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EU Storytellers

Youth Exchange

Report

Conducted in **Varna, Bulgaria** from **8 to 12 June 2026**

Introduction

The project **EU Storytellers** is a youth exchange that brought young people together to gain insight into different cultures, beliefs, ideas and stories about the EU core values. The project aimed to empower young people by increasing their knowledge and understanding of the European Union and engaging them with improvisational theatre techniques and storytelling. During the YE, the participants engaged in intercultural dialogue and a variety of non-formal activities focused on combining artistic creativity with civic engagement to contribute to a vibrant democratic culture. The project used creative arts as a tool to raise awareness of the European Union's importance and its role in young people's lives, personal and professional development.

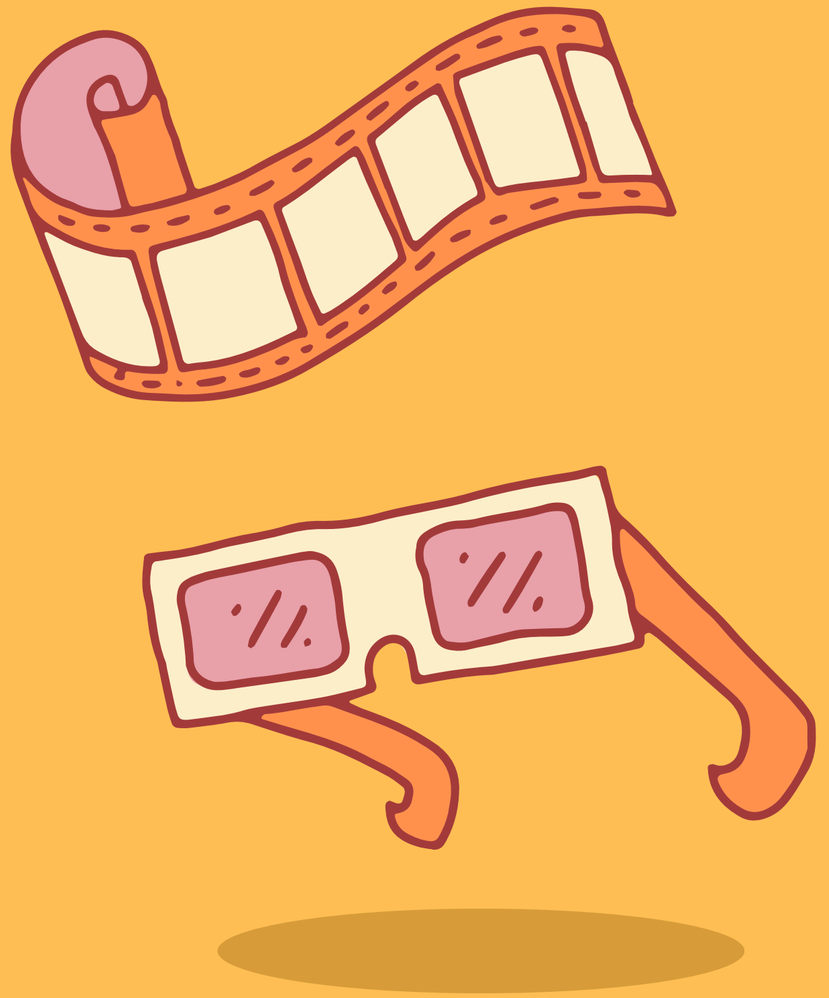




Partners

- **FECE Bulgaria (host)**
- **Creative Youth Academy Hungary**
- **MultiKulti Romania**
- **Zielona Stacja Poland**

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VENUE

The YE **EU Storytellers** 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 last sunny days of the summer.

26 young people aged 18-30 took part in the exchange. They came from four European countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Poland. The participants arrived at the hotel on **7 June** and left on **13 June**.

Learning Objectives

- To raise awareness of the core EU values through the creative ideas of young people
- To acquire skills in theatre as a tool to engage and empower young EU citizens

- To acquire new knowledge and storytelling techniques to tell inspiring stories
- To promote the European values through storytelling and the theatre

- To raise cooperation, leadership and creativity skills among the participants
- To raise awareness of the importance of youth voices in shaping new European strategies







Reached Results

- Improved ability to apply creative methods and storytelling to promote important topics/ causes
- Improved understanding of the European Youth Strategy and the 11 EYGs and the role of youth in raising awareness of them
- Improved teamwork, leadership and creative skills
- Enriched intercultural competences
- Improved understanding of the core EU values and the national context of each participating country









What is storytelling?

In this activity, the participants created group definitions about storytelling.

Group 1: “Storytelling an ancient form of art that requires a combination of nostalgia vision including creativity and imagination with a touch of captivating timeline. It has a plot twist that can keep listeners on a hook and give a subtle hint of what it can be. It aims to provide a reaction, inspire the public and help people to open themselves up.”







What is storytelling?

In this activity, the participants created group definitions about storytelling.

Group 2: “Storytelling is the art of using imagination to express yourself and test of communication. It contains well-delivered narratives, impactful characters and psychological actions. It serves as a way to inspire, enlighten, entertain and connect with others.”

Group 3: “Storytelling is an art of expression using creativity and motion to provoke a reaction by portraying a narrative that leaves a legacy.”





What is theatre?

In this activity, the participants created a group definition of theatre by listing their individual associations and brainstorming one agreed-upon definition.

“Theatre is an ancient art of expression that uses creative performance, characters and costumes on stage to entertain, provoke and unite the community through emotions, ideas, laughter, drama and energy serving as food for the soul and inspiration.”





EU Values Three

In this group activity, the participants created joint projects on how to advocate for some of the six core European values: democracy, rule of law, freedom, equality, respect of human rights and human dignity.

Group 1: Equality

- The value matters because it ensures that every individual has access to the same education, healthcare and opportunities regardless of their gender, age, background or disability.
- **How can I advocate:** speak up against discrimination, support fair policies in schools and workplaces, share diverse perspectives
- **Dissemination:** partnering with local youth NGOs or schools to host educational events (e. g. Equality Day), develop games, demonstrations or other engaging materials to let people experience the core objectives of the value
- listening to marginalised groups and addressing modern gaps in equality, regularly updating our goals when society evolves (e. g. digital inequality)



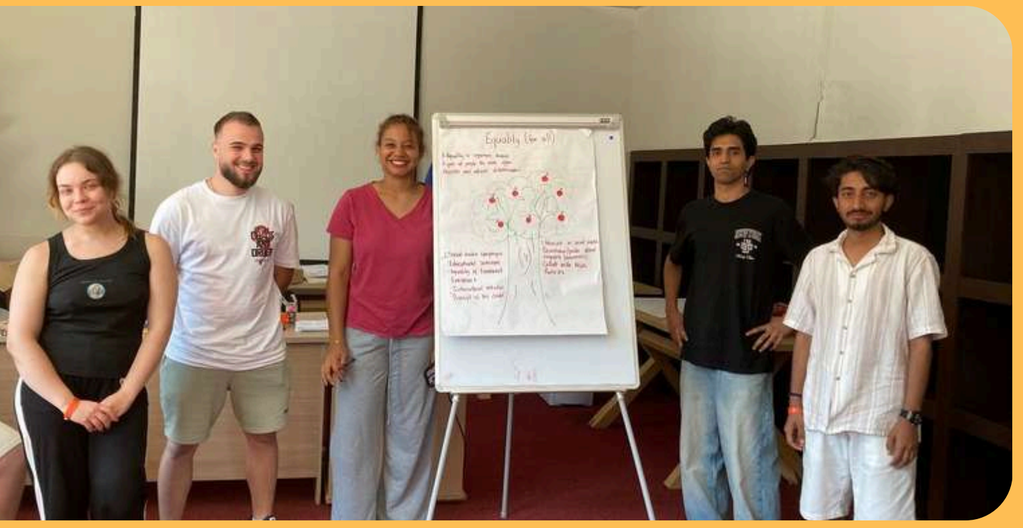


EU Values Three

In this group activity, the participants created joint projects on how to advocate for some of the six core European values: democracy, rule of law, freedom, equality, respect of human rights and human dignity.

Group 2: Freedom

- **Why the value is important:** It gives you the right and responsibility to choose your values, your family, your place of living and guarantees your freedom of speech.
- **How can I advocate:** It's important to teach history and know your past, engage in philosophy and debates, respect other people's freedom, connect with different ethnicities, and create art.
- **Plan how to disseminate the value:** Create stable institutions like the EU for free travel, education and empathy; promote peace and prosperity to spread the value of freedom
- **Promote the value:** through discussions, debate clubs, exchange programmes, social media campaigns, TV shows and programs. education





EU Values Three

In this group activity, the participants created joint projects on how to advocate for some of the six core European values: democracy, rule of law, freedom, equality, respect of human rights and human dignity.

Group 3: Equality

- **Why the value is important:** It gives all people the same opportunities and reduces discrimination.
- **How can I advocate:** Presentations/ posters about inequality, collaboration with NGOs, protests
- **Promote the value:** through social media campaigns, educational seminars, equality of treatment, Erasmus+, intercultural activities

Group 4: Freedom

- **Why the value is important:** allows people to express their opinions
- **How can I advocate:** by spreading the rights and opinions of others
- **Promote the value:** through campaigns in schools and universities, discussions, workshops, social media



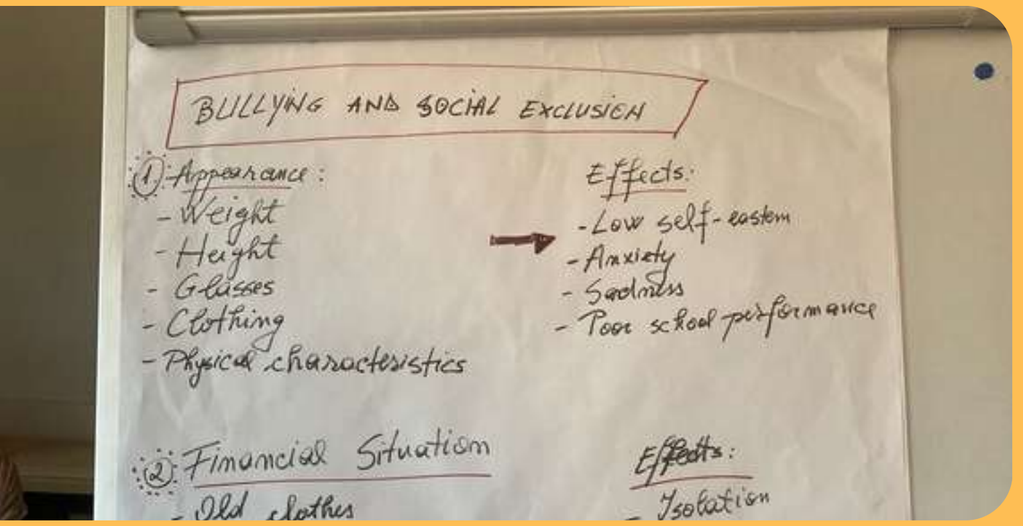
Act It Out

Split into groups, the young people filmed short videos showcasing their representations of various human rights articles, such as No discrimination, Equal before the law, Right to privacy, Freedom of movement and residence and Freedom of opinion and expression.



The future we all want to live in

In this activity, the participants discussed the existing challenges in their countries related to equality and inclusion in 3 domains: personal/ domestic life, professional life, and popular culture. Afterwards, they identified solutions and presented them as a newspaper front page of the year 2056.



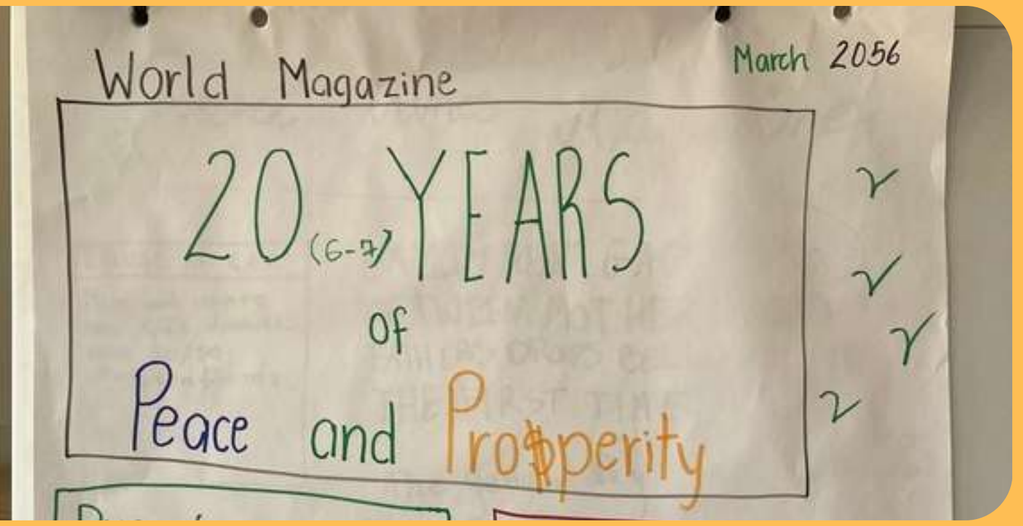


The future we all want to live in

EU STORYTELLERS

Group 1: Romania

- **Identified challenges:** bullying connected to appearance (leading to low self-esteem, anxiety, sadness, poor school performance) and financial situation (leading to isolation, shame, lack of confidence, social exclusion)
- **Solutions:** empathy and emotional intelligence education from primary school onwards, school psychologists to support students, anonymous reporting system, AI technologies that can identify bullying cases (incl. cyberbullying), conflict mediation programms



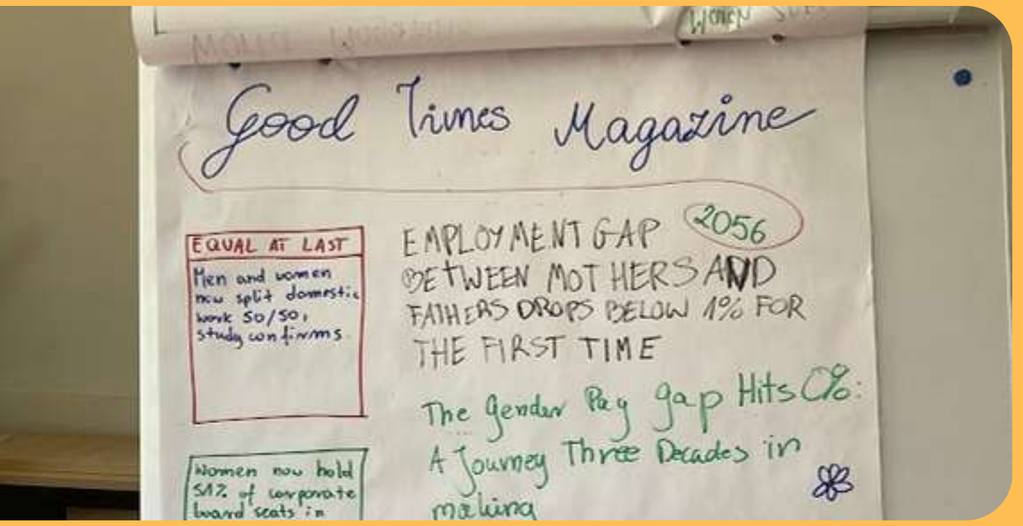


The future we all want to live in

EU STORYTELLERS

Group 2: Hungary/ Pakistan/ Mozambique/ Azerbaijan

- **Identified challenges:** political oppression, unemployment, “influenzas”, LGBTQ+ stigma, extreme poverty, early marriage, domestic abuse, “Nhonga” in Mozambique, lack of legal recognition of LGBTQ+ in Pakistan, only 22% of women participate in the labour force, visible discrimination on a gender basis in popular culture
- **Vision for the future:** drop in unemployment rate by 40% in Pakistan, Mozambique is free from political oppression, ban on influenzas - decrease in prostitution and colorism propaganda, first LGBTQ president elected in Azerbaijan



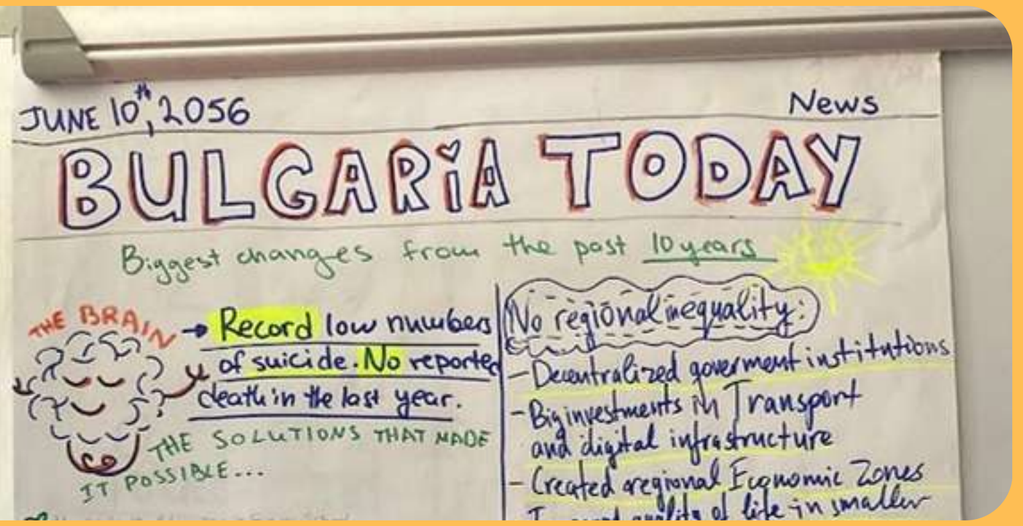


The future we all want to live in

EU STORYTELLERS

Group 3: Poland

- **Identified challenges:** LGBTQ marriages are not allowed, 7.8% wage gap between men and women, discrimination and xenophobia towards Ukrainians, fewer females on managerial positions, rap genre dominated by males, vasectomy is legal only for men, female sterilisation is illegal
- **Vision for the future:** men and women split domestic work 50/50, more board seats (51%) held by women, same sex marriage is allowed for 25 years, war is over and wounds are healed, “My body, my choice” - Poland’s reproductive rights act, gender pay gap reaches 0%, employment gap between mothers and fathers drops below 1%





The future we all want to live in

EU STORYTELLERS

Group 4: Bulgaria

- **Identified challenges:** regional inequality, mental health stigma, exclusion based on ethnicity, social isolation of people with disabilities, negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community, and gender inequality
- **Vision for the future:** reduced suicide cases thanks to mental health education, campaigns, mental health community centers, and access to (digital) support, equal pay for equal work, equal parental leave for men and women, challenged gender stereotypes in schools, no regional inequality through decentralised government institutions, big investments in transport and creation of regional economic zones



Intercultural night

The participants joined the intercultural night, during which all national groups presented their countries' traditions, local food, music, and traditional dances through interesting quizzes, games, and group performances.





Youth Goals Heroes, Fill in the Cartoon & Final theatre performances

Split into international teams, the participants created fictional personas advocating for one of the 11 European Youth Goals. Afterwards, they took part in a discussion about the basics of storytelling, the main elements of the story (characters, conflict, core message), and the story structure.

The young people had to come up with a fictional story representing the journey of the previously created personas and illustrate it as a comic. Later on, they developed their stories further by presenting them as a short theatre performance, with them being the actors, narrators and creative crew.

Theatre time





Varna Adventure

The participants visited Varna and explored the city together, interacted with locals and presented the Erasmus+ Programme.









Erasmus+ Session

In this group activity, the participants developed concepts for future Erasmus+ KA1 projects and got familiar with the Erasmus+ Programme and its specifics.

Group 1: Cleaner Varna, Better Karma

- Youth Exchange to fight beach pollution
- Venue: Varna, Bulgaria
- Supported by volunteering professionals
- Dissemination: WWF, HELCOM, Black Sea NGO Network, BTV

Group 2: Together against bullying: Building safe and inclusive environment

- Training Course
- Target groups: educators aged 25+
- Partners: NGOs working on youth inclusion, educational training providers





Erasmus+ Session

In this group activity, the participants developed concepts for future Erasmus+ KA1 projects and got familiar with the Erasmus+ Programme and its specifics.

- Objectives: improve teachers' skills in bullying prevention, create a safer environment for everyone, promote empathy, inclusion and respect
- Activities: teacher training, workshops for students, peer mentoring, exchange of good practices
- Location: Szczebrzeszyn, Poland
- Duration: 1 week
- Partnering countries: Poland, North Macedonia and Romania
- Learning outcomes: learn conflict resolution techniques, improve communication and teamwork skills
- Dissemination: School websites and social media, local community events, articles in local media, presentations for teachers, parents and students
- **Join us in creating spaces where everyone can feel safe, respected and valued!**





Erasmus+ Session

In this group activity, the participants developed concepts for future Erasmus+ KA1 projects and got familiar with the Erasmus+ Programme and its specifics.

Group 3: Para-Athletics

- Aims: decrease segregation, increase motivation
- Target group: Wheelchair users
- Partners: IWBT, TD, IPC
- Objectives: inclusion through sports, skills exchange, foster motivation
- Activities: basketball, football, swimming, archery, bowling
- 10 days long, in early September in Pecs, Hungary
- Learning outcomes: mental and physical health, collaboration, communication
- Dissemination via NGOs, social media communities and health organisations
- Slogan: **Let’s “wheel” over the barriers!**



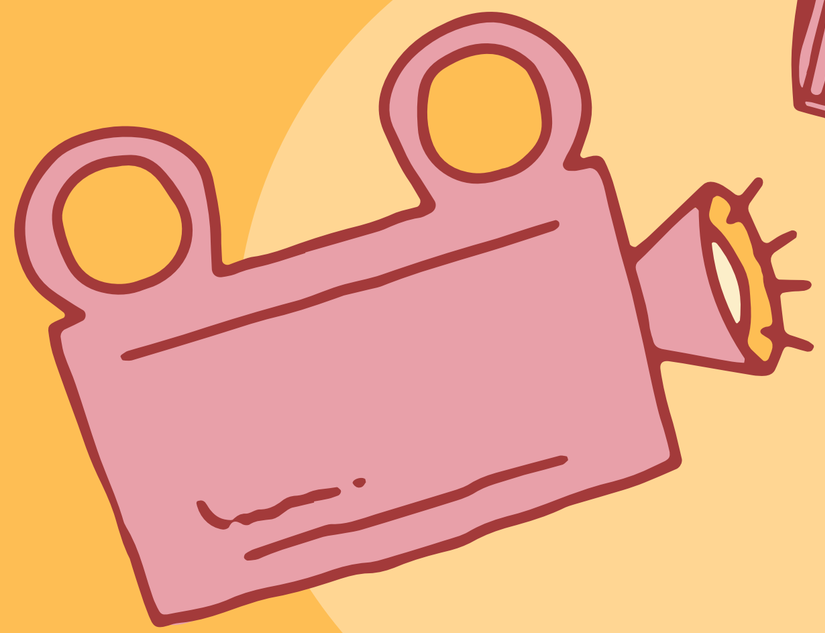


Erasmus+ Session

In this group activity, the participants developed concepts for future Erasmus+ KA1 projects and got familiar with the Erasmus+ Programme and its specifics.

Group 4: Embrace Yourself

- Youth Exchange
- Target group: Youth (16-25)
- Stakeholders: NGOs, schools, universities, mental health associations
- Objectives: encourage self-acceptance and self-compassion
- Activities: games, discussions, focus groups
- Learning outcomes: building resilience and meaningful connections and acquiring courage
- Dissemination via campaigns, workshops, follow-up events
- Slogan: **The boundaries exist only in your head!**





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EU Storytellers

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