

Inclusive and powerful local youth councils

**YOUTH
SPEAKS!**



First published in 2019 by



ISBN: 978-83-88752-26-1

Free publication

A collective work edited by: Jakub Radzewicz

Co-authors: Emeline Marchesse, Pauline Geay, Mickaël Medina, Maryse Gaillard, Ewelina Górecka, Aurélie Kindermans, David Latorre García, Alejandro Sanchis Roldán, Montserrat Llinares Morales

Editing and proofreading by: Małgorzata Sobczak

Design and layout by: Pracownia C&C

Illustrations: © Morgane Parisi

All the photographic materials are part of the archives of Consell Valencià de la Joventut.

This publication was published as a part of the project “International cooperation for inclusive and powerful local youth councils” in cooperation with:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



The project resources contained herein are publicly available under the Creative Commons license: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International.

Content

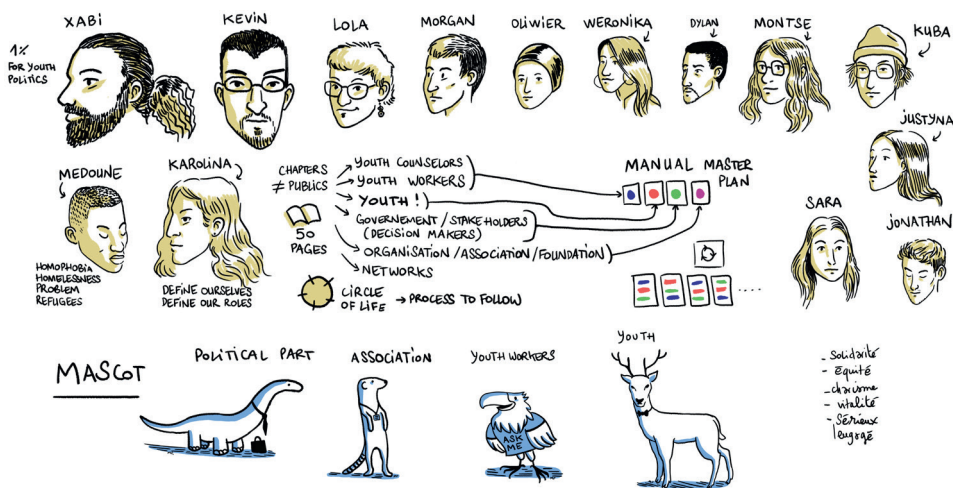
About the project	4
Topic 1 – National reality in each country. General picture of youth participation, youth policy and Youth Councils	5
Topic 2 – The role of Youth Councils	10
Topic 3 – Building motivation and good cooperation in the team	16
Topic 4 – Diagnosis of local communities. Strategic planning of the Youth Council	24
Topic 5 – Inclusive Youth Council	30
Topic 6 – Effective cooperation with local authorities, relevant stakeholders and	37
Topic 7 – Capacity building and sustainability of Youth Councils	44

About the project

The project 'International cooperation for inclusive and powerful Local Youth Councils' was implemented to increase the participation of young people in public life, particularly in local decision-making processes. Within this initiative of three organizations from Poland, Spain and France we focused on Youth Councils as a tool of participation.

Putting together our experience from and knowledge of different fields (local youth policy, social inclusion, decision-making process and European citizenship), we want to develop new approaches and methods of work to empower Local Youth Councils. It is our aim to promote this inclusive and diverse format and therefore to facilitate young people in having more influence on decision-making processes regarding issues that affect their daily lives.

Most ideas, methods and approaches presented in this publication are based on the experience and expertise of people engaged professionally in developing the Youth Council model, further complemented by partner organizations and young councillors' research and personal experience. We hope that this publication will prove to be a useful and inspiring source of information, ideas, tools and methods for all people interested in encouraging young people to be actively involved in the political, social and cultural life of their communities.



Blended Mobility in Angoulême (France) within the project „International Cooperation for Inclusive and Powerful Local Youth Councils“ captured by © Morgane Parisi

Topic 1

National reality in each country. General picture of youth participation, youth policies and Youth Councils

FRANCE



In France, including its overseas departments, we can find all kinds of Youth Councils addressed to children and young people of all ages. They can function under different names: Children's Councils, Youth Councils, Municipal Youth Councils, Local Youth Councils, Youth Forums, etc.

They can be found in small and medium towns, cities, departments, regions and also in some interconnected communities operating at the national level (such as ANACEJ for instance).

They are informal bodies, established by the decision of the town or city council. Administered according to the policy of the town/city they depend on, they follow its suggestions regarding members' age (from 9 to 25) and selection for the council (town elections, school elections, designation within the framework of representative associations, volunteering, mixed system, etc.).

Not only do these youth bodies have a consultation value but they also allow young people to carry out projects and take action within their local area. It is about responding favourably to young people's demand to have their opinions taken into account. Indeed, youngsters often have the feeling that their ideas and concerns are not given due attention in the public debate, which can result in a high rate of abstention during elections among voters in this age group. In practice, it is about giving democracy a fresh renewal, broadening the participating horizons for youth.

The first Children's Council was created in Schiltigheim in 1979. As it was based on highly codified and technical rules and regulations of the local town council originally specified for adults, the Children's Council essentially just followed this pattern, producing its own young councillors. Eventually, France withdrew from this model of functioning in this area in order to adapt better to young people's needs.

Thanks to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 and the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life from 2003, youth participation bodies and measures broadened and could grow, both in form and number.

The process started at all levels of local authorities even though no special law exists that would impose the creation of Youth Councils. Nevertheless, some youngsters would prefer it to be mandatory. The Article 55 from the Law on Equality and Citizenship allows the possibility to create such bodies based on legal regulations which clarify the composition of Youth Councils and their role.

Art. L. 1112-23.

- Any local authority or inter-communal cooperation public body may establish a Youth Council to ensure that young people can express their opinion on decisions relating in particular to youth policy. It is a body that can formulate action proposals.
- A Youth Council is composed of young people under the age of 30, living in a given town or school community, or who are annually enrolled in either a secondary school or an institution of higher education located within the same territory. The difference between the number of women and the number of men must not be higher than one.
- The operating procedures and composition of the Youth Council are determined by the local authority or the public institution of inter-municipal cooperation.”

Most organizations and associations linked with the Youth Councils campaign call for the process of creating Youth Councils to remain a voluntary one. According to the National Youth and Child Council Association: ‘No civic commitment can be set by a decree. A Youth Council is much more efficient when it is established voluntarily.’

Originally, Youth Councils wanted to straddle the areas of education and politics. However, the politics started to get bigger and so did the age range of the members of Youth Councils. Nowadays, Youth Councils are represented mostly by teenagers. In France, secondary school students aged between 11 and 14 are the most active members of Youth Councils.

On average, members of Youth Councils stay in their organization for a limited period of time: between one and three years. Human resources (volunteers or employed youth workers and councillors) and financial resources are determined by the competent authority in order to allow young members to carry out proposals or to answer inquiries and requests from within their territory.

The National Association of Children’s and Youth Councils (ANACEJ) estimates that there are between 2500 and 3000 Youth Councils in France. However, according to other estimates (taking into account only the organizations administered by local authorities), their number is much smaller and amounts to 1000.

Yet, there are many kinds of Youth Councils that are not included in these estimates, such as for instance the Children’s Parliament or Youth Local Conferences. Many local authorities count on Youth Councils operating within their districts. They form a political power although no single political board for Youth Councils exists in France.

SPAIN



In the late 1970s, the new context of the democratic transition in Spain favoured the vitality and dynamism of youth associations, which in some Valencian municipalities and cities was articulated in the form of Local Youth Councils.

At the end of 1977, a year before the Spanish Constitution entered into force, an assembly of youth organizations was convened by the Ministry of Culture to study the relationships between the youth movement and the administration. The main conclusion of the meeting consisted of initiating the constituent process of the Spanish Youth Council (CJE), as the

only way to bury the youth policy of the dictatorship and define a new approach accommodating for different sensibilities and ideas.

In the Valencian Community, the first councils were formed in Castellón (1979) and in Valencia (1982), the crowning achievement resulting from the strength of the association movement and municipal policies that inspired civic participation.

In 1983, the Youth Council of the Valencian Community (CJCV) was created which assumed the mission of promoting Local Youth Councils. At that time, due to the lack of regulations the proper functioning of the councils depended on the political will of each city/town council.

In 1989, the Generalitat Valenciana made a commitment to participation with the approval of the Law on Youth Participation. It regulated the legal aspects of Local Youth Councils, recognizing the CJCV as a public law organization formed by youth associations (by definition, also private law organizations).

Law No. 18/2010 on Youth implemented uniform regulations for the CJCV and Local Youth Councils as private sector-based public organizations, guaranteeing their independent character and its recognition by the administration. It also ensures that representatives of the Valencian youth associated within the councils are to participate in talks with the administration regarding everything that concerns young people.

Finally, with Law No. 15/2017 on Comprehensive Youth Policies, the role of Youth Councils in the entire territory was reinforced. This is also when the notion of Youth Territorial Councils emerges, with the intention of ensuring that this model of youth participation remains within the reach of all young people, regardless of their geographical context.

Currently, in the Valencian Community there are many Local Youth Councils that meet the coordination objectives of youth associations and are involved in a dialogue with local authorities to promote associations and work toward improving the situation of young people in general.

POLAND



Nowadays, activities of and related to Youth Councils in Poland are developing dynamically at the local level.

First Youth Councils in Poland were created in the early 1990s, after the country's political transformation in 1989. It is recognized that the first Youth Council was established in Częstochowa on September 19, 1990. It was called the Children and Youth Council of the City of Częstochowa.

Formally, the creation of Youth Councils at local governments was sanctioned by the national law in 2001. It was when a new administrative structure was set up in Poland and the new Law on Local Governments was introduced. The formation of Local Youth Councils was added in article 5b of this Law.

Article 5b states that local governments take action to support and spread the idea of Local Youth Councils among residents, particularly young people. At the request of interested groups, local authorities may establish a Youth Council in a given community, giving it the statute and voting rights. This is the only legal provision about Youth Councils in Polish law. However, it doesn't specify in any way what the functioning of a Youth Council should look like. Issues such as the number of councillors, their age, manner of election, the scope of their duties and internal operation are regulated individually by every local government, taking into account the size of the town/city/region and the number of young people living there.

The most common practice is to organize elections for Youth Councils in schools, usually primary and secondary schools. The number of young councillors is often equal to the corresponding number of adult councillors.

Youth Councils have an advisory character. They should ensure the representation of the youth community in each district/town/city in a dialogue with local authorities.

Working in a Youth Council, young people take the responsibility for their local environment, they learn independence and the principles of the functioning of the local government. They have the possibility to influence their district (gmina), town/city or county (powiat). They can take specific actions in response to specific needs. Thanks to democratic elections, young councillors can represent their peers in talks with local authorities.



Youth Councils don't have legal personality, which means that they are not an institution or a non-governmental organization (NGO) within the meaning of Polish law. Neither can they directly raise funds for their activities. Financing the council's activities is most often indirect, through the local town or city office, which allocates part of its own budget to support the operation of the local Youth Council. If a Youth Council wants to raise funds for the organization of a project externally (i.e. from the EU or private funds), it is possible to do it with the help of an NGO. Local NGOs are sometimes invited to take the role of coordinators of the Youth Council's work – they work with its members, organizing trainings and meetings and supporting their daily operation.

The formal guardian of the Youth Council is often an appointed official and/or councillor from the 'adult' town/city council. The role of the councillor is to support the council's activities from the formal side (e.g. booking rooms for meetings, assistance in administrative matters, running a session) and in contacting local authorities.

Youth Councils in Poland may be appointed voluntarily. Such initiatives most often emerge from the youth community or are initiated by local authorities (mayor/president or a group of local councillors). There is no official register of Youth Councils in Poland, which makes it difficult to specify their current number. Publications prepared by non-governmental organizations provide some estimates. For example, the Civis Polonus Foundation estimated their number at 200 in 2013, while the Council of Children and Youth at the Ministry of National Education informs of approx. 400 councils in its publication from 2018.



Youth Councils exist in most capital cities of provinces (voivodeships), including the capital city of Poland – Warsaw. Due to its specific administrative system, Youth Councils operate here in different city districts. Additionally, selected representatives from each district work jointly in the Youth Council of the Capital City of Warsaw.

Youth councillors from different towns and cities cooperate with each other, meet at congresses, regional and national conferences, as well as implement joint projects. These are the bottom-up initiatives and their frequency isn't predetermined.

The structures of Youth Councils, along with other forms of youth representation, are also created at the voivodeship level. Such initiatives are then supervised by Voivodeship Marshal Offices.

In recent years, an increase in the activity of youth organizations has been observed at the central level. They are seeking their own voice in the public debate. However, there is still no Youth Council with the nationwide coverage that would be elected in democratic elections and would be recognized by all interested parties. On the one hand, there is the Polish Council of Youth Organizations (PROM). Having operated since 2013, it brings together over 40 youth organizations and those which work with youth, representing over 250,000 young Poles. PROM is a union of different associations and foundations. Members can be neither individuals nor Youth Councils, although leaders of such groups are actively involved in the work of the Council. PROM is also an official representative of Polish youth in the European arena, being a member of the European Youth Forum. The Polish Council of Youth Organizations is also responsible for the implementation of the European dialogue with young people in Poland (previously called structured dialogue).

On the other hand, there is also the Council of Children and Youth at the Ministry of National Education, which is active in Poland. This is a group of students from all voivodeships who are not elected in democratic elections but are appointed by ministry officials.

The role of Youth Councils

1. General Description

Youth Councils, sometimes more specifically referred to as Local Youth Councils (LYCs), are independent, democratic organizations whose main aim is to represent the interests of all young people. In some countries, Youth Councils are the associations of youth organizations, in others young councillors are elected in schools, representing students from a given community. Regardless of their internal organization, the goals of the councils and their role in local communities are very similar in all countries.

The councils are a place of meeting, cooperation and discussion of various youth groups that can organize joint projects to answer the needs and solve problems faced by young people in a given city or town. The basic concept behind the idea of the council is to integrate different groups of young people, respecting their identity, political views and values. A Youth Council can be a unique place for cooperation of young conservatives and liberals, believers and non-believers, people from different social and economic backgrounds. What they have in common is the fact that they live in the same city/town/region and they have a strong will to change it into a better, more youth-friendly place. Councils might be one of the ways for civic participation of young people and an opportunity to learn about democracy in a very practical way.

The objectives of Local Youth Councils include:

- To support, coordinate and disseminate different activities and actions of associations and youth groups within their communities;
- To promote the associations of young people and their participation in the political, social and cultural life of their communities;
- To be the voice in a dialogue with the local administration (local authorities) in all issues that concern young people directly or indirectly;
- To track all issues that concern young people (such as the Local Youth Plan, if such document exists) in order to express their position and create a space for a critical and plural debate;
- To promote and carry out activities, projects, searches, etc. that are of interest to young people and youth associations without prejudice to the objectives and/or the capacity of action of the associations;
- To share experience and collaborate with other LYCs.

In Poland, there is a very popular concept of three basic pillars of a Local Youth Council:

1. Representing young people in the dialogue with local governments and public institutions (focus on advocacy);
2. Strengthening youth participation through organizing different projects (e.g. sports, cultural, ecological, educational) aimed at satisfying the needs of young people;
3. Promoting knowledge about local governments and democracy by strengthening youth participation and involvement in public affairs.

3 pillars of a Local Youth Council

Advocacy

Strengthening
Youth Participation

Promoting
knowledge about
local governments

When talking about consultations and the dialogue with local authorities, it is worth considering what topics/issues should be raised by LYCs.

The document *Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life* includes a very interesting concept of different policy areas where Youth Councils could have something to say. They include as follows:

1. Public policy for sport, leisure and associative life
2. Policy promoting youth employment
3. Specific policy for rural areas
4. Education and training policy promoting youth participation
5. Policy for sustainable development and for the environment
6. Anti-discrimination policy
7. Transport policy
8. Health policy
9. Policy for mobility and exchanges

What are the benefits from establishing a Local Youth Council?

- Young people have a chance to understand public matters better.
- It makes young people believe that their voice is important.
- Youth Councils can actually have a real influence on what is happening in the city/town/region.
- Young people are more interested in self-governance.
- Local Youth Councils help to spend public funds more effectively by consulting decisions concerning young people directly with them.

2. Good practices

The Local Youth Council in Lisewo (Poland)

Young people from the Lisewo county (directly: members of the Local Youth Council, indirectly: all young inhabitants) took part in the decision-making process concerning the development of a small park in the centre of the town.

The local government asked the Local Youth Council to express their opinion and to consult with the residents (young and not only) the possible ideas for the revitalization of the local park. Members of the Council came up with the idea of organizing a survey. What is more, they held several meetings with the inhabitants asking them about their needs and views on the park. After collecting the votes and analysing the most important outcomes, the young councillors prepared their very detailed proposal for the park revitalization. It

was received very positively by the local government and, as a result, included in the application for the EU funding for the project. In this way, young people contributed to a real change in their community.

This activity helped to solve issues of great importance for the local community: lack of a place where people could meet and spend time together; a low quality or even lack of sports and leisure infrastructure in the district; and the need to revitalize the public space in order to make it useful for the inhabitants.

The Local Youth Council in Olsztynek (Poland)

In Olsztynek, a small town in the Mazurian Region in Poland, members of the Local Youth Council decided to revitalize and develop a new idea for a neglected and polluted local beach.

The first step was to present the idea of the Council to the local community and confront it with people's ideas and needs. To achieve that, young people organized a debate in the Town Hall and invited all (not only young) residents of Olsztynek.

Secondly, the Council organized an event during which the paths around the lake and the local beach were cleaned. On the one hand, this field study was used to diagnose the problem (*Research walk - see chapter 4*) and on the other it served as a social action which was supposed to draw attention to the neglected fragment of urban space.

In the last step, young councillors – based on the conclusions from the debate, their research walk and their own ideas – prepared a proposal for the revitalization of the local beach. They met and presented their concept to the local authorities and applied for funding from the town budget. The aim was to launch the basic works on the beach to restore it to the local community.

As a result, during one of the sessions of the Commission of the Municipal Council, the Mayor announced that PLN 51,000 would be allocated for this purpose in the upcoming year.

The Local Youth Council in Valencia (Spain)

Every year, the Local Youth Council of Valencia organizes a fair of youth associations on the campus of the University of Valencia. Around 30 youth associations set up their information stands in order to promote their activities and volunteering offers. This space also serves as a meeting point for the associations to generate future collaborations.

Each year the fair is focused on a special theme to challenge students and political leaders, and to encourage them to



participate in it. In 2018, the theme was emancipation. Under the motto ‘EmancipAcció’, basic needs such as mobility, housing and employment were discussed through the prism of emancipation. During the period before the fair, the Local Youth Council created the appropriate environment for a reflection and extraction of proposals on these topics with the students of the University. Finally, on the day of the fair, a structured dialogue was facilitated between youth and the Department of Employment of the City of Valencia.

The Local Youth Council in Quart de Poblet (Spain)

During the local elections of 2019, some Local Youth Councils carried out a political advocacy campaign (promotion of youth participation in the elections, bringing politics closer to youth). During the month before the elections The LYC in Quart de Poblet met with representatives of different political parties and local authorities. In these meetings, the LYC expressed its vision of young people’s needs and presented a series of demands and proposals.

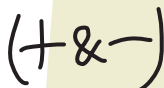
Three weeks before the elections, a debate was organized among young people from different parties to discuss four thematic blocks: autonomy of the young (education, employment, housing and mobility), equality of opportunities (gender equality, LGBT, disabilities, young migrants, etc.), educational leisure (youth participation, education on values, non-formal education) and a public system of youth policies (political lines, resources, youth plans, etc.). In addition, the participants could ask questions to the political representatives that attended the event.

3. Useful tips

When does a Youth Council have a chance to succeed?

- When young people are interested in public affairs and have a real need for a change.
- When adults are really open to listen to young people and sharing the responsibility and political power with them.
- When the dialogue is perceived as a value in itself.
- When there are good conditions for making changes (political, legal).
- When there are good ideas.
- When there is a supporting coordinator/youth worker.
- When there are leaders in the group that make it strong.
- When regular trainings and study visits are organized that increase the motivation of young councillors.

4. DO’S and DON’TS



Local Youth Councils are:

- ✓ A meeting point for coordination, cooperation and exchange between youth organizations, which allows the creation of joint projects.
- ✓ A democratic structure of representation and youth participation that incorporates different youth association models (associations, organizations, youth groups, etc.) and concerns of young people.

- ✓ A space for work and a debate that is characterized by its plurality and variety of topics, to the extent that it integrates very diverse people and associations.
- ✓ A valid representative to discuss with the administration all issues that concern youth, which allows the administration and society to understand better the demands and opinions of youth associations and young people.

Local Youth Councils are not:

- Regular youth NGOs (associations or foundations).
- Youth areas at city/town halls.
- Distributors of subsidies from city/town halls for youth organizations.
- City/town hall working groups for implementing the youth plans of the local authorities.
- Opposition to those currently in power or a youth wing of any political party.

5. Methods of work and the Toolbox



Working together for several years, an informal coalition of non-governmental organizations and experts who support the operation of Local Youth Councils in Poland has prepared 'The Charter of Rules and Standards for Local Youth Councils'. The document presents the most important aspects of the efficient functioning of Local Youth Councils:

Standards of a high-quality Local Youth Council:

1. Elections to Local Youth Councils should be democratic and should be based on a promotional campaign of candidates.
2. The most important role of every Local Youth Council is to be the voice of young people and thus an advisory body to city/town authorities.
3. Cooperation between local governments and Local Youth Councils is based on partnership and equal treatment.
4. Local Youth Councils are also a place of education for their members where they can develop their skills. They should try to improve their activities as members of a Youth Council and thus representatives of all young people from the city/town/region.
5. Local Youth Councils build open relations and cooperate with public institutions in the city/town and its residents, particularly with all groups of young people.
6. Local Youth Councils operate in a planned and systematic way, based on their statute.
7. Local Youth Councils need systematic support from adults: authorities, teachers, officials and youth workers in order to be able to work effectively.

Examples of decisions that can be consulted with Local Youth Councils:

1. Updates to the local development strategy or other strategic documents.
2. An annual programme of cultural or sporting events.
3. Rules for awarding scholarships for students.
4. Plans for revitalization or other changes in the public space (e.g. new bicycle paths).
5. The programme of important local events (e.g. holiday of the city/town).
6. Rules of grant programmes for non-governmental organizations.
7. The annual city/town budget.

6. Testimonies

Very often the role of a Youth Council and the whole concept of youth participation is questioned. But I will always defend the statement that in an individualized society in which the collective is so unimportant, Youth Councils are indeed schools of participation and they are of crucial importance for the entire society.

Youth Councils manage to make people work as a team, listen to each other, understand each other, agree and develop as a collective, so I think that there is no better form to strengthen the participation of young people and give them an important voice in the decision-making process.

I have seen both religious and anarchist people working together in a Youth Council. I have experienced situations in which young people get together with common objectives and put them in favour of their own personal interests I have seen how young people are perfectly capable of breaking the things that are long established and are so destructive for the dialogue process. I've learnt how to truly listen, understand each other's attitude and to make decisions that include everyone's opinion. And this is what I would like to see in my society: that we learn how to listen, decide together, understand the motivation and views of the people around us. When I talk about society in which everyone could have a voice, a lot of working groups operating at Youth Councils come to my mind; and when I talk about learning how to build impossible things, I talk about millions of councils facing their decline because they are no longer useful for the administration. Nevertheless, they still fight for their importance.

Youth Councils teach, make people work as a collective and force them to make decisions that represent common interests. Maybe it is not perfect, but I believe it makes a real value for a democratic society.

Papi Robles Galindo, Ex-president Valencian Youth Council, Valencian deputy

7. Check the videos&useful materials

A video explaining the aims and the projects of the Local Youth Council in Piaseczno, Poland:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVEJkXXofUg>

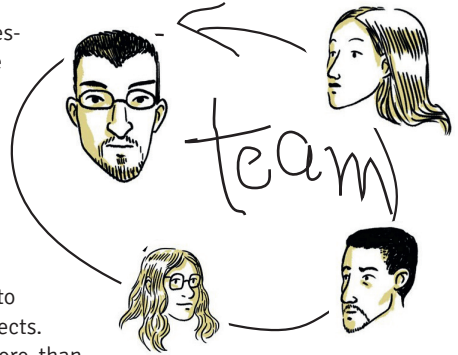
The Charter of Rules and Standards for Local Youth Councils (text in Polish):
<https://docplayer.pl/43634199-Karta-zasad-i-standardow-dzialania-mlodziezowych-rad-gmin.html>

Building motivation and good cooperation in a team

1. General description

In a team, motivation and good cooperation are essential for the development of actions and for the organization. When motivated, members of a group are much more efficient and work more because they find pleasure in it and they enjoy their individual or collective tasks. They tend to be much more involved.

Thanks to good cooperation, young people feel at ease, they are open-minded and are eager to meet people, they can have more ideas for projects. When we work with other people, we work more than when we work alone.



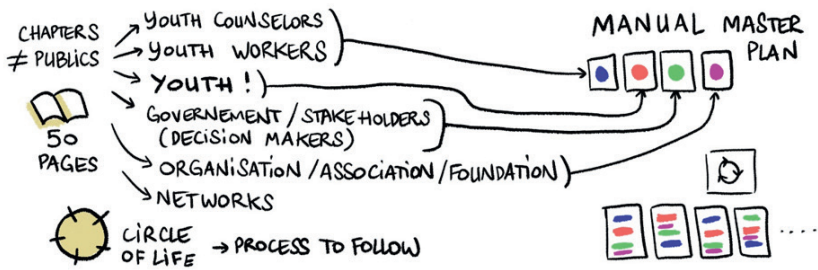
This is the reason why it is not only important to find the right practices, methods and tools to build motivation and develop good cooperation in a Youth Council but also to point out bad practices that may have a negative effect on the team. Once we have identified them, often through our own experience, it is good to write them down and avoid using them ever again.

When these methods are pointed out, the group works perfectly and can have further impact on their own working methods and vision of life.

In fact, when there is a great relationship in a team, a member can realize how to motivate people too, he/she enjoys teamwork, feels more self-confident, is proactive and comes up with new ideas for actions and events. He/she will gain more self-esteem and will become more autonomous. Consequently, youngsters gain maturity and internal strength for their future professional life.

It is also important to highlight the link with lifestyle. A member of a Youth Council will see the importance and advantage of deeper interpersonal relationships and will become more open-minded. He/she will be more objective with little or no prejudice thanks to collaboration with many people with different backgrounds even if they represent the same nationality. He/she can learn self-confidence and feel useful through his/her actions, thus growing up with a better understanding of the world.

Building motivation and good cooperation in a team is essential, both for the organization and its members.



2. Good practices

LOLA



How do we create, organize and host a meeting within Collectif 100% Jeunes? When our members have an idea, we talk about the possibility of its success and organize a meeting. Before introducing the project to everyone, we must inform and convince other members: in this group, we take decisions jointly when it comes to projects and actions. We are not forced to participate in every project, but we must agree on its concept and manner of implementation together. That is why we have to discuss it before.

It promotes the spirit of cooperation and stresses the importance of each member: your opinion is listened to and heard.

As our collective is linked with an association of youth information called Centre Information Jeunesse (CIJ) in Charente, we can use their facilities as our working space. Also, during meetings and projects we can communicate using their access to the internet and media, put posters or flyers on the wall and have our own Facebook page to answer people's questions or to talk about new partnerships and events.

Although the formula of our meetings may vary, we are always adaptable: the shifting make-up of the council brings colours to Collectif. We have recently selected an educational project similar to an action proposal that was related to another field: self-fulfilment.

For our last meeting, we prepared a summary for the members who organized that event. We started with a fast group game: this type of games helps people to relax when they don't know each other. Fun and playing group games is a good way to deconstruct social barriers and overcome stress. You can make it more reflective or physical, the goal is always the same: mutual help and discovering other people.

Then, we presented and explained the project to everybody: what we thought was interesting about it, why we want to realize it, is it possible? We tried to find answers to these and other questions before starting a debate with everybody. We listened to everyone and after a while we decided to adopt a different way of thinking. The project will essentially evolve if you let people express their opinion and if you actually listen to their advice. This is exactly the kind of direction we wanted in our project: collective decisions.

We keep in mind the importance of having breaks in actions longer than two hours: this time must be given to people to get to know each other, talk about their feelings, talk about the project. It is a moment which stimulates social links, helps to discover affinities among people and facilitates cooperation within the group.

We organize a secret ballot to respect people's personal opinion. This is when they can specify if they want to be personally involved in a given action or not. During our last meeting, we finished by mixing up two different projects because they both gained the same support from our members who wanted to see two actions happen. Once approved by everyone, we can really start to work on the project, by assigning different tasks, problem areas and defining the project priorities.

Our Facebook group is our way to send and receive documents, information and questions. It is also a non-formal medium which allows us to have fun and chat about everything that concerns the project. This is where personal thoughts are always welcome.



Local Youth Council in Piaseczno

Within the Youth City Council in Piaseczno we decided that some of our meetings should take place not as usual in the Town Hall but somewhere out, e.g. in the local park. The members wanted to create a less formal atmosphere that would bring more creativity and fun to the meetings. At the same time we had a chance to explore local public spaces and discuss ideas for potential projects/changes in these areas. This approach to the meetings was welcomed by the members as very useful and nice, so it became a tradition in Piaseczno. Of course, we still continue to hold our official meetings in the Town Hall, too.

3. Tips

Generations Y, Z and Alpha look for commitment and actions that make sense. Taking into account that, by essence, youth needs flexibility and freedom, here are a few tips from France in order to make your Youth Council diversified and successful in terms of motivation and cooperation:

- Share common values.
- Trust each other: if you trust the other members in your Youth Council, they will trust you in return and this way you will develop everybody's commitment to it.
- Keep in mind that youth IS the ambassador of the youth and youth-related policies.
- Secure support of a youth counsellor/youth worker who might have been part of a Youth Council in the past: it will allow you to redefine your actions from a more global perspective.
- Make each member aware of their responsibilities: it will help you not to treat them like children.
- Appreciate and emphasize small steps: sometimes they are much more motivating than big projects with a far deadline.
- Give yourself the right to make mistakes and to be able to talk about it in group meetings in order to find a solution together.

- Encourage originality.
- Communicate and listen.
- Live the key moments: action is the best way for team-building.
- Meet other Youth Councils.
- Have fun!

4. DO's and DONT's



Before the meeting:

Making some communication about what you want to do is essential. This way you can see if your idea is interesting to others. If it is, it will be easier to get more people on board. Moreover, what you can do by communicating on your events is inviting people to join your team. They will feel more attracted to collective work.



Use every possibility to expand your target group: depending on which publ you want to reach with your actions, schools and associative places too are very attractive for young people and have a big visibility. Think of every place where you usually see flyers or posters, or where events are organized that you would gladly join. Don't forget about local cultural and social centres because a lot of young people go there to do something interesting with their peers.

Social media are also very important to contact people, especially those who live in more remote areas. The largest part of your work before the project will depend on how you communicate it to others.

You have to think BEFORE about everything that can happen during your workday. Anticipation includes organizing a place to host your meeting: it means somewhere that suits your profile and activities. For example, if you need to do research, you need to prepare some documentation on the topic. Think ahead if you plan some physical activities: it isn't much fun to run and make noise indoors. If you can, it is a good thing to move to different places depending on the task. A place to rest, read, discuss, eat This is how you will create a good atmosphere.

During a group discussion:



A group discussion is sometimes hard to manage when people of different profiles and characters meet in one place: in many situations you will probably face prejudice and people willing to dominate the rest of the group. In these situations, some people are at risk of being excluded from the conversation. Their credibility and personal implications may be affected by prejudice and stereotypes. This is a real problem for teamwork and good cooperation during collective work. If you can't totally suppress these inequalities, you can try to act in other ways to bring them down and allow everyone to share their opinion.

If you have a big discussion group, it is a good idea to assign someone to be in charge of turn-taking. This way you can avoid one or two people hogging the conversation while others are held hostage by their private debate. By doing this, you will facilitate shy people to join the discussion.

All people who work on a project, who are present and want to speak are free to do so. We don't just want consultation, a face-to-face meeting with two sides: one for the organizers and one for the participants. The principal aim is to move beyond the classical and problematic patterns and create a real debate based on a discussion group and teamwork. Our goal is to avoid a unilateral transmission of knowledge, methodology tips, etc. New ideas can come easily when people feel truly confident, not judged.

Working as a collective may be challenging: try to find your place in the group. As it is not an easy thing to do, it is necessary to let people express themselves as they prefer. If someone doesn't want to speak in front of other people, don't force him/her. However, what you can do is adapt your ways of self-expression. For example, using sports with shy people can be very efficient to get to know their thoughts, and for the whole group it is a good way to be more active and participative. What we want is a constant evolution into our group, a real adaptation to its members with the use of a few techniques. Adaptation is essential for good cooperation and motivation. Obligation is counterproductive.

After the meeting:

Never forget that it is people that are at the heart of your project: real people who dedicate their own private time to do something together. It is useful to thank them for their volunteering time through an on-line discussion group or by email in order to give them your personal feedback or to show progress of the projects. When a project succeeds, the team spirit can only be strengthened.

At the end of a working day, sometimes it may be necessary to spend a few minutes on a group evaluation and thus let everyone fill in the suggestion box.

Such a group evaluation may be organized in a circle: one person expresses her/his opinion while others, going forward or backward, show if they agree or disagree. The advantage of this kind of assessment is that it is done in a group and that everyone can express themselves without having to speak directly to one person.

It is necessary and mandatory to write reports and prepare agendas in order to stay informed of the schedule and progress of the project.

5. Methods of work and the toolbox



In order to complete successfully actions with new people meeting for the first time, you can use some animation techniques to facilitate the meeting. First of all, having a volunteer for the animation is an excellent basis in order to establish a trust building approach.



Make sure you have enough speaking time so that everyone can speak. You can organize relaxing breaks along with the debating times in order to get more information, approval, disagreement or advice from all members of the group.

As mentioned before, the use of icebreaker games, which quite often are physical, are an excellent means to get to talk to your neighbour. At the beginning of each working session it allows the group to release tension that the meeting can generate.

Multiple measures can be introduced to help people to express themselves:

- Anonymous: a suggestion box, voting by secret ballot
- Oral debate
- Explanatory paper
- Art
- Moving debate: physical positioning

In order to make the projects progress with everybody's help, it is relevant to divide tasks and to create subgroups so that everyone can relate to the project.

Groups can change. They don't only allow to deal with the subject in depth but also to get to know each other better. Subgroups foster affinities, common working methods, etc.

At the end of a group working session, you can make the dialogue easier by using a spokesperson per each group. They should complement each other in terms of the working load.

Small groups can handle and carry out tasks much more quickly if tasks are divided in an efficient way. It makes people more aware of their responsibilities and enables to include everyone in the working group.

6. Essential summary for the interested groups

A. Young people and Youth NGOs

If you are young and you have participated in a group action, a Youth Council or a working group, you might already know how to galvanize a group exchange. When getting rid of clichés and perceptions, you leave the door open to happy surprises in terms of work organization and group participation.

If you are young and you have participated in a group action, a Youth Council or a working group, you might already know how to galvanize a group exchange. When getting rid of clichés and perceptions, you leave the door open to happy surprises in terms of work organization and group participation.

B. Youth workers

The role of a youth worker in building motivation and cooperation in a diversified group of young people is to give them hints how to become a harmonious team. Naturally, youth workers don't represent any authority. They serve the interests of young people and are the ones who can put into practice the



creation of real talking and experimental spaces, they monitor youth projects, keep a good atmosphere and provide a general overview of youth participation.

A youth worker coordinates activities, creates talking spaces, provides support to Youth Councils, offers guidance to their members, gives ideas for activities. In brief, a youth worker is crucial in order to encourage young people to participate in teamwork. The specificity of youth workers is that they remain a constant agent in the process of youth participation while, essentially, the Youth Council members keep changing. They are the reference point for youngsters who want to join a given youth organisation.



They can also help a group of young people to create their own Youth Council. What could be more relevant than Youth Council members equally working together with youth workers for a better partnership toward youth democratic participation? Especially when they have already established cooperation: young people can handle proposals through youth workers while local authorities can communicate with local youth through youth workers.

C. Local authorities and decision makers

It is hard to reach young people and their organizations as naturally they are subject to frequent changes and high turnover rates. Youngsters grow up and local authorities need to constantly update their contacts/try to reach out to new young people. A well-motivated Youth Council needs a fruitful dialogue with decision makers and local authorities.

All decision makers and local authorities should definitely take good care of their young council members in order to ensure constant participation from the youth. They will have to keep in mind that these young people are here on a voluntary basis, which is precious.

How to do this? First of all, by defining participation that has to include preparation, settling in and evaluation of activities.

Then, by supporting them to become autonomous, without any political influence, by providing appropriate dialogue material or digital means for team-building, by participation in sector policies that concern them and by maintaining a fruitful dialogue with all stakeholders.

Communicating with Youth Councils through youth workers is essential and so is financing youth organisations. It will also help a lot to maintain constant participation for example through youth workers.

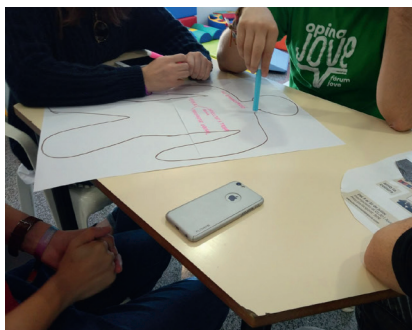
7. Testimonies

Personally, I believe that every group of people needs some guidance to better understand each other and get involved. Since I started working with Collectif 100% Jeune, I have learned a lot about organisation and main problem areas that you come across when working as a collective: how to integrate everyone depending on their abilities, how to find your place in the group, etc. But I also think we know very well why we are here, present, together. All our actions and their consequences start with how we work in the group, how we communicate with it. We try to develop a real team spirit when it is about our projects. To me, volunteering is a space where people are ready to give and enjoy learning, including learning of and about human relationships. I think all our members are truly open and I love working with all of them.

Aurélien, a youth volunteer at Collectif 100% Jeunes, CIJ

8. Check the videos&useful materials

“Le Bureau des Méthodes” tutorial from CNAJEP <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN0wkrOAz6tAJCQI3W-vmgXNm6kYZtVa>



Diagnosis of local communities. Strategic planning of the Youth Council

1. General description

Diagnosing the needs of your local community means simply checking what are the most important needs and problems of the inhabitants of your town or region. Such diagnosis is primarily an attempt to look at things from other people's perspective, as they can often have completely different ideas, needs and perception of the situation than the members of the Local Youth Council. It allows us to better understand the environment in which we work and broaden our perspective. This is especially important for Youth Councils, which by definition should represent all young people.

Youth Councils often implement projects whose only authors are their own group members. Of course, there is nothing wrong with it because it is the council members that should set the direction of the council's activities. However, if we look at a Youth Council as a representation of all young people in a certain town/city/region, it is good to encourage councillors to widen their perspective. Why is it so important? Because creating a youth policy is about discovering the most important needs and problems of young people with fewer opportunities.

It is like during a lesson or a school debate – usually only a certain group gets to speak out loud. The rest prefers to stay quiet for various reasons (e.g. fear of public speaking, lack of courage, self-confidence). The role of a well-organized diagnosis is to reach these 'quiet' groups and get to know their opinions. Their ideas can be extremely interesting – all you need to do is try to find them.

It is important to involve excluded groups (people from small towns/villages, those with educational problems, ethnic minorities or people with disabilities) in the Youth Council's activities. The role of the Youth Council is to represent the voice of all young people, which is why the diagnosis should be such an important step when planning a project in the Youth Council.

The most important stages of the diagnosis include:

- 1.** What information do we want to obtain by conducting a diagnosis? How can we divide/categorize it?
- 2.** Which target groups do we want to reach?
- 3.** What are the questions that we want to ask our peers?
- 4.** What kind of method(s) can we use for the diagnosis (below you will find examples of different methods: a research walk and an individual interview)?
- 5.** How can we sum up the collected material?
- 6.** What are the most important conclusions from the diagnosis? How do they influence the Youth Council's activities? How can we use them?

2. Good practices

Diagnosing the needs of the local community in Piaseczno by Karolina Hołownia-Malinowska, Chairman of the Board, Local Youth Council in Piaseczno, Poland:

Piaseczno is a large district that has been divided into the town of Piaseczno and surrounding villages. The only places where young people can take up different activities are schools which are often located quite far. That is the reason why each year young people point to the poor quality of student councils and the problem with transfers to school. However, our local problems are not only related to school and transport. Piaseczno is located very close to Poland's capital city, Warsaw, which might be the reason why it seems to have lost its 'civic' value, at least to some extent. People often say: 'Piaseczno is just where we sleep, but everything else happens in Warsaw: our future, fun and opportunities.' Piaseczno should become more attractive for young people. Through our activity, we would like to 'youth up' our community and engage people to be more active citizens.

How do we manage to draw such conclusions? We run workshops in schools where we ask individual questions about the needs and problems of as many people as possible, even among those who definitely aren't interested in any kind of participation. We also try to ask different questions about problems and hopes of our peers at dedicated Youth Council meetings in the Town Hall. There our target groups: students at various levels of education, NGOs, teachers. We gather and discuss different issues and also receive feedback on the council's activities.

Crucial part of the diagnosis is work on projects funded from the youth budget. It is a dedicated part of the town budget which all young people from Piaseczno can decide what to spend on. The first stage of choosing the most important project is to gather the proposals through surveys in schools. The final decision is made during the debate where pros and cons of each project are discussed. Then we choose the best one in a democratic voting. In the first edition of the youth budget young people decided to build a youth centre, public toilets, infrastructure in smaller villages near Piaseczno and youth spots where young people can spend their free time together.

3. Useful tips

Questions that need to be asked during the strategic planning of the Youth Council's activities:

- What needs do we want to meet through the project?
- What problems/challenges do we respond to by implementing the project?
- To whom do we address our actions (target group) and how do we know that our activities will be important for this group?
- What do we want to achieve by implementing the project? What are our objectives?
- How will we know that we have achieved our goal?

Only after we have discussed the above-mentioned issues with the group, can we start a practical conversation about the selected tools and methods, necessary resources (financial and material), partner organizations to cooperate with and, finally, timeline of activities and division of responsibilities among the group members.

Such a simple reflection might seem obvious, but in practice members of youth organizations (and not only them) very often start the discussion from choosing the project and dividing tasks. It is a natural need for action and moving on straight to the details, but it is worth to spend some time on diagnosis and strategic planning, so that our activities are better matched and suited to the needs of the local community.

Strategic planning allows us to look at the organization's long-term activities from a wider perspective, set the most important priorities and select a variety of activities, e.g. for a quarter or half a year.

4. DO's and DONT's



- ✓ Plan the time to compile a reliable diagnosis of the local community and its needs – it is as an important part of the project as project management itself.
- ✓ Look for different kinds of sources – you don't have to use the most common ways to collect data (like a survey). Think about other interesting ways how you can reach your peers (e.g. organization of a debate, a research walk, video interviews).
- ✓ Use data that is already available – you don't have to create everything yourself. Certainly, there are some documents commonly available, for example an analysis of local needs for cultural or sports activities. It is worth looking for such reports, for example in non-governmental organizations that often implement different projects for local communities. Probably they prepared their own diagnosis before applying for project funding, so it is a good idea to work with them. You can organize a joint meeting and discuss your perspectives. Another good source of data might be local authorities – you can check if any reports and data they might have are relevant for you.
- ✓ Define the target group you want to reach and select the diagnostic tool accordingly – for example, workshops or a drawing competition might be a good idea to reach teenagers. Together with a group of young adults you can conduct a research walk or an in-depth group interview (focus interview).
- ✓ Diagnosis might be fun! Think how to make it more attractive and interesting – both for yourselves and your audience. You can try to make a video blog or make a mural wall of wishes at your school. Be creative!
- ✓ Remember to write down and collect data, and then draw conclusions. A good diagnosis brings a lot of knowledge, data and gives you a fresh look. Spend some time to write them all down so that you can use them better.
- ✓ Organizing a diagnosis of needs can be a great way to promote your Local Youth Council! Talking to people in schools, youth organizations or simply with your neighbours can be the best way to bring their attention to the council. Try to make them remember who they are talking to, explain the purpose of the diagnosis and tell them how they can stay in touch with you.
- ✓ You can also check the needs of specific groups, e.g. those interested in arts, by talking with local young artists. They will certainly be more willing to come to your concert or exhibition, and maybe in the future they will also join the Local Youth Council? That might be a good idea!

5. Methods of work and the toolbox



Research walk

This is a field diagnosis method that allows you to explore a selected place (e.g. a building, park, district) and look at it from the perspective of people who use it on a daily basis. The researcher and the participants (users of a given space) walk together through the selected place/space/location and gather opinions, insights and ideas for actions.

A research walk can be a great tool to understand the needs and everyday problems of citizens, for example in the context of public space, sports or cultural facilities. Thanks to its form, a research walk allows to have a common experience that makes participants talk in a very natural way, which is a big advantage compared for example to a classic survey. What is important, a walk is easy to organize – basically you just choose a route, prepare a few guiding questions and listen carefully. That should be enough to succeed!

Before you start:

- Start by choosing a topic/a problem, e.g. marking the classrooms at school, facilities around the school or a bicycle path in your city/town;
- Gather a group of people – users of the space that will take part in the walk, e.g. representatives of school classes (students), teachers;
- You can take a walk on a pre-arranged route or a route proposed by participants.
- During the walk you should note all participants' comments and suggestions. It is a also good idea to take photos.
- A research walk is often used in the process of public consultations regarding changes in the city/town space, adapting them to the needs of the citizens. Possible topics include for example: bicycle paths, security in the district, a city/town park.

One-to-one interview

One of the easiest methods of collecting information is to conduct an interview. It is a scientific definition of conversations with people from whom we want to get some information. In our case, it can be information about their favourite ways of spending free time, interests of young people, their opinions on the quality of education, scholarships awarded by local authorities, etc.

An interview is one of the simplest and most valuable methods of gathering information. In order to use this method efficiently, you should prepare a list of questions or issues that you want to raise. To make it easier, they can be grouped into larger blocks. When preparing a list of questions, try to answer the following questions yourself: What do I want to learn from this conversation? What kind of new knowledge/ideas do I want to discover? The interview can be recorded, but sometimes good notes are enough.



Remember to always explain the purpose of the interview to the person you are talking to. Ask if he/she agrees for recording the interview. It is also worth underlining that it will be anonymous. In order to draw valuable conclusions from the interviews, try to conduct at least over a dozen of them. Based on that, you can compare the collected content and draw more general conclusions which can be representative for a large part of the group you have studied.

The Disney Method

This method is one of simple approaches to strategic planning of group activities, which is both attractive and stimulates unconventional thinking. It refers to an anecdote about Walt Disney, a famous pioneer of the American animation industry. When creating new projects, he supposedly used three rooms which he entered one by one: Dreamer Room, Realist Room and Critic Room. In each of them, he would take a different attitude, trying to look at his idea from a different perspective.

Try it out and make yourselves think differently than you usually do. To do the following exercise, divide yourselves into three equal groups and find three separate spaces (e.g. classrooms) that will symbolize different Disney's rooms. Let each group try to formulate the goals of your project, answering the following questions one by one and moving from one room to another:

The Dreamer Room – this is the space where you can let your imagination run free. You can say whatever comes to your mind, without judging and wondering if it makes sense. This is the brainstorm stage.

Questions:

- What do we want our activity to look like?
- What do we want to achieve?
- What change would we like to make?



The Realist Room – here you try to concretize the ideas developed in the first stage and consider which of them are possible to achieve at the moment.

Questions:

- How will we specify our goals? What are the objectives for each goal? Which are long-term and short-term?
- How will we know that our goal and objectives have been achieved?



The Critic Room – you take a critical attitude here to find weak elements in your plan, identify potential risks and think about possible threats for the project.

Questions:

- Are our goals and objectives possible to achieve?
- What is the biggest threat to our goals and objectives?



6. Useful tip

Every idea can go through all rooms several times. After leaving the Critic Room, you can return to the Dreamer Room. The full cycle always includes all three rooms!

The Disney Method is nothing but an invitation to accept different perspectives when looking at a given case/project. You don't have to stick to its rules in 100%, you can freely modify them and adapt to the needs of your group. It is important that each member of the group should at least for a moment adopt a different perspective – different from his/her natural way of thinking.

7. Essential summary for the interested groups



A. Young people

Don't be afraid of the diagnosis process – it doesn't have to be difficult. Try to divide the tasks in the team, so that those who like meeting new people and discussing things share the responsibility together with those who have the ability to analyse and draw conclusions. A well-organized diagnosis can be a great proof of the high quality of your projects and a strong argument in the discussion with local authorities.

B. Youth NGOs

Try to make sure you reach out to non-organized youth in the diagnosis process. Their voice can bring a fresh, interesting perspective to your plans. Think about where young people spend their time in your city/town most often? What do they like doing the most? How can your projects fulfil their needs?

C. Youth workers

The role of youth workers in the process of diagnosing the needs of the community is particularly important. They often have the sociological knowledge that will allow the council to better organize the diagnosis process. Try to share your experience with young councillors, but don't do all of the work for them. Steer them toward the sources of important knowledge and advise which directions they can go. Ask questions that will force young people to think critically, challenge the status quo and ensure them about the value of the diagnosis. In the course of the council's activities, remember to get back to the conclusions of the diagnosis regularly or update them from time to time.

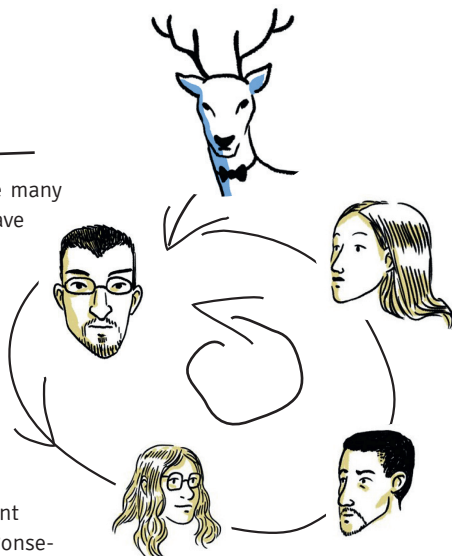
D. Local authorities and decision makers

Representatives of local authorities and politicians should encourage young councillors to conduct the diagnosis of local needs. They can present some examples of successful projects and explain why this is such an important phase of each project. It is worth to organize joint discussions on the conclusions, even before the council takes the decision to start a new project. You can also encourage young councillors to cooperate with other public institutions. Local authorities often have their own data and reports that may be useful to young councillors.

Inclusive Youth Council

1. General description of the topic

Youth Councils are a good opportunity to involve many young people and show them that everyone can have responsibilities in an organization or can be able to be involved in its actions, regardless of their social or educational background. Thanks to integration, some youngsters can be listened to and share opinions on different subjects in a way that they never could before. It is also a possibility to express their own ideas and listen to other kinds of opinions, allowing for their evolution or the development of some of them. A Youth Council ensures involvement and acknowledgement which its members might not have had before. Consequently, they can feel involved and gain self-confidence in interactions with other people and when looking at themselves.



Mixing young people together can make them more open-minded: having less prejudice, questioning stereotypes, being more open to meeting people who are different and observing others in order to enrich oneself. Youth Councils help youngsters to build their own ideas in cooperation with all members, develop their own personality and realize that each person can learn from other people, whatever his/her way of thinking, life-style, social or cultural background is.

They have a positive impact not only on youngsters but on all Youth Council members. They can learn a lot from young people, their life experience and environment.

In conclusion, involving 'all' young people allows youngsters to 'get out of' their exclusion, feel as responsible as other people and gain faith in themselves. They can feel more self-confident and motivated to become an actor on some projects, get involved professionally or personally. Last but not least, they grow and finally feel able to do things which they never thought were possible.

2. Good practices

In November 2018, **the first Free Assembly of Youth** was organised in the department of Charente, France. It was a way to gather young people around their dreams and nightmares. This event was co-organized with **Collectif 100% Jeunes**, local partners and politicians. The principal aim was to create a meeting with a democratic framework, with the participation of every person. By multiple ways, the organizers tried to encourage different people to express their opinion on different topics and problems related to their community with the aim to bring a positive change in their everyday lives and in their society.

The Assembly allowed young people, sometimes living in remote areas and thus isolated from the city/town, to share and practice democracy with other persons. When you want to create a non-student event and/or with youngsters from service civique (a French volunteering scheme and civic commitment to a collective mission), you can reach the public that is at a risk of social exclusion: they do not have a big community with which they can identify themselves. Sometimes they can feel very lonely in their life. Gathering this kind of people establishes a connection between you and others, providing a common goal. In that event, the meeting of people of such different profiles was crucial to the organizers.



The organizers had to anticipate a number of issues, including the total handling of and payment for food, transport and accommodation arrangements: most young people that attended the event are financially dependent on their families and have to carefully select the activities that they would like to join. The event had to be free for them. Offering support before and after the event helps to know how many people will be present while ensuring comfort to them in terms of the action itself and what it will look like.

To include everyone, general meetings must be planned taking into account people's working hours (e.g. youngsters participating in professional integration). Depending on the target audience, weekends are the best time to schedule such actions. During the week meetings need to be organized after working hours. In the case of this Assembly, the organizers agreed on two days during the weekend, with additional attractions such as concerts, artistic creations with graffiti artists and a TV studio to preserve the memories of all these moments.

In total, 53 youngsters, aged from 16 to 30, participated directly in the actual event. A lot of them were volunteers, students, youth workers, etc. They expressed their opinions and ideas about democracy, discrimination, self-fulfilment, ecology and education. Local, creative structures and associations also worked toward making the event possible and accessible to everybody on equal terms. The organizers facilitated discussions while listening and offering a framework for youth-related initiatives. Through this way, one can try to increase motivation of people less concerned with this kind of practices, mostly because they are rarely asked for their political opinions or ideas.

The biggest interest was to inspire a liberating moment, which is why they worked with the tool called 'Dreams and Anger' (see *below*). It was fundamental for the organizers that their actions were representative of the actual reality of people who were involved in them. This is crucial for further projects and it works as a motivation booster for isolated people and developing a professional network.

3. Useful tips

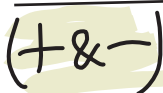
Depending on the profile you aim at, make sure to get organized in advance, taking into account that every participant is there with you only for a limited amount of time (students, employees, volunteers, etc.). Even if it seems obvious to adapt your timeline to people's different schedules, it often turns out to be an issue when you wish to mix students and non-students.

Remember that you may sometimes get disappointed. Planning is not always easy, especially within the framework of a working group. You can't force people to carry out tasks or make them participate. Trust them and let go!

Finally, not everybody is going to like you. All you can do is drop your intention to cover the whole population. You need to learn how to make yourself known, respect and promote respect for everyone so other people can absorb the event.

The more people feel attached to the project, the more they will vary in their opinion on what it should look like. This is where you may encounter the biggest conflicts on a variety of matters. You sometimes have to compromise and reassess your choices which are to be group choices.

4. DO's and DONT's



For every participant:

Starting with group actions allows participants to become attached to values rather than people. Collective projects should be able to exist without a leader. The fact of the project being absorbed on the individual level by a group of people makes it a collective action, reflecting the image of those who have produced it.

However, the adopted format may sometimes seem restrictive. For instance, setting a mandatory period of commitment which is to prove people's willingness to act on a more permanent basis may prevent some youngsters, with different and often unpredictable schedules, to participate and, consequently, to integrate.

If your main wish is to offer possibilities of commitment to all, than you should definitely avoid comparing different types of commitment. Levels of personal commitment may vary among people. They often depend on many more variables than just the will to commit.

In order to make this will more flexible and compatible with a full-time schedule, you can always inform everybody about the planned actions via email specifying that their presence is very much welcome but not mandatory. The goal is to avoid giving the impression

of pressure and make everybody feel free to attend. This can prove to be the driving force for your event and a much more effective motivation booster.

Creativity can give fun to all young people working together on important subjects. You can create, for example, a fresco illustrating the most important things of the day. You can also prepare a comic strip or shoot short videos illustrating your projects, ideas, etc. It is important to change your approach if you want to reach many people of different profiles and sensibilities.

Make time and space for different initiatives, sometimes off the beaten track, during youth gatherings such as for example the Assembly, as well as during meetings between inhabitants and local authorities/social/legal structures.

For your action:

There are several ways to evaluate the success of a group action. You can tell that an action has succeeded when:

- Participants give positive feedbacks;
- The project was completed;
- People perceived it as an enriching experience while learning from others;
- Other projects or ideas came out from your action;
- It helped to create a professional network: a working group, an association, a network of people, a platform for communication and exchange of ideas, etc.

In brief, you can rely on many criteria to check whether you have succeeded or failed. If you want all your actions, projects or meetings to succeed, it is important to remember that commitment is above all a personal choice and therefore part of volunteering.

It corresponds to an exchange, which is the will to get committed to something. One of the first things to settle is to make sure that knowledge is not one-sided so that self-fulfilment can be shared and does not become a scholar domain.

Finally, let's talk about another detail. From the beginning to the final implementation, you must think about financial partners or other ways which will help you secure the necessary funding for your project. Organizing an event like the Assembly discussed here is a very expensive endeavour, especially if it is to be accessible to everyone, free of charge. However, it is important not to be consumed by this dimension. Naturally, without money there is no event. It is not a very pleasant aspect of this work but it is essential to take care of it because it also takes time and patience.

5. Methods of work and the toolbox



Artistic means to inspire a multi-level commitment

For the Assembly, Collectif 100% Jeunes, in partnership with a video recording and design association, prepared a mock shooting TV set.

Not only did they immortalize and explain what happened during the two days of the Assembly but they also encouraged young people to participate in this project through the

vector of art: audiovisual media. Thanks to those tools, they were able to reach young people who otherwise would certainly not have come just for a social debate. However, entering the Assembly through other means than direct participation did not prevent them from getting interested in the entire initiative.

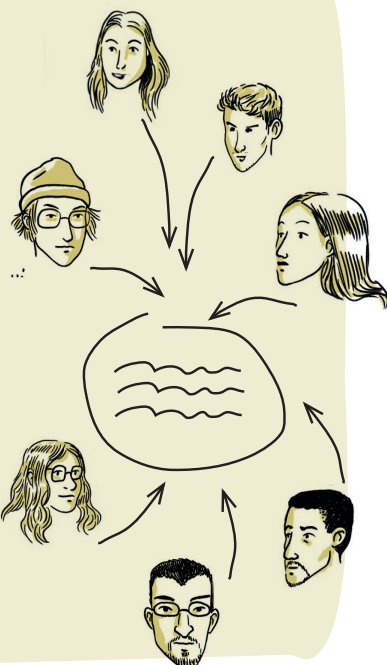
Such tools allow to develop curiosity, ask questions about our world and share your vision with others. Art and tools inspiring creation are of crucial value: they allow for a more personal identification with a collective project and help to develop sustainable projects.

‘Dreams and Anger’

It is sometimes difficult to feel legitimate when talking about certain subjects when you are younger, less experienced or facing experts. However, isn't it because of the participation of each of us individually that we can even think of collective projects?

In the he ‘Dreams and Anger’ method you can use each one's personal background in different contexts to be able to share personal experiences and build up new ideas on it. For instance, in terms of education you can find out common issues that affect most people, starting from stories that may not even seem relevant from the individual angle. ‘

Anger’ defines the aspects that have caused problems with respect to a given topic. You start from frustration and gradually move on (progress). ‘Dreams’, like for example an ideal school, allows to contemplate people's wishes and confront them with the reality, together with other participants. Eventually, you define actions according to those dreams in order to pave way for progress.



6. Essential summary for the interested groups

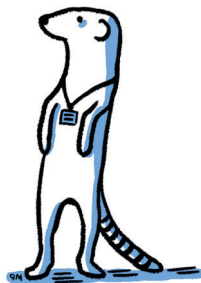
A. Young people

For young people, being involved in a Youth Council is synonymous with meeting, discovering and often positive surprises. In order to take advantage of this experiment, you can try it out with someone you know, who could help you to feel at ease. You can also be directed toward this kind of actions by youth workers. If you enjoy participating in this kind of gatherings, you can also use your network, your friends, people you think might be interested in this kind of events in order to disseminate the information. This kind of measures often lack visibility. As a human being with social relations you can contribute and sow the seeds of change.

B. Youth workers

Being involved in a Youth Council allows youth workers to meet people from the city/town/region (citizens, people of all social backgrounds), political sphere, all generations, representatives of NGOs, etc.

It is also an opportunity for them to share and express opinions, ideas with people and even to find new job opportunities. Moreover, youth workers have the possibility to be included in a project which can develop their skills and competences. In addition, through their involvement and active participation they can be important actors in the Council's actions, both locally and otherwise.



Being involved and working closer with a Youth Council will help them to gain self-confidence and develop personal and professional projects.

C. Local authorities and decision makers

Local authorities can take action related to informal education and creating co-decision councils. Decision makers should value formal and informal skills acquired by young people during the volunteering period (skills useful when taking responsibilities). They should recognize the youth's capacity to take action and offer concrete proposals and feedback. For instance, the state promotes local volunteering through service civique: volunteers have a special status, receive state subsidies and are fully recognized as such in all fields.

Decision makers need to trust young people if they want to be trusted in return: to be young does not mean to be inexperienced. In order to facilitate inclusive participation, decision makers can rely on local stakeholders. They should support them, also through funding, providing bus passes, facilities to meet, etc., and consult them in terms of the youth policy. In brief, they can help Youth Councils to get closer to young people from more remote areas, both in terms of mobility and their representation.

Decision makers can benefit from trainings in order to learn how to rely on local youth initiatives and demystify local authorities in young people's circles.

Finally, every youth policy should be developed basing on school as an important vector of participative citizenship.

7. Testimonies

I joined Collectif 100% Jeunes right after discovering it during my *service civique* volunteering mission. I think it is important and even essential that such a collective becomes larger and thus shows a positive and committed image of the youth in the city.

It is a user-friendly space where everybody can freely bring their ideas, wishes and knowledge, and where new projects and actions are born. You can even become an actor in partners' projects. I have been able to participate in the organization and implementation of

the Free Assembly of Youth, live the Festival des Films Francophones through the Web Art Reporter and to volunteer during the Runcolor. It is a place of exchanging and sharing ideas where everybody can get involved and experience new things.

Amélie, a volunteer at Collectif 100% Jeunes

8. Check the videos&useful materials

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxqTDv-xBxgigvfwSntzydqAqhxspBhq> – Channel of Youth Organisation Assemble Libre des Jeunes en Charente



Effective cooperation with local authorities, relevant stakeholders and decision makers

1. General description

One of the most important aims of every Youth Council's activity is to change the city/town/region into a better space that fulfils the needs of its citizens, especially young people. However, a change on a large scale is not possible without cooperation with local authorities – ensuring a dialogue with the authorities is an important part of the activity of Local Youth Councils.

There are two levels of possible Youth Council's consultative activities:

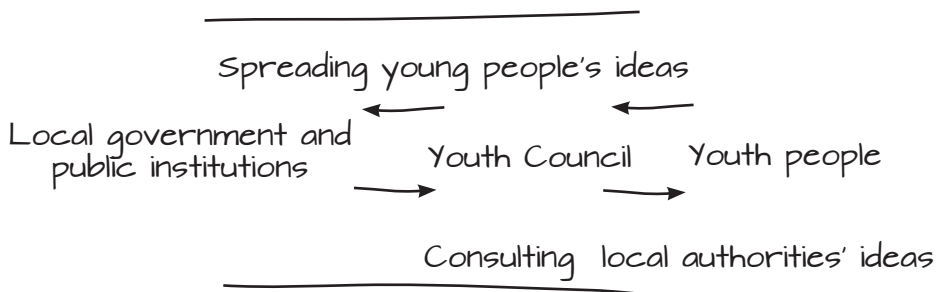
- 1 Consultation of local authorities' decisions among young people (e.g. resolutions of the city/town council and decisions of cultural or sports centres);
- 2 Gathering young people's opinions, ideas and problems, and informing public institutions about them.

On the one hand, a Local Youth Council can be a helpful tool for local authorities, a kind of a bridge to reach out to the youth community with questions and for information. For example, when local authorities plan to invest in new sports infrastructure, before spending a large amount of money, they can conduct surveys and debates with the help of a council. It might help to determine what kind of infrastructure is desired the most and where it should be located.

On the other hand, a Local Youth Council should be a strong voice which represents all young people – students, members of youth organizations, etc. Councillors should be actively engaged in a dialogue with their peers, collect their ideas, use the knowledge and support of other young people in the dialogue with local authorities. We can easily imagine how a group of students who have come up with an idea to organize a photo workshop will be treated by the local mayor/president. However, a delegation of these students together with young councillors who may help their less experienced friends will most probably be treated in a completely different way.

DO YOU KNOW?

In Poland, Local Youth Councils are entitled to officially speak at meetings of 'adult' city/town councils. This is a very important tool that allows young councillors to present their opinions, evaluate the proposed legislation and thus influence the decision-making processes in their area.



2. Good practices

SPAIN'S PERSPECTIVE

In order to achieve effective cooperation between local authorities and Local Youth Councils (LYCs), it is necessary to create a **legislative framework** that recognizes the LYC as a separate figure or entity, guaranteeing that, independently of the people in the government, the LYC will receive the recognition and timely support.



However, at the same time it is important to guarantee the organizational and decision-making independence of the LYC. We must not forget that LYCs are organizations made up of young people, but they are not part of the administration.

To achieve that, the proposed legislative framework would be the recognition of LYCs by law as functionally and organizationally independent and democratic organizations. This also implies the need to provide a specific legal figure or entity that guarantees the representativeness and recognition of the organization as the only one of its kind in its territorial scope, as well as a procedure and requirements for the creation of a LYC.

Such legislation will also have to specify what the purposes of LYCs are in order to ensure that competences are not duplicated between the local administration and LYCs. Most often there are three basic areas covered by LYCs:

- Promoting youth associations;
- Promoting initiatives that ensure the participation of young people in their area in the decisions that concern them;
- Representing the youth in the dialogue with the local administration.

Finally, this legal framework must guarantee the functioning of LYCs. For this reason, it must reflect, as specifically as possible, the obligation of the administration at its different levels to provide LYCs with economic resources.

Valencian laws – Valencian Institute for the Youth (Institut Valencia de la Joventut, IVAJ)

Law No. 15/2017 on Inclusive Youth Policies of the Valencian Community is one of the most advanced in this respect in Spain, a country where regional governments are responsible for dealing with youth issues. This law establishes guidelines for youth policies whose principles include: comprehensiveness, mainstreaming, proximity, universality and equality. It also draws the lines of intervention to how youth policies should be designed, always as a co-responsibility of different levels of public administration. Therefore, the role of the local administration is recognized.



Specifically, ‘Title III’ addresses comprehensive policies on youth. In this title, the ‘Valencian Youth Strategy’ is designed as a general framework for planning policies that are to be developed throughout the territory of the Valencian Community. Likewise, the involvement of local entities is specified and new instruments are established. It highlights the creation of a network system, especially the ‘Xarxa Jove’, which will unite the resources and the work of different agents.

In addition, it recognizes the figure (entity) of LYCs as consultation, advice and participation agents of the young collective, in the design of municipal youth policies; and it grants the municipalities the competence to support LYCs at a technical, economic and formal level.

3. Useful tips

Of course, cooperation between every Youth Council and local authorities depends on many different factors. The ones presented below seem to be particularly important:

- ✓ Getting to know the structure, tasks and responsibilities of different public institutions – as young councillors you should be able to move smoothly in the world of local governments. If you know what the basic provisions of local laws are, how to finance initiatives and are familiar with the scope of duties of individual officials – it might be really useful. Your preparation will also be a sign of respect, serious approach to your responsibilities and will increase the chance for a real partnership with authorities. After all, professional preparation and good ideas are much more important than one’s age!

- ✓ During cooperation with the local government you should remember that officials and decision makers like discussions that are very specific and concrete. When you come to the meeting with a new proposal, make sure that it is as concrete as possible, time-oriented and has a realistic budget plan. The more time you put into the preparation phase, the greater the chance of succeeding!
- ✓ Building good relations – try to create situations in which both sides of the discussion are positive toward each other. Maybe it is worth considering for example inviting the representatives of the authorities to a less formal meeting where you will have an opportunity to get to know and like each other? Often it may turn out that, age difference aside, you have a lot in common, e.g. similar interests, way of looking at urban issues, etc. This kind of mutual sympathy is a good foundation for further cooperation.

From our experience related to managing the Youth Council of Xàtiva, we have come to the conclusion that cooperation and coordination between Youth Councils and public administration (or more specifically, with the Town Council) is currently beneficial and almost necessary. The Youth Council of Xàtiva doesn't receive income from the activities or projects we carry out, nor do we receive funding from the private sector. Therefore, the agreement securing our economic foundations, which we have with the Town Council, allows us to carry out more ambitious projects. This year we have been able to hire a technician who manages the Youth Council in Xàtiva on a daily basis. Therefore, we believe that this relationship is beneficial, as long as it does not imply a loss of autonomy or power of decision on our side to attend to the interests of the administration.

Regarding the coordination between the two entities, in our case the relationship is mutually supportive. For instance, we promote the activities of the Department of Youth and it also supports our activities through a bi-monthly programme in which our activities are included. Also, throughout the year we have managed to organize various activities and projects together.

However, it must be taken into account that this methodology can dilute the work of Local Youth Councils and blur the differences between the two entities.

Ernesto Cuenca Martínez, project manager at the Youth Council in Xàtiva, Spain

4. DO's and DON'ts



- Being financed by public funds doesn't mean losing autonomy. Legislation shouldn't hinder LYCs in achieving their independence. That means that a LYC can make a critical campaign against the administration and that this campaign is financed with funds from the same administration.
- A good relationship and cooperation between LYCs and local authorities is recommended, but LYCs must not lose their objectivity and critical vision. Obviously, before conducting a public campaign against the administration, LYCs must follow the path of dialogue.
- LYCs must always be on the side of youth and youth associations, defending their interests and rights more than their relationship with the administration.

The key to effective cooperation with local authorities and advocacy on issues important to young people is to ensure:

- Relevant expertise and good ideas;
- Knowledge of the decision-making process and/or social processes;
- Efficient internal organization structure;
- Effective presentation of arguments (argumentation);
- Cooperation with allies.

5. Methods of work and the toolbox



Mapping of the advocacy campaign stakeholders

Every successful advocacy campaign (fighting for the interests of young people, trying to convince local authorities to take a specific decision/action) must be preceded by a good mapping of the environment. Before we start acting, it is worth considering what the balance of power around us looks like. Who may find our actions to be a potential opportunity, and who may be sceptical about them? Which group is a key to increasing our chances of succeeding?

The following exercise will help you to easily map your surroundings.

As the first step, try to list all groups that may be relevant to your activities, e.g. if you would like to change the scholarship system for the most talented students, the stakeholders will include: the mayor/president and his/her officials, city/town councillors, school directors, teachers, parents, students, NGOs.

In the second step, try to think about the attitude of each group toward your advocacy activities and then assign them to one of the following five groups:

Active allies

Passive allies

Neutral

Passive opponents

Active opponents

Source: ACT 2015. *Advocacy strategy toolkit. The PACT and UNAIDS.*

How can these groups be characterized?

- Active allies are those who agree with your demands and actively cooperate with you, e.g. express their opinions on your case, share knowledge, support and plan joint actions with you! The wise involvement of this group may be the key to the success of your campaign.
- Passive allies – this is the term used to describe a group that agrees with your demands in principle but does nothing about it. For instance, it can be parents who might agree with the ideas of the Youth Council regarding scholarships, but they won't actively support you in any way.
- Neutral – this group most often doesn't know anything about your plans and/or completely doesn't care about them. It is worth to find time to reach them with the specific, tailor-made message about your project. Probably they won't engage in your project actively, but maybe they can help you for example by signing a petition about scholarships?

- Passive opponents – they don't agree with your demands, but won't take any action against you. So it is worth simply to monitor this group to see if there is a tendency for them to turn into active opponents who can become a big threat to you.
- Active opponents – a group that fundamentally disagrees with your goals and, what is more, takes actions to hinder their implementation. People from this group may for example criticize your ideas in the media or at meetings/debates and point out their weaknesses. It is worth trying to neutralize their message, but don't get into a sharp dispute which may divert attention away from the real purpose of your actions and cause the failure of the entire project.

How to communicate effectively?

After a good analysis of the stakeholders, it is also worth considering how we want to communicate with our target groups. Below you can find a simple tool that will allow you to plan effective communication step by step:

Let us try to go through it using the example of a proposal to change the conditions for the scholarships criteria already referred to above. Imagine that your proposal is to create a special scholarship for students most active socially, so that not only those with the best grades are rewarded. Imagine that you want to create a message for a neutral group, in this case parents:

Target Group	Your goal	Key message	Methods of communication	Potential risks	Expected results	Other remarks
Parents	Convince parents to support the idea of new scholarships criteria and sign the petition to local decision makers.	Scholarships are a good way to appreciate students involved in volunteering and youth organizations – let's give them a chance to be rewarded!	Announcing the idea during a parent-teacher meeting in all schools and publishing articles in the local press.	Lack of interest in social engagement and in changing the current status quo. Fear that young people will lose their willingness to learn.	Positive reaction to the proposal and agreement to sign the petition.	It is worth getting your own parents involved and asking them to support you in the dialogue with other parents. This will give more credibility to your proposal and may bring you new supporters.

Try to use this table and discuss the communication strategy with all important stakeholders – maybe during your discussion some new, important conclusions will arise which will influence the final shape of your project?

6. Essential summary for the interested groups

A. Young People and Youth NGOs

Good preparation, collection of basic knowledge and appropriate planning of activities are a key to an effective advocacy campaign. If you are fully involved in fulfilling these tasks, for sure you are ready to go to the decision makers to present your ideas. Remember, it is your fresh look at the city/town/region and your official mandate to represent young people that is your greatest asset. Keep a balance between assertiveness and conciliation, find the right balance between revolution and evolution, be professional, but don't lose your young spirit!

B. Youth workers

Be the helping hand for young people exploring the world of local government – very often you know well how public institutions work and what is essential to establish a fruitful cooperation. Try to pay attention to risks related to young people entering the local political arena. Share your experience, but do not influence the direction of young councillors, even if they are not entirely in line with your personal views.

C. Local authorities and decision makers

Remember that cooperation with local authorities is a very important educational process for young activists. First projects, first meetings with decision makers, first debates – these are very important experiences that can strongly shape young people's attitude toward civic engagement. Try to appreciate their ideas, give them a thoughtful feedback and point out areas for development. Such cooperation can be a challenge for you as well – after all, you often need to share your power with citizens (young people).

7. Testimonies

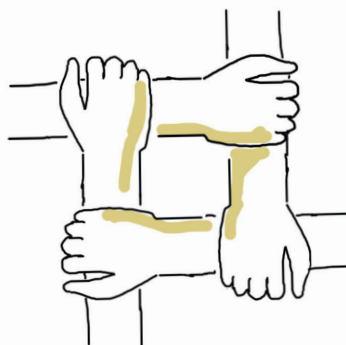
Local authorities need Local Youth Councils. It isn't easy to establish fruitful cooperation with young people and teenagers. However, having a real dialogue with young citizens helps to create better policies. It isn't enough for local governments to ask young people about their needs and try to solve their problems. It isn't enough to organize activities for them. What is necessary is to really listen. It's necessary to build a real partnership. It's necessary to let young people be active and realize their own projects. The existence of LYCs might not always be comfortable for the administration because it can't control them. However, LYCs are a very important space for personal and collective growth and for education toward participation. At the same time, they remind decision makers to mainstream youth issues. It is through this constant tension that effective cooperation between local authorities and young people can be born.

Jesús, Managing Director at IVAJ.

Capacity building and sustainability of Youth Councils

1. General description

A good Local Youth Council should have a strong position in the local community, be treated as a partner by adults and be able to maintain the continuity of its activities over the years. This is a particularly important challenge for councils which are composed of young people elected in school elections.



The term of office of a Local Youth Council lasts for a certain period of time (usually 1 or 2 years) and is followed by elections during which some or even all members are replaced by new councillors.

In the latter case, it is particularly difficult to ensure the continuity of the council's activities, both in terms of the implementation and internal management. The situation is similar in Youth Councils based on non-governmental organizations. Representatives elected to the board are most often active for one or two terms, and the biggest challenge is to get new people on board while avoiding the same mistakes and discussions.

To maintain the consistency of activities in the Youth Council, it is important to support new councillors in their activities especially at the beginning of their term. During the last period of each term, councillors should prepare new members for their role. It is also a good practice to start building the so-called institutional knowledge, e.g. a database of documents, contact lists, practical solutions that can be shared with new members.

Thanks to these actions, each new term of the Youth Council doesn't have to start from the beginning – adaptation to a certain model of operating occurs almost immediately. Councillors of previous terms typically attend the sessions and events organized by the new members and should be available to them in case of any questions, problems and challenges. This ensures a good flow of information and enables to avoid reinventing the wheel at the inauguration of each new term.

Building the institutional knowledge is a difficult challenge even in experienced non-governmental organizations or professional companies, but it can work efficiently also in Youth Councils. Such transfer of knowledge, contacts and common ways of acting is also vital when it comes to cooperation with local authorities.

It is important that local authorities ensure such working conditions for the Youth Council, so it has the opportunity to develop and strengthen its capacity. In its publication on the

quality criteria of youth policy, the European Youth Forum draws attention to three critical dimensions of support for youth organizations which include:

- Ensuring sufficient financial resources and personal support for building the strength of youth organizations;
- Conducting training programmes for youth leaders in order to strengthen youth organizations (e.g. the Warsaw Academy of Young Leaders programme in Poland);
- Ensuring the knowledge and information on capacity building (e.g. good practices database, training support, mentor support) are easily accessible for youth and their organizations.¹

2. Good practices

Capacity building of Local Youth Councils

The term of office in our council lasts for two years while people in presidential positions usually change every year. Nevertheless, we manage to maintain continuity between the consecutive terms and prepare new members for their role. We focus on trainings, so even primary school students have knowledge about Youth Councils. We try to encourage them to be active citizens and engage in youth organizations. This is the way how we try to reach out to our younger friends to whom we can later hand over our work and thus ensure the strong position of the Council in the local community.

Another important structure that we have established is the Advisory Board for the Local Youth Council. This is the place where all active young people from Piaseczno, who for different reasons can't be official members of the Council, gather together. For instance, older youth who still want to be active citizens and people who are not students of schools in Piaseczno and therefore can't be elected to the Council. There is no election system for the Advisory Board – so it is an inclusive structure that everyone who wants to be active can join. That is a really nice way to learn about civic participation as well as Youth Councils, their structure and activities. Very often members of the Advisory Board decide to run for a seat in the Local Youth Council in the next elections. This mechanism helps us to educate our future members and thus increase the number of active young people in Piaseczno. Also, very often after they have served their term, former members of the Youth Council continue their activity in the Advisory Board, educating and advising their younger peers.

What are the benefits of such system? First of all, it helps to ensure that new councillors, especially those in the presidium of the Council, who previously were members of the Advisory Board, are experienced and can apply good practices from the previous years. They don't start from scratch. Instead, they can simply continue the successful work of their predecessors. On the other hand, former members of the Youth Council can still help their younger peers in the Advisory Board – it is a very good way for maintaining the institutional knowledge. What is more, thanks to the Advisory Board the period of activity in the Youth Council is much longer. Usually young people are active only during their term (2 years), but with this solution this time can be extended to even as many as 4 years: one year in the Advisory Board, two in the Council and then again one year as an Advisor.

Karolina Hołownia-Malinowska, President of the Local Youth Council in Piaseczno, Poland

¹ *A Toolkit on Quality Standards for Youth Policy*, European Youth Forum, 2016.

Peer-to-peer education is a key to success!

Picasso used to say that 'great artists steal', but for us following them should be enough. And by 'great artists' I mean here huge enterprises with a well-developed management structure. Their way of working might be a great inspiration for every Youth Council!

Before we start thinking how wide and high our skeleton will be, we should stop thinking about ourselves as a youth organization but rather as a company that has certain standards, mission and vision. Implementing such way of thinking will bring profit! In our case 'profit' means a high quality representation of young people's interests and strengthening the very brand of the Youth Council.

Bearing in mind the duration of the term of office in the Youth Council and high turnover rates of its members, it would be worth modifying the system of selecting new members. A situation where only some members of the council are newly elected might have a positive impact on the Youth Council's activities. In that scenario, new members will have the opportunity to get the necessary knowledge and skills from their more experienced friends, and become fully involved members in a shorter period of time. On the other hand, experienced members will have the opportunity to learn how to teach others, which is a great way for developing personal skills.

We try to build our internal structure in the Regional Youth Council in Lower Silesia in a way that allows more experienced people with strong leadership skills to be tutors for less experienced members and to work closely with them. That brings vital results for both groups and effects in strengthening our Youth Council! Don't forget that Youth Councils can be a very important educational space for young people – both to learn and support each other.

Michał Radoń, Coordinator of the Regional Youth Council in Lower Silesia, Poland

3. Useful tips

Building the institutional knowledge might sound difficult, but in fact it is nothing else than raising awareness of the need to strengthen your organization, both internally and externally, on a daily basis.

How to do it? Below you will find some ideas:

- Create an infopack for new members (basic information about the council, its goals, activities, duties of the young councillors, practical tips);
- Organize a joint workshop for members from the old and new term of office to share their experience and get to know each other;
- Create short notes and flashcards with good practices of your council;
- Take care of internal communication, both to the council members and members of associated youth NGOs (for example, if the council is a member of a union of youth organizations like in Spain). Share with them news about upcoming projects, invite them to events, involve them in the promotion and dissemination of your activities. They can be your best ambassadors!
- Plan regular meetings and workshops with other Youth Councils and youth organizations to explore new perspectives.

4. DO's and DON'ts



- ✓ Don't hesitate to use good practices and experiences of other youth NGOs. Find out if there are any other Youth Councils nearby. It might be a good idea to set up a meeting, organize joint workshops and exchange knowledge. Youth Councils often face very similar problems and challenges – you don't have to reinvent the wheel!
- ✓ Use the knowledge and experience acquired by the Youth Council in the past years. Maybe it is worth to organize a meeting with previous members and share your views. They will understand the specifics of Youth Councils activities perfectly – maybe after a few years' break they will have a completely new perspective which you might find useful?
- ✓ Cooperate with local NGOs. They are often a perfect source of knowledge about your community. From time to time you can invite them to meetings or organize joint workshops with them – they will surely share many of their valuable experiences which you might find useful in your everyday work.
- ✓ Find time and ensure resources to obtain new knowledge – stay up to date with offers of workshops, training courses and study visits. Encourage your members to attend these types of projects, so that they can come back richer in new experiences that you can use.
- ✓ Build your institutional knowledge through working on your database. Make sure that you do it on a daily basis, not only at the end of each term. Sometimes this involves even really small actions, such as updating your council's contact list by adding telephone numbers to local journalists that you have recently met.
- ✓ Find time for brainstorming and think how you want to collect documents and important knowledge, so you can easily hand it over to the next councillors. Think about it as an important task, just like any other big cultural or sport project.
- ✓ If your council has employees on a regular basis, work with them closely and involve them in building the capacity of your organization. An efficient secretary general is often its greatest treasure and a source of long-lasting knowledge.

5. Methods of work and the toolbox



It is hard to discuss the institutional knowledge and not to mention popular and proven internet tools. By using applications, we can easily create and then share both project documents (Dropbox) and tasks (Trello). Regular use of these tools will be an excellent basis for sharing your knowledge and basic sets of documents with the next council members.

Trello is an internet application for project management in which you can create task lists in the form of a board. You can organize tasks by their status: to be carried out, in progress and already implemented. It is possible to assign specific people to individual tasks and add comments. A very useful tool if we have to coordinate the work of many people performing various tasks at the same time. The basic version is available for free.

www.trello.com

Dropbox is a service that allows you to store different kinds of files and share them with other users. You may share one file or the whole catalogue. The tool is useful for handling larger files that cannot be sent via email as an attachment. The basic version is available for free. www.dropbox.com

6. Essential summary for the interested groups

A. Young people and youth NGOs

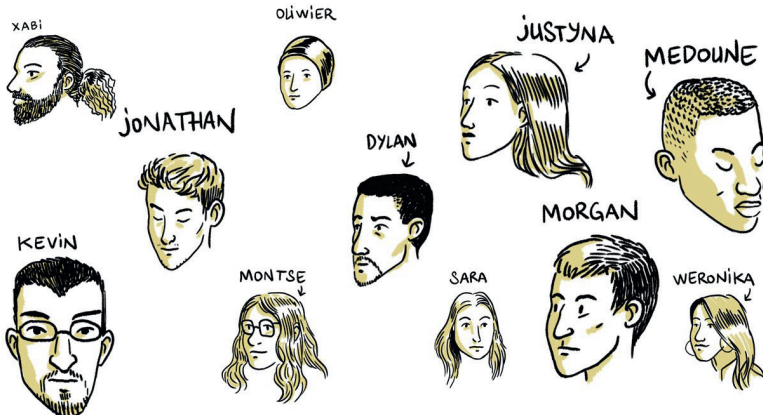
Choose from the group the ‘guards of institutional knowledge’ – this may be for instance the role of the secretary of the council. Try to prepare minutes from meetings regularly and then upload them to the ‘virtual world’. Share your contact lists with the key stakeholders and local government representatives. Are there any other Youth Councils in your region? For sure it is worth to start building relationships with them which may result in fruitful cooperation in the future. Invest your time in getting new people on board and involving them in the council’s activities. This may prove to be the greatest asset for your organization in the future. After the end of your term try to be like an older brother – be supportive when necessary, but also let the next members take their own actions.

B. Youth workers

A youth worker supporting the Youth Council is a key person when it comes to building the capacity of the youth organization. Skilful introduction of new young councillors, motivating them, conducting the first integration workshop, assisting them in planning the council’s activities and understanding their own role in the process – these are the tasks for you. It is worth reminding young councillors that they need to find time and look for new volunteers who can then join the council and strengthen its activities.

C. Local authorities and decision makers

It is also in the interest of local authorities to build a strong Youth Council. Support youth organizations not only by ensuring the budget but primarily by sharing your knowledge and experience. Young people often need support of an experienced youth worker who will help them look at their work not only from the perspective of the upcoming project but also in the long term. The role of the authorities is to help to find such person and convince him/her to work with young people.





www.youthcouncils.schuman.pl