



leap

learning
to participate



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1. INTRODUCTION

The current document is part of the Intellectual Output 4 **“Youth Participation: Charter and PBL application”**, developed in the framework of the project **LEAP - Learn to participate (Erasmus + - KA2: Strategic Partnership | Youth)**.

This output is divided in two parts: Part A –which is this actual document– which is an introduction to the development of the final format, a Charter (*see the infographic at the end of this file*) whose main goal is to advocate for the grounding values around youth participation and active citizenship, promoted during LEAP lifetime. The second part – the Part B - is an audio-visual guideline on Project Based Learning (PBL) as well as some testimonials of young people who participated to the project activities in local and international level.

(Click [HERE](#) for the video)

2. THE PROJECT

LEAP - Learning to Participate is a co-funded Erasmus Plus project - developed under Key Action 2 - Strategic Partnership on the field of youth – result of a cooperation between three youth organisations and two universities. Its focus, and what brought the partnership together, is their interest on young people’s participation and their engagement. Their goal is to shift the perspective about the perception of youth’s role as a societal actor in political processes and to empower young people in taking ownership over issues that matter to them. Actual or alleged lack of youth interest and participation in political, social and civic matters is an issue of great concern in policy and research. To address this issue, LEAP worked on an approach – Project Based Learning (PBL) - that aims to tackle youth workers training, young people’s empowerment, organisational changes and policy debates.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Promote youth-centred pedagogical approaches in non-formal education youth organisations.
- Reinforce young people’s empowerment intended as capacity for action.

For further information, please, check the following link:

- LEAP blog: <https://leap2020.home.blog/>
- LEAP on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LEAPLearningToParticipate/>

3. THE CHARTER

In introduction to the Charter, one of the main results of LEAP project. The Charter's content is based on gathered information from 123 young people from Austria, Croatia and Italy through specific project activities – included a virtual international mobility.

The Charter provides a definition of Youth Participation from young people's point of view. It also presents the related values and the recommendations for youth organisations and policy makers that young people have proposed and explored during their involvement. Its main intention is to answer to the need of questioning the concept of political participation and of finding a definition of participation that fits young people's ideas, bringing them at the center of issues that concern them. It can be a valuable education resource to activate dialogue and discussion with young people on these topics, using as starting point ideas and words from their peers.

3.1. TO WHOM AND WHY IT IS INTENDED FOR

The Charter is intended specifically for three targets: **1) young people**, since it provides an overview on terms, concepts and ideas which are close to them and to their daily life as citizens and it can ignite discussion among their peers as well as it can be an inspirational resource for their activity as active citizens; **2) youth organisations and professionals**, since it can be used as an educational tool with their target as well as to encourage the exercise of active citizenship and develop sense of initiative, motivating them to be active for community; **3) policy makers**, since the Charter provides insights on how to effectively include young people in activities that concern them as well as their explicit recommendations.

4. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

The main methodology which has been used to gather the information at the basis of this Charter is the **Action Research Methodology**. Quoting the bid, "Action Research is "a set of practices" and "an orientation to enquiry" (Reason, Bradbury, 2008¹) where the object of enquiry - in this case young people - are co-creators of knowledge; implying this theory, this intellectual output was

¹ Source: Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2008). The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice (2nd ed). SAGE Publications.

developed not only for young people, but together with young people. Action research “calls for engagement with people in collaborative relationships, opening new ‘communicative spaces’ in which dialogue and development can flourish” (Reason, Bradbury, 2008 p.3).

The choice of orienting the distribution of tasks on the basis of collaborative work with young people is a consequence of the fact that in order to expand definition of participation, the project created a space for dialogues with young people from different partner countries. Together with this approach, the partnership has developed also several tools and specific & designed steps which helped the information-gathering process. The main objective of these steps were to reinforce intercultural dialogue and respect for diversity amongst young people in Europe, providing knowledge and skills about Project-based learning principles and methods as well as to contribute the development of young people soft/organisational skills and therefore increase their capacity for action.

Five main phases have been at the core of the development of this process:

Partners' definition	The partnership started with their own definition of participation to reflect on their own representations and practices.
Survey	A survey with open-ended questions was addressed to young Austrians, Croatians and Italians. The respondents were 123.
Pre-virtual mobility	Supported by a process of questions and dialogue, young people from Austria, Croatia & Italy had a virtual space at local level in which discuss and talk about participation and how they can include PBL in their daily life.
International virtual mobility	An online virtual mobility that involved around 40 participants, we provided a space in which they could exchange knowledge, ideas and concepts relating to participation and active citizenship.
Post-virtual mobility	At the end of the virtual mobility, participants had the chance to follow-up all the learning process, providing last feedbacks on the main results of their project involvement.

5. RESULTS

The main results of the project activities with young people are the following:

5.1. DEFINITION OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Thanks to the participants' meetings before, during and after the mobility, Youth Participation has been defined according to the following 2 levels:

A. Participation in the community:

Being active for the society through volunteering or being involved through dialogues, valuing that every member of society has equal access to opportunities. It is a form of self-expression and social interest that works in a collective dimension through exchanging ideas.

B. Participation in political processes:

It means influencing political decisions. Young people want to get opportunities to actively participate in shaping their country's policies, and demand transparency regarding government decisions, elections, referendums, etc.

5.2. GROUNDING VALUES AROUND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- Civic and social skills
- Freedom of opinion/expression/speech
- Leadership
- Contribution to the political decision-making process
- Respect of diversity (opinions, people etc.)
- Inclusion
- Open-mindedness

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Apply Project-Based Learning methodology working with young people:

Project-based learning (PBL) has a potential that can be exploited by young people in approaching society in a constructive way. The implementation of this methodology allowed young participants to start from an analysis of their needs with the aim of creating feasible solutions that can meet their requirements.

B. Increase initiatives for young people:

Young people need further support through initiatives that can encourage participation in the community and other levels of governance. In this way, not only they can benefit from existing opportunities, but also youth organisation can have more opportunities to widen their networks.

C. Increase opportunities to international mobility programmes:

Most of the youth we work with is not having opportunities to learn new languages and cultures. This kind of mobility programmes can help them to be aware of the culture they represent as well as to feel to be enriched by others.

D. Promote their co-creation in their initiatives:

Young people can bring fresh knowledge and ideas for youth organisations and for the society and should be seen as partners in building knowledge rather than only beneficiaries of (educational) programmes.

5.4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Increase young people's involvement in the decision-making process:

Most of the young people in LEAP demanded that their requests are listened by policymakers. They perceive that there is the lack of interest in them from policymakers in every social and national context. Their demand is to have possibilities to express their opinion and actively participate in shaping the policies of their countries and demand transparency regarding government decisions.

B. Include youth practices in policy-making process:

The educational practices of youth workers in LEAP have shown that young people have very diverse interests that could shift policy agendas. Including youth workers' practices in the policy-making process can provide insights about youth and understand how these actors educate to participate. This, in turn, could lead to shifting perspectives on young people's role in democracies and an increased involvement of young people in the policymaking process on any issues that concern them and not solely on youth-related ones.

C. New proposals to fight pandemic situation:

Due to the situation of Covid-19, young people have less opportunities to participate and feel frustrated. Young people ask for more youth friendly programs at local level that can create opportunities and help young people/ entrepreneurs to start business.

D. Uniform recognition of youth workers status and qualifications at EU level:

The status of “youth worker” is still not recognised in some European countries, or sometimes it is listed under “volunteering”. In addition to this, we recognise that there is a disparity in the qualifications and training offered to youth workers on a European scale, including on “citizenship” related issues such as participation. It is important recognising a youth workers’ statute, including an EU one and continue developing trainings on citizenship issues. These would guarantee better support for youth workers’ vital function in our societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO YOUTH ORGANISATIONS



Apply Project-Based Learning methodology when working with young people

Increase initiatives for young people

Increase opportunities to international mobility programmes

Promote young people's co-creation in their initiatives

DEFINITION OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY



PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES

Being active for the society through volunteering or being involved through dialogues, valuing that every member of society has equal access to opportunities. It is a form of self-expression and social interest that works in a collective dimension through exchanging ideas.

It means influencing political decisions. Young people want to get opportunities to actively participate in shaping their country's policies, and demand transparency regarding government decisions, elections, referendums, etc.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Increase young people's involvement in the decision-making process

Include youth practices in policy-making process

New proposals to fight Pandemic situation

Uniform **recognition** of Youth workers status and qualifications at EU level

GROUNDING VALUES



Civic and social skills

Contribution to the political decision-making process

Freedom of opinion/expression/speech

Respect of diversity (opinions, people, etc.)

Leadership values

Inclusion

Open-mindedness





Universität Wien

www.univie.ac.at



**Institut für
Didaktik der Demokratie**

University of Hannover

www.demokratiedidaktik.de



**Centro per lo Sviluppo
Creativo Danilo Dolci**

www.danilodolci.org



Sapere Aude

www.saperaude.at



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