



GUIDELINE FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Promoting European Values and Empowering Young People in Civic Engagement

Best practices, methodologies and practical tools for youth participation, inclusion, migrant integration and democratic action

Presented to

Youth Workers



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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. European values in youth work.....	3
3. Target groups and participation barriers.....	5
4. Principles for empowering youth work.....	6
5. From awareness to action: a practical framework.....	7
6. Creating safe, inclusive and motivating spaces.....	9
7. Methodology toolbox and activity sheets.....	10
7.1 Activity sheet: Values in Everyday Life.....	11
7.2 Activity sheet: Community Mapping and Needs Walk.....	12
7.3 Activity sheet: PhotoVoice.....	13
7.4 Activity sheet: Collage for Self-Expression.....	14
7.5 Activity sheet: Story Circles for Intercultural Dialogue.....	15
7.6 Activity sheet: Media and Disinformation Lab.....	16
7.7 Activity sheet: Local Democracy Simulation.....	17
8. Supporting youth-led civic action.....	22
9. Inclusion, migrant integration and intercultural solidarity.....	23
10. Civic engagement in crisis and recovery contexts.....	24
11. Monitoring, evaluation and learning.....	25
12. Sustainability after the project.....	26
Annex A. Workshop design template.....	27
Annex B. Inclusion and accessibility checklist.....	27
Annex C. Youth civic action plan template.....	28
Annex D. Reflection questions.....	28
Source base and adaptation note.....	29

1. Introduction

Youth work makes European values concrete when young people experience respect, choice, dialogue, responsibility and shared action in their everyday communities.

This guideline supports youth workers to promote European values and empower young people to participate in civic life. It is grounded in the learning of the Small Scale Partnership project Promoting EU Values Across Borders, which focuses on common values, civic engagement, active citizenship, awareness of the European Union, and the reception and integration of refugees and migrants.

How to use this guideline	What it offers
For youth workers	Ready-to-use methods for workshops, youth clubs, exchanges, community events and outreach.
For organisations	Principles for safe participation, inclusion, transparency, digital communication and sustainability.
For young people	Activities that help them understand European values, identify local issues, take action and reflect on their learning.
For online dissemination	Messages, consent reminders, accessibility checks and campaign ideas that make project results reusable.



2. European values in youth work

European values become meaningful for young people when they can connect them to school, family, migration, local conflicts, social media, volunteering, community recovery and their own future.

For this project, European values are understood through the values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The same value base highlights pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.

In youth work, these values should not remain abstract. They should be translated into how a group is welcomed, how decisions are made, how conflict is handled, how young people with fewer opportunities are supported, and how participants are invited to act in their communities.

European value	Youth work translation	Example activity
Human dignity	Every young person is treated as a person with experience, ideas and rights - not as a problem, label or passive beneficiary.	Start with a strengths map: what can each person contribute to the group or community?
Freedom	Participation is voluntary, informed and based on meaningful choice. Young people can express ideas safely.	Offer three workshop output options: poster, podcast, photo story or local action.
Democracy	Young people co-decide group rules, topics, priorities and actions.	Use a youth assembly or local council simulation to decide a community initiative.
Equality	Access needs, language levels, transport, food, disability and economic barriers are considered from the start.	Create an inclusion checklist before every activity.
Rule of law	Rules are transparent, fair and apply to everyone, including facilitators.	Co-create a group agreement and revisit it when conflict appears.
Human rights	Young people learn to identify rights, responsibilities and situations where rights are denied or protected.	Use case studies on discrimination, privacy, asylum, education or online hate.
Minority rights	Belonging is not conditional on majority identity, language, religion, nationality, ability or legal status.	Run a story circle where each participant decides what they want to share and what stays private.
Solidarity	Participants move from empathy to shared responsibility and practical support.	Design a micro-volunteering action or community event with migrants and local residents.

Field insight: values are learned through interaction

Project partners observed that intercultural encounters often reduce fear more effectively than abstract explanations. When young people meet international volunteers, cook together, play games, create films or work on shared tasks, they can experience diversity as normal human contact rather than a political slogan.



3. Target groups and participation barriers

Young people with fewer opportunities do not need lowered expectations. They need accessible pathways, trust, dignity, practical relevance and consistent support.

Youth work is often directed to overlapping target groups: rural youth, young people with migrant or refugee backgrounds, young people facing economic or social barriers, youth workers, educators, NGOs, local communities and the wider online youth audience. Youth workers should avoid treating these groups as fixed categories. One young person may experience several barriers at the same time, while another may move in and out of vulnerability depending on life events.

Group	Common barriers	Support approach
Young people with fewer opportunities	Cost, transport, low confidence, lack of information, negative previous experience with institutions.	Use simple invitations, free participation, food and transport support where possible, small groups, trusted referrals and practical outcomes.
Rural youth	Distance, limited youth services, fewer EU mobility examples, feeling that European opportunities are for others.	Bring opportunities to local venues, use local stories, plan around transport, and connect EU values to local environmental, cultural and social issues.
Young people with migrant or refugee backgrounds	Language barriers, trauma, discrimination, legal uncertainty, social isolation, pressure to represent a whole community.	Offer language support, avoid tokenism, protect privacy, create mixed activities based on common tasks, and include migrant youth as co-creators.
Young people exposed to polarisation or extreme narratives	Mistrust, anger, online propaganda, peer pressure, need for belonging or status.	Set clear anti-hate boundaries, listen to underlying concerns, use dialogue and media literacy, and offer constructive roles in the community.
Youth workers	Limited time, lack of methods, uncertainty around sensitive topics, reporting pressure.	Use modular activity sheets, peer support, facilitation scripts, reflection questions and shared documentation templates.

Participation barrier scan

- Access: Can participants get to the venue or join online without extra costs?
- Language: Is the invitation understandable, and can participants contribute without perfect English or the national language?
- Safety: Could participation expose a young person to stigma, online risk, family conflict or public pressure?
- Relevance: Does the topic connect to their everyday lives, not only to institutional priorities?
- Power: Are young people asked for input only symbolically, or do they influence decisions?



4. Principles for empowering youth work

Empowerment is not only about giving information. It is about building agency, trust, competence and belonging.

The following principles summarise the learning from the training, partner reflections and field experiences in youth centres, humanitarian contexts and community settings.

Principle	Practice	Avoid
Start with trust	Create a predictable, warm space where young people can arrive, decompress and feel respected before they are asked to participate.	Beginning with heavy political content before the group feels safe.
Treat young people as capable	Give real tasks: welcoming guests, preparing materials, mapping needs, running a game, documenting an event, presenting results.	Using youth only as an audience or decoration for a project.
Make values concrete	Connect democracy, equality and solidarity to local examples: school, neighbourhood, transport, flood recovery, migration, online hate.	Explaining values only through institutional vocabulary.
Co-create, do not impose	Let young people choose topics, formats and roles. Use open questions and participatory decisions.	Designing the whole process in advance and calling it youth-led.
Balance support and autonomy	Offer guidance, resources and mentoring while making it clear that help is unconditional and participation is voluntary.	Creating moral debt or pressure to volunteer because someone received support.
Be transparent	Explain what an NGO can and cannot do, how funding works, what the project limits are and why decisions are made.	Overpromising, hiding limitations or allowing unrealistic expectations to grow.
Share resources	Cooperate with schools, municipalities, NGOs, informal groups and local volunteers. Share tools and spaces where possible.	Gatekeeping contacts, rooms, equipment or visibility.
Use creative entry points	Use photography, collage, film, sport, games, food, music and storytelling to open civic topics.	Assuming civic education must look like a formal classroom.

Principle	Practice	Avoid
Protect dignity	Use respectful language, consent forms, privacy checks and trauma-sensitive facilitation.	Publishing photos, stories or labels that expose participants to risk.
Reflect and recognise	Close every activity with reflection on learning, contribution and next steps. Recognise effort publicly when safe.	Moving from activity to activity without helping young people see what they gained.

Field insight: safe space plus responsibility

In the study visit, youth workers described how young people behaved differently in the youth space because they felt respected and needed. Practical responsibilities such as preparing packages, helping at events, cleaning shared spaces or supporting animal-food deliveries became entry points for social responsibility.



5. From awareness to action: a practical framework

A strong civic-learning process moves from listening to action, reflection and dissemination.

Youth workers often ask how to move from a workshop about values to young people taking real civic action. The framework below can be used for a single 2-hour session, a 5-workshop local programme, a youth exchange or a community event cycle.

Phase	Key question	Youth worker action	Possible output
1. Listen	What matters to young people here?	Use informal conversations, community mapping, anonymous questions, PhotoVoice, collage or small-group check-ins.	List of issues, feelings, interests and strengths.
2. Build trust	What do participants need to feel safe and respected?	Co-create group agreements, clarify confidentiality, explain consent and set boundaries against hate or humiliation.	Group agreement and participation options.
3. Connect values	Which EU values relate to these issues?	Translate values into everyday situations: fairness at school, equal access, misinformation, migration, public space, crisis recovery.	Values map or problem-value link.
4. Explore causes	Why is the issue happening and who is affected?	Use problem trees, stakeholder maps, media analysis, human-rights lens and dialogue with community members.	Problem analysis and stakeholder map.
5. Co-design action	What can young people realistically do?	Support youth to choose an action that is useful, safe, achievable and visible.	Action plan with roles, timeline and support needs.
6. Implement	How will youth lead while staying supported?	Mentor, check risks, connect resources, help with logistics, but keep ownership with young people.	Community event, campaign, volunteer action, exhibition or local proposal.
7. Reflect and share	What changed and what did we learn?	Use reflection circles, storytelling, testimonials, evaluation forms and dissemination outputs.	Learning evidence, social media recap, recommendations and next steps.

A simple facilitation formula

- Experience: start with a concrete image, story, activity, dilemma or local issue.
- Meaning: ask what participants notice, feel and think.
- Values: connect the experience to dignity, equality, democracy, rights, solidarity or inclusion.
- Action: ask what can be changed locally and who needs to be involved.
- Reflection: close with learning, responsibility and next steps.



6. Creating safe, inclusive and motivating spaces

Young people participate when they feel respected, when expectations are clear and when their contribution has visible value.

A safe space does not mean a space without disagreement. It means a space where disagreement is handled with dignity, where no one is humiliated, where discriminatory behaviour is addressed, and where young people can try roles without being punished for mistakes.

Before	During	After
Know the group: age, language, access needs, conflict history, trauma indicators and transport realities.	Welcome by name, explain the purpose, clarify voluntary participation, and use warm-up activities that do not force personal disclosure.	Debrief emotionally, thank participants, share what will happen with their ideas, and offer follow-up support.
Prepare consent and safeguarding procedures, especially for minors and public media use.	Use mixed methods: visual, verbal, movement, small groups, creative work and quiet reflection.	Store photos and documents safely. Do not publish identifiable material without permission.
Design different levels of participation: observe, speak, create, lead, document, organise.	Give concrete tasks and rotate roles so responsibility is shared.	Recognise contributions and invite young people into the next step without pressure.

Handling polarised views

Youth work should not exclude every young person who repeats harmful narratives, but it must protect the group. Separate the person from the statement, ask for sources and lived experiences, name the impact of hate speech, and set non-negotiable boundaries around dignity and safety. When a statement targets a group, support the targeted participants first.

Situation	Youth worker response
A participant makes a discriminatory joke	Pause. Name that the comment can harm others. Ask the group to return to the agreement. Invite repair without turning the targeted person into a teacher.
A young person refuses to participate	Offer observation or a small practical role. Do not shame them. Participation often grows after trust.
A participant shares trauma or serious distress	Thank them, avoid probing, check immediate safety, offer a break, follow safeguarding procedures and refer to professional support if needed.
A debate becomes hostile	Stop the debate format. Move to structured listening: each person speaks for one minute, others summarise before responding.
Young people expect the NGO to solve everything	Be transparent about what the organisation can do, what it cannot do and where the group can build collective action.



7. Methodology toolbox and activity sheets

Use methods that match young people's realities: visual, practical, dialogical, youth-led and connected to local action.

The following tools can be used independently or combined into a longer civic-engagement programme. Each activity includes an aim, values, steps and facilitation tips. Adapt the language, duration and complexity to the group.

Tool	Best used for	Typical output
Values in Everyday Life	Introducing EU values in accessible language.	A values map connected to local examples.
Community Mapping and Needs Walk	Identifying local problems and resources.	A map of places, needs, allies and action ideas.
PhotoVoice	Youth-led expression, research and public dialogue.	Photo exhibition, captions and community discussion.
Collage for Self-Expression	Identity, belonging, future dreams and difficult topics.	Individual or group collage and reflection.
Story Circles	Intercultural understanding and migrant integration.	Shared stories, empathy and common themes.
Media and Disinformation Lab	Democratic resilience, propaganda awareness and source checking.	Fact-checking habits and campaign ideas.
Local Democracy Simulation	Understanding decision-making and participation.	Youth proposals, debate and voting process.
EU Opportunities Clinic	Raising awareness of Erasmus+, volunteering and mobility.	Opportunity map and first-step plan.
Micro-Volunteering Challenge	Moving from discussion to action quickly.	Small solidarity actions completed by youth teams.
Youth-led Community Event Sprint	Migrant integration, inclusion and local visibility.	Intercultural event, campaign or public action.
Action Plan Canvas	Turning ideas into realistic youth-led initiatives.	Clear roles, timeline, resources and indicators.

7.1 Activity sheet: Values in Everyday Life

Element	Guidance
Aim	Help participants understand European values through situations they recognise.
EU values in practice	Human dignity, democracy, equality, rights, solidarity, non-discrimination.
Best for	A first workshop, school session, youth club meeting or preparation for a youth exchange.
Time	60-90 minutes.
Materials	Cards with value words, local scenario cards, flipchart, markers, sticky notes.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place value cards on the floor: dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights, solidarity and non-discrimination. 2. Give small groups local scenario cards, for example: a new migrant student is isolated; a rumour spreads online; young people are ignored in a local decision; public space is unsafe after dark. 3. Groups choose which values are involved in each scenario and explain why. 4. Ask: What would respecting this value look like in practice? Who needs to act? What can young people do? 5. Close with one personal commitment and one group action idea.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use simple words first, legal wording later. - Invite disagreement about which value matters most. This is where democratic thinking begins. - Avoid testing participants. The goal is connection, not memorisation.

7.2 Activity sheet: Community Mapping and Needs Walk

Element	Guidance
Aim	Identify community needs, assets and possible civic actions through direct observation.
EU values in practice	Participation, solidarity, equality, local democracy and shared responsibility.
Best for	Rural youth, neighbourhood groups, youth centres, crisis-recovery settings and community-event preparation.
Time	90 minutes to 3 hours, depending on whether the group walks outside.
Materials	Large local map or printed satellite map, sticky notes, markers, phones or cameras if consent allows, risk assessment.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask participants to mark places where young people feel welcome, unsafe, excluded, useful or invisible. 2. Walk through the area in small groups, or use a printed map if going outside is not possible. 3. Mark community resources: youth spaces, schools, NGOs, parks, cultural venues, local businesses, informal meeting places and transport points. 4. Mark community challenges: barriers, misinformation points, isolation, lack of bins, flood damage, language barriers or inaccessible spaces. 5. Turn observations into three action ideas and choose one that is realistic for youth to lead.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not focus only on problems. Mapping assets builds agency. - Agree on safety rules before leaving the venue. - When mapping crisis-affected areas, avoid photographing private damage or people without consent.

7.3 Activity sheet: PhotoVoice

Element	Guidance
Aim	Give young people a way to express their perspective on community issues through photography and dialogue.
EU values in practice	Freedom of expression, participation, dignity, democracy and inclusion.
Best for	Youth-led research, local exhibitions, migrant-integration dialogue, crisis-recovery reflection and advocacy.
Time	Two to four sessions plus optional public exhibition.
Materials	Phones or cameras, consent guidance, printed photos or projector, caption templates, exhibition space.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the method: participants answer an open question with photos, for example: What helps young people feel they belong here? or What needs to change in our community? 2. Discuss ethics: do not photograph identifiable people, private homes, sensitive documents or risky places without permission. 3. Participants take photos independently or in pairs. 4. In the next session, each participant chooses one to three photos and writes a caption: What do I see? Why does it matter? What value is connected? What change do I want? 5. Host a group gallery walk. Participants ask questions and identify common themes. 6. Optional: organise a public exhibition where young people present their own messages to community members.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use open prompts and avoid giving examples of topics that may direct young people's thinking too strongly. - Protect privacy and emotional safety. Some images may be powerful but not safe to publish. - Let young people decide the final title and captions of the exhibition.

7.4 Activity sheet: Collage for Self-Expression

Element	Guidance
Aim	Support self-expression, language learning and reflection on identity, belonging, environment or future dreams.
EU values in practice	Dignity, freedom, equality, inclusion and respect for diversity.
Best for	Groups with mixed language levels, young people who are hesitant to speak, youth clubs and creative workshops.
Time	60-90 minutes.
Materials	Old magazines, newspapers, cultural flyers, scissors, glue, paper, markers, optional music.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose a prompt such as: I am..., My community is..., A future I want..., What solidarity looks like..., or Europe in my life. 2. Invite participants to select images and words without needing to explain immediately. 3. Participants create individual or small-group collages. 4. Use a gallery walk. Each person chooses what they want to explain and what they prefer to keep private. 5. Connect the collages to values: Where do you see dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity or belonging? 6. Optionally turn collages into postcards, posters or campaign visuals.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not analyse a participant's collage for them. Ask open questions. - Collage can support basic language learning by adding words such as I am, I need, I dream, We can. - Use the method to make difficult topics approachable without forcing disclosure.

7.5 Activity sheet: Story Circles for Intercultural Dialogue

Element	Guidance
Aim	Build trust and mutual understanding through structured listening, especially in mixed local and migrant groups.
EU values in practice	Human dignity, human rights, pluralism, tolerance, non-discrimination and solidarity.
Best for	Groups preparing community events, migrant integration activities, youth exchanges and conflict-sensitive dialogue.
Time	60-90 minutes.
Materials	Talking object, timer, prompt cards, optional language support.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a circle and agree on rules: speak from personal experience, no interruptions, no pressure to share, confidentiality limits. 2. Use a low-risk prompt first: A place where I feel welcome; A skill I learned from someone else; A time someone helped me. 3. Each person has equal time. Participants may pass. 4. After each round, ask listeners to name common themes rather than judge stories. 5. In a second round, connect stories to civic questions: What helps people belong? What can our community do better? 6. Close with one shared action or message.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Never ask migrant or refugee youth to tell painful stories for the education of others. - Use interpreters or bilingual peers when needed, but protect privacy. - Focus on common tasks and future cooperation, not only on difference.

7.6 Activity sheet: Media and Disinformation Lab

Element	Guidance
Aim	Strengthen democratic resilience by helping young people recognise misinformation, propaganda and manipulative online narratives.
EU values in practice	Democracy, rule of law, human rights, dignity, non-discrimination and responsibility.
Best for	Groups discussing war, migration, polarisation, social media, elections, local rumours or anti-migrant narratives.
Time	90-120 minutes.
Materials	Printed screenshots or anonymised examples, source-checking checklist, phones/computers if available, flipchart.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start with a neutral example of misleading content so participants learn the process before discussing sensitive topics. 2. Introduce four checks: Who created it? What evidence is given? What emotion does it try to trigger? Who benefits if I share it? 3. In groups, participants analyse examples and mark red flags: no source, extreme emotion, dehumanising language, fake authority, manipulated image, missing context. 4. Discuss how misinformation can harm migrants, minorities, people in crisis or public trust. 5. Participants design one youth-friendly counter-message, quiz, poster or reel that promotes verification and empathy.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid repeating harmful claims in a way that gives them extra visibility. - Do not mock young people for believing misinformation. Focus on skills, not shame. - When using real examples, remove names and avoid amplifying extremist accounts.

7.7 Activity sheet: Local Democracy Simulation

Element	Guidance
Aim	Help young people practise democratic decision-making, public speaking, negotiation and accountability.
EU values in practice	Democracy, rule of law, equality, participation and freedom of expression.
Best for	Workshops on local issues, youth councils, school groups, youth exchanges and community action planning.
Time	90-120 minutes.
Materials	Role cards, issue brief, voting cards, chairperson guide, flipchart for proposals.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose a local issue: youth space, integration event, public transport, climate action, flood preparedness, safe public areas or anti-hate campaign. 2. Assign roles: young residents, migrant youth, local business, school, NGO, municipality, parents, environmental group, media. 3. Groups prepare their priorities and one proposal. 4. Run a structured meeting: opening, proposals, questions, amendments, vote and next steps. 5. Debrief: Who had power? Who was missing? What made the process fair or unfair? How could youth influence real decisions?
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure roles do not stereotype migrants or disadvantaged youth. - Rotate speaking roles so confident participants do not dominate. - Connect the simulation to a real opportunity such as a meeting with local stakeholders.

7.8 Activity sheet: EU Opportunities Clinic

Element	Guidance
Aim	Make Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps and local EU-related opportunities understandable and reachable.
EU values in practice	Freedom, equality, participation, solidarity and youth initiative.
Best for	Young people who feel European opportunities are distant, rural youth, first-time applicants and youth with fewer opportunities.
Time	60-90 minutes.
Materials	Opportunity cards, laptop/projector, map of Europe, example stories, first-step worksheet.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask participants what they already know and what worries them: cost, language, travel, family, documents, confidence or eligibility. 2. Present opportunities in plain language: youth exchanges, volunteering, solidarity projects, internships, local projects, training and youth work opportunities. 3. Use peer stories or short videos rather than only institutional descriptions. 4. Participants choose one opportunity and complete a first-step worksheet: What is it? Why me? What support do I need? Who can help me? 5. Create an opportunity board with deadlines, contacts and mentoring sessions.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be honest about requirements and support available. False promises damage trust. - Show routes for people with fewer opportunities, not only highly confident young people. - Offer follow-up help for applications and travel planning.

7.9 Activity sheet: Micro-Volunteering Challenge

Element	Guidance
Aim	Move quickly from discussion to meaningful action by giving young people small, visible tasks that help the community.
EU values in practice	Solidarity, participation, dignity, equality and shared responsibility.
Best for	Youth clubs, recovery contexts, local solidarity campaigns, migrant integration and first steps into volunteering.
Time	One session to plan, one action day, one reflection session; or a two-week challenge.
Materials	Action cards, materials depending on the task, safety plan, mentor contact, reflection form.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brainstorm small actions that can be completed safely: welcome postcards, community clean-up, animal-food delivery, information poster, helping at an event, making care packages, creating bins, language exchange, intergenerational workshop. 2. Ask youth teams to choose one action and define who benefits, what is needed and what could go wrong. 3. Adults check safety, permissions and boundaries, but young people lead the action. 4. After the action, hold a reflection: What did we do? Who did it help? Which value did we practise? What would we change? 5. Share the result with consent through photos, a short text, a poster or a local thank-you wall.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not use volunteering as repayment for support. Keep participation voluntary. - Choose tasks that are useful but not exploitative or unsafe. - Make the action visible so young people feel their contribution matters.

7.10 Activity sheet: Youth-led Community Event Sprint

Element	Guidance
Aim	Support young people to design and deliver a community event that promotes inclusion, dialogue and civic participation.
EU values in practice	Democracy, solidarity, pluralism, inclusion, equality and participation.
Best for	Community events, migrant integration, public dissemination, youth exchange follow-up and local awareness raising.
Time	Half-day planning sprint plus preparation meetings and event day.
Materials	Event canvas, budget sheet, role cards, venue checklist, communications plan.
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarify the purpose: What value should the event make visible? Who should feel included? What local need does it address? 2. Choose the format with young people: intercultural night, food festival, board-game evening, film club, book or plant exchange, art creation, sports tournament, exhibition or public dialogue. 3. Map roles: programme, welcome team, logistics, accessibility, social media, documentation, safety, stakeholder contact. 4. Set a realistic budget and resource-sharing plan. Ask partner organisations what can be borrowed instead of bought. 5. Prepare a short values message that explains why the event matters. 6. Run the event with youth visibly leading and adults available for support. 7. Debrief immediately and collect evidence for dissemination and reporting.
Facilitation tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid making migrants perform culture for others. Design events with migrant participants, not about them. - Include quiet roles for participants who do not want to speak publicly. - Make the event accessible: transport, food, language, timing and signposting.



8. Supporting youth-led civic action

Young people are empowered when they can move from being participants to co-designers, organisers, decision-makers and peer supporters.

Civic engagement can be small, local and practical. It does not require young people to start with formal politics. Preparing an intercultural evening, challenging a rumour, improving a shared space, creating an exhibition or helping neighbours after a crisis can all become civic learning when young people understand the value, the community need and their own agency.

Level of youth ownership	What it looks like	Youth worker support
1. Taking part	Youth attend, try activities and express initial opinions.	Welcome, reduce barriers, build confidence.
2. Having voice	Youth share needs, stories, ideas and feedback.	Use accessible methods and show how their input is used.
3. Co-deciding	Youth help choose topics, methods, rules or priorities.	Offer real options and transparent limits.
4. Co-designing	Youth develop the workshop, event, campaign or action with adults.	Mentor planning, risks and logistics.
5. Leading	Youth run parts of the activity, represent the initiative or coordinate peers.	Step back, stay available, protect safety.
6. Multiplying	Youth mentor others, document learning and propose new activities.	Support recognition, networks and next opportunities.

Do	Do not
Invite young people into real tasks: welcome, logistics, content, facilitation, documentation, evaluation.	Give only symbolic roles while adults make all decisions.
Make participation voluntary and separate it from any aid or support the young person receives.	Create pressure to volunteer because someone was helped by the organisation.
Discuss motivation: What do you care about? What skill do you want to use or learn?	Assume all young people are motivated by the same issue.
Recognise effort, not only polished outcomes.	Celebrate only confident speakers or high-performing youth.
Share resources across organisations and local groups.	Gatekeep spaces, tools, contacts or visibility.

Building local volunteer networks

Project reflections show that volunteer networks can fade after an emergency if people are exhausted, distrust NGOs or do not understand how organisations work. Youth workers can respond by making volunteering transparent, small, social and skills-based, and by creating peer-to-peer pathways where young people who have participated can gradually become helpers and mentors.

Practical ways to keep engagement alive include: creating youth volunteer cards or certificates; offering short, flexible tasks; pairing new volunteers with experienced peers; organising appreciation moments; explaining the impact of each task; and giving young people chances to propose their own initiatives.



9. Inclusion, migrant integration and intercultural solidarity

Integration is not a one-way demand placed on migrants. It is a shared civic responsibility to build communities where everyone can participate with dignity.

The project treats migrant integration as a practical expression of European values. Youth work can reduce isolation and prejudice by creating shared activities where young people cooperate, make decisions and build relationships. The aim is not to make migrant youth objects of charity, but to make sure they can participate as peers, contributors and leaders.

Risk	Better practice
Tokenism: asking one migrant youth to speak for a whole community.	Invite voluntary personal stories, offer multiple forms of contribution and include migrant youth in planning.
Cultural display without shared power.	Co-create events where everyone brings something and decisions are shared.
Overexposure of trauma or legal status.	Do not ask for migration stories unless participants choose to share. Protect privacy in photos and captions.
Language exclusion.	Use visuals, bilingual materials, peer translation, slow facilitation and non-verbal methods.
Local resentment or misinformation.	Use dialogue, transparent information, media literacy and shared community tasks that benefit everyone.

Intercultural activity ideas

- Community cooking with shared roles and recipe stories, not a performance by one group.
- Board-game evenings with mixed teams and simple language rules.
- Film club followed by structured dialogue on belonging, rights or migration.
- Sports or gaming tournaments used as low-threshold entry points into dialogue.
- Plant, book or tool exchange connecting sustainability, solidarity and local cooperation.
- Art or collage workshops producing postcards, posters or exhibitions about community identity.

When working with war refugees or other displaced young people, be aware that civic engagement may interact with grief, war experiences, family separation, uncertainty and online propaganda. Offer choice, structure and referral pathways.

10. Civic engagement in crisis and recovery contexts

After a disaster or conflict, civic engagement must be trauma-sensitive, transparent and focused on restoring agency without creating dependency.

The project learning from humanitarian and flood-affected settings shows that rapid assistance is essential, but long-term recovery also needs social connection, psychosocial support, youth activities, local ownership and trust-building. Young people can contribute to community resilience when they are supported safely and when their action is not treated as repayment for aid.

Challenge observed	Youth-work response
People may not understand how NGOs work or where funding comes from.	Organise simple information meetings, posters or videos explaining funding, limits, neutrality, volunteer roles and complaint channels.
Residents may be exhausted, traumatised or focused on their own recovery.	Offer low-pressure participation and psychosocial spaces before asking for long-term commitment.
Aid can unintentionally create dependency or moral debt.	State clearly that help is unconditional. Separate assistance from volunteer recruitment.
Basic needs can overshadow social recovery.	Combine material support with safe spaces, cultural activities, dialogue, youth clubs and community events.
Local solidarity can weaken after the emergency phase.	Build small peer-to-peer actions and public recognition that strengthen trust over time.



11. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Evaluation should measure not only numbers reached, but also learning, confidence, agency, inclusion and follow-up action.

Use a mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Numbers are useful for reporting, but youth civic engagement also requires stories of learning, examples of changed roles, participant reflections and evidence that young people continued acting after the activity.

What to measure	Indicators	Tools
Reach	Number of participants, demographics where appropriate, online reach, website visits, newsletter opens.	Registration forms, analytics, dissemination tracker.
Engagement	Questions asked, discussion quality, attendance over time, online interactions, youth taking roles.	Observation notes, facilitator reports, platform metrics.
Learning	Increased understanding of EU values, rights, democracy, disinformation and civic opportunities.	Pre/post questions, quizzes, reflection cards, group debriefs.
Agency	Young people propose ideas, make decisions, lead tasks, contact stakeholders or run events.	Action plan review, role tracking, youth self-assessment.
Inclusion	Participation of youth with fewer opportunities, language access, safe participation, adaptations used.	Inclusion checklist, anonymous feedback, facilitator reflection.
Sustainability	Follow-up activities, youth volunteer network, reuse of materials, downloads of guideline, new partnerships.	Follow-up survey, partner debrief, online analytics, stakeholder feedback.

Five reflection questions for young people

What did I learn? What did I contribute? Which value did I practise? Who did our action affect? What is one next step I want to take?

12. Sustainability after the project

A project ends. A participation culture continues when young people, youth workers and local partners have routines, resources and relationships that outlive funding.

Sustainability should be planned from the first activity. It is not only the final report or online archive. It is the way young people are invited into responsibility, how partners share resources, how methods are documented, and how local stakeholders remain connected.

Sustainability strategy	How to do it
Youth alumni pathway	Invite participants to become peer mentors, workshop assistants, campaign creators or event coordinators.
Reusable method cards	Turn successful activities into one-page tools with purpose, steps, materials and facilitation tips.
Local partner network	Share spaces, tools, volunteers, contacts and calendars with NGOs, schools, municipalities and informal groups.
Micro-actions	Keep engagement alive through small tasks that do not require large budgets: clean-up, exchange, poster, visit, postcard, game night.
Transparent communication	Explain funding cycles, project limits and future possibilities to avoid unrealistic expectations.
Recognition	Use certificates, public thank-you moments, skills portfolios or Youthpass-style reflections.
Open access	Publish the guideline, templates, campaign materials and results in accessible formats and languages where possible.

Annex A. Workshop design template

Field	Questions to answer
Title	What is the name of the workshop?
Target group	Age, language, access needs, background, group size.
Purpose	What should participants understand, practise or create?
European values	Which values are connected and how will they become visible?
Methods	Which activities will you use and why?
Youth ownership	Where will young people choose, decide, create or lead?
Inclusion adaptations	Transport, food, language, disability access, quiet space, online access.
Safeguarding and consent	Risks, privacy, photo/video permissions, referral contacts.
Outputs	What will be produced or decided?
Evaluation	How will learning and feedback be collected?
Follow-up	What is the next step after the workshop?

Annex B. Inclusion and accessibility checklist

- Invitations are written in clear language and shared through trusted channels.
- Participation is free or costs are clearly supported.
- Transport and timing are realistic for rural youth and young people with care or work responsibilities.
- Food, water and breaks are planned.
- Language support is available, including visual methods and peer translation if appropriate.
- The venue is physically accessible or an alternative is offered.
- Participants can contribute without speaking publicly.
- Minors have the required permission for participation and media use.
- Facilitators know how to respond to conflict, discrimination or distress.
- A follow-up contact is available after the activity.

Annex C. Youth civic action plan template

Canvas field	Write your answer
Our issue	We want to change...
Why it matters	This matters because...
EU value connection	Our action promotes...
Who benefits	The people who should benefit are...
Our idea	We will...
Roles	Who will coordinate, communicate, organise materials, document, welcome people, evaluate?
Resources	What do we need and what can we borrow or share?
Partners	Who can help: NGO, school, municipality, local business, volunteer group, youth centre?
Risks and safety	What could go wrong and how will we prevent harm?
Timeline	What happens this week, next week and on the event/action day?
Success indicators	How will we know it worked?
Reflection	What did we learn and what is the next step?

Annex D. Reflection questions

Moment	Questions
Opening	What do I need to participate today? What do I already know about this topic?
After a dialogue	What did I hear that was new? What was difficult? What helped me listen?
After a creative method	What did my image or collage express? What value is connected to it?
After action planning	Is our action realistic, inclusive and safe? Who else should be involved?
After a community action	What changed? What did I contribute? What did I learn about my community?
For youth workers	Who spoke, who stayed silent, who led, who was missing, and what will I change next time?



GUIDELINE FOR YOUTH WORKERS

European values become visible when young people are trusted to practise them: by listening, deciding, creating, helping, questioning, welcoming and taking responsibility together.



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