

Comprehensive Report

Youth Participation in Civic Life



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Comprehensive Report: Youth Participation in Civic Life

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Comprehensive Report: Youth Participation in Civic Life

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Executive Summary

Brief overview of Youth Match Point project and its objectives

The initiative titled "Youth Match Point" is an ERASMUS+ Cooperation Partnership for YOUTH project (2023-2-EL02-KA220-YOU-000177092) that has been developed to promote the active engagement of young people hence inclusive involvement in civic society issues, while creating a supportive and inclusive environment that recognizes and values the diverse array of perspectives and ideas within the teenage demographic of Europe.

The primary aim of the Youth Match Point project is to foster and enhance the active engagement of young individuals and encourage active youth participation in civic issues while fostering collaborative relationships.

The main objectives of this initiative are:

- to provide a platform that facilitates authentic relationships among young people in an enjoyable and accessible manner.
- to offer supplementary resources, mentorship prospects, and virtual events.
- to provide essential support and motivation to emerging leaders, enabling them to effectively contribute to the betterment of Europe.
- to support inclusivity for cooperation and networking will have been built.

In order to establish the basis for young people's active participation in civic life, the project seeks to discover the themes that most appeal to them through comprehensive nationwide studies that aimed to:

- to fully comprehend the goals, interests, and concerns of young people
- to equip young people with trustworthy resources so they can decide themselves on matters that are important to them.

- to create an atmosphere of participation and informed dialogue, by creating a dynamic environment where networking and collaboration become second nature and increase the effectiveness of youth-led initiatives.
- to bridge the gap between young people's aspirations and their ability to actively participate in meaningful community projects, boosting youth involvement, building deep connections, and fostering impactful change across Europe.

As a result, six surveys were conducted, in all partners countries, using a co-designed questionnaire and the results were analysed per country. In parallel, six focus groups took place, one in each partner country and the results were analysed and presented, in six respective National Reports, for Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Türkiye.

This Comprehensive Report consists of the analysis of the findings of:

- The 6 national reports presenting the main interests and issues that have an important effect on young people's goals and motivate their active participation in civic life
- The 36 collected and analysed best practices of youth initiatives, and
- The created interactive document presenting practical resources for young people to use.

Summary of key findings from the survey and focus groups

This summarizes the key findings from both a youth interest survey and focus group discussions conducted across multiple countries:

- **Areas of Interest and Concerns:**
 - **Alignment:** Both the survey and focus groups revealed a shared interest in mental health, social justice, and environmental sustainability.
 - **Focus Group Nuance:** Focus groups further emphasized the need for safe spaces for self-expression and belonging, particularly in Bulgaria and Türkiye.
- **Role of Technology:**
 - **Alignment:** Both data sources confirmed technology's integral role in daily life, for communication, information, and hobbies.
 - **Focus Group Concern:** Focus groups highlighted concerns about technology's negative impacts, including addiction, misinformation (Spain), and exclusion (Türkiye).
- **Challenges and Goals:**
 - **Alignment:** Economic uncertainty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities were consistent concerns. Aspirations for higher education, personal development, and contributing to society were also shared.
 - **Focus Group Emphasis:** Focus groups revealed a stronger desire for financial stability and career guidance (Bulgaria, Türkiye), and a lack of future vision (Hungary).
- **Community Engagement:**
 - **Alignment:** Both sources recognized the importance of community involvement.
 - **Focus Group Insight:** Focus groups emphasized the need for more accessible, flexible, and impactful community programs, and highlighted barriers like time constraints and lack of information.
- **Socio-Political Views:**

- **Alignment:** Both data sources showed youth are politically aware and concerned about social issues.
- **Focus Group Nuance:** Focus groups revealed a disconnect between youth and traditional political systems, and a sense of disillusionment (Italy, Spain, Hungary).

Highlight actionable recommendations

This provides actionable recommendations based on these insights from both a youth interest survey and focus group discussions conducted across multiple countries:

1. Tailored Programs and Support:

- Develop community programs aligned with youth interests (mental health, environment, social justice) and country-specific needs (e.g., financial literacy in Bulgaria, career guidance in Türkiye).
- Offer flexible formats (online, part-time) and accessible locations to overcome time and transportation barriers.
- Provide mentorship and skill-building workshops, including digital literacy and leadership, to enhance employability and personal development.

2. Safe and Inclusive Spaces:

- Create physical and online safe spaces for self-expression, fostering a sense of belonging and community.
- Ensure inclusivity for marginalized groups (e.g., migrants, LGBTQ+) in all programs and initiatives.

3. Mental Health Support:

- Integrate mental health awareness and support into existing programs and community spaces.
- Destigmatize mental health issues and promote access to affordable counseling and support services.

4. Enhanced Civic Engagement:

- Bridge the gap between youth and political systems by creating youth advisory boards and facilitating dialogues with policymakers.
- Support youth-led initiatives and advocacy campaigns on social and environmental issues.
- Leverage technology to promote civic engagement through online consultations, digital activism, and e-participation platforms.

5. Information and Resource Accessibility:

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- Improve access to reliable information and resources through youth-friendly channels and digital platforms.
- Offer guidance on navigating available resources and support systems.
- Provide financial assistance and material resources to enable participation in community projects.

Introduction

Background and Context

Young people are key drivers of societal progress and innovation. Their participation in civic life is essential for building inclusive, resilient, and dynamic communities. However, understanding the priorities, aspirations, and challenges of young people remains a critical step in fostering their active engagement. This project aims to bridge the gap between youth aspirations and opportunities by identifying the themes and issues that resonate most with young people and motivate them to participate in meaningful ways.

In light of this goal, a collaborative effort involving partners from 6 different countries, (Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Türkiye) has been undertaken. By leveraging surveys and focus groups, this initiative seeks to gather valuable insights into the interests and concerns of young people, ultimately enabling the development of tailored resources and actionable strategies to support their participation in civic life.

Youth participation in civic life is fundamental to creating inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable communities. As agents of change, young people bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and unique energy to address societal challenges. Engaging youth in civic activities not only empowers them to shape decisions that affect their lives but also fosters a sense of responsibility, belonging, and collaboration. By involving young voices in policymaking, community development, and social initiatives, societies can ensure that their future is guided by the aspirations and needs of all generations, paving the way for stronger, more equitable democracies.

Methodology

To comprehensively explore the views of young people, Youth Match Point project employed a twofold research approach:

Surveys: A structured questionnaire was developed, using Microsoft Forms, and was shared over the internet with young people to capture quantitative data on topics such as areas of interest, challenges, aspirations, and participation habits. This ensured a broad representation of youth perspectives across different regions.

Focus Groups: Facilitated discussions were organized in each partner country, allowing for deeper exploration of the survey topics. These sessions provided a platform for youth workers, experts working with youth, as well as young people to express their opinions, share experiences, and suggest solutions in an open and interactive environment.

The survey employed a questionnaire-based approach to gather data on youth interests and civic engagement. This questionnaire was distributed online, allowing participants to respond at their convenience. The collected data provides a snapshot of the views and experiences of young people primarily residing in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Türkiye, spanning a diverse age range from under 16 to over 30, with a majority falling within the 16-30 age bracket. While the data predominantly represents the perspectives of related countries' youth. A structured questionnaire was developed, using Microsoft Forms, and was shared over the internet with young people to capture quantitative data on topics such as areas of interest, challenges, aspirations, and participation habits. This ensured a broad representation of youth perspectives across different regions.

A series of focus groups conducted across six countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Türkiye. These focus groups, held between September 17th and November 15th, 2024. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas related to youth participation in civic life, guided by open-ended questions and prompts. The

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discussion covered key themes such as areas of interest, community concerns, aspirations, resource access, and barriers to engagement. The facilitators ensured a respectful and inclusive environment, encouraging active listening and diverse viewpoints while adhering to pre-determined discussion topics to maintain focus. Notes were taken throughout the session to capture key insights and recurring themes.

The data collected through these methods were analyzed to identify recurring themes and unique perspectives, offering a holistic view of the factors influencing youth engagement in civic life.

Objectives of the Report

This report serves as a critical component of the project by:

Presenting the findings from the survey and focus groups conducted in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Türkiye:

- Highlighting the key themes and patterns emerging from the data.
- Providing actionable recommendations to address barriers to youth engagement and enhance participation opportunities.

By shedding light on the voices of young people, this report aims to contribute to the development of policies and initiatives that empower youth to take an active role in shaping their communities and the wider society.

Survey Analysis

Participant Demographics

This study examined youth demographics across five European countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Turkiye), focusing on individuals aged 16–30. The data reveals a predominantly young participant pool across all nations, with relatively balanced gender representation, although some variations exist, such as a higher female participation rate in Italy and Spain, and a higher male participation rate in Hungary. Unsurprisingly, given the age range, the dominant language in each country aligns with the national language. Education levels are mixed, but a substantial proportion of participants are either secondary school or undergraduate students. Correspondingly, the majority of participants in each country identify as students, reflecting the targeted youth demographic.

Table 1: Participant Demographics by Country

Country	Age Range	Gender	Language	Education Level	Employment Status
Bulgaria	16–30	Male (29%), Female (68%)	Bulgarian	Secondary Education (63%)	Student (82%)
Greece	16–30	Male (49%), Female (47%)	Greek	Secondary Education (48%)	Student (65%)
Hungary	16–25	Male (67%), Female (33%)	Hungarian	Undergraduate (58%)	Student (64%)
Italy	16–30	Female (57%) , Male (43%)	Italian	Undergraduate (56%)	Student (66%)
Spain	16–30	Female (70%), Male (30%)	Spanish	Secondary Education (42%)	Student (62%)
Turkiye	16–30	Female (58%), Male (33%)	Turkish	Undergraduate (58%)	Student (64%)

Key Points:

- **Age:** The majority of participants across all countries are young people between 16 and 30 years old. This suggests that the survey successfully targeted and engaged with the youth demographic.
- **Gender:** While there is some variation between countries, the gender distribution is relatively balanced overall. This indicates that the survey captured the perspectives of both male and female youth.

- **Language:** The language spoken by participants aligns with the country they are from, highlighting the survey's reach across different linguistic groups.
- **Education:** There is a mix of educational levels, with a significant proportion of participants being either secondary school students or undergraduate students.
- **Employment:** The majority of participants across all countries identified as students, which is expected given the age range.

Key Findings by Country

This highlights key observations, recurring themes, common patterns, unique findings, and actionable recommendations regarding the interests, concerns, and needs of young people across several surveyed countries.

Key Observations:

- **Consistent Interests:** Young people globally share a strong interest in social justice, human rights, and hobbies, reflecting a dual focus on societal issues and personal fulfilment.
- **Technology's Importance:** Technology is deemed "Very Important" by most respondents, underscoring its central role in their daily lives.
- **Technology for Hobbies:** Young people frequently use technology to engage with their hobbies, indicating its integral role in their leisure activities.

Unique Findings:

The unique findings for each country highlight the specific challenges and concerns that young people face in their respective contexts. By understanding the unique perspectives and needs of young people in each country, stakeholders can create targeted strategies to foster civic responsibility and empower youth to actively shape their communities and

societies. These findings emphasize the importance of considering local factors when developing youth engagement strategies.

Table 2: The unique findings for each country

Country	Unique finding	Perspectives and needs of young people
Bulgaria	Strong emphasis on education and personal development.	A strong focus on completing their education, particularly high school and university. There's also a notable emphasis on personal development goals, such as learning foreign languages, improving mental health, and gaining independence.
Greece	Concerns about brain drain and meritocracy	Concerns about brain drain and lack of meritocracy were prominent, reflecting a sense of frustration with limited opportunities and a perceived lack of recognition for talent and hard work.
Hungary	Emphasis on Political Engagement	Showed a strong interest in Politics and Governance, suggesting a desire for greater involvement in political processes and decision-making.
Italy	Need for youth centers and dedicated spaces	Highlighted the need for youth centers and dedicated spaces for young people to gather, socialize, and engage in community activities. This suggests a lack of adequate infrastructure and support for youth-led initiatives.
Spain	Concerns about unemployment and corruption.	Concerns about high unemployment rates and political corruption were particularly pronounced, reflecting the socio-economic challenges faced by young people in Spain.
Turkiye	Economic and Political Concerns	Economic instability, unemployment, social inequality, and political polarization were highlighted as key challenges, reflecting the current socio-political climate in Türkiye.

These unique findings also suggest potential areas for further research and targeted interventions. For example, addressing brain drain in Greece, promoting political engagement in Hungary, establishing youth centers in Italy, tackling unemployment and corruption in Spain, and addressing economic and political concerns in Türkiye could be key priorities for youth development initiatives in these countries.

Recurring Themes and Common Patterns:

Several recurring themes and patterns emerged across the diverse participant groups. Universally, participants emphasized the importance of social issues and community involvement, alongside a consistent prioritization of education and career goals. Technology's deep integration into daily life and hobbies was also a prominent finding. Common patterns observed include a predominantly student participant base, consistently high internet access across all countries, and the identification of time constraints and a lack of awareness as key barriers to increased participation. Table 3 provide a more detailed analysis of these findings, offering valuable insights:

Table 3: Recurring Themes and Common Patterns by Country

Country	Recurring Themes	Common Patterns
Bulgaria	1. Disengaged and apathetic, requiring targeted efforts to re-engage them. 2. Social media plays a central role in shaping interests, hobbies, and language, but it also contributes to time-wasting and potential social exclusion. 3. Express a strong desire for community and belonging but face challenges in forming meaningful and lasting relationships. 4. A recognized need for support in developing practical life skills like personal finance and soft skills. 5. Financial stability is a major concern for Bulgarian youth.	1. Most respondents are students or employed, indicating a focus on education and career development. 2. High access to technology and the internet, suggesting that digital platforms play a significant role in their lives. 3. Family and friends are identified as the most helpful support systems, highlighting the importance of strong social connections.
Greece	1. Strong emphasis on social justice and human rights, and a belief in the importance of community involvement. 2. High value placed on education and career development, with a focus on personal and professional growth. 3. Concerns about brain drain and lack of meritocracy, indicating a desire for better opportunities and recognition within the country. 4. Reliance on a mix of online and offline sources for information, including social media, online reading, and educational environments.	1. Most respondents are students or employed, indicating a focus on education and career development. 2. High access to technology and the internet, suggesting that digital platforms play a significant role in their lives. 3. Family and friends are identified as the most helpful support systems, highlighting the importance of strong social connections.
Hungary	1. Strong interest in politics and governance, indicating a desire for active participation in shaping the country's future. 2. Concerns about political instability, corruption, and economic uncertainty, reflecting the current socio-political climate. 3. Value placed on education and career, but also a desire for work-life balance and personal well-being. 4. Reliance on a mix of online and offline sources for information, with a focus on social media and word-of-mouth.	1. Most respondents are students, highlighting the importance of education in their lives. 2. Moderate access to financial resources and education/training, suggesting potential barriers to achieving their goals. 3. Family and friends are considered the most important support systems, emphasizing the role of close relationships.

Italy	1. Concerns about unemployment, lack of opportunities, and political corruption, indicating a desire for greater economic and political stability. 2. Strong interest in social justice and human rights, reflecting a commitment to creating a fairer society. 3. Value placed on education and personal development, with a focus on finding a job and achieving financial independence. 4. Reliance on social media and online reading for information, but also value word-of-mouth and educational environments.	1. Most respondents are students, suggesting a focus on education and future career prospects. 2. Moderate access to financial resources and education/training, indicating potential challenges in achieving their goals. 3. Family and friends are considered the most helpful support systems, highlighting the importance of social connections.
Spain	1. Concerns about high unemployment rates, political corruption, and social inequality, reflecting the current socio-economic challenges in the country. 2. Strong interest in social justice and human rights, indicating a desire for social change. 3. Value placed on education and career, with a focus on finding a job and achieving financial independence. 4. Reliance on social media and online reading for information, but also value word-of-mouth and educational environments.	1. Most respondents are students, suggesting a focus on education and future career prospects. 2. Low access to financial resources, indicating significant financial barriers to achieving their goals. 3. Family and friends are considered the most important support systems, emphasizing the role of social connections.
Turkiye	1. Concerns about economic instability, unemployment, and social inequality, reflecting the current socio-political climate. 2. Strong interest in social justice and human rights, indicating a desire for social change. 3. Value placed on education and career, with a focus on finishing school, getting a good job, and career advancement. 4. Reliance on social media and online reading for information, but also value educational environments and official EU channels.	1. Most respondents are students, suggesting a focus on education and future career prospects. 2. Moderate access to financial resources and education/training, indicating potential challenges in achieving their goals. 3. Family and friends are considered the most important support systems, highlighting the role of social connections.

Commonalities and Differences:

While there are shared values and concerns among young people across different countries, the specific priorities and challenges they face vary based on their unique contexts. This highlights the importance of tailoring youth engagement strategies to address the specific needs and circumstances of each community. By recognizing both the commonalities and differences in youth perspectives, stakeholders can develop more effective and impactful initiatives to promote civic engagement and empower young people to create positive change in their societies.

Table 4: Commonalities and Differences in Responses

Commonalities	Differences
Shared core values, belief in youth involvement, and reliance on technology. • Core Values: Across all countries, young people shared similar core values, such as honesty, respect, fairness, and responsibility. • Social and Political Awareness: Youth in all surveyed countries expressed a belief in the importance of social and political issues and the role of young people in addressing them. • Importance of Community: Community involvement was consistently valued as either "extremely" or "very" important, highlighting a shared desire to contribute to society. • Reliance on Technology: All countries demonstrated a high reliance on technology for daily life, hobbies, and information gathering. • Educational and Career Aspirations: Goals related to education, career advancement, and financial stability were common across all countries.	Specific community concerns and desired programs vary by local context. • Areas of Interest: While there was overlap, specific areas of interest varied between countries, reflecting cultural and contextual differences. • Community Concerns: Specific community concerns and challenges differed based on the unique circumstances of each country. • Views on Social Media: Opinions on the role of social media in understanding social and political issues were mixed, with some countries expressing more skepticism than others. • Resource Needs: While financial support and education/training were common needs, specific resource requirements varied based on local contexts. • Barriers to Participation: While time constraints and lack of awareness were common barriers, some countries also highlighted specific challenges like safety concerns or lack of infrastructure. • Preferred Networking Methods: While social media and online platforms were widely used for networking, preferences for offline methods like volunteering and local events varied.

A. Areas of interest and role and usage of technology

These observations highlight common trends among young people in the surveyed countries regarding their interests, the role of technology, and the frequency of technology use for hobbies. These insights can inform initiatives aimed at engaging and supporting youth in their communities and personal development.

Key observations from a multi-country survey exploring the interests and technology usage of young people. Analysis of the data reveals consistent trends across all participating nations. Foremost among these is a strong and shared interest in social justice and human rights, coupled with a similar emphasis on hobbies and leisure activities. Furthermore, the survey highlights the perceived importance of technology in young people's lives, with the majority of respondents considering it "very important." This importance is further underscored by the frequent use of technology for pursuing hobbies and interests, demonstrating its integral role in how young people engage with their passions.

Table 5: Summary of Areas of Interest by Country

Country	Areas of Interest
Bulgaria	Arts and Culture; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Education and Learning; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; News
Greece	Arts and Culture; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Health and Wellbeing; News; Environment and Sustainability; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; Education and Learning
Hungary	Arts and Culture; Environment and Sustainability; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Education and Learning; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; News
Italy	Arts and Culture; Environment and Sustainability; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Education and Learning; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; News
Spain	Arts and Culture; Environment and Sustainability; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Education and Learning; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; News
Turkiye	Arts and Culture; Environment and Sustainability; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Education and Learning; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; News
ALL	Arts and Culture; Environment and Sustainability; Social Justice and Human Rights; Hobbies and Leisure; Education and Learning; Politics and Governance; Science and Technology; News

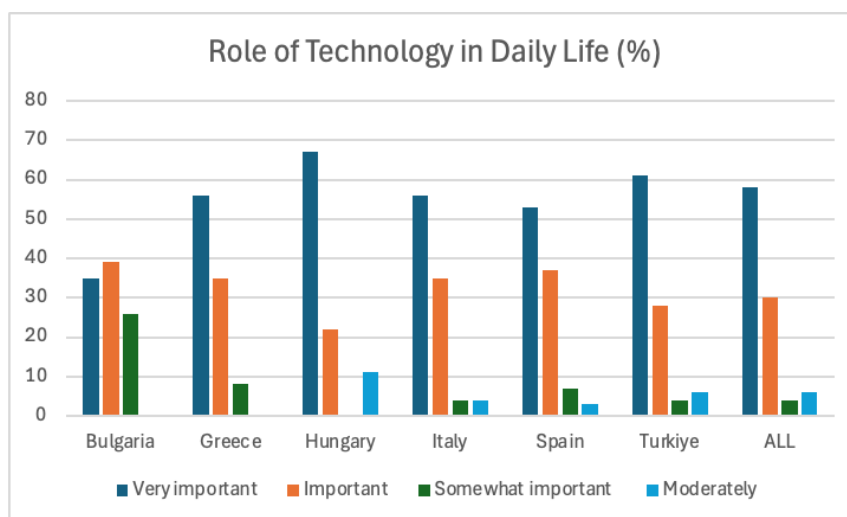


Figure 1: Role of Technology in Daily Life by Country

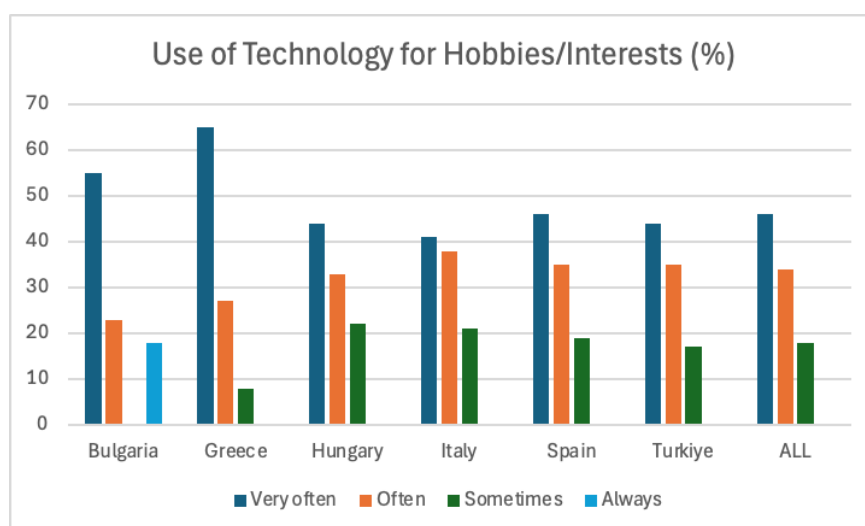


Figure 2: Use of Technology for Hobbies/Interests

Key Observations:

1. **Consistent Interests:** Young people across all surveyed countries share a consistent interest in **Social Justice and Human Rights** and **Hobbies and Leisure**, indicating a global concern for social issues and a desire for personal fulfillment.
2. **Technology's Importance:** The role of technology is perceived as "**Very Important**" by the majority of respondents in all countries, highlighting its significance in their daily lives.
3. **Frequent Use of Technology for Hobbies:** "**Very Often**" and "**Often**" are the most common responses regarding the use of technology for hobbies and interests, emphasizing technology's integral role in how young people engage with their passions.

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B. Community Concerns and Challenges

The diverse challenges faced by young people in different countries and emphasize the need for tailored solutions to address these issues and empower youth to create positive change in their communities. Participants identified a range of pressing community concerns, including social inequality, climate change, and mental health, which emerged as prominent themes across multiple locations. Furthermore, several significant challenges facing communities were highlighted, with substance abuse, a lack of relevant skills, and experiences of discrimination and exclusion frequently cited across the participating nations.

Table 6 will delve into the specific concerns and challenges raised in each country, providing a more detailed understanding of the issues impacting their communities.

Table 6: Summary of Top Issues and Challenges by Country

Country	Top Issues and Challenges
Bulgaria	Mental health, social issues, human rights, work, finances, housing -- those are all related to financial stability, green policies and green transition
Greece	Lack of meritocracy, brain drain, lack of job opportunities, economic instability, political corruption, climate change effects, social inequalities, mental health stigma
Hungary	Political instability, corruption, environmental issues, economic uncertainty, social inequality, education system shortcomings, healthcare accessibility, housing affordability
Italy	Unemployment, lack of opportunities, political corruption, organized crime, environmental degradation, social inequality, mental health stigma, education system inadequacy
Spain	High unemployment rates, political corruption, social inequality, environmental concerns, lack of affordable housing, precarious working conditions, mental health issues
Turkiye	Economic instability, unemployment, social inequality, political polarization, environmental problems, education system challenges, lack of social mobility, discrimination

Key Observations:

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- **Economic Concerns:** Issues like unemployment, economic instability, and lack of opportunities are major concerns across multiple countries, reflecting the challenges faced by young people in the current economic climate.
- **Social and Political Issues:** Social inequality, political instability or corruption, and discrimination are also prevalent concerns, highlighting a desire for fairer and more just societies.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Environmental issues and climate change are recognized as significant challenges, indicating a growing awareness of sustainability among young people.
- **Mental Health and Education:** Mental health stigma and concerns about the education system are also present, emphasizing the need for greater support and investment in these areas.
- **Country-Specific Issues:** Each country also faces unique challenges, such as brain drain in Greece, housing affordability in Hungary, organized crime in Italy, and precarious working conditions in Spain.

C. Goals and Aspirations

The aspirations, concerns, and values of young people in the surveyed countries, are commonalities across countries. It is important to recognize the nuances and variations in their responses, which may be influenced by cultural, social, and economic contexts. These insights can inform initiatives aimed at promoting youth engagement, social responsibility, and community development.

Table 7: Summary of Goals and Aspirations by Country

Country	Most Important Goals for the Next 1 to 3 Years	Views on Social and Political Issues	Importance of Community Involvement
Bulgaria	Graduating school or college, or starting the next part of their education. Finding a job in their career path. Learning a new language and using it to travel abroad. Improving mental and physical health. Opening their minds and starting new relationships.	Political crisis that has been ongoing for a few years has created a divide between those who are actively engaged in citizenship and those who are apathetic about the situation. Some young people are deeply involved in community action and stay informed about the political situation, while others feel they have no say and become detached.	Extremely important
Greece	Professional development, Quality free time, Health and fitness, Financial security, Further education, Family	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, social media helps understand the world, worried about the future due to current issues	Extremely important
Hungary	Finishing studies, Finding a stable job, Financial independence, Starting a family, Travel	Agree that social issues impact their lives and that young people should be involved in solving them, mixed opinions on social media's role in understanding the world, concerned about the future due to social/political issues	Extremely important
Italy	Finding a job, Financial independence, Personal development, Travel, Starting a family	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, mixed opinions on social media's role in understanding the world, concerned about the future due to social/political issues	Extremely important
Spain	Finishing studies, Finding a job, Financial independence, Personal development, Travel	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, mixed opinions on social media's role in understanding the world, concerned about the future due to social/political issues	Very important
Turkiye	Finishing school, Getting a good job, Career advancement, Financial stability, Personal development	Agree that social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, social media helps understand the world, worried about the future due to current issues	Extremely important

Key Observations:

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1. **Goal-Oriented:** Young people across all countries are focused on achieving their goals, primarily related to education, career, and financial stability. This indicates a strong sense of ambition and a desire for a secure future.
2. **Socially Aware and Engaged:** Participants express awareness of social and political issues and believe in the importance of youth involvement in addressing them. However, there are mixed views on the role of social media in understanding these issues.
3. **Community-Minded:** Community involvement is highly valued by young people in all countries, with most respondents considering it either "Extremely Important" or "Very Important." This suggests a strong desire to contribute to their communities and create positive change.

D. Values and Beliefs

The values and beliefs that shape young people's perspectives on social and political issues and their role in society. While there are commonalities, variations between countries underscore the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when engaging with youth on these topics.

Consistent emphasis was placed on the importance of honesty, respect, kindness, fairness, and responsibility, indicating these are foundational values held by participants. Furthermore, a strong belief in the power of youth involvement in social and political issues emerged, coupled with a recognition of the crucial role of community engagement in fostering positive change. These findings highlight the participants' commitment to both personal ethics and active citizenship.

Table 8: Summary of Values and Beliefs by Country

Country	Values	Beliefs about Social and Political Issues
Bulgaria	Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Loyalty, Kindness, Independence	Believe social issues have a significant impact on their lives and that they should be involved in solving social and political problems. Many young people are worried about the future due to current social and political issues.
Greece	Respect, Fairness, Creativity, Responsibility, Teamwork	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving them, social media helps understand the world, concerned about the future due to social/political issues, feel their opinions are valued.
Hungary	Respect, Honesty, Kindness, Responsibility, Fairness	Agree that social issues impact their lives and young people should be involved in solving them, mixed opinions on social media's role, concerned about the future due to social/political issues.
Italy	Honesty, Respect, Loyalty, Fairness, Independence	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, mixed opinions on social media's role, concerned about the future due to social/political issues, feel their opinions are valued.
Spain	Honesty, Kindness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, mixed opinions on social media's role, concerned about the future due to social/political issues.
Turkiye	Honesty, Respect, Loyalty, Fairness, Independence	Believe social issues impact their lives, young people should be involved in solving social/political problems, social media helps understand the world, feel their opinions are valued, worried about the future due to social/political issues.

Key Observations:

- **Shared Values:** Across all surveyed countries, young people consistently value honesty, respect, fairness, and responsibility. This suggests a shared moral compass among European youth.
- **Social and Political Awareness:** Participants across all countries express a belief that social issues impact their lives and that young people have a role in addressing social and political challenges.
- **Mixed Views on Social Media:** While some believe social media helps them understand the world, others are less convinced of its role in social and political awareness.
- **Concern for the Future:** A significant number of respondents express worry about the future due to current social and political issues, highlighting a sense of uncertainty and a desire for change.
- **Value of Personal Opinions:** Respondents generally feel that their opinions on social and political issues are valued by their peers and community, suggesting a sense of agency and empowerment.

E. Resource Access and Needs

The importance of providing young people with access to the resources and support they need to achieve their goals and actively participate in their communities. Addressing these needs can help empower youth and enable them to contribute meaningfully to society.

Participants reported high access to technology and the internet, indicating a strong foundation for digital engagement. However, access to financial resources and education/training opportunities was reported as moderate, highlighting a potential gap. Consequently, the primary needs identified were for additional financial support, increased education/training opportunities, and mentorship to further empower and support individuals.

Table 9: Summary of Values and Beliefs by Country

Country	Where They Get Information	Access to Resources	Additional Resources Needed	Most Helpful Support Systems
Bulgaria	Word of mouth,, social media, educational environments, online reading	Moderate	Financial support, access to education/training, scholarships, internships, mentorship programs, safe spaces for experimentation	Family, friends, educational institutions, online platforms
Greece	Word of mouth, online reading, social media, educational environments, books, newspapers, articles, official EU publications/web channels	Moderate	Financial support, seed capital, opportunities for entrepreneurship, support for innovative ideas and projects, training and development programs	Family, friends, online platforms
Hungary	Word of mouth, online reading, social media, educational environments, books, newspapers, articles	Moderate	Financial support, scholarships, internships, mentorship programs, training and development opportunities, support for entrepreneurship, affordable housing, improved public transportation	Family, friends, educational institutions
Italy	Social media, word of mouth, online reading, educational environments, books, newspapers, articles, official EU publications/web channels	Moderate	Financial support, scholarships, internships, job opportunities, training and development programs, affordable housing, mental	Family, friends, online platforms, educational institutions

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				health support, youth centers and spaces		
Spain	Social media, online reading, word of mouth, educational environments, books, newspapers, articles	Low		Financial support, scholarships, job opportunities, internships, entrepreneurship support, mental health resources, affordable housing, improved public transportation	Family, friends	
Turkiye	Social media, online reading, educational environments, official EU publications/web channels, word of mouth, books, newspapers, articles	Moderate		Financial support, scholarships, job opportunities, internships, entrepreneurship support, training and development programs, improved public transportation, environmental protection	Family, friends, online platforms	

Key Observations:

- **Information Sources:** Young people across all countries rely heavily on a mix of online and offline sources for information, with social media and online reading being particularly prominent. This highlights the importance of digital literacy and access to reliable online resources.
- **Access to Resources:** While access to technology and the internet is generally high, access to financial resources and education/training is perceived as moderate in most countries and low in Spain. This suggests that financial constraints and limited opportunities for skill development are barriers to achieving their goals.
- **Additional Resource Needs:** Financial support, scholarships, and job opportunities are common needs across all countries. Additionally, there is a demand for mentorship, entrepreneurship support, and training and development programs. Specific needs like affordable housing, mental health support, and environmental protection also emerged in certain countries.
- **Importance of Support Systems:** Family and friends are consistently identified as the most helpful support systems, highlighting the crucial role of personal relationships



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in young people's lives. Online platforms and educational institutions are also recognized as valuable sources of support.

F. Participation and Engagement

The diverse interests, challenges, and opportunities for youth engagement in community activities across different countries. By addressing the identified barriers and implementing the suggested changes, stakeholders can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that encourages young people to actively participate in their communities.

A strong willingness to participate in community programs was evident, several barriers hindered actual involvement. These included time constraints, a lack of awareness about available programs, and financial limitations. Regarding engagement preferences, participants expressed interest in various avenues, notably social media, local events, volunteering opportunities, and established clubs. These findings offer valuable insights for developing strategies to increase community involvement and tailor programs to better meet the needs and preferences of residents.

Table 10: Summary of Community Engagement by Country

Country	Community Programs of Interest	Participation Frequency in Community Activities	Types of Community Projects Involved In	Barriers to Participation	Preferred Networking and Collaboration Methods	Suggested Changes to Facilitate Youth Engagement
Bulgaria	Workshops, online, hybrid programs, training, networking events	Varied, with a mix of never, close to yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily participation	Tutoring or mentoring younger students, organizing/participating in local festivals, cultural events	Lack of time due to school, work, or family commitments	Attending local events and meetups, school/university clubs, online platforms	More accessible information, flexible scheduling, financial support, integration into school curricula, financial support or stipends for participants
Greece	Online, offline, hybrid programs, training, workshops, discussion	Varied, with a mix of never, close to yearly, monthly,	Tutoring, organizing/participating in local festivals, cultural events	Limited time due to commitment, safety concerns	School/university clubs, EU projects, co-working spaces, online platforms	More accessible information, flexible scheduling, financial support, safer

	clubs, networking events	weekly, and daily participati on				environments, simplified sign- up, integration into school curricula
Hungary	Online, offline, hybrid programs, training, workshops	Varied, with a mix of never, close to yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily participation	Volunteering at shelters, food drives, meal distribution, tutoring/mentoring, organizing/participating in local festivals or cultural events, environmental clean-up, recycling/waste management programs, tree planting/urban gardening projects	Lack of information, lack of time, lack of financial resources	Social media, volunteering, local events, youth organizations, online platforms	More information about opportunities, financial support, flexible schedules, integration into school curricula, collaboration with local businesses and organizations, recognition and rewards for participation
Italy	Civic engagement, intercultural exchange, educational resources, workshops, seminars, online courses	Varied, with a mix of never, close to yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily participation	Volunteering at shelters, food drives, meal distribution, tutoring/mentoring, organizing/participating in local festivals or cultural events, environmental clean-up, recycling/waste management programs, tree planting/urban gardening projects	Lack of information, lack of time, lack of financial resources	Social media, local events, community workshops, youth organizations, volunteering	More information about opportunities, financial support, flexible schedules, integration into school curricula, collaboration with local businesses and organizations, recognition and rewards for participation
Spain	Online, offline, hybrid programs, training, workshops, networking events	Varied, with a mix of never, close to yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily participation	Volunteering at shelters, food drives, meal distribution, tutoring/mentoring, organizing/participating in local festivals or cultural events,	Lack of information, lack of time, lack of financial resources	Social media, local events, volunteering, school/university clubs, EU projects, co-working spaces	More information about opportunities, financial support, flexible schedules, integration into school curricula, collaboration with local

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			environmental clean-up, recycling/waste management programs, tree planting/urban gardening projects			businesses and organizations, recognition and rewards for participation
Turkiye	Online, offline programs, workshops, training activities, networking events	Varied, with a mix of never, close to yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily participation	Food drives, meal distribution, organizing/participating in local festivals, cultural events, tutoring/mentoring, recycling/waste management programs	Limited time due to commitment, lack of awareness, financial constraints, transportation issues, lack of access to project locations	Social media, local events, volunteering, school/university clubs, EU projects	More accessible information, flexible scheduling, financial support, greater support from schools, involvement of local businesses, integration into school curricula

Key Observations:

- **Diverse Program Interests:** Young people are interested in a wide range of community programs, including online, offline, and hybrid formats, with a focus on skill development, networking, and social impact.
- **Varied Participation Levels:** Participation in community activities varies, with some individuals actively engaged while others face barriers that limit their involvement.
- **Common Project Types:** Volunteering, environmental clean-up, and organizing/participating in local events are common types of community projects that young people engage in.
- **Barriers to Participation:** Limited time, lack of awareness, financial constraints, and transportation issues are major barriers preventing young people from participating in community projects.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** Social media, local events, volunteering, and school/university clubs are popular ways for young people to network and collaborate with others in their community.

- **Suggested Improvements:** Increased accessibility of information, financial support, flexible scheduling, and greater support from schools and businesses are suggested changes to facilitate youth engagement in community activities.

Focus Group Results

Overview of Focus Group Sessions

A series of focus groups conducted across six countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Türkiye. These focus groups, held between September 17th and November 15th, 2024. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas related to youth participation in civic life, guided by open-ended questions and prompts. The discussion covered key themes such as areas of interest, community concerns, aspirations, resource access, and barriers to engagement. The facilitators ensured a respectful and inclusive environment, encouraging active listening and diverse viewpoints while adhering to pre-determined discussion topics to maintain focus. Notes were taken throughout the session to capture key insights and recurring themes.

The following sections provide a country-by-country breakdown of the focus group methodology and participant demographics:

Bulgaria

The focus groups in Bulgaria were held on two separate dates, 17.09.2024 and 01.10.2024, in Sofia and Varna, respectively. The sessions took place at the National Youth Forum office in Sofia and a social teahouse in Varna, with a total of 11 participants across both locations. The group consisted primarily of youth workers and individuals engaged in the NGO sector, representing member and partner organizations of the National Youth Forum, Bulgaria's internationally recognized National Youth Council. The age range of participants was broad, spanning from 17 to 55 years, with a majority of female participants (9 out of 11). Their interests and expertise included youth advocacy, education, and journalism, reflecting a strong commitment to societal development and youth empowerment. The discussions were likely enriched by the diverse professional backgrounds and experiences of the participants, providing valuable insights into youth-related issues in Bulgaria.

Greece

The focus group in Greece was conducted online via Zoom on 01.10.2024, organized by the Higher Incubator Giving Growth and Sustainability (HIGGS). The session was divided into two time slots, 15:00-16:00 and 16:00-17:00 Greek time, to accommodate participants' schedules. While specific details about the number and profile of participants are not provided, the online format likely allowed for a diverse group of individuals to join, potentially including youth workers, activists, and professionals from various fields. The focus group aimed to gather perspectives on topics relevant to HIGGS's mission, which focuses on sustainability and growth, particularly within the NGO sector. The virtual setting provided flexibility and accessibility, enabling a wide range of voices to contribute to the discussion.

Hungary

The focus groups in Hungary were held online via Google Meet on 14 and 15.11.2024, with three separate sessions to accommodate participants' availability. A total of 11 individuals participated, representing youth NGOs from across the country, including cities like Székesfehérvár, Nyíregyháza, Miskolc, and Budapest. The group included youth workers, mentors, and individuals involved in children's camps, with an age range of 22 to 42 years and a balanced gender distribution (6 male, 5 female). Their interests centered on youth support, social issues, and education, reflecting their active engagement in addressing challenges faced by young people in Hungary. The online format facilitated participation from diverse regions, ensuring a broad representation of perspectives.

Italy

The focus group in Italy took place on 14.10.2024 at the premises of the organizing organization, with 13 participants aged 18 to 30. The group was predominantly female (12 out of 13), consisting of youth workers and young people engaged in NGOs, as well as representatives from local networks. Their interests were described as "very mixed," suggesting a wide range of perspectives and expertise. This diversity likely contributed to

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dynamic discussions on youth-related topics, with participants bringing unique insights from their respective fields. The in-person setting fostered a collaborative environment, enabling deeper engagement and exchange of ideas.

Spain

The focus group in Spain was held on 30.09.2024 at the Ferrol Youth House, with 8 participants, including a facilitator. The group was evenly split by gender (4 male, 4 female) and ranged in age from 20 to 35 years. Participants were primarily youth workers and active volunteers from the local community of Ferrol, with interests spanning youth activism, LGBTQ+ issues, environmental concerns, and migration. Their involvement in local initiatives and community work provided a strong foundation for discussions on pressing social issues. The in-person meeting allowed for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, reflecting the participants' commitment to driving positive change in their community.

Turkiye

The focus group in Türkiye was held on 16.10.2024 at Yaşar University's Selçuk Yaşar Campus in Izmir, with a total of 29 participants, including 2 facilitators. The group was diverse in age (17 to 65 years) and predominantly female (22 out of 29). Participants included youth workers, social entrepreneurs, representatives of major NGOs in Izmir, municipality and governor officials, volunteers, and student club members. Their interests covered a wide range of topics, including youth development, social entrepreneurship, education, journalism, immigration, civic rights, and disability rights. The large and varied group provided a comprehensive perspective on societal challenges and opportunities, making the discussions highly informative and impactful. The in-person setting at a university campus facilitated a collaborative and inclusive environment.

Key Findings under the Discussion Topics

The focus group reports explore the interests, concerns, and goals of young people in various countries, including Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Türkiye. Reports reveal that **youth across these countries share common concerns**, such as unemployment, mental health challenges, social inequality, and climate change. They also express a strong desire for community involvement and social change, but often face barriers such as time constraints, lack of information, and financial limitations.

Technology plays a significant role in their lives, serving as both a source of information and a platform for self-expression, but also raising concerns about misinformation and excessive screen time.

Specific concerns and aspirations vary across countries. For example, young people in Spain are particularly worried about economic difficulties and limited cultural programs, while those in Hungary express anxiety about their future due to the uncertain political and social climate.

The reports also highlight the **need for more accessible and flexible community programs** that cater to the diverse interests and needs of young people. Participants suggest that programs should focus on providing practical skills, mentorship, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of mental health support and safe spaces for young people to connect and express themselves.

Overall, these reports provide valuable insights into the **experiences and perspectives of young people in Europe** and offer recommendations for policymakers, educators, and youth workers to better support and engage with this generation.

A. Areas of Interest and Role of Technology

The findings reveal a diverse range of concerns and priorities, from mental health and environmental sustainability to career development and social justice. While technology is universally recognized as an integral part of daily life, its impact is viewed with both optimism and concern, highlighting the complex relationship between young people and the digital world. Table 11 presents the findings of cross-country focus groups exploring youth interests and technology use in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Turkiye.

Table 11: Focus group findings on Youth Interests and Technology Use

Country	Areas of Interest	Role of Technology	Technology Use for Hobbies/Interests
Bulgaria	Mental health, personal finance, personal development, and social issues were top interests. Young people in smaller towns sought a sense of belonging and shared activities.	Technology was seen as both positive and negative. It provided access to opportunities but also led to mindless scrolling and misinformation. Social media algorithms and trends were perceived to influence language and thinking.	Technology was used daily for hobbies, learning, and entertainment.
Greece	Environmental sustainability, social justice, digital innovation, mental health, creative fields, and technology-driven sectors were key areas of interest.	Technology was deeply integrated into daily life and essential for staying informed and connected. It was used for creative pursuits and staying updated on current events.	Technology was used regularly for hobbies and interests, including creative pursuits and connecting with like-minded peers.
Hungary	Further education and finding a future were primary concerns. Interests varied by age, but online spaces and social media played a significant role.	Technology, particularly social media, was used daily for entertainment and connection. However, it also contributed to anxiety and a fear of negative online attention.	Daily use of technology for entertainment, learning, sports, and hobbies was prevalent.
Italy	Environmental sustainability, social justice, and mental health were the most prominent interests.	Technology played a central role in staying informed and connected.	Technology was frequently used for hobbies and interests, almost daily.
Spain	Arts and activism were major areas of interest. Many participants played instruments or were involved in social causes.	Participants spent significant time online, with mixed views on social media's benefits. Concerns included addiction, misinformation, and time wastage.	High daily use of technology was acknowledged, with an average of 3 hours per day spent on non-work/study activities.

Turkiye

Career-focused skills and competencies were highly sought after, driven by economic concerns. Safe spaces for self-expression were also valued.

Technology was integral for communication, self-expression, and learning. However, there were concerns about its misuse, rejection, and exclusion.

Technology was used daily for hobbies, including learning new skills and participating in virtual communities.

B. Community Concerns and Challenges

Based on the focus group discussions conducted in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Türkiye, young people identified a range of pressing issues and challenges within their communities. These concerns highlight the social, economic, and political realities faced by youth and offer insights into their priorities and anxieties.

- **Bulgaria:** Mental health, social issues, human rights, work, finances, housing, and green policies were identified as major concerns. The lack of community feeling and belonging, especially in smaller towns, was also highlighted.
- **Greece:** Unemployment, lack of opportunities for youth, mental health challenges, and climate change were the primary concerns. Participants also expressed worries about the lack of safe public spaces and limited access to affordable education and training.
- **Hungary:** The lack of vision, poor information, and uncertainty about the future were major challenges. Financial insecurity and the need to balance school with work were also significant concerns. Many young people expressed feelings of depression and anxiety due to these challenges.
- **Italy:** Employment, mental health, and social issues were the top concerns raised by young people.
- **Spain:** Economic difficulties, including limited access to housing and low salaries, were major concerns. Participants also highlighted the lack of a rich and accessible cultural program for young people and ongoing discrimination based on sexual or cultural diversity.
- **Türkiye:** Economic uncertainty and job prospects were key concerns, along with mental health challenges and social inequality.

These findings highlight common themes across countries, such as economic insecurity, mental health challenges, and social inequality. However, they also reveal unique concerns shaped by each country's specific context. These insights can inform policymakers and youth workers in developing targeted interventions to address the needs and aspirations of young people in different communities.

C. Goals, aspirations, and views on social issues

The most important goals young people prioritize for the next 1 to 3 years, their perspectives on current social and political issues, and the significance they place on community engagement. Key findings reveal a strong focus on personal and professional development, often intertwined with concerns about financial stability and economic opportunity. While socio-political views vary across countries, common themes include disillusionment with traditional politics, a desire for social justice and equality, and concerns about issues like climate change.

Table 12 presents a cross-country analysis of the aspirations, socio-political views, and community involvement of young people in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Türkiye.

Table 12: Youth Goals, Socio-Political Views, and Community Involvement

Country	Most Important Goals for the Next 1 to 3 Years	Views on Current Social and Political Issues	Importance of Community Involvement
Bulgaria	Young people are primarily focused on financial stability and personal development . This includes securing a job, managing finances, and pursuing further education or vocational training.	Young people are divided in their views on social and political issues . Some are actively engaged and concerned about political instability, while others feel apathetic and detached.	Community involvement is valued but challenging . Young people are looking for a sense of belonging and opportunities to connect with others, but often struggle to find meaningful ways to engage.

Greece	The primary goals are finding employment, pursuing higher education or training, and achieving personal and professional growth.	Participants expressed strong opinions on social justice, climate change, and equality. They are critical of traditional political systems and seek alternative ways to engage and influence change.	Community involvement is seen as important for fostering social change. However, many young people find it difficult to get involved due to a lack of accessible and relevant opportunities.
Hungary	The overarching goal is finding a vision for the future. This involves making decisions about education, career paths, and whether to stay in Hungary or seek opportunities abroad. Financial security is also a major concern.	There is a negative perception of the political situation and a sense of hopelessness about the future. Many young people are considering moving abroad due to the uncertain social and political climate.	Community involvement is important to many young people. Many participate in volunteer activities and social initiatives, even without financial incentives.
Italy	The focus is on personal and professional growth. This includes pursuing higher education, finding stable employment, and developing skills in areas like digital literacy. Travel and exploring opportunities abroad are also common aspirations.	Young people are concerned about climate change, inequality, and mental health. Many feel disillusioned with politics and are seeking ways to make a tangible impact through community involvement.	Community involvement is highly valued. Young people see local engagement as a way to drive change and are actively involved in volunteer work and civic initiatives.
Spain	The main goals are economic stability and independence. Young people are concerned about finding affordable housing, securing well-paying jobs, and achieving financial independence.	Participants expressed disenchantment with political parties and a lack of trust in the government. Some view activism as the only way to achieve social change.	The level of community involvement among young people is generally low. Sports clubs are the primary avenue for youth engagement, while activism and volunteering are less common.
Turkiye	The most important goals are higher education or vocational training, finding meaningful employment, and enhancing personal well-being. Some also aspire to start their own businesses or contribute to social causes.	Young people are politically aware and vocal about social justice issues. They value transparency and are critical of political leaders who fail to address their concerns.	Community involvement is valued when aligned with personal interests and social causes. Young people prefer modern and tech-savvy ways to engage, such as digital activism or virtual community projects.

D. Resource Access and Needs

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Young people across different countries face varying challenges in accessing the information and resources they need to achieve their goals. While digital technology plays a significant role in their lives, there's a clear need for more targeted support, mentorship, and accessible opportunities to help them navigate their paths and reach their full potential.

The primary sources young people rely on for decision-making, the challenges they face in accessing necessary resources, the support systems they find most helpful, and the additional resources they identify as crucial for their development. The findings reveal a common reliance on digital platforms for information, coupled with significant disparities in access to practical resources, mentorship, and financial support. While peer networks and family often serve as key support systems, the report highlights a clear need for more targeted interventions, including career guidance, skill-building programs, mental health resources, and financial assistance, to empower young people and facilitate their successful transition to adulthood.

Sources of Information for Decision-Making:

- **Bulgaria:** Young people primarily rely on **online sources and social media** for information. They also utilize resources from schools, universities, and organizations they are involved with.
- **Greece:** **Social media, online forums, and peer networks** are the primary sources of information for young people. Some also utilize school programs, YouTube tutorials, and specialized online communities.
- **Hungary:** **The internet** is the main source of information, but young people are finding it increasingly difficult to access reliable information. They also get information from within their social groups and from each other.
- **Italy:** Young people rely heavily on **social media, online platforms, and peer networks** for information. While some use traditional news outlets, they primarily trust digital sources and influencers.

- **Spain:** Young people mainly get their information **online** through social media, blogs, and YouTube channels.
- **Turkiye:** **Social media, online news outlets, and peer groups** are the primary sources of information. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter (X), and TikTok are frequently used, and there's a growing interest in podcasts and blogs.

Access to Resources and Additional Needs

- **Bulgaria:** There is a **disparity in access to resources**. Some young people manage their resources well, while others struggle to achieve their goals due to a lack of resources and knowledge.
- **Greece:** Many young people feel they **lack access to resources** for personal and professional growth. While digital tools are available, they often lack guidance on how to use them effectively. Financial barriers and limited mentorship opportunities are also concerns.
- **Hungary:** While many resources are available, young people **don't always take advantage of them**. There's a lack of time and space for youth workers to provide direct help, and some young people do not actively seek out available programs.
- **Italy:** Many young people feel they **lack sufficient access to resources**. Although they have access to information, they struggle to find practical opportunities, mentorship, and financial support.
- **Spain:** Young people feel **constrained by economic difficulties** such as low salaries and high housing costs, which limit their access to resources and opportunities.
- **Turkiye:** Many young people feel they **lack adequate access to professional networks, mentorship, and financial resources**.

Most Helpful Support Systems

- **Bulgaria:** **Youth organizations and peer support** are considered the most helpful support systems.

- **Greece: Family, friends, and peer networks** are the most reliable support systems, followed by online communities and school counselors.
- **Hungary: Educational events, school psychologists, youth support programs, and online support systems** are helpful. Participants also highlighted the need for mental health support.
- **Italy: Peer support, family, and online communities** are heavily relied upon, but programs offered by youth organizations, local community groups, and educational institutions are also beneficial.
- **Spain: Youth organizations, peers, and family** are the most helpful support systems.
- **Turkiye: Peer networks, community organizations, and online communities** are highly valued. Formal mentorship programs and internships are also critical.

Additional Resources Needed

- **Bulgaria:** Young people need guidance and mentorship, soft skills development, financial resources for their initiatives, and safe spaces for experimentation.
- **Greece:** Young people need targeted career guidance, mentorship opportunities, affordable workshops or skill-building programs, mental health support, and local community spaces for collaboration.
- **Hungary:** More direct assistance and mentoring programs are needed.
- **Italy:** Young people need more guidance, access to mentorship, job opportunities, funding for projects, and mental health support. They also express a desire for skills training in areas like technology, leadership, and sustainability.
- **Spain:** Young people need inspiration, guidance on finding resources and allies, and seed capital or microgrants for their ideas.
- **Turkiye:** Young people need career guidance and mentorship, financial support, mental health resources, and skill-building programs.

E. Participation and Engagement

The findings reveal a diverse range of interests, from mental health support and environmental activism to creative arts and career development. While some young people are actively engaged in their communities, many face barriers such as time constraints, lack of awareness of opportunities, financial limitations, and a disconnect from traditional community structures. The report highlights the need for more accessible, flexible, and relevant programs that cater to the specific interests and needs of young people in each country. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of leveraging digital platforms for communication and collaboration, as well as providing supportive infrastructure, such as mentorship and financial incentives, to encourage greater youth participation in community life.

Table 13 presents the types of community programs young people are interested in, their participation levels, and the barriers they face, based on focus group discussions in various countries.

Table 13: Community Engagement and Program Preferences Among Youth

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Country	Desired Programs	Participation Frequency	Community Projects	Barriers	Networking and Collaboration	Suggested Changes
Bulgaria	Young people expressed interest in mental health support, financial literacy, and cultural activities, including Bulgarian language and art exhibits. They also showed interest in both global and local issues, such as environmental cleanups and school improvement projects.	Participation varied widely, with some young people very active and others rarely engaging.	Charity events, such as fundraising for medical expenses or supporting disadvantaged people, were common.	Time constraints due to school and work, lack of interest in available opportunities, and a focus on financial rewards were cited as barriers.	Few young people actively build networks or connections. Those who do are typically older and focused on their careers.	More career-oriented programs, popular topics, and work experience opportunities could attract greater youth participation. Setting tangible goals and highlighting the purpose of community activities would also help.
Greece	Environmental activism, creative arts, leadership development, volunteering, and technology boot camps were popular choices.	Participation varied, with some actively involved in youth groups or volunteering and others rarely participating due to lack of awareness, time constraints, or limited opportunities.	Participants were involved in environmental cleanups, peer tutoring, and social media campaigns for mental health awareness. Some also organized small-scale events or workshops.	Lack of awareness, time constraints, and insufficient opportunities were mentioned as barriers.	Digital tools like social media and online platforms were preferred for networking and collaboration.	

Hungary	Humanities programs, working with children and animals, and participating in community and student events were of interest.	Participation was not frequent due to time constraints and lack of interest. Financial incentives were also a factor.	Mandatory community service, city events, and youth outreach activities were common.	Time constraints, lack of interest, and difficulty finding relevant opportunities were cited as barriers.	Few young people actively build networks, with those who do mainly focusing on professional events and opportunities.	More career-oriented programs and opportunities for work experience could motivate young people to engage.
Italy	Hands-on initiatives, European Solidarity Corps (ESC), Erasmus+ KA1 youth exchanges, and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs were of interest.	Participation was occasional, with a desire for more involvement if opportunities aligned with schedules and interests.	Local volunteer initiatives, environmental cleanups, student organizations, and cultural events were common.	Lack of time, limited awareness of programs, and transportation issues in rural areas were barriers. Some young people felt intimidated or disconnected from traditional community structures.	Digital tools and face-to-face interactions were both preferred for networking and collaboration.	More accessible and flexible programs, increased promotion through digital channels, transportation support, and a more inclusive environment could increase youth engagement.
Spain	Artistic and creative workshops, talent development accelerators for music bands or video makers were desired.	Most participants were active in activist campaigns or volunteering, regularly participating in workshops and assemblies.	Environmental actions, charity campaigns, and activist actions were common.	Not explicitly mentioned.	Not explicitly mentioned.	Support and boost interest-based communities, promote social skills development, and focus on facilitating access to jobs and housing.

Turkiye	Programs focused on employability, technology, and cultural projects with tangible outcomes and opportunities to use technological skills were favored.	Participation varied, with some active in school or local projects and others less involved due to lack of time or resources. Digital platforms offered flexible engagement opportunities.	Not explicitly mentioned.	Time constraints, lack of information, financial barriers, and disillusionment with traditional organizations were challenges.	Digital platforms, particularly social media and online collaboration tools, were preferred for networking.	More flexible and remote opportunities, increased visibility of projects through social media, supportive infrastructure like mentorship and financial incentives, and recognition for participation could enhance engagement.
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Recurring Themes and Insights

These recurring themes and insights highlight the shared experiences and aspirations of young people across different countries. By understanding these commonalities, policymakers, educators, and community leaders can develop more effective strategies to support and empower young people, and create a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

Based on focus group discussions with young people in various countries, several recurring themes and insights emerged, highlighting shared concerns and aspirations among youth across different contexts.

Key Insights

- **Economic Uncertainty and Future Prospects:** Young people across all countries expressed concerns about their economic futures, including job prospects, financial stability, and the rising cost of living. These concerns were often linked to broader anxieties about social and political instability, as well as a perceived lack of opportunities for personal and professional development.
- **Mental Health and Well-being:** Mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and stress, were prevalent among young people in all focus groups. Participants cited various contributing factors, such as academic pressure, social media, and uncertainty about the future.
- **Social Issues and Inequality:** Concerns about social justice, equality, and discrimination were raised by young people in all countries. Participants expressed a desire for more inclusive and equitable societies, where everyone has equal opportunities and access to resources.
- **Community Engagement and Social Impact:** While levels of community involvement varied, young people generally expressed a desire to contribute to their communities and make a positive social impact. However, they often faced barriers to participation, such as lack of time, information, and resources.

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- **Role of Technology:** Technology played a significant role in the lives of young people across all countries, serving as a primary source of information, communication, and entertainment. However, concerns were also raised about the negative impacts of technology, such as social media addiction, misinformation, and online harassment.

Recurring Themes

- **Desire for Change:** Young people across all countries expressed a strong desire for change in their communities and societies. They are eager to address social, economic, and political issues, and are looking for ways to make their voices heard and contribute to positive change.
- **Need for Support and Guidance:** Young people identified a need for more support and guidance in navigating the challenges of adulthood, including career planning, financial management, and mental health support. They also expressed a desire for mentorship and opportunities to develop practical skills.
- **Importance of Community and Belonging:** A sense of community and belonging was identified as crucial for young people's well-being and development. Participants expressed a need for safe and inclusive spaces where they can connect with others, share their experiences, and feel supported.
- **Empowerment and Agency:** Young people want to be empowered and have a say in decisions that affect their lives and communities. They are looking for opportunities to take on leadership roles and contribute to shaping the future.

Comparative Analysis

Both the research questionnaire and focus group discussions provide valuable insights into the experiences, concerns, and aspirations of young people. While the questionnaire offers a broad overview, focus groups add depth and nuance by capturing the lived experiences and diverse perspectives of youth in different contexts

The data gathered from a research questionnaire with insights gleaned from focus group discussions across multiple countries. The aim is to identify recurring themes, highlight discrepancies, and pinpoint unique findings that emerged solely from the focus groups.

Areas of Alignment

Both the research questionnaire and the focus group discussions revealed several common themes:

- **Prominent Interests:** Both methodologies highlighted **mental health**, **social justice**, and **environmental sustainability** as top concerns for young people. This consistency underscores the significance of these issues for today's youth.
- **Role of Technology:** Both data sets affirmed the **central role of technology** in young people's lives. Technology is used for communication, entertainment, and information-seeking, but also raises concerns about excessive use and misinformation.
- **Challenges and Aspirations:** Both the questionnaire and focus groups identified **economic concerns** (unemployment, financial instability) and **future uncertainty** as major challenges. Similarly, aspirations for **higher education**, **meaningful employment**, and **personal development** were consistent across both data sources.

Divergences and Unique Focus Group Findings

While there was considerable alignment, focus group discussions also yielded unique insights and nuanced perspectives that were not captured in the research questionnaire:

- **Community Engagement:** Focus groups revealed a **stronger emphasis on community involvement** than the questionnaire data suggested. Participants expressed a desire to contribute to their communities but also highlighted barriers to participation, such as lack of time and information.

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- **Political Disengagement:** Focus group discussions uncovered a **sense of political disillusionment** and disengagement among many young people. This sentiment was more pronounced in the focus groups than in the questionnaire responses.
- **Mental Health Nuances:** While both methodologies identified mental health as a concern, focus groups provided deeper insights into the **specific stressors** faced by young people, such as academic pressure, social media comparisons, and the fear of failure.
- **Cultural and Contextual Differences:** Focus groups highlighted the **importance of cultural and contextual factors** in shaping youth experiences and perspectives. For example, concerns about political instability were more prominent in countries with volatile political climates.

Outliers and Unique Findings

Focus group discussions also revealed some unique findings that were not reflected in the questionnaire data:

- **The Desire for Safe Spaces:** In several countries, focus group participants emphasized the need for **safe spaces** where they can freely express themselves, explore their identities, and connect with like-minded peers.
- **The Impact of Social Media Algorithms:** Some focus groups discussed the **influence of social media algorithms** on their thoughts, behaviors, and self-esteem. This highlighted a growing awareness of the potential negative impacts of social media.
- **The Importance of Mentorship:** Focus group participants frequently mentioned the **value of mentorship and guidance** from adults and older peers. This suggests a need for more structured mentorship programs and opportunities for intergenerational dialogue.

Key Insights and Recommendations

The key insights and recommendations for enhancing youth civic participation, drawing from both a research questionnaire and focus group discussions across multiple countries highlight commonalities and differences between the two data sources, focusing on significant takeaways and proposed actions to foster a supportive environment for youth-led initiatives. By implementing these suggested actions and recommendations, stakeholders can create a more supportive and empowering environment for youth civic participation. This would not only benefit young people themselves but also strengthen communities and contribute to a more engaged and democratic society.

Key Insights

- **Desire for Impactful Engagement:** Youth across all countries expressed a desire to engage in activities that have a tangible impact on their communities and society. They are keen to contribute to social change and are drawn to projects that align with their values and interests.
- **Barriers to Participation:** Time constraints due to academic or work commitments, lack of information about available opportunities, and financial barriers were common obstacles to participation. Additionally, some young people felt a disconnect from traditional community structures and a lack of trust in established institutions.
- **Need for Supportive Infrastructure:** Youth emphasized the need for supportive infrastructure, including mentorship, guidance, and financial resources, to facilitate their participation in community projects. They also highlighted the importance of safe and inclusive spaces where they can freely express themselves and collaborate with others.
- **Digital Engagement as a Gateway:** While digital platforms are crucial for communication and information-sharing, focus groups revealed that online engagement can serve as a gateway to offline participation. Online communities and social media can facilitate connections, raise awareness, and mobilize young people for community action.

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Recommendations

Suggested Actions to Improve Youth Engagement

- **Create Accessible and Flexible Opportunities:** Design programs that are flexible and accommodating to young people's busy schedules, offering both online and offline options.
- **Provide Clear Information and Guidance:** Ensure that information about community programs and opportunities is readily available and easily accessible through various channels, including social media and educational institutions.
- **Offer Mentorship and Skill-Building:** Establish mentorship programs and workshops that provide young people with the skills and knowledge they need to lead and participate in community projects.
- **Foster Inclusive and Welcoming Environments:** Create safe and inclusive spaces where all young people, regardless of their background or identity, feel welcome and valued.
- **Leverage Technology for Engagement:** Utilize digital platforms to connect young people with opportunities, facilitate collaboration, and amplify their voices.

Recommendations for Creating a Supportive Environment for Youth-Led Initiatives

- **Provide Funding and Resources:** Offer financial support, grants, or seed funding to youth-led initiatives and projects.
- **Recognize and Value Youth Contributions:** Publicly acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of young people to their communities.
- **Offer Training and Mentorship:** Provide training and mentorship opportunities to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to lead and manage their own projects.
- **Facilitate Networking and Collaboration:** Create opportunities for young people to connect with each other, share ideas, and collaborate on projects.

Proposed Strategies for Addressing Barriers to Participation

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- **Time Constraints:** Offer flexible scheduling options, including online or remote opportunities, and consider providing incentives for participation.
- **Lack of Information:** Utilize social media, educational institutions, and community centers to disseminate information about available programs and opportunities.
- **Financial Barriers:** Offer scholarships, subsidies, or stipends to cover the costs of participation, and seek partnerships with businesses and organizations to provide financial support.
- **Lack of Trust and Disconnection:** Build relationships with young people through open dialogue, active listening, and meaningful engagement. Demonstrate a genuine commitment to addressing their concerns and incorporating their perspectives into decision-making processes.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of both focus group discussions and survey data, several key areas for further action emerge, highlighting the need to tailor project implementation to the specific needs and preferences of young people in different countries.

By incorporating these insights and recommendations into its implementation strategy, the Youth Match Point project can effectively support and empower young people to become active and engaged citizens, contributing to their communities and shaping a better future for all.

1. Targeted Skill Development and Mentorship

Both the survey and focus groups indicate a strong desire among youth for skill development and mentorship opportunities. This suggests that the project should prioritize offering workshops, training sessions, and mentorship programs that equip young people with the skills they need to navigate the job market, pursue their interests, and contribute to their communities. These programs should be tailored to the specific needs and interests identified in each country, such as digital skills, entrepreneurship, and social activism.

2. Accessible and Flexible Community Engagement

Focus group discussions highlighted the importance of providing accessible and flexible community engagement opportunities that fit into young people's busy lives. This could include offering online volunteering opportunities, organizing events outside of traditional working hours, and providing transportation or financial assistance to overcome barriers to participation.

3. Amplifying Youth Voices and Agency

Both data sources revealed a desire among young people to have their voices heard and to be actively involved in decision-making processes. The project should create platforms and opportunities for youth to express their opinions, share their ideas, and contribute to

shaping policies and initiatives that affect their lives. This could involve organizing youth forums, establishing youth advisory boards, or supporting youth-led advocacy campaigns.

4. Addressing Mental Health and Well-being

The focus group discussions, in particular, highlighted the prevalence of mental health challenges among young people. The project should incorporate mental health awareness and support into its activities, such as offering workshops on stress management and resilience, providing access to counseling services, and creating safe spaces for young people to discuss their mental health concerns.

5. Leveraging Technology for Engagement and Connection

Both the survey and focus groups emphasized the central role of technology in young people's lives. The project should leverage digital platforms and tools to engage young people, facilitate communication and collaboration, and provide access to information and resources. This could include developing online communities, creating interactive digital campaigns, and utilizing social media to reach a wider audience.

6. Tailored Country-Specific Approaches

While there are common themes across countries, the focus group discussions also revealed unique challenges and opportunities in each context. The project should adopt a flexible and adaptable approach that takes into account the specific needs, interests, and cultural contexts of young people in each country.

7. Collaboration and Partnership

The project's success will depend on collaboration and partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including youth organizations, educational institutions, government agencies, and businesses. By working together, these stakeholders can create a more supportive and empowering environment for youth civic participation and social engagement.

Appendices

Appendix I: Questionnaire template used in the survey

Appendix II: Focus group discussion guide

Appendix III: Photos