# REPORT

## My yEUth Story 1.0 YE





**Place**: Varna, Bulgaria

**Date**: 7-11 May 2025

Funded by
the European Union



The purpose of this report about the youth exchange **My yEUth Story 1.0** is to motivate other non-governmental organisations and young people to develop similar projects and initiatives to stimulate young people to be active citizens and through their actions, to promote youth engagement and active citizenship through various tools such as storytelling, interviewing and content creation.

**Host organisation:**
Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Culture and Education, Bulgaria

**Partners:**
SFERA, North Macedonia
Monomyths, Romania
ABOVE Youth Foundation, Hungary

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**My yEUth Story 1.0** took place at Golden Sands seaside resort on the Northern Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The chosen accommodation was Detelina Hotel. It proved to be an ideal place for conducting the activities as it is located away from the big city, making it easy to work outside and enjoy the first sunny days of the summer. It is also minutes away from the beach and bus stops, thus giving participants the option to easily explore nearby places.

**26 young people** aged 18-30 took part in the exchange, from four European Countries: **Bulgaria**, **Hungary**, **Romania**, and **North Macedonia**. The participants arrived at the hotel on 6 May and left on 12 May.



The youth exchange introduced the participants to the **European Youth Strategy** and its corresponding **11 European Youth Goals**, emphasising the importance of youth participation and active engagement the the topics and policies that concern young Europeans. The participants explored storytelling as a tool to raise the awareness of young people's voices and opinions and promote the EU values among various target groups.

## The topics of the project were:

- 11 European Youth Goals (focusing on #1 Connecting EU with Youth and #11 Youth Organisations & European Programmes)
- Democracy and Youth Participation
- Storytelling
- Video Interviewing



## Various non-formal learning methods and activities were used:

- Ice breakers
- Role playing and collective games
- Creativity and teamwork games
- Discussion, debates, brainstorming and reflection
- Intercultural and experiential learning
- Soft-skill training





My yEUth Story 1.0




## The aims of the project were:

- To raise awareness of the importance of active youth participation through the use of storytelling techniques and video interviewing
- To acquire new knowledge and skills on developing strategies and methodologies to engage more young people in youth dialogue.
- To promote the EU Youth Strategy through digital storytelling and the collection of video-interviews
- To raise digital skills and new knowledge on storytelling and interviewing
- To raise awareness of the importance of youth voices in shaping new European strategies towards the better integration into society of young people

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# The reached results:

1. Participants gained a deeper understanding and new knowledge about the European Union, its values and goals in the field of youth
2. Participants increased their understanding of democracy, youth participation and active citizenship among young people
3. Empowered young people to become active European citizens and participate in the democratic life of Europe, through exploring the EU Youth Strategy
4. Participants are more aware of the importance of youth activism and the use of digital storytelling when giving voice to their peers
5. Participants gained and further developed valuable soft skills including leadership and negotiation skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, critical thinking, constructive participation in dialogue and debate, the ability to comprehend abstract concepts and intercultural competences

The participants were first asked to come up with three words/definitions about democracy and then gathered in groups of two and later in groups of four to come up with one agreed definition on what is democracy. Then participation was defined.

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# What is democracy?

**Democracy** is a form of government in which every adult can vote regardless of gender and race without discrimination.

**Democracy** is the freedom that's given to the citizens and that highlights people's opinions during an election. Moreover, it offers equality, freedom diversity for all genders and races.

**Democracy** is a system built on the beliefs of freedom, free elections, free speech and open-mindedness, but is often delusional, because you are not always having the opportunity to choose.

**Democracy** is the voice of the people and its pillars are the freedom of speech, press and religion. Sadly, in reality, corruption prevents it to reach its full potential.

**Democracy** is the power of people to elect the government that will fight for their freedom and equality and its results are based on the rule of the majority, meaning that decisions are made built up what most people want and need.

**Participation** is a process that involves opinions, activism, voting, debating, protesting and membership that encourages public voice to be heard and involves the citizens in decision-making.

# Group ideas to support active citizenship

After outlining several participation tools such as taking actions, voting, social media campaigns, debating, volunteering, protesting (boycotting & procotting), membership in a political party and citizen journalism the participants were given specific domains (voting and democracy, gender equality, green living and activism). By integrating the participatory tools they had to develop group ideas to support positive change in the given fields.




**Renewable energy sources**

Promoting active citizenship actions linked to the production of green energy via wind turbines, solar panels, dam,  geothermal, biomass energy and tidal.



# Group ideas to support active citizenship






**Don’t limit yourself!**

Goals: to motivate young girls to become an entrepreneur, to reduce the payment gap and to motivate women to accept leadership activities

**FREE BEER!**

In this creative campaign the group will use free beer as a hook to promote opportunities for youth activism and foster connections between young people advocating for similar causes.

# Group ideas to support active citizenship

**Voting and Democracy**

.The group created a social media campaign with the slogan **#You are right to have a right.** The campaign is centered around a provocative question to the EU citizens:

Which right would you give up?

- You have a right to speak
- You use your right for education
- You use your right to be informed
- You use your right to work
- You use your right for freedom
- You have a right to use medical care

**Its hard, right? Why you give up voting then?**



Within the next activity **"Create your campaign"** the participants filmed short promotional videos to raise the awareness of their ideas. The videos are available here.

# How to create compelling stories



Together the participants brainstormed about the most important elements of a story. They outlined the story structure - introduction, climax and conclusion, the story characters - protagonist, antagonist and supporting characters and the story conflict. Then they formed international groups and created 4 stories in total - 2 reflecting EYG #1 and 2 about EYG #11.

**#11 European Programmes and Youth Organisations**

One of the most popular organisations in our city is called Bright. The organisation exist for 20 years and is very active. It has many members and makes a lot of projects. On the other hand, the National EU Agency plays an important role in financing European Organisations.

It was a sunny day, the leaders of the organisation were working and enjoying time together. In one moment they received a call by the leaders of the EU National Agency and they were suspected for stealing the money from the projects and that they will reduce the budget they give to the organisation.

There was some conflict between them. When the other members found out about it, they decided to meet up the leaders of the agency and tell them the truth. They found posts on social media which were on the agency's side, spreading lies and propaganda about their organisation.

At the end the youth organisation sued the agency for destroying their reputation and spreading fake news. They won in the court and they got the budget.

# How to create compelling stories

**#1 Connecting EU with Youth - Eurocrats and Vegan Glue**

17-years-old Max from Slovakia just wants yo start a YouTube channel about Euro memes and maybe impress his crush Sofia who thinks EU institutions are “colonial relics”. Max doesn’t really get politics, but he joins the Youth Connect Program just to skip Math class.

At a youth summit in Brussels, Max meets an enthusiastic policy nerd from Germany named Otto, who is passionate about meme. Together they realise that barely any youth are engaging with EU initiatives because let it be honest - the EU branding looks like it was made in Power Point 2003. They decide to modernise the EU’s image using viral trends, edgy humor and a sprinkle of chaotic Gen Z energy.

Just as their campaign #EUSpiceItUp gains traction, they are hijacked by a radical climate collective called Glue4Gaia. The leftist eco-activists are furious that Max used a plastic ring light in a video and demand the entire EU Youth Portal to be “decolonised, veganised and decentralised”. They glue themselves to the doors of the Parliament with oat-milk based adhesive and start a hunger strike (except for hummus breaks).



# How to create compelling stories

Max, who's never been in a real argument unless you count online Minecraft debates, finds himself in a live-streamed EU roundtable with an angry Glue4Gaia spokesperson named Raven (they/them) who accuses him of "Euro-bourgeois propaganda". Max panics but then rants about how youth can be both about climate and still laugh at memes without being cancelled. Otto edits the rant into a sick remix. It goes viral. EU youth across TikTok, YouTube and BeReal start using it with the hashtag #LetUsDecide.

The EU Youth Commissioner, secretly a fan of Otto's memes, meets them and asks them to lead a new task force: "EU, But Make It Cool". Glue4Gaia is given some jail time. Max finally uploads his meme review of EU bureaucracy. It flops, but Sofia texts: "You're kinda annoying, but brave".



# How to create compelling stories



**Fake News Frontline**

A passionate teenager is doing some research for his next article, while his photographer friend is searching for his camera.

The teen journalist is outraged by the overflowing amount of fake news and misinformation that he is reading.

Vox Veritas, a shadowy media network spreading anti EU misinformation across Eastern Europe.

Curious and alarmed, the journalist investigates and uncovers a pattern of similar EU targeted hoaxes circulating in youth spaces. With help from an EU funded digital literacy platform for youth journalists, he connects with teens from other EU countries fighting the same digital smear campaigns.

The digital literacy platform founded by EU uses the teen journalists' help, his photographer friend and many other journalists that also fight against the fake news.

The founder of the network, alongside the co-founder, comes forward and apologises for spreading the propaganda.

# Youth Goals Heroes

In this activity the participants had to choose a specific youth goal and describe the ideal role model advocating for the chosen goal.

**Youth Goal Heroes**

Based on the Youth Goal logo design
by Mireille van Bremen

Where does the person come from?

How old is the person?

What does the person wish
for in terms of Youth Goals?

What is the level of
education of the person?



What is the family status?

Are there any targets of the Youth
Goal that are of particular concern
to the person?

Does the person have a job,
if so which one?

How does the person contribute
to achieving the Youth Goal? And what
does the person need to achieve it?

What language would the person
like to learn?

What is the person's life dream?

# Youth Goals Heroes

**Group 1: Youth Organisations and European Programmes** – The person is 47 years old, he comes from Chicago, but he was born in Atlanta, he graduated from university, and he is divorced. His occupation is musician. He would like to learn German, French and Italian. His life dream is to inspire youth to push creative boundaries and influence through music. In terms of the youth goals, this person wishes to promote creativity, freedom of expression and entrepreneurship for youth. He fights for freedom of speech, inclusion, mental health and youth entrepreneurship. His contribution to achieving the youth goals - he created a platform for new artists, where people can speak about mental health and find initiatives. He needs public trust, support and collaboration.

**Group 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing** – This person is called Milja. She is from Finland and is 20 years old. She is a university student, her parents are divorced. Her job is linked to volunteering. She would like to learn English and German. Her dream is to become a famous psychologist. In terms of the youth goals, she wishes to safeguard the rights to work and to study of people with mental health issues. She wants to fight the stigma about mental health issues by developing awareness programmes. She is particularly concerned about TikTok, because young people tend to over-scroll. She supports the youth goal by developing awareness programmes. She tries to promote tools about mental health and if her friends have any problems, she helps them.





# Youth Goals Heroes

**Group 3: Sustainable Green Europe** – This person is a woman. She has spoken in front of the UN about this goal, she has written books and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize multiple times. Her occupation is an activist, she was still in high school when she started with activism. She is 22 years old (born in 2003). She comes from Sweden. Her famous quote is “How dare you?”, She comes from a nice family (Greta Thunberg).

**Group 4: Mental Health and Wellbeing** – This person comes from Brazil. She is 26 years old and has just finished university. She is divorced but she has two children (twin boys). She is a housekeeper. She would like to learn Spanish. Her life dream is to help and support other single mothers. To achieve the youth goal, she wants to reach as many single mothers as possible. She strives for wellbeing. To achieve the goal she organises informal events to help single mothers (financially and mentally). She needs sponsors, support and donations.





# Civil Dialogues

After outlining the 4 most important actors in an ideal democratic society – government, citizens, media and NGOs, the participants were divided into 4 groups, each group representing one of the actors. Together they listed the 5 most important functions of each actor. Each group had to come up with 2 demands for the other actors. Within 3 rounds they discussed the demands and reached a compromise.

## 5 most important functions of the Government

- **maintain the order**: making sure the citizens are safe, making sure there are no illegal immigrants, having a strong and powerful army
- **provide good healthcare and education**: build schools and hospitals, give doctors and teachers good working conditions, make sure everyone has at least 2 years of education
- **keep economy stable**: investing in bonds, having an investment fund, promoting stock options
- **good international relations**: keeping the peace with other countries, having a good trade policy
- **keeping the promises**: having civil advisors, asking the public for opinions

## 5 most important functions of the Media

- **informing**: media plays a huge and critical role in delivering relevant information to help people make informed decisions
- **educating**: media highlights important social issues (climate change, human rights) and promotes public understanding
- **influencing**: through framing and coverage media influences how people perceive issues, events and social trends
- **representation**: media has the power to reflect diverse identities, voices and experiences, helping marginalised groups be seen and heard
- **hold power accountable**: investigative journalism can expose corruption, abuse and wrong doing by governments, corporations and institutions

# Civil Dialogues

**5 most important functions of the NGOs**

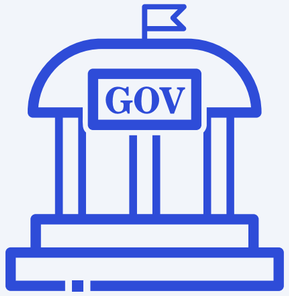
- **giving information**
- **non-formal education**
- **providing opportunities for volunteering**
- **transparency**



**5 most important functions of the Citizens**

- **voting in elections**: active participation ensures that the government reflects the will of the people
- **staying informed**: understanding political, economic and social issues
- **civic participation**: volunteering, attending meetings, joining discussions
- **respecting the rule of law**: equal treatment under the law protects freedom and rights
- **upholding rights and tolerating differences**: democracies depend on respect for human rights










# Getting acquainted with the Erasmus+ Programme

After being introduced to the Erasmus+ Programme and the opportunities provided to young people, the participants developed group ideas on sample Erasmus+ projects, reflecting various topics such as social inclusion, green and digital transition and young people's participation in the democratic life, etc. They had to define the name, duration, topic and objectives, activities, target groups and impact of the project.

### Group 1 - Mental Health in everyday

- **Location**: Reunion Island
- **Participants**: 18-30 years old
- **Duration**: 21-30 September 2025
- **Topics**: Mental Health, development of new habits, balanced lifestyle
- **Activities**: Meditation, yoga, workshops, hiking
- **Impacts**: become aware, manage pressure, develop new habits, become more balanced



# Getting acquainted with the Erasmus+ Programme

**Group 2- Erasmus +.RO**

- One week of activities
- Every two days we switch locations
- Location: Romania
- Activities start at 10:00 and finish at 15:00
- Free time from 15:00 to 21:00
- The participants will take photos/ videos and we will play them before they leave
- Each country will have a game night where we learn their childhood games
- Participants from Greece, Serbia, Spain, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova and Germany
- The participants must have a bilingual TEST
- The project will raise awareness about political problems and introduce the youth to the democratic world
- The project will include DIY projects that are made out of “trash” (e.g. plastic bottles, paper bags, cans, etc.)






# Getting acquainted with the Erasmus+ Programme

**Group 3 - Different, but same**

- **Location**: 5 days in Barcelona (next to the beach); 5 days in Poboleda (in a farm)
- **Duration**: 10 days
- **Topics**: Differences and similarities between people who are living in big cities and small villages
- **Objective**: To promote good relationship between them
- **Age**: 18-28
- Participants: a total of 36 participants (18 from a city and 18 from a village) coming from Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, Italy and Portugal
- Activities: 1 day - introduction, 2 day - creative activities, 3 day - field trips, 4 day - free day, 5 day - evaluation



## Intercultural Dialogue

Intercultural Evenings: Non-formal learning and sharing of national culture helped young people engage in intercultural dialogue. By organising cultural evenings, participants got the chance to proudly represent their country, while learning about other groups' culture, cuisine, music, dance, and interesting facts. The evenings included videos about different countries, filled with practical and interesting information, traditional foods and drinks, music, and dances. These cultural nights foster the formation of intercultural groups and cultivate a feeling of tolerance among young people.

## Secret Friend Game

On the first day of the youth exchange, everyone received a secret friend, that remained unknown until the end of the exchange. The names of everyone were written on envelopes, that were then stuck to the wall. During the youth exchange, participants had to leave small gifts varying from notes, candy and souvenirs, to their secret friends, without revealing who it is. On the last day, an interactive game was played to reveal everyone's secret friend.

The youth exchange concluded with the awarding of Youthpass certificates, the secret friends revealing, and a final evaluation.



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