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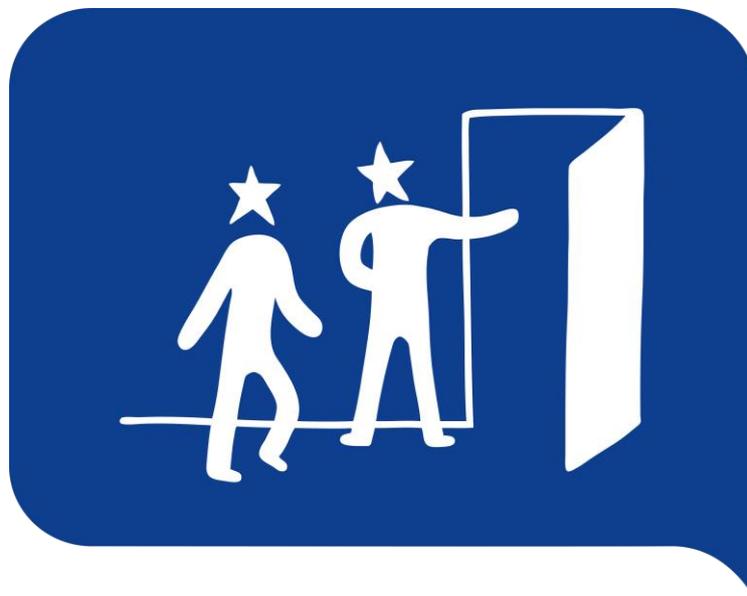
Report on the Implementation Phase of 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue

Under the Trio Presidency Germany-Portugal-Slovenia

'Europe for YOUth - YOUth for Europe:

Space for Democracy and Participation'

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Introduction

Background to the 8th Cycle of European Youth Dialogue

The EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD) is the European participatory process which, through cycles of 18 months over a priority topic, supports the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and ensures the involvement of young people in the decision-making process in the field of youth in Europe through an articulated dialogue between young people and decision-makers.

The 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue runs from 1st of July 2020 to 31st December 2021 under the Trio Presidency of Germany - Portugal - Slovenia. Building on the experience of previous cycles and setting the path for the following ones, this cycle aims at:

- Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue as a space for meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of youth-related policies;
- Contributing to the mainstreaming and multi-level and cross-sectoral implementation of the European Youth Goals which were developed by young people during the 6th cycle of the Structured Dialogue; increasing the visibility of the Youth Goals;
- Fostering multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation from local to European level in order to make the process more inclusive, visible and sustainable so that its outcomes can encapsulate the expectations of all young people living in Europe.

The topic of the 8th cycle (EUYD8) is Youth Goal #9 'Space and Participation for All' under the title 'Europe for YOUth - YOUth for Europe: Space for Democracy and Participation'. Each European Youth Goal has a list of targets to achieve, related to the respective topic of the Youth Goal. (See appendix for Youth Goal#9 in full).

EUYD8 has two phases, the dialogue phase and the implementation phase, as well as three EU youth conferences. An overview of the 8th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue can be found in the EUYD8 Explanatory note.

At national level, EUYD8 is supported by national working groups (NWGs) in each EU-27 country. There is also an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation working group (INGYOs) operating at European level.



About the findings within this report

This report is a summary and analysis of the activities carried out by working groups in relation to the implementation phase of EUYD8. It is based on reports supplied by the working groups themselves.

The intention of the implementation phase of EUYD8 is to realise the outcomes and ideas generated towards implementing Youth Goal #9 in the first half of the cycle - the dialogue phase. After the cycle's EU Youth Conference in Portugal, NWGs and INGYOs make the transition from the phase of dialogue into the phase of implementation, using the results of the conference as inputs and starting points but also reflecting on their local, regional, national and European realities.

The results of the dialogue phase can be found in the report of the qualitative consultation¹ as well as the reports from the German² and Portuguese³ EU Youth conferences. These results are complex and multifaceted. They contain a set of seven political demands generated at the German conference, 24 actions from the Portuguese Youth Conference and a wide variety of other detailed ideas and recommendations spread across the qualitative consultation and both conference reports.

Working groups were asked to report follow-on actions which contributed to implementing the outcomes of the EUYD8 dialogue phase using a standard written template. They were able to include activities which were in the process of implementation as well as completed ones with the deadline for reporting in August 2021.

Working groups were able to report as many activities as they wished. The reporting template was set by the European Steering Group and based around the questions below.

- What was / is the action? (Open question)
- To which target of the Youth Goal #9 your action is linked to? (Tick box selection)
- What was / is the aim of the action? (Open question)
- Who was / is involved? (Open question)
- What barriers were / are you facing in its implementation? (Open question)

26 working group reports were received. This included reports from NWGs in every EU-27 country except Poland, Greece, Latvia, and Romania as well as a report from the IYNGOs. Belgium supplied three separate reports, one for each Belgian community. Reports were analysed by one of the researchers supporting EUYD8.

¹ Moxon, D. and Pantea. M. (2021) *8th Cycle Of The EU Youth Dialogue Qualitative Consultation Report - Youth for Europe, Europe for youth: space and participation for all*. Lisbon. Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, I.P. [DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4734312](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4734312)

² DBJR (2020) *Europe for YOUTH – YOUTH for Europe EU Youth Conference: Space for Democracy and Participation* <https://www.dbjr.de/en/article/konferenzbericht-der-eu-jugendkonferenz>

³ Portuguese Presidency (2021) *Europe for YOUTH YOUTH for Europe Space for Democracy and Participation EU Youth Conference Report and Implementation Toolbox* https://youth2021portugal.eu/assets/files/youth-conference/eu_youth_conference_report_and_implementation_toolbox_2021portugal.pdf



The initial review of working group reports showed that all working groups who provided reports were active in working towards Youth Goal #9 and the promotion of youth participation. In general, they were not systematically attempting to implement the concrete actions and demands identified in the German and Portuguese EU Youth Conference. However, many of the actions implemented were still based on similar ideas, themes, and goals. This will not be a surprise to readers who are familiar with the political realities of the EU and EUYD. EUYD is not able to mandate specific political action at national level, the various ideas are exceptionally wide ranging, and the short timescales are politically challenging to work with. This finding may be frustrating to youth delegates involved in the cycle, who are often keen to see demands and actions have been realised in concrete form. To some extent, all cycles of EUYD face the challenge of raising political expectations that are difficult to deliver. Rather than being a challenge specific to the 8th cycle, this issue stems from the complexities of EU and EU wide policy making and overarching limitations in EUYD as a whole.

Within this context, the EUYD8 implementation phase can still be regarded as having many areas of success. There is evidence that EUYD8 has contributed to a range of initiatives to support young people's participation across the EU. It can be said that each working group has worked towards Youth Goal #9 with actions based on their local and national realities and histories, which were often informed and enhanced by the European level of EUYD8. EUYD8 has contributed to a clear direction of travel for the improvement of youth participation as well as a wide range of concrete initiatives.

The remainder of this report gives an overview of the sorts of actions and activities undertaken towards implementing Youth Goal #9 in connection with EUYD8. It is based on classifying the various aims, targets and methods of actions. The complexity of actions leads to slightly varying numerical data depending on which criteria is analysed, however the overall trends are consistent.

Several examples of actions are included. Unfortunately, there has not been the space to feature actions from all working groups in this report. There are many further excellent examples which could have been highlighted. The European Steering Group would like to thank all the working groups for their efforts implementing EUYD8.



How *much* change took place to support youth participation *as a result* of EUYD8?

Across the 26 working group reports 154 follow-on actions were reported. To improve consistency of reporting 29 of these actions were combined with other actions or removed from the data during analysis⁴. This left 125 unique actions, an average of around 5 per working group. Individual actions ranged in scale, so did not necessarily represent the same ‘amount’ of activity.

Participant numbers were not reported and are not necessarily a good reflection of social and political impact of actions. However, estimating them still provides some insight into the level of activity. Most follow-on actions described events or activities involving tens of people, or hundreds at most. Some actions, such as national policy work, surveys, media and outreach campaigns were broader in scope and possible reach. Excluding these, it can be estimated that follow-on activities involved no more than 5000-10,000 people of all ages. This can be compared to the qualitative consultation which engaged just over 10,000 young people⁵.

Each action described a coherent package of activity with a common theme or goal. The general discourse implied that working group members were the primary actors taking responsibility for implementing EUYD8 findings. Actions often referred to activities the working groups (or closely connected actors) were directly implementing themselves to support participation. Some actions describe situations where findings of EUYD8 were presented by working groups to other political actors (e.g., National Governments representatives). The intention of these actions was to generate further political action by that third party, but in most situations this further action was not identified. These two approaches are somewhat dependent on who was involved in the working groups. For working groups with stronger ministry or Government involvement, lobbying other actors may not have been relevant, as they were already implementing results themselves. However, this may also suggest that political or social change based on EUYD8 findings is primarily implemented by actors who are directly connected to the cycle. This may limit the potential for wider impact, particularly of a cross sectorial nature.

Within this group of actors, a wide variety of actions to improve youth participation have taken place. However, identifying which actions happened *as a result* of EUYD8 may be too simplistic. It is more accurate to consider that local and national activity has been enhanced by EUYD8, but does not always occur *exclusively* because of it, or without further support from local / national actors. Across the actions a spectrum of ways in which EUYD8 was linked to local and national participation could be seen.

⁴ Activities were removed or combined with others to help create consistency between reporting styles across working groups. Reasons for removals and combinations included, combining highly subdivided reports (e.g., a series of linked events reported as multiple actions), removing actions relating to the EUYD8 survey, and selection of EUYD delegates, which were not reported consistently by all groups, removing case studies / examples of participation practice with no clear link to EUYD8.

⁵ See Moxon and Pantea (2021) *ibid*.



This spectrum included:

1. Actions which were very strongly connected to EUYD8 and seem very unlikely to have occurred without EUYD8.
2. Actions which seem to be enhanced significantly by EUYD8 but may well have occurred in some other manner or way without EUYD8.
3. Activities which contribute to achieving Youth Goal #9 and make links to the EUYD8 framework, but that seems very likely to have occurred even without EUYD8.

Actions in the first category did not always represent ‘better’ or ‘more impact’ from EUYD8 than the other two categories. Some of the most impactful actions occurred when there was substantial cross linkage between national and European activity. Some working groups were able to use both the EUYD8 outcomes and processes to build on and enhance their national work. This seemingly led to greater potential for political and social change. However, it also led to less clarity on the exact contribution of EUYD8. This speaks to some of the complexities of creating political change, and the non-hierarchical relationship between the EU and member States.

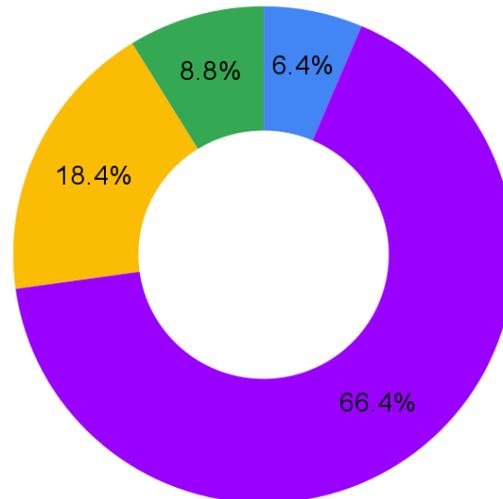
An indication of the relationships between EUYD8 and local / national participation activities can be seen by considering when the reported actions began (Chart 1). Although it may not be strictly the case, the 6.4% of actions that started before the cycle seem the most likely to have been able to occur without EUYD8. The 18.4% that were planned during the cycle but not yet implemented seem most likely to be things that happen strongly as a result of EUYD8. The two thirds of activities that begin during the cycle⁶ might be judged to fit in either category.

⁶ This includes activities that are repeated from previous years / cycles, but start a new implementation within the cycle.

Chart 1: Activity implementation status

n=125

- Began prior to cycle
- Started during cycle
- Not yet started
- Unclear

**Example of action from the Estonian National Working Group**

This action illustrates a national response that addresses concerns raised in EUYD8 but seems likely to have been heavily influenced by other national politics and factors.

'In cooperation with the Office of the Chancellor of Justice and Ministry of Education and Research, we [the Estonian National Youth Council] amended and added to the existing Code of Good Practice of Electoral Matters. The Code of Good Practice of Electoral Matters aims to clarify and gives guidelines about bringing elections to educational institutions: it specifies what election-related activities and actions are allowed in schools, how to encourage conversation about elections and organising debates, all done while remaining politically neutral. The document is important for creating the prerequisites for talking about elections in schools and to ensure that schools remain an environment where young people can be informed and educated about elections in a safe and neutral manner.'



‘Project Youth Goal awards’ reported by the working group of The Czech Republic

This illustrates an action which has strong linkage between the national and the EU level.

‘The long-term project, led jointly by the National Working Group and the partner organisation Young Citizens, focuses on spreading awareness about Youth Goals and their implementation, especially to CRDM (youth council) member organisations, but also to other organisations for children and youth. We are preparing a system of rewarding organisations in individual categories related to how they manage to meet Youth Goals. The awards will start in 2022. In each year of the competition, the activities of the organisations and in the next category the projects of the organisations in the past year will be evaluated.’

Example of action from the Slovakian working group

This action illustrates an activity based exclusively on EUYD8.

‘[We are] making a policy paper based on data from qualitative and quantitative consultations and results from the EU survey. We will deliver this policy paper to members of parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Parliamentary committee and School committee.’

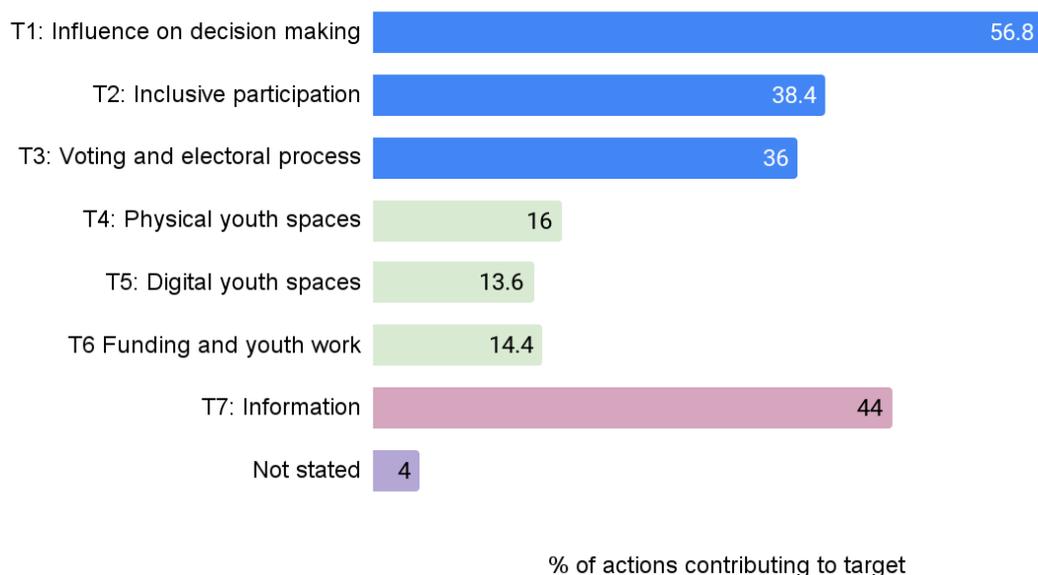
Several other Slovakian actions also disseminated EUYD8 findings to different actors.

Which Youth Goal #9 targets did the follow-on actions contribute to?

One of the goals of EUYD8 is to contribute to the implementation of Youth Goal #9 ‘Space and participation for all’. Working groups were asked to report which Youth Goal #9 targets each of their actions contributed to. This provides an indication of the thematic connection between follow-on action and the Youth Goal #9 targets. It should be interpreted carefully. A thematic link does not guarantee that follow-on actions were successful in creating social and political change linked to this target. Results are shown in Chart 2, for the full written version of each Youth Goal #9 target see the appendix.

Chart 2: Youth Goal #9 targets contributed to by follow-on actions

n=125



Working groups identified that many actions contributed to multiple targets at once. On average each action contributed to just over two targets (n=120). Nearly two thirds of actions (62.5%) contributed to more than one target. The most frequently contributed to targets were T1, on ensuring young people’s influence on decision making, and T7, providing youth friendly information.

The high degree of overlap between targets reflects the way that many of the targets are interlinked. The data might be understood as three groups of targets: political participation (T1-3), youth work / youth spaces infrastructure (T4-6) and education / information (T7).

Targets 1, 2, and to a lesser extent 3 were often selected together. As a result, the distinction working groups made between these targets was not always strong. Notably, very few of the actions classified under Target 2 had a focus on engaging marginalised groups of young people, despite this being a key area of discussion for this target during the qualitative consultation. Target 2 was instead typically used to describe actions which aimed to involve *wider numbers* of young people in political participation such as outreach activities. This meant many actions classed under T2 had little practical difference

from T1 activities. Actions marked as T3 usually have a clearer connection to the electoral process and voting.

Actions classed under T4, T5, T6, were more discrete and followed the nature of the targets closely. The lower number of actions focusing on these targets reflects the lower political priority this area had within the EUYD8 cycle.

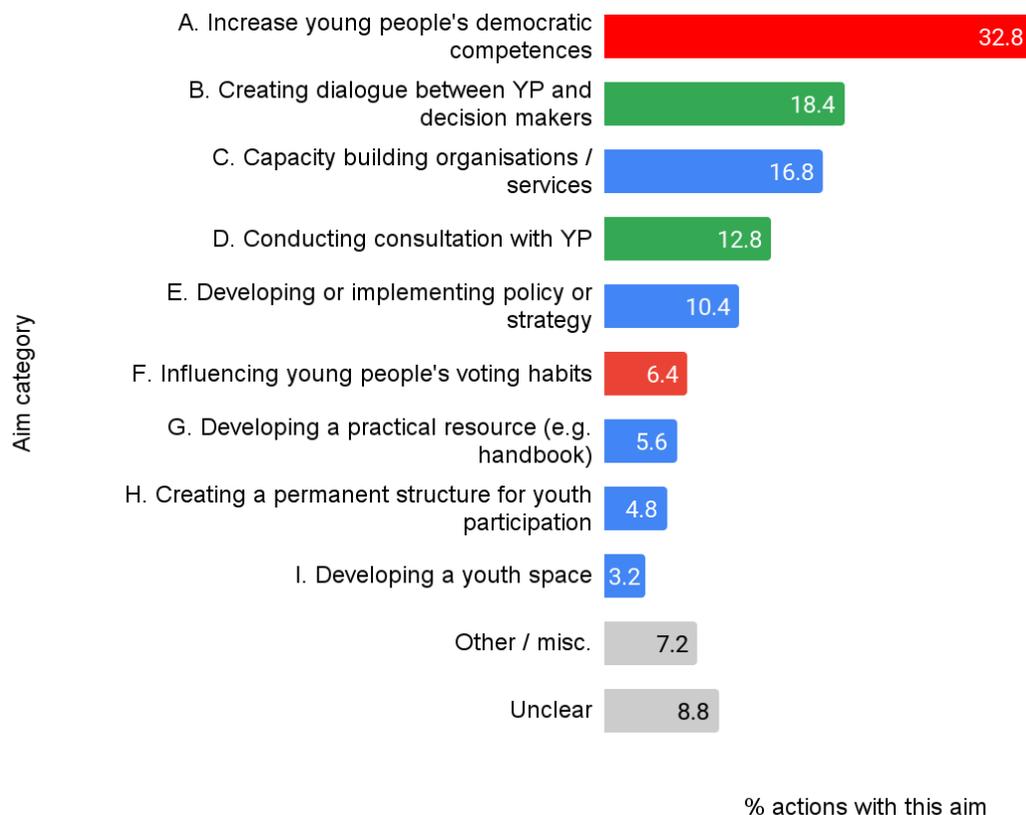
Target 7, on youth information, was interpreted broadly by working groups. Despite the written target's focus on youth information, many working groups classified educational initiatives under this target as well. These educational activities were typically aimed at informing young people about democratic processes or participation opportunities.

What were the aims of the follow-on actions?

Based on the open question answered by working groups, the aims of each action were categorised. 9 distinct categories of aim emerged (see Chart 3). Of the 114 actions with clearly identifiable aims, 74.6% had only one aim, 21.1% had two and 4.4% had three.

Chart 3: Aims of follow-on actions

n=125

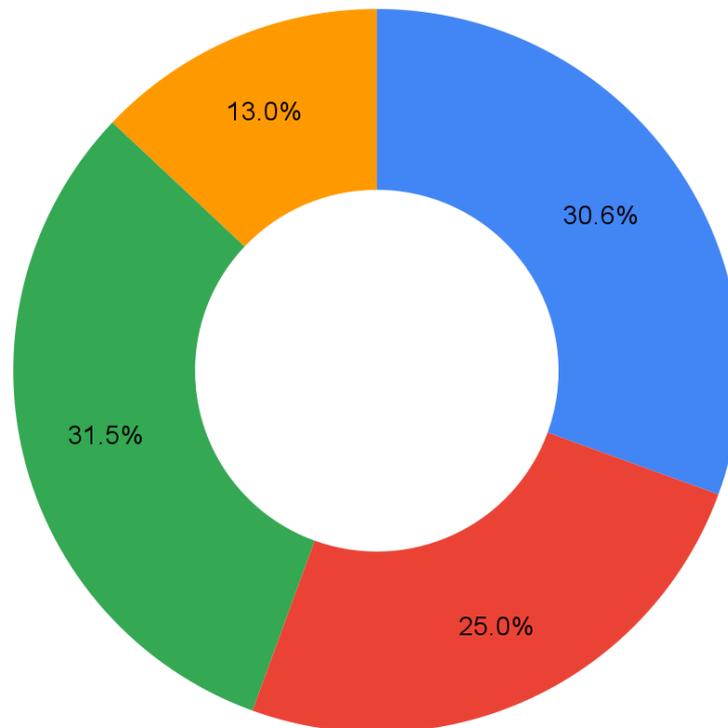


A further simplified categorisation was also then created. Results are shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Aims of follow-on actions (Simplified)

n=108

- 1) Actions which aim to develop YP's competences / voting only
- 2) Actions which aim to improve how participation is carried out only
- 3) Actions which aim to foster engagement with decision makers only
- 4) Actions with aims across one or more of the above



The results show that actions were roughly equally divided between educational / informational actions, capacity building actions, and engagement with decision makers.

- **Group 1 educational / informational actions** represented 30.6% of actions (aims in categories A and F only). These actions aimed to develop young people's competencies or voting intentions. This typically referred to educational programmes, or media outreach campaigns.
- **Group 2 capacity building actions** represented 25.0% of actions (aim in categories C, E, G, H, and I only). This group contained actions or activities that aimed to improve the way participation was carried out. This included for example, producing handbooks and resources, resourcing training programmes, developing youth councils, and more complex strategy or policy initiatives.
- **Group 3 engagement with decision makers** represented 31.5% of activities (aims in categories B and D only). These groups of activities had the aim of enabling young people to share their views with decision makers. It included surveys, focus groups and direct dialogue with decision makers.



Example of action from the Belgian - German speaking community

This is an example of an educational / informational activity.

'We created a row of three video-podcasts with young people that are engaged in the Youth Council or youth wings of political parties in our Community. For each podcast, two young people come together with a moderator that asks several questions about their engagement, the functioning of their organisation and what they would recommend to young people if they also want to become politically active. The podcasts will be disseminated via YouTube and music streaming services. The project for and with young people has the aim to inform about possibilities of youth participation in our region. It is above all due to a lack of information that young people do not participate: They do not know the Youth Council nor the youth political parties, although they offer many possibilities to participate on a political level. The NWG elaborated the concept of the podcasts and asked the youth wings of the political parties for their interest to participate in such a format.'

Example of action reported by the Irish National Working Group

This is an example of capacity building. It was also one of the few actions that directly addressed the needs of minority and marginalised groups.

'Engagement with 'minority and marginalised' young people through direct links with advocacy organisations and groups. This action is about building on previous success in terms of diverse participation in EU Youth Dialogue. Our positive networks are a strength and we have a reputation for our commitment to proactively pursuing and maintaining links with young people who are often not heard, not included, not considered, not valued. Some examples so far include linking in with a young Travellers leadership programme being delivered by the Irish Traveller Movement. We will be hosting an event for young people with disabilities later in the month of August to hear directly from them what their needs are. We have set up a Youth Participation Network. We have linked with reps from Independent Living advocacy groups. [The aim is to] identify relevant groups and organise meetings to discuss how we can enhance and improve our practice in order to ensure that young people who want to participate have equal opportunities to do so. Our model of engagement includes large group events, outreach events, focus groups and online events. Listening to young people who may face barriers to participation in our own activities, not to mention wider society, is a vital way of maintaining the highest standards of engagement for us as a NWG. Exploring what needs to be done to ensure participation is possible carries a level of responsibility that we fully accept.'



Example of action reported by the Slovenian National Working Group

This is an example of capacity building.

'The action is a financial grant funding active participation and EUYD implementation activities of Local Youth Councils. In order to reach more activities on a local level we launched an open call for local youth councils in order to provide funding of young people activities with implementation of the 9th EU Youth Goal. We chose 7 applications that we will support financially or with trainers from the Pool of Youth Dialogue Trainers (the grant total worth was 5000 EUR). The chosen activities include methods which are more and less participatory: installation of waste bins with intriguing questions, forum with decision makers, creativity camp for preparing art that express youth opinion followed by a youth dialogue, picnic with decision makers, etc.'

Youth Convention: Exchange between young people and policy makers at Luxembourg's National Parliament

This is an example of engagement with decision makers, planned for November 2021.

'[The aim is] to bring together young people in order to exchange about the topics related to the Youth Goals. The main focus also lies in a face-to-face exchange between the young people of the respective workshop, as they will present their questions and recommendations directly to the present politicians, all in the main chamber of the National Parliament. The discussed topics are 100% related to the Youth Goals which are key to the definition of the workshop themes. By trying to connect these topics to the national context we want to ensure that the participants can relate to the European goals formulated in the interested of all the youngsters across the EU'

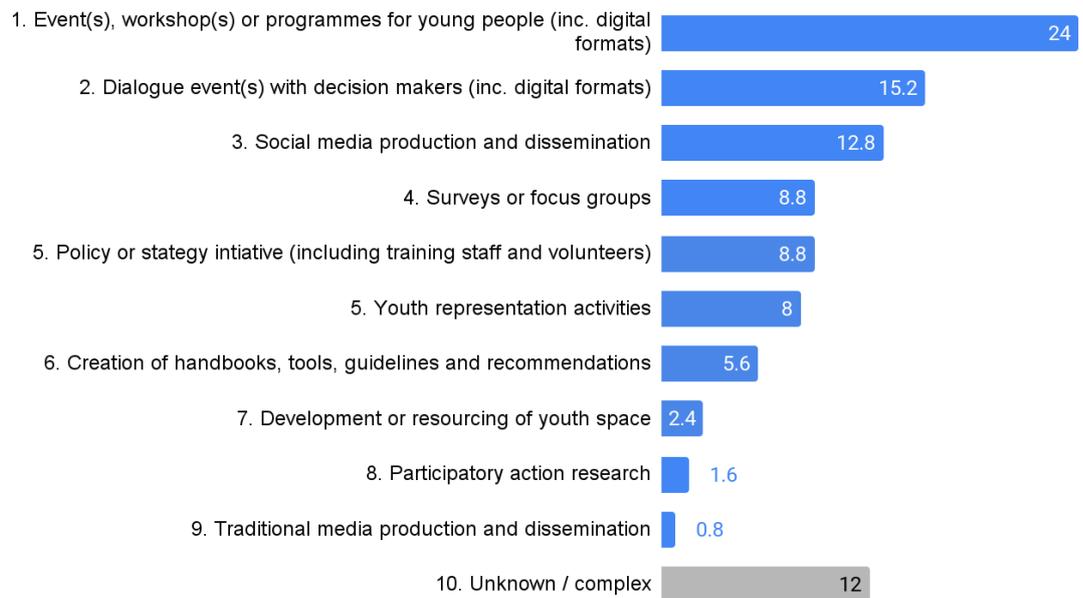
What methods and formats did the actions use?

Based on the open question answered by working groups, the activity format / methodology of each action was categorised. 9 distinct types emerged; actions were categorised into one format only based on the principal methodology used. A further tenth category was used for actions which were not possible to categorise into one format only or where methods were unclear or still to be planned. Results are shown in Chart 6.



Chart 6: Methods and formats of follow-on actions

n=125



% of actions with this format

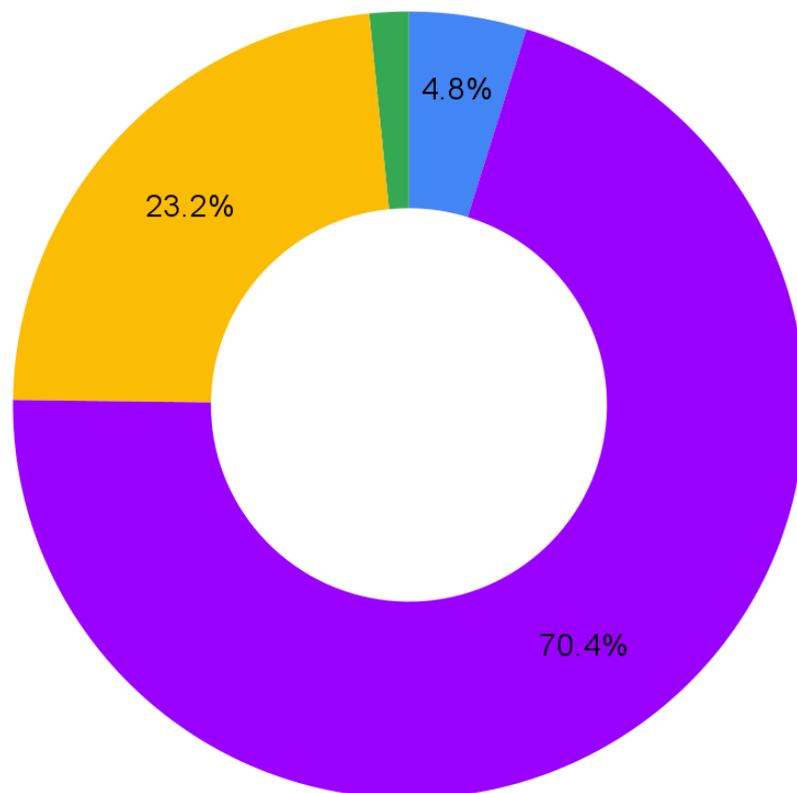
The results reinforce the findings on the aims of activities, that EUYD8 implementation actions contained a mix of educational work, capacity building and engagement with decision makers. We can see those actions with aims to educate and inform young people were most likely delivered through a mixture of events, workshops, or programmes for young people (24%) and social media campaigns (12.8%). Engagement with decision makers occurred though the dialogue events(s) (15.2%) but less participatory methods such as surveys and focus groups (8.8%) still play a role.

Actions were further categorised by their political ‘level’. Nearly three quarters (70.4%) of actions occurred at national level with just under one quarter (23.2%) occurring at local or regional level (see Chart 7). However, the true reach into local level participation is greater than the data implies. Many national activities included a local / regional dimension. For example, event series coordinated nationally, but delivered at various locations across the country's regions. The international actions were made up of the work of INYGO’s who hosted webinars to bring together their representatives with decision makers, and a small number of bilateral collaborations between countries.

Chart 7: Activity level

n=125

- International
- National
- Local or Regional
- Unclear





Regional conferences reported by the Hungarian National Working Group.

This illustrates a nationally coordinated activity operating at regional level.

'We will organise 7 youth conferences within the seven regions in Hungary. Our regional events will be coordinated by our regional ambassadors. During these events, we will showcase and discuss the proposed youth actions within a panel discussion with decision makers, and the outcomes of the Slovenian Youth Conference, followed by a discussion and workshop that will include all the participating youth. With our events, we aim to spread the seeds of the suggested youth actions in order to realise Youth Goal 9 as much as possible in the region. We will also map out local problems and form suggestions with young people to create solutions according to Youth Goal 9. At all regional events we aim to involve at least one local decision-maker in the participation, thus promoting a positive change in the area of the problem mapped.'

Who were the follow-on actions attempting to influence?

Youth participation involves the process of creating social and political change. One of the important dimensions to understanding participation activities is considering which actors are the target of influence, i.e., who is the activity attempting to influence or change. This is different to considering who is involved in an activity. For example, a youth led campaign would involve young people, but have politicians as the target of influence.

Example of action INYGO roundtable event

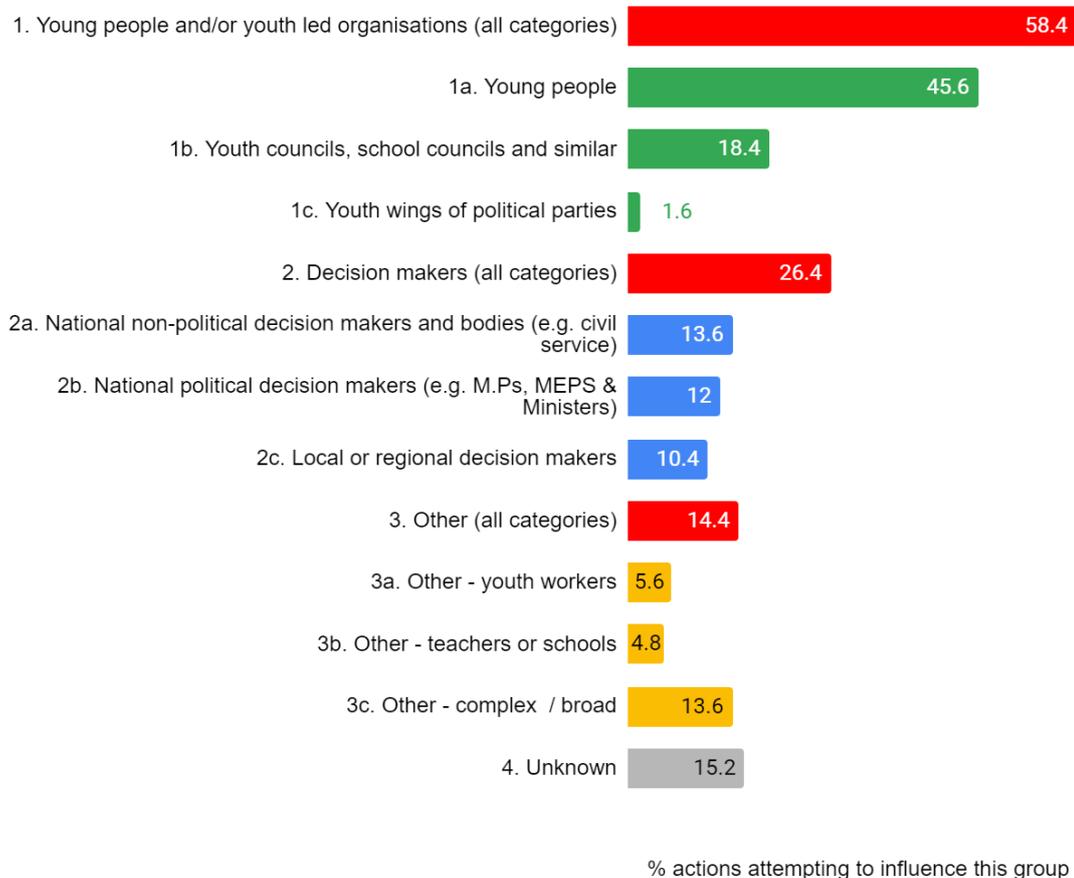
This action illustrates an event that involved both INGYOS and decision makers, where the target of influence was decision makers.

'The INGYOs in the EU Youth Dialogue organised an online roundtable discussion on the possibilities and challenges for meaningful youth participation on a European level. Decision-makers that are or have been involved in the area of youth were invited to discuss their perspectives together with young people and activists in smaller groups. These smaller groups focused on discussing challenges and possibilities for young people to be meaningfully engaged on a European level. The event was held online on Zoom and simultaneously live streamed on all of the INGYOs Facebook-pages, where viewers could also engage in the discussions.'

Based on the open question answered by working groups, the targets of influence of each follow-on action were identified. Most activities had between 1 and 2 targets per activity. 9 categories were identified which could be further reduced into 3 broad categories⁷. Results are shown in Chart 8.

Chart 8: Follow-on action targets of influence

n=125



A substantial proportion of EUYD8 follow-on activities were directed at affecting change in young people, as distinct from enabling young people to influence others. Results indicate that more than half of EUYD8 activities (58.4%) were attempting to influence young people or youth-led organisations. This compares to only a quarter (26.4%) of actions which were attempting to influence decision makers.

The higher number of actions that aimed to foster engagement with decision makers 31.5% (Chart 4) compared to having decision makers as targets of influence 26.4% (Chart 8) is explained by the role of consultation activities. Many consultation action reports described how a consultation would be carried out, but not how results would be used to target decision makers. This may indicate a particular

⁷ For simplicity, one activity at international level with decision makers was included in the national decision makers category. Activities with M.E.P.s were also included as these actions were mainly still at national level.

weakness in the destination of consultation actions, or simply that plans were intended to be developed at a later stage.

The ‘Other (all categories)’ group represents 15.2% of actions. These are actions where tangible social and political impact is likely already occurring as a result of EUYD8 and other factors. It includes actions that are already making a direct contribution to the way young people’s democratic engagement is supported, usually by improving or changing some existing area of policy or practice.

Example of action Dutch online and offline school campaign

This is an example of young people involved in EUYD creating social and political change within the cycle by affecting the work of teachers and schools.

‘The Youth Representatives, together with a group of volunteers, have developed an online school program, which teachers can use to discuss the EU and how young people can be involved in democratic processes. From Summer 2021 onwards they will relaunch their offline school campaign, with a specific focus on the youth goals’

Example of action Portuguese national plan

This is an example of a government led initiative promoting the quality of participation in schools.

‘The National Plan for the Promotion of Students’ Associations is a governmental initiative led by the Portuguese Institute for Youth and Sports [in co-operation with the Ministry of Education]. It aims to foster youth participation in primary and secondary schools through three main areas of intervention:

The Plan seeks to:

- *Foster citizenship education and the participation of young students in their school community reinforcing the role of non-formal education in their educational path.*
- *Provide institutional and legal support in the constitution of student’s associations or informal groups.*
- *Implement annual campaigns aiming at ensuring that every public-education institution has a student-led structure to represent the students in the school community.*



Barrier to implementation

The barriers to implementation for many actions were not reported by working groups or were not reported in detail. Some working groups expressed that they had not faced barriers with actions, or they that the barriers were unknown as actions were still in planning.

The most widely reported barriers were issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. These consistently described the challenges being able to deliver activities in digital formats, or in some instances in face-to-face formats that respected social distance and vaccination guidelines. Some working groups reported the pandemic had weakened young people's motivation to participate. Planning activities within the uncertainty of COVID-19 was an ongoing concern.

Closely connected to this were barriers relating to the use of digital tools. This related to the ability and confidence of working groups to deliver activities digital formats effectively, especially when new methods were used. Some working groups reported concerns they could not make digital tools and formats inclusive, or that young people did not have digital access. In general, there was a feeling that implementing activities digitally was more challenging than face to face work.

Conducting communications and outreach work effectively was also a barrier affecting some actions. Several working groups identified challenges using social media for outreach effectively. There were also challenges conducting outreach through schools and youth centres, particularly during the summer period when schools were closed. This was said to make recruitment to activities challenging, particularly those that targeted marginalised groups of young people.

Communicating effectively about EUYD8 and the youth goals was identified as a barrier. It was said to be challenge making some of the concepts and ideas accessible and understandable to both young people and other stakeholders.

'It was challenging to convey the relevance of the European Youth Goals (EYGs) to the different policy fields. Not every stakeholder is familiar to them, so it has taken a while to spread the idea and history of the EYGs'

Austrian Working Group Report

'A general observation we have made is that there are too many activities or initiatives from EU to have the time implement activities. For example, we had to focus the 9 cycle of EU youth dialogue since Sweden is part of trio-presidency for that cycle. Another problem is the Conference on the future of Europe. Many of actors on local and national level want to focus on the Future conference and it is difficult to find the synergies. On a local level, in Sweden there are the 290 municipalities that have some autonomy which makes it complicated to coordinate the youth dialogue on local level'

Swedish National working Group

The breadth of topics within Youth Goal#9 and youth participation was said to be to be a barrier affecting some actions. Some working groups reported challenges creating common understandings of youth participation amongst stakeholders and dealing with the range of topics covered by Youth Goal #9.



A commonly reported issue was the challenge building support and finding common agendas with other actors to implement actions. Building alliances and partnerships with bodies such as schools, municipalities and NGOs was identified as possible but difficult. This was linked to partly to the challenges of creating understanding of EUYD8 and the Youth Goals with these bodies.

At a more political level, some working groups reported lack of political support either for EUYD8, youth participation, or specific issues such as votes as 16. Other topics such as COVID-19 recovery, or elections took political priority. This resulted in challenges accessing senior decision makers or getting commitments from them. Whilst lack of political support was a certainly a barrier for some actions, more often the challenges were about harmonising with other political agendas, rather than a lack of support completely.

Alongside the above there were also more practical, organisational barriers reported, such as financial or human resource limitation as well as difficulties with the timescale of implementations.

Conclusions

Meaningful youth participation is about enabling young people to influence the social and political world around them. However, classifying, measuring, and assessing the impact of youth participation and its ability to create social and political change is complex. EUYD8, like any youth participation initiative, does not exist in isolation from other political initiatives and actors. The relationship between the EU level policy and politics and the politics that occur at member State level is multidirectional.

The extent to which EUYD8, operating at EU level, can affect change at National or local political level is heavily interconnected to the relationship between the EU and member States. Many working groups used the opportunities and discourse that EUYD8 creates to drive national and local initiatives. This seems to occur most strongly when there is national commitment, and political opportunities to do so. When these things are in place, there are clear examples of how the ideas generated in a dialogue phase of EUYD8 have directly informed actions at national level.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ability to use digitalise youth participation seems to be one of the most substantial barriers to implementation of actions. Alongside this, the ability to broker political support remains an ongoing challenge to implementation. However, rather than a complete absence of political support, this seems to operate more at the level of the complexities of linking EUYD to national and local actors and cross-sectoral politics.

Across the 125 follow-on actions which took place, the most common areas of action have been around two targets:

- Youth Goal #9 Target 1 - Influencing decision making
- Youth Goal #9 Target 7- Information, interpreted by working groups to also include education.

However, there was considerable overlap between the way Targets 1-3 were interpreted in practice by working groups and these targets are interlinked. It is notable though that few follow-on activities had the strong focus on marginalised groups implied by Target 2.



Youth participation is both the topic of EUYD8 and the method. Therefore, by default, implementing EUYD contributes to Youth Goal #9. Around one third of follow-on actions aimed to create engagement between young people and decision makers (either through dialogue or consultation). The extent to which this engagement will now lead to longer term improvements in youth participation is not yet known. It will be dependent on:

- How much decision makers act upon the dialogue they have taken part in.
- How much the consultation activities currently underway are successfully shared with decision makers in future.

As indicated by the focus on Target 7, a surprisingly large proportion of EUYD8 implementation activities have been directed at educating and informing young people. Just under one third of activities have primarily educational or informational aims. Just under two thirds attempted to influence young people or youth led organisations. Promotion of youth participation, feedback of EUYD8 results and education were all needs identified in the EUYD8 dialogue phase. But it could also be argued that such a strong focus on young people turns the attention back on changing young people themselves, rather than enabling young people to affect change. Nevertheless, persuading and enabling young people to engage in democracy is still a key part of Youth Goal#9, as well as the EU Youth Strategy.

A final group of actions demonstrated more concrete social and political change. Around 25% of actions had the aim of some form of capacity building - improving the way youth participation is done. These were things such as policy initiatives, strategic actions, or the development of resources. Examples include the networking initiatives developed by the Irish NWG, the Dutch school programme, or the Czech Republic's Youth Goals awards. By their nature these actions are often much more embedded in local and national work, and many also linked to previous EUYD cycles. As a result, this sort of impact is harder to attribute as an *exclusive* result of EUYD8. Many are clearly enhanced and informed by EUYD8 and EUYD as a whole however

Although the systematic implementation of identified actions and demands from the two EU Youth conferences is not visible, EUYD8 has a positive impact on enhancing youth participation across the EU. All the follow-on actions reported by working groups clearly contribute to Youth Goal #9. The cycle has no doubt contributed to improving youth participation across the EU. EUYD, like the EU is unique, there are no directly comparable international youth participation activities elsewhere in the world. This means identifying if it has achieved 'enough' impact to be judged successful is impossible. There is nothing by which to identify how much change should realistically be expected across 27 interlinked countries. As a result, it is important not to judge the implementation phase by too much of an idealistic standard. Implementing the seven political demands, 24 conference actions and many other consultation recommendations generated in the dialogue phase, was always politically ambitious. It should finally be noted that the EUYD8 cycle is not yet complete, and more change will likely occur both during and beyond the cycle.



Appendix: Youth Goal #9

Space and participation for all

Strengthen young people's democratic participation and autonomy as well as provide dedicated youth spaces in all areas of society.

Young people are underrepresented in decision-making processes which affect them although their engagement is crucial to democracy. They need access to physical spaces in their communities to support their personal, cultural and political development.

Targets

- T1) Ensure young people can adequately influence all areas of society and all parts of the decision-making processes, from agenda setting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation through youth-friendly and accessible mechanisms and structures, ensuring that policies respond to the needs of young people.
- T2) Ensure equal access to everyday decision making for all young people from different backgrounds.
- T3) Increase youth participation and thus equal representation in the electoral process as well as in elected bodies and other decision-making organs at all levels of society.
- T4) Provide youth-led physical facilities and infrastructures called youth spaces defined by being autonomous, open and safe, accessible to all, offering professional support for development and ensuring opportunities for youth participation.
- T5) Ensure safe virtual youth spaces are accessible to every young person which provide access to information and services as well as ensure opportunities for youth participation.
- T6) Ensure sustainable funding, common recognition and development of quality youth work in order to strengthen youth organisations and their role in inclusion, participation and non-formal education.
- T7) Provide youth-friendly, relevant, comprehensive information, also developed by and with young people, in order to enable youth participation.