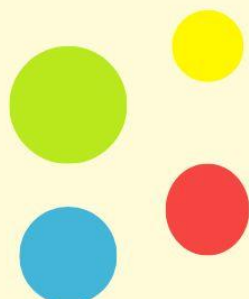




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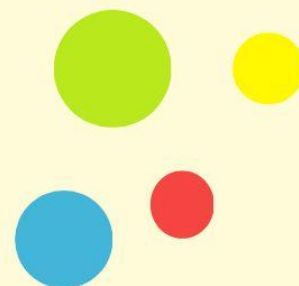
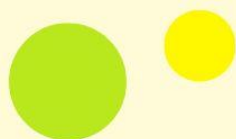


YOUTH LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT



YOUNG FUTURE LEADERS POLICY PAPER

**Paper on the Future of Youth Integration and
Inclusion in Community-Led Local Development**



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Community-led local development and 'Future Challenges, Skills Needs and Effective Youth Engagement Methodologies for Community Led Local Development Practitioners'

Project Name: *"Addressing youth skills and community youth inclusion processes to facilitate the next generation of young community leaders"*

Project Acronym: Youth Led Local Development (YLLD)

The project aims to improve, through lifelong learning, the awareness, interest, knowledge and participation of young people living in rural and remote areas and facing socio-economic difficulties in civic participation and community-led local development activities, thus contributing to community inclusion, social innovation, sustainable growth and quality economic opportunities.

By involving, connecting and empowering young people, the project will strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation, creating synergies between different geographical areas and important actions for local communities across Europe.

Project number: 2021-1-IE01-KA220-YOU-000028770 OI.D.





Executive Summary

The Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is a European Union approach, that emphasizes the active involvement of local communities in shaping and implementing strategies for their area's development. This participatory model aims to empower communities by granting them a central role in decision-making processes.

Youth civic engagement is recognized as a vital element in fostering a fair and equitable society. Primary engagement in civic participation introduces a lifelong commitment to democracy and contributes to community resilience and social innovation. The unique perspectives and innovative ideas of young people are seen as catalysts for social change and inclusive decision-making processes.

Recognizing the importance of involving young people, EU institutions promote the advantages of youth engagement, such as better academic outcomes, improved overall wellness, skills enhancement, and increased economic opportunities. In order to address challenges and promote youth inclusion in Community Led Local Development, the Youth Led Local Development (YLLD) project, aims to raise awareness, interest, knowledge, and participation among young people facing socio-economic difficulties, particularly in rural and remote areas.

The project cooperates with community development organizations to understand challenges related to volunteer recruitment, succession planning, and integrating young people into community-led structures. By designing a toolkit with input from various stakeholders, including young people, youth workers, community leaders, and local action groups, the project seeks to facilitate the implementation of best practices for youth inclusion in local development activities.



Introduction

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is a European Union approach to support local development initiatives and strategies.

In general, CLLD is an approach to local development that actively involves local communities in the design and implementation of strategies for their area's development. It aims to empower communities by giving them a central role in decision-making processes related to local development initiatives¹.



The youth civic engagement is one of the most important parts of creating a fair and equitable society. The engagement of civic participation early in life contributes to a lifelong commitment to democracy. The idea is that the development of stable community performance, multiple skills, and commitment among young people will lead to a wealthier community. The role of youth is critical in public engagement, basically because of the unique perspectives and innovative ideas that can lead to social change. Overall, the goal is to provide diverse young people with opportunities to build their skills, knowledge, and empowerment, leading to more representative decision-making and benefiting communities.

Young people have a crucial role in a country's development, as their lives are deeply connected by different aspects such as education, healthcare, the environment, immigration, violence, and foreign policy. The importance of the active engagement of youth in public life is that young people have innovative approaches and contribute to a more inclusive democracy. Youth involvement is not only vital for national decisions but also important to local communities, where their engagement strengthens social connections and contributes to community resilience.

The EU institutions consistently highlight the benefits of youth engagement, including improved academic performance, enhanced well-being, skill development, and economic mobility. Focusing on youth civic engagement is identified as a critical step in addressing these issues and working towards a more just and equitable society².

¹ The ESF and community-led local development: Lessons for the future. European Social Fund Plus. (2022). <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en>

² *Participation - Youth Partnership*. Council of Europe. (n.d.). <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/participation>



Project Description

The Youth Led Local Development (YLLD) project is a part of the Erasmus+ Programme that purposes to support the youth inclusion in Community – Led Local Development through European Union. The project aims to raise awareness, interest, knowledge and participation of young people living in rural and remote areas and who face socio-economic difficulties, in civic participation and community led local development activities, contributing to community inclusion, social innovation, sustainable growth and quality economic opportunities.



To achieve these goals, the project will collaborate with existing community development organisations to understand the challenges of volunteer recruitment and succession planning, as well as perceptions/challenges of integrating young people into the community led structures. A key objective of the project is to collaboratively design a toolkit with various groups to facilitate the implementation of best practices in integrating young individuals into local development structures led by the community.

This research aimed to identify the current and future skills needed by young people to actively participate in Community Led Local Development activities across partner countries. The study focused on key aspects of both Community Led Local Development and youth engagement. The audience comprises several stakeholders including young people or youth workers working in youth development, members of voluntary community organisations, community leaders, local action groups and youth agencies.

The methodology involved the distribution of an online questionnaire to professionals, youth workers, volunteers, local government members, and young people. The goal was to gain insights into their perceptions of challenges, requirements, and potential solutions for youth inclusion. Additionally, the research explored how the ambitions of young people and the needs of local community groups could be effectively merged to support robust community-led organizations. The findings will be utilized to design tools that enhance the integration and inclusion of young people in these activities.



Community-led local development

Community-led local development (CLLD) is an approach to territorial development in which local actors collaborate to design and implement strategies that address their specific objectives and needs. This model, introduced by the European Commission, aims to exchange from traditional "top-down" methods, emphasizing the potential and strengths of the local territory following the "bottom – up" method (from community to the higher parts, policy makers). CLLD involves a combined partnership of local actors, both public and private, working within European regulations and funding models to achieve integrated local development goals on a sub-regional scale. A key component is the Local Action Group, responsible for formulating a Local Action Plan that translates objectives into concrete actions, fostering cooperation and resilience in communities³.

The EU is actively promoting CLLD across various types of territories and community needs, recognizing its potential to enhance territorial cohesion. In practical terms, the CLLD policies are designed to empower local communities by giving them a greater role in decision-making processes related to the use of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). These funds include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), and the Cohesion Fund. By engaging local actors, such as community groups, local authorities, businesses, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), CLLD seeks to promote integrated and participatory approaches to development.

The challenges facing CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) are connected to its concrete impact on the enhancement of development policies. These challenges involve enhancing the design and implementation of policies to benefit specific regions, emphasizing territorial focus for heightened effectiveness. Additionally, CLLD aims to elevate the quality of local planning and facilitate coordinated, flexible, and practical collaboration between policies, by simplifying governance tools and procedures for accessing EU funding.



³ *Thematic guidance fiche: Institutional capacity building (thematic objective 11)*. European Commission – European Structural and Investment Funds. (2018.). https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/guidelines/2014/thematic-guidance-fiche-institutional-capacity-building-thematic-objective-11_en

Existing Data Review Youth Integration and inclusion

Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: EU Youth Strategy

The 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, conducted in 2017/2018, aimed to gather the perspectives of young people to shape the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. This process resulted in eleven European Youth Goals, representing the aspirations of European youth. These goals include various themes, including connecting the EU with youth, gender equality, inclusive societies, constructive dialogue, mental health and wellbeing, rural youth development, quality employment and learning, space and participation for all, a sustainable green Europe, and the involvement of youth organizations and European programs⁴.

The younger generation is willing to take charge of their lives and actively support others. It is important to mention that youth are navigating various life transitions, such as moving from education to employment, living independently, forming relationships, or starting a family. They must deal with different aspects for their future. There are multiple patterns that young people are surrounded by and that really affect the quality of their daily lives. Social phenomena like globalization, climate change, technological advancements, demographic shifts, socioeconomic trends, populism, discrimination, social exclusion, and the influence of fake news, the impacts of which on jobs, skills, and democratic processes are some of the topics that young people worry about⁵.

The cooperation among European Union Youth aims to make the most of the potential to support youth policy. It promotes youth involvement in democratic processes, aligning with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. Additionally, it backs social and civic participation, motivated to ensure that every young individual has the necessary resources in order to be engaged in society. At the same time, it is crucial to emphasize the inclusion of young individuals who may be at risk due to potential sources of discrimination, including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, belief, or political opinion.

There is a link between socioeconomic exclusion and democratic exclusion. Youth facing disadvantages tend to be less engaged citizens with lower trust in institutions. It is crucial for Europe to ensure that the potential of its young

⁴ *European youth goals*. European Youth Portal. (n.d.). https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/european-youth-goals_en

⁵ *EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027)*. EUR-Lex. (n.d.). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/eu-youth-strategy-2019-2027.html>



population is not misspent, and to prevent the occurrence of social exclusion and disengagement. Young people should not only shape their own lives but also actively contribute to positive societal changes. For EU actions to truly benefit young individuals, they must align with their aspirations, creativity, and talents, addressing their specific needs. In return, the younger generation enhances the EU's goals, as highlighted in the EU Youth Report, which emphasizes their status as the most educated and technologically skilled generation ever ⁶.

Using the knowledge gained from the experiences and decisions made in youth cooperation over the past four years, the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 aims to address current and emerging challenges faced by young people across Europe. This strategy establishes a framework comprising objectives, principles, priorities, core areas, and measures for collaborative youth policy efforts, involving relevant stakeholders while respecting their competences and following to the principle of subsidiarity.

These stakeholders include EU Member States, relevant EU institutions, international organizations like the Council of Europe, local and regional authorities, youth councils, youth organizations, entities working with young people, youth workers, youth researchers, civil society actors, as well as structures associated with programs like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, along with their subsequent initiatives. By actively engaging and empowering all young individuals, youth policy actions can contribute to realizing the vision of a community where young people can embrace opportunities and align themselves with European values.

During the 6th cycle of the Structured Dialogue, titled 'Youth in Europe: What's next?', decision-makers, young individuals, and researchers collaborated to identify topics pertinent to youth through a Europe-wide consultation. These topics were then categorized into 11 areas. The 11 European Youth Goals emerged as a result of this inclusive process, which engaged young people from across Europe. These goals not only mirror the perspectives of European youth but also embody the aspirations of those actively participating in the Structured Dialogue⁷.

These goals stand as a proof to the interest of many young Europeans to play a role in shaping the direction of European cooperation in the youth sector. The EU Youth Strategy is expected to contribute to realizing the youth's vision by utilizing EU-level policy instruments and implementing actions at national, regional, and local levels involving all stakeholders. The European Youth Goals, in their original form as expressed by the participants, are designed to

⁶ *Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy*. European Commission. (n.d.). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0269>

⁷ EU youth strategy. European Youth Portal. (n.d.). https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en



inspire and provide guidance for the European Union, its Member States, and pertinent stakeholders and authorities. This is accomplished while taking into account the principles of subsidiarity, national competence, and the right to freedom of association⁸.

Youth Participation: Italy

The formal mechanisms of consultation in Italy regarding youth-related matters are outlined in Law 145/2018, which designates the National Youth Council (CNG) as a consultative and representative body. The CNG is empowered to provide input on issues presented by the President of the Council of Ministers or delegated authorities. Ministers can also seek the CNG's opinion on matters impacting younger generations. The CNG is granted the authority to foster dialogue among institutions, youth organizations, and young individuals, as well as to address barriers delaying youth participation in representative and direct democratic processes. Additionally, the CNG collaborates with public administrations, conducts studies, and prepares reports on youth conditions to inform youth policies. It expresses opinions and proposes legislation affecting young people.

However, there is currently no obligation for the government to consult young people on specific issues. In 2020, the CNG began discussions with the Minister for Youth Policies and Sport to establish formal consultation mechanisms. At the regional level, diverse approaches exist, with some regions establishing Forums/Councils and other representation bodies. The Campania Region is highlighted as an example, having enacted laws promoting a Regional Youth Forum with advisory functions, financial resources, and formal consultation mechanisms. This Forum, comprising 70% local Forum representatives, provides input on issues affecting young people. Campania also supports youth participation in political life and facilitates interactive digital platforms for discussions between institutions and young people. Other regions such as Piemonte, Puglia, Tuscany, and Sicily showcase good practices in youth participation.

Additionally, the Universal Civil Service, managed by the Department for Youth Policies, has a representative body for voluntary workers participating in the National Council, where decisions regarding civic service planning are made. The primary channel for government engagement with youth participation is the National Youth Council (CNG), which experienced reformation in 2019 by merging with the National Youth Forum (Law 145/2018). The transformation aimed to enhance representation and involvement of young people within the Council. Over the past decade, the

⁸ Youth spaces and everyday participation final. Youth Conference. (n.d.). http://www.youthconf.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Youth-Spaces-and-Everyday-Participation_final.pdf



National Youth Forum, included of various and key Italian youth associations, consistently led consultations on crucial issues affecting youth. The Department of Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service supported these efforts through funding projects dedicated to evaluating the perspectives and preferences of young people⁹.

Youth Participation: Ireland

Since 2000, various Government departments and state agencies at the national level in a given country have developed policies and frameworks emphasizing the participation of children and young people in decision-making. The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (2015-2020) and the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making (launched in 2021) are key initiatives. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) houses a dedicated Citizen Participation Unit (Article 12 of the United Nations on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)). The department is committed to ensure that children have a voice in matters affecting them and directs efforts toward effective structures for participation, conducting consultations, and developing evidence-based policies. The DCEDIY supports local child and youth councils, the national youth parliament, and the Children and Young People's Participation Support Team, fostering collaboration with academic institutions on children's participation.

The Children and Young People's Participation Support Team focuses on building best practices, conducting participation capability, and supporting existing structures. The Participation Officers specifically assist the local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) and the national youth parliament (Dáil na nÓg) through support, training, and oversight of funding. The Children and Young People's Participation Hub, known as "Hub na nÓg", is a national centre aiming to implement the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making. The Hub supports government departments, agencies, and NGOs to involve children and young people in decision-making, with a focus on those seldom heard. The Hub's objectives include supporting participation, creating resources, conducting training, and establishing an online participation database.

The Children and Young People's Participation Research Advisory Group collaborates with academics to document participation initiatives led by the DCEDIY and develops education and training on children's participation. The group aims to build an evidence base for children's involvement in decision-making. The Rural Youth Assembly, established in 2021, focuses on identifying

⁹ *YouthWiki*. National Policies Platform. (n.d.). <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/italy/54-young-peoples-participation-in-policy-making>



and influencing policy issues affecting young people in rural Ireland. It meets annually to discuss and address issues impacting their futures. From July 2017 and then, “Hub na nÓg” and the Participation Support Team have collaborated with the DCEDIY to organize discussions and gather feedback from children and young individuals on diverse topics, including the design of the new Children’s Court and the involvement of the child’s perspective in adoption proceedings. The feedback received from these consultations has empowered young people to actively contribute to the policy making procedure¹⁰.

Youth Participation: Portugal

In Portugal, the involvement of young people in decision-making processes is mainly consultative, meaning their contributions are considered but not a requirement. This engagement is typical, happening mainly through youth representative organizations like associations and councils related to youth, sports, education, employment, or health. Formal consultation mechanisms are concentrated in advisory boards of various state sectors.

Nationally, consultations involve bodies like the Youth Advisory Council and Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (Instituto Português Do Desporto E Juventude - IPDJ), while locally and regionally, Youth Municipal Councils and Regional Advisory Councils of the IPDJ are significant. The actors involved are varied, including governmental structures, youth and student organizations, and civil society groups. Notable youth actors include the National Youth Council, National Federation of Youth Associations, and student associations, all actively participating in legislative processes and policy dialogues concerning young people’s interests. The legal framework also grants students’ representatives a seat on relevant councils. Various procedures incorporate the input of young individuals in shaping and evaluating political measures. Several instances highlight this integration:

The National Youth Plan emerged through a comprehensive national listening process, utilizing an online form open to all youth, combined with a dedicated national forum. Valuable contributions played a pivotal role in formulating the plan, and the outcomes of the listening process were shared both online and in various forums. The current legislation governing youth association underwent extensive consultations, discussions, and negotiations (Law no. 57/2019). The development of the youth worker’s professional profile and its corresponding Recognition, Validation, and Certification of

¹⁰ *YouthWiki*. National Policies Platform. (n.d.-a). <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/ireland/54-young-peoples-participation-in-policy-making>



Competences (RVCC) received input from multiple stakeholders, particularly their representative platforms.

The Youth Pass evolved through collaborative efforts involving a workgroup comprising various stakeholders, including youth representatives. The Formar+ program benefited from contributions originating in a public sounding out process. The National Plan for the Implementation of a Youth Guarantee experienced modifications based on proposals from youth representation within the Committee for the Coordination and Monitoring of the Youth Guarantee. Significant initiatives fostering dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people were undertaken. The creation of the National Youth Plan 2018 involved a comprehensive consultation process, employing diverse mechanisms such as online surveys, focus groups, debate forums, and the dissemination and collection of perspectives through formal bodies and channels¹¹.

Youth Participation: Romania

The Youth Law directives local authorities to engage with youth organizations on matters concerning young people. Based on the law no. 52/2003, when a youth council isn't established, is important to have transparency in decision-making, requiring the publication of normative decisions for a 10-day public consultation, with an optional debate if requested by a registered NGO. The National Council for Youth (NCFY) at the national level, formed in 2020, involves active youth NGOs. It holds meetings organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, focusing on specific policy areas. Consultative youth councils are vital mechanisms for some authorities, but guidelines on their organization and structure at regional or local levels are lacking.

Face-to-face or online meetings are the primary consultation methods from 2020. The NCFY meetings and debates under law no. 52/2003 occur at central institutions or online. Law 52/2003 requires authorities to receive suggestions and comments via email before organizing public debates. Consultations under Law no. 52/2003 occur with each new regulation, ensuring transparency. However, the NCFY's frequency lacks regulation, with no meetings since August 2021. The Consultative Council on Youth Issues operated from 2016 to 2019, with varying meeting frequencies at national and local levels, influenced by local regulations. The Consultative Council on Youth Issues allowed all interested organizations to participate between 2016 and 2019. Since the establishment of the National Council for Youth (NCFY) in

¹¹ *YouthWiki*. National Policies Platform. (n.d.-a). <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/portugal/54-young-peoples-participation-in-policy-making>



youth, in order to share thoughts, ideas and strategies for effective community engagement and development.

In September 2023, a five-day international mobility workshop – Learning, Teaching, Training, Activities (LTTA) took place in Potenza, Italy, bringing together partners and participants from four countries: Ireland, Romania, Portugal, and Italy. The event started with team-building activities, facilitating interaction among participants. The LTTA workshop boasted a diverse group of 32 young individuals from partner countries. Workshops focused on Modules 1 and 2, emphasizing the rural community operating environment, youth engagement, and facilitation methodologies. Days 4 and 5 delved into Modules 3 and 4, concentrating on soft skills development and communication skills for rural youth animators.

The workshop included various cooperating activities, that participants were able to address their thoughts and adjust them properly to become recommendations for the stakeholders and policymakers. The activities included teamwork, problem-solving, ethics, and effective communication strategies, including leadership, social media management, and public speaking. The workshop provided a complete learning experience, combining theoretical knowledge with practical activities to empower participants with essential skills for youth-led local development in rural communities. The following part underlines some of the ideas that were mentioned throughout the workshop, as activity outputs from the youth participants.

→ One of the suggestions was to develop a system that aims to engage young people who are unaware of its activities by directly approaching them and encouraging their participation through personal interaction. A potential strategy involves implementing a 'buddy' system where current participants support and encourage others to join or various community events to attract youth involvement. Also, organizing events that appeal to multiple generations fosters greater community involvement, as it attracts parents and grandparents seeking activities for their children and creates positive childhood experiences that may lead to future involvement in community activities as adults.

→ Encourage young participants of public and town meetings to volunteer for different tasks or activities. Establishing a youth group with the appropriate adult guidance, where a committee of young individuals elected by the members takes charge. This setup fosters leadership skills and involvement in wider groups, allowing some members to become representatives and engage actively in decision-making processes. Organizing events aimed at involving young people can help in gaining representation from diverse communities.



Another idea proposed is to establish sub-committees comprising representatives from various organizations to organize events or activities. By involving members from different organizations, it becomes easier to reach volunteers from those organizations to assist in running the event. For instance, each event sub-committee could include a member from the parent group and representatives from several other organizations. This inclusive approach aims to foster a sense of community ownership of the event, rather than it being associated solely with the initiating group.

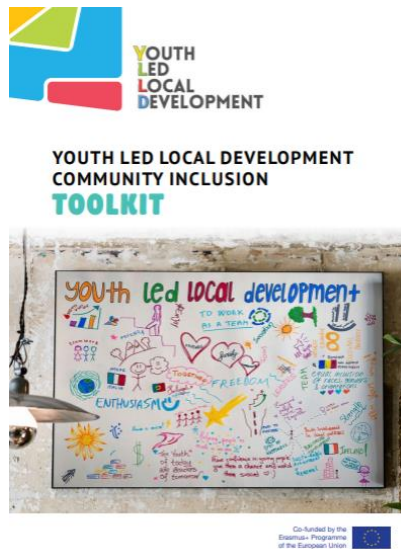
Additionally, the workshop facilitated discussions on addressing common challenges faced by youth in community development, such as access to resources, youth unemployment, and social inclusion, while also exploring innovative solutions and opportunities for collaboration. Overall, the learning workshop acted as an indicator for empowering young people to become effective agents of change and driving sustainable development at the public level.

Youth Led Local Development Community Inclusion Toolkit

The Youth Inclusion Toolkit is a comprehensive resource designed to integrate and empower young people in Community Led Local Development (CLLD). It facilitates engagement, connection, and empowerment of young individuals from diverse backgrounds, available in multiple languages including English, Italian, Romanian, and Portuguese. Its primary goal is to enhance youth participation in democratic processes, social and civic engagement, and ensure access to necessary resources. The toolkit has proven highly effective in engaging youth, addressing their needs, and fostering community inclusion. Its structured approach and stimulating content facilitate broader perspectives and enrich community dialogue. With practical examples and real-life

situations, it serves as a valuable resource for organizations working with youth. The inclusion of interactive workshops further emphasizes its effectiveness in real-world scenarios. Overall, the toolkit has successfully met project objectives and holds potential for widespread application in similar communities, highlighting its utility and impact.

In the following link you can have access to the e-learning platform and the online material of the YLLD project: <https://ylld-onlineportal.eu/>



Recommendations

The integration of young people in community-led local development is vital for fostering sustainable and inclusive growth within society. This chapter provides comprehensive recommendations aimed at enhancing youth participation in community actions, ensuring their active involvement in decision-making processes and contributing to the overall development of localities. Based on the collected data and the outcomes of the workshop, the recommendations are:



- In order to promote active participation of young individuals in community decision-making processes, it is crucial to establish youth-driven platforms. The establishment of those platforms can be achieved by creating permanent forums like youth councils or advisory boards, providing accessible spaces for young people where they can express their opinions and contribute innovative ideas. A way to ensure inclusive and accessible spaces is to develop both online and physical channels, in order to promote effective communication between youth and community leaders. These platforms not only empower the younger generation but also promote a collaborative and dynamic approach to addressing the needs and aspirations of the community as a whole.
- Directing the power of technology is crucial for engaging young people effectively. By utilizing technology platforms and social media, it is feasible to reach and connect with the youth, fostering a sense of community. Even by creating mobile applications and online portals further facilitates seamless information sharing, collaboration, and to the data collection process. This approach not only improves the cooperation but also empowers young individuals to actively participate in decision-making processes, making them important contributors to the broader community dialogue.
- Capacity building and skill development are fundamental aimed at the growth of the youth, in order to become valuable participants to local development. This approach targets in providing young people with the essential tools and knowledge necessary to actively engage in and positively impact their communities. A key aspect is the collaboration with educational institutions and vocational training centres to integrate practical, community-focused modules into their curricula. By doing so, the target is to bridge the gap between

theoretical knowledge and real-world application, preparing the new generation to have an impactful role in the local development¹³.

- Encouraging youth engagement in community-led projects can be achieved through the introduction of incentives, such as awards, scholarships, or recognition programs. By offering tangible rewards, we can effectively motivate young individuals to actively participate in initiatives that contribute to local development. It is crucial to explore innovative approaches in acknowledging and celebrating the valuable contributions of the youth, creating a positive and empowering environment that not only recognizes their efforts but also fosters a sense of pride and commitment to community betterment. These incentives serve as catalysts for increased youth involvement, driving a positive cycle of participation and contribution to broader societal well-being.
- To foster a more inclusive and diverse community, it is crucial to implement policies that guarantee representation from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and genders in decision-making bodies. This commitment to diversity ensures a broad range of perspectives and experiences are considered, contributing to more well-rounded and equitable decision-making. Additionally, establishing mentorship programs that connect seasoned community leaders with young individuals serves as a catalyst for knowledge transfer and mutual understanding. These initiatives not only promote professional development but also create an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued, ultimately fostering a stronger and more cohesive community.
- Promoting community engagement and fostering a sense of responsibility among the youth can be achieved through the implementation of participatory budgeting mechanisms. By incorporating platforms that allow young individuals to actively contribute to decisions regarding resource allocation for community projects, we empower them to have a direct impact on the development of their surroundings. Moreover, it is crucial to equip the youth with essential skills, such as financial literacy, to enhance their understanding of budgeting processes. This not only enables them to make informed contributions but also prepares them for future civic responsibilities, promoting a culture of informed and active citizenship within the community.
- To enhance community engagement and address the unique challenges faced by young individuals, it is imperative to cultivate robust partnerships with youth-led organizations, non-governmental

¹³ Capacity building in the field of Youth. European Commission. (n.d.). <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/capacity-youth>



organizations (NGOs), and local community groups. By forging alliances with these entities, one can tap into their established networks and resources, amplifying the impact of initiatives aimed at fostering positive change. Joint efforts can be directed towards tackling specific issues that disproportionately affect the youth, such as enhancing educational opportunities, facilitating employment prospects, and promoting overall health and well-being. Through collaborative endeavours, a more comprehensive and effective approach can be developed to empower and uplift the younger generation within the community.

- Implementing regular evaluations of youth integration initiatives is crucial for gauging their effectiveness and pinpointing areas that require improvement. Additionally, it is essential to establish robust feedback mechanisms that empower young individuals to articulate their concerns, share ideas, and provide suggestions for both ongoing and future projects. This two-pronged approach not only ensures a continuous assessment of the initiatives' impact but also fosters a participatory environment, allowing the voices of the youth to play a pivotal role in shaping the success and evolution of integration efforts.
- Engaging in policy advocacy and awareness campaigns is essential to foster youth integration in community-led development initiatives. By actively advocating for youth-friendly policies at both local and regional levels, we can create an environment that supports and encourages the meaningful participation of young individuals in community-building processes. At the same time, conducting targeted awareness campaigns becomes instrumental in illuminating the advantages of youth involvement while dispelling any prevalent misconceptions or stereotypes. Through these concerted efforts, we aim to establish a platform that not only recognizes the unique perspectives and capabilities of the youth but also harnesses their potential as valuable contributors to the overall development of our communities.
- Implementing a stable approach to long-term monitoring and adaptation is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of youth integration initiatives in community-led development. It is crucial to establish an inclusive monitoring system that systematically tracks the impact of these efforts over time. Emphasizing flexibility in strategies is key, as it allows for adjustments based on evolving needs and challenges encountered during the integration process. This adaptive approach ensures a dynamic response to changing circumstances, fostering continuous improvement and enhancing the overall success of youth integration initiatives in contributing to community-led development goals.



By implementing these recommendations, communities can create an environment that actively involves and empowers young individuals, fostering a sustainable and inclusive approach to local development. Embracing youth participation brings new perspectives and ideas while fostering a sense of community ownership and responsibility. This collaborative approach builds a resilient and vibrant community where the contributions of young people are valued and essential to societal progress and well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it cannot be emphasized enough how essential it is to encourage the integration of young people in community-led local development. This policy paper has explored the diverse advantages that emerge when young people actively engage in shaping their local communities. From enhancing social cohesion to driving innovation and sustainable growth, the positive impacts of youth engagement are undeniable.



The recommendations outlined in this paper serve as an outline for policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to

embrace and implement strategies that elevate youth voices and talents. Investing in education, providing platforms for civic participation, and fostering mentorship programs are crucial components of a comprehensive approach to youth inclusion. As we move forward, it is imperative to recognize that the success of community-led local development hinges on the active involvement of its youngest members.

In essence, by championing the inclusion of youth in the decision-making processes and development initiatives of their communities, we not only invest in their future but also lay the groundwork for sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant societies. The time to act is now, and by doing so, we can ensure that our communities evolve into spaces where every individual, regardless of age, can contribute, thrive, and collectively shape a better tomorrow.

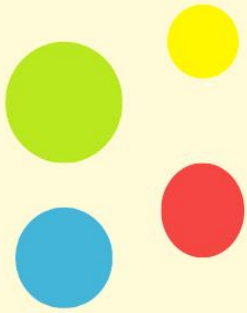
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