work*
- Save the Children - *Consultation Toolkit*
- Save the Children - *Evaluation Handbook*
- Artworks - *Creative Evaluation Toolkit*

6.3 Young people taking the lead

As well as giving feedback, young people can also **take leadership roles** in designing and carrying out evaluation and assessments. This increases the level of participation (see Hart's Ladder, Chapter 2). Rather than using evaluation to **consult** with young people on their views about evaluation topics, young people can **be involved with decisions** about the design and direction of the evaluation itself. This enables greater influence on the whole process, can lead to findings and viewpoints that would not otherwise have been uncovered and is a more meaningful approach to participation.

Youth information services can consider:

Young people inspecting or auditing services - young people are supported to take on volunteer roles involving grading or scoring services against fixed criteria or a set of quality standards. The criteria themselves can also be developed in a participatory way with young people. This approach is useful to create comparisons against a benchmark or between different services or organisations of the same type. Typically, young people visit the services they are inspecting, or may already be regular users of them. They work alongside youth information workers who may conduct other parts of the evaluation as well as supporting the young people.

Young people acting as peer researchers - young people are supported to develop, design and carry out an evaluation or consultation. They develop evaluation topics, design the methodology and create their own conclusions or reports. The findings are then presented to the youth information service. Typically, the focus is on young people interviewing or holding focus groups with other young people. In this way young people are the ones responsible for gathering service user feedback. Young people often work alongside researchers and evaluators who can guide them on the evaluation's design.

Involvement in evaluation steering groups - young people can participate in a steering group which guides and directs a piece of evaluation (see Chapter 4 for more information on steering groups).

Resources for youth-led evaluation

Involving young people in conducting research, evaluation and assessment is a complex but highly effective form of youth participation. More detailed guides can be found in these resources:

- Barnardos - *Young researchers toolkit*
- Youth Focus North West *Youth Inspection Toolkit*
- CRIS - *toolkit for young people interested in research and co-research*

6.4 Good practices and initiatives

Teeviit annual questionnaire
Estonia

Every year between September-October the Estonian national youth information service Teeviit conducts a questionnaire for young people (in Estonian and Russian) to find out their needs and interests, as well as their expectations on how digital youth information should be delivered. Based on the findings, youth information experts and young volunteers create a yearly plan. The plan outlines 12 youth information topics and a different topic is focused on each month and is supported by explanations and worksheets. Following this, each month young people work together with youth information service managers to create social media plans for that month's topic. Teevit has over 30 young volunteers who collaborate with the service to plan, design and disseminate youth information in this way. Examples of the content can be seen on the Teeviit TikTok and YouTube channels.

Eurodesk Survey Mobility and the Role of Youth Information

The Eurodesk *Mobility and the Role of Youth Information Survey* is a multilingual European-wide survey published by Eurodesk every second year. The third edition of the survey (2022) targeted young people aged 13 to 35 and aimed at understanding their information patterns and their perception of learning mobility after two years of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The survey report provides a better understanding of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on young people in terms of mobility. The survey collected 4,061 responses from 74 countries. The report provides useful insights for youth information providers. For example: what are young people's favourite channels, where do they look for mobility information, what sources do they trust, and many other elements which are crucial to better strategies for delivering youth information, which turns into real mobility opportunities for all youngsters. Eurodesk uses the results of the survey to design its information strategy.

Cube of ideas
Cyprus

The Paphos Youth Information Centre of the *Youth Board of Cyprus,* in collaboration with the Municipality of Paphos, created the Cube of Ideas which was based in the heart of the city (Kennedy Square). The Cube of Ideas was a large cube/wall of expression and was designed as an innovative way for young people in the area to share what concerns them. This project aimed at looking into ways of engaging young people more interactively, and constituted a kind of open consultation. The main goal of the "Cube of Ideas" was to give a space for everyone to express their concerns and send their own message about the future they want. All the testimonies and ideas collected were used in the development of a new National Youth Strategy by the Youth Policy Department of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The "Cube" was designed and built by the pioneering and innovative technology programme of the Youth Board of Cyprus at *Youth Makerspace Larnaka*. More than 120,000 people were reached through the visibility of the initiative, thanks to promotion through Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation's national TV station RIK 1 and various radio stations.

Waddist mobile app
Flanders, Belgium

The Waddist mobile app (Flemish for "What's up") was launched in February 2021 as a flexible, inclusive, research tool. It aims to answer young people's needs and to put their voices first in policy and youth work on a structural basis. Waddist is a joint project by Artevelde Hogeschool and De Ambrassade. It is an example of e-participation, and uses digital tools to take an innovative approach to participation.

The app asks young people to answer questions on a daily basis and share their opinions, feelings and ideas on various topics such as love and sex, mental health, politics, leisure time, education, identity, and other topics. It also asks how they think and feel about current issues in the media and public and political debates. The questions can vary from difficult and taboo questions, to funny, easy and light questions. Examples of questions are 'how do you feel about a face mask obligation in class?', 'how often do you masturbate in a week', 'where do you hang out outside of the place you live?'. The questions in Waddist are written by researchers of De Ambrassade and Artevelde Hogeschool as well as other youth and policy organisations. Young people using the app can also submit questions to be used.

The general results can be consulted instantly and anonymously in the app, as well as on the organisation's website. This means young people can find out what their peers think and the results are also available to other stakeholders. Since its launch, the app has reached 2,800 young people and has 400 daily and long-term participants. To motivate users, a gamification approach is used. Participants earn digital badges for answering questions, scoring 'streaks' for regular participation. With these badges, they can change the colours of the app.

Waddist is not only a research and participation tool, but also a tool to provide youth information. Daily links to quality youth information sources and helplines are provided, connected to the topics of that day.

The *European Youth Information Quality Label* is a visible sign that tells young people that a certain piece of information is verified, true and unbiased, therefore it does not require further verification. It has been developed in the framework of the Partnership Agreement between the Council of Europe and ERYICA, and young people have been involved throughout the whole process.

The Quality Label was designed by a Steering Group that included young people and a member of the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth. The involvement of young people ensured that the resulting output is youth-friendly and in line with the expectations of young people. The logo of the Label itself was designed in a competition for young people and the winning entry was fine-tuned by a design agency.

In order to ensure that the products and services of youth information providers match the needs of the target group, young people also take part in the evaluation procedure linked to the awarding of the European Youth Information Quality Label. This is called the youth review. During this process, young people assess the information products of the applicant youth information service. The youth review concerns areas that young people can easily evaluate and feel attracted to. Youth reviewers are representatives of the target group of the applicant youth information service.

The applications for the Label are assessed by the European Youth Information Quality Label Task Force. This international committee includes 12 members, 5 of which are young people. Currently 3 young users of youth information services and 2 ERYICA Youth Ambassadors are members of this Task Force, where all members have equal rights and votes.

European Youth Information Quality Label: Youth Review

Information you can trust

Selected Resources

Legislation and European policy

- *The European Convention on Human Rights*
- *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.*
- Council of Europe - *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*
- Council of Europe - *Young people's access to rights through youth information and counselling*
- *The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2022*
- *Youth Participation Strategy for enhancing youth participation in democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes*

Youth Information resources

- ERYICA - *European Youth information Charter*
- ERYICA - *Ensuring Quality in Youth Information and Counselling: Practical tips for implementing the European Youth Information Charter*
- ERYICA and Eurodesk - *Youth Information Worker Competence Framework*
- Eurodesk - *Youth Mobility and the Role of Youth Information Survey*
- Eurodesk - *Euro-Participation and Euro-Activism. All about Europe, all about you(th)!*

Participation resources

- Ideo.org - *Field guide to human centred design*
- IJAB - *Guidelines for successful e-participation by young people in decision-making at local, regional, national and European levels*
- Outer East Children and Youth Area Partnership – *Co-design with service users*
- SALTO-PI - *Resource Pool*
- SALTO PI Think Tank on Youth Participation: *closer to the edge of participation and activism*
- SALTO-PI - *Youth Participation Toolkit*
- Save The Children - *Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation*
- *The DesYIgn toolkit*
- The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership - *Perspectives On Youth Participation*

Peer education resources

- European Peer Training Organisation - *Toolkit*
- *Peer to Peer in Youth Information: Training manual for youth information workers, trainers and peer educators*
- The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership - *T-Kit 6: Training Essentials*

Resources for youth-led evaluation

- Barnardos - *Young researchers toolkit*
- Youth Focus North West - *Youth Inspection Toolkit*
- CRIS - *Toolkit for young people interested in research and co-research*
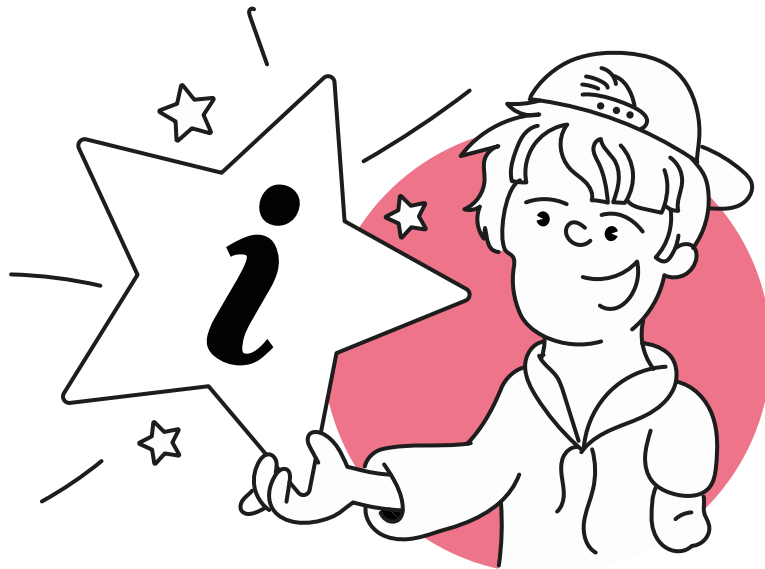
Inclusion resources

- The *SALTO Inclusion and Diversity website*
- SALTO Inclusion and Diversity - *Engage in inclusion!*
- SALTO Inclusion and Diversity - *Inclusion A to Z: A compass to inclusive international youth work*
- The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership - *T-Kit 8: Social inclusion*

Youth Participation in Youth Information Services

eurodesk

eryica

european youth information and counselling agency