



Interreg
South Baltic



Co-funded by
the European Union



**D-EFFECT-
CIVIC SOCIETY DEMOCRACY LESSONS,
bringing a youth perspective in the eu
policymaking at all levels in line with Youth
Strategy 2022-2027**



Activity 2.3

Local Youth Inclusion Strategies

Mapping of Good Practices in Youth Civic Participation

Best Practice Guide



Responsible partner – Hochschule Wismar, University of Applied Sciences: Technology, Business and Design.

WORK PACKAGE 2 – ACTIVITY 2.3
Local Youth Inclusion Strategies
Mapping of Good Practices in Youth Civic Participation
Best Practice Guide

Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

South Baltic



Prepared and financed within the framework of the D-EFFECT project –*Civic Society Democracy Lessons: Bringing a Youth Perspective in the EU Policymaking at All Levels in Line with the EU Youth Strategy.*

A programme co-financing activities under the project: Interreg South Baltic

Project duration: 2024-07-01 to 2027-06-30

Reference number: STHB.04.01-IP.01-0005/23

Co-funded by the European Union

<https://eurobalt.org.pl/en/euroregion-baltic-ongoing-projects/d-effect>

Responsible partner – Hochschule Wismar, University of Applied Sciences: Technology, Business and Design.

INTRODUCTION

Activity 2.3 focuses on gathering information on existing practices that support youth participation in civic and democratic processes. The activity concentrates on identifying methods and tools used by partner organisations and municipalities to engage young people in civic life.

As part of this activity, partners provided structured descriptions of their practices, including objectives, applied methods and tools, and the general implementation context. The collected material was organized using a common structure to ensure clarity and consistency.

Practices included in this mapping were contributed by project partner from Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and Lithuania:

- **Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic** (Poland)
- **Media Dizajn** (Poland)
- **Odsherred Municipality** (Denmark)
- **Guldborgsund Municipality** (Denmark)
- **Hässleholm Municipality** (Sweden)
- **Wismar University** (Germany)
- **Klaipeda University** (Lithuania)



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied within Activity 2.3 follows a simple, structured, and practice-oriented approach. Its purpose was to ensure clarity, transparency, and coherence in documenting and summarizing youth civic participation practices, while respecting differences across local and institutional contexts.

The mapping process consisted of the following steps:

(1) COLLECTION OF PRACTICES

Partner organisations were invited to submit descriptions of existing youth civic participation practices. The contributions included information on each practice, the methods and tools applied, and the general implementation context (e.g., where and by whom it is used).

(2) DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAPPING TABLE

To ensure consistency, a shared template was developed and used to document all practices. All inputs were then compiled into one consolidated overview table, which served as the basis for this mapping exercise.

(3) THEMATIC STRUCTURING

Based on the compiled material, the practices were reviewed and grouped into thematic clusters reflecting policy-relevant dimensions of youth civic participation.

(4) SYNTHESIS OF LESSONS LEARNED

Building on the overview and thematic clustering, cross-cutting observations were summarised to highlight recurring enabling conditions and considerations that support meaningful and sustained youth participation.

Supporting partner materials provided by selected partner organisations are included in **Annexes A–C**.

3. MAPPING TABLE OF GOOD PRACTICES

The mapping is based on practice descriptions provided by partner organisations participating in the D-EFFECT project. The collected contributions reflect a range of youth civic participation practices implemented in different institutional contexts and at local, regional, and network-based levels.

The table below provides a structured overview of the mapped practices. It includes the contributing partner organisation and country, the practice or initiative title, the level of implementation, and a concise description of the methods and tools applied. The final column summarises the key relevance of each practice by indicating its primary focus in supporting youth civic participation.

Table 1 Mapping Table of Good Practices

| Partner/country | Example /Initiative | Type or Level (local / regional / national) | Short description (methods, tools, or activities used) | Why it is relevant / Key takeaway |
|---|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland) | Municipal Youth Councils | Local | In Poland, municipal youth councils are advisory and initiative-based bodies that give young people a formal voice in local decision-making and youth policy. They are created by a city or municipal council resolution and operate under their own statute, which defines their goals, tasks, and cooperation with local authorities, as seen in Elbląg, Olsztynek, and Dzierzgoń. Their main aims are to promote local democracy, build civic competences, and support young people in developing and implementing projects that respond to real needs in their communities. Youth councils act as an official representation of young residents, creating a structured dialogue with mayors and city councils and contributing to local strategies and programmes for youth. These examples show that when youth councils are embedded in local law and supported by | Municipal youth councils are relevant because they give young people a real, structured way to influence local decisions and policies that directly affect their lives. |

| | | | | |
|--|---|----------|---|--|
| | | | the municipality, they become a sustainable tool for meaningful youth participation and co-creation of local policies. | |
| Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland/ Warmian-Masurian) | Warmia and Masuria youth initiatives fund | Regional | Warmińsko-Mazurski Fundusz Inicjatyw Młodzieżowych is a three-year grant scheme that finances youth-led local initiatives in the Warmia–Mazury region, with at least 45 small grants planned for 2024–2026. It uses two application “paths”: one dedicated to institutional youth participation bodies (municipal, county youth councils and the regional youth parliament), and another for school and academic self-governments and student/doctoral organisations. The Fund works as a practical tool for youth civic participation by giving young people real budgets, simple grant procedures, and support from ESWIP and Braniewski Instytut Rozwoju in planning and implementing their own community projects | The Fund is relevant because it turns youth participation from consultation into concrete decision-making about resources, enabling young people to design, manage, and evaluate projects that respond to local needs. By combining financial support with mentoring and a clear role for youth councils and school self-governments, it strengthens local youth structures, builds civic and project skills, and creates a stable, multi-year framework for meaningful youth engagement in the Warmia–Mazury region |
| Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland/ Warmian-Masurian) | Open call for proposals for NGOs for “strengthening the creative potential, civic activity and social competences of youth” | Regional | The annual Cooperation Programme between the Warmia–Mazury regional government and NGOs sets out priority areas and open calls where civil society organisations can apply for funding to deliver public tasks. Each year, the region runs a package of competitive grant schemes, including a dedicated line for “strengthening the creative potential, civic activity and social competences of youth”, with its own budget and detailed call for proposals. NGOs and other eligible entities submit project proposals that are assessed by competition committees, and successful applicants | This mechanism is relevant because it provides a systematic and recurring financial tool that enables NGOs to design and run youth-focused civic initiatives at regional scale, not just as one-off pilots. By explicitly naming youth civic engagement as a priority and reserving a specific budget line, the regional government signals that youth participation is a long-term policy goal and encourages partnerships between local authorities, schools and NGOs around youth-led projects. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|----------|---|--|
| | | | receive grants to implement activities such as trainings, local initiatives, volunteering, youth leadership development and intergenerational cooperation | |
| Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland/ Warmian-Masurian) | Youth Assembly of the west Pomeranian voivodeship | Regional | The Youth Sejmik of the Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship is a regional youth representative body established by the regional council, with members selected through a public competition and appointed for two-year terms. It operates as an advisory platform where young delegates meet regularly to pass resolutions, discuss regional policies, and propose initiatives on education, culture, environment and civic engagement. Key activities include drafting and adopting youth policy resolutions, organising consultations with regional authorities, and coordinating youth participation in regional events and forums. | The Youth Sejmik is relevant because it creates a formal, youth-led channel for influencing regional governance, scaling up local youth council efforts to the voivodeship level and ensuring young voices reach decision-makers on cross-municipal issues. Its competitive selection process, regular sessions and resolution-passing model demonstrate a scalable tool for structured youth civic participation that builds leadership and policy skills while integrating youth input into regional strategies. |
| Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland/ Warmian-Masurian) | Program for the Youth of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship | Regional | The "Programme for Youth of the Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship" is a youth-led policy document developed by the Youth Sejmik delegates during workshops and consultations within the Warmia–Mazury Youth Initiatives Fund project, in collaboration with WAMA-COOP association. It identifies four key problems (lack of youth initiative support, poor mental health, youth migration, transport exclusion) through analysis of local experiences, interviews and data, and proposes concrete recommendations like youth budgets, mental health programmes, transport improvements, leadership training and dialogue platforms. The document serves | This programme is relevant because it provides a bottom-up, youth-authored roadmap for addressing regional youth challenges, filling a gap in formal regional youth policy with practical, evidence-based proposals. Regrettably, it was not co-developed with local government authorities, which limits its immediate institutional buy-in but highlights the potential of youth-led diagnosis as a powerful tool to pressure decision-makers for change and inspire collaborative policy-making. |

| | | | | |
|---|--|----------|--|--|
| | | | as a toolkit of priorities, specific goals and actionable solutions (e.g. free public spaces for youth projects, green relaxation zones, mid-municipal transport partnerships) drawn from good practices in other Polish regions. | |
| Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland/ Warmian-Masurian) | Youth Budget for Students | Regional | The Student Budget (BS) at the Academy of Applied Sciences (ANS) in Elbląg is an annual participatory funding mechanism allocating up to 20,000 PLN from the Rector's reserve for student-proposed projects aimed at improving study conditions. Any ANS student (except Commission members) submits project ideas via an online Google form; a mixed Commission (Pro-Rector, administrative reps, three Student Council members) conducts preliminary eligibility checks based on feasibility, legality, university alignment, budget fit and no ongoing costs. Qualified projects go to a vote via the USOS student portal, where every student and staff member casts one vote for their favourite; top-voted ideas fitting the budget are approved by the Rector and implemented that calendar year. | This tool is relevant because it empowers students to directly decide on campus improvements, fostering ownership, democratic skills and real influence over their learning environment in a simple, transparent process. By blending student proposals with institutional oversight and broad voting, it exemplifies an effective higher education model for youth civic participation that builds collaboration between students, staff and administration while ensuring practical, sustainable outcomes. |
| Media Dizajn (Poland / Westpomeranian) | Secretariat for Youth of the Westpomeranian Region | Local | Secretariat encourage active participation in the social life of local communities. We enable youth to become involved in various projects, actions and voluntary activities. We are also the promoters of youth exchange, workshops and trainings. We support youth councils. Secretariat efforts target young people of any age (according to the European law, | Supports Youth Councils, Secretariat aids youth organizations and informal youth groups. Secretariat supports youth councils of Zachodniopomorskie Members of the council are chosen among young people, who can also be representants of various associations and student councils of schools and universities. Thanks to the council, young people have bigger influence over what happens around them. Secretariats provide help in gaining funds |

| | | | | |
|--|---|-------|--|--|
| | | | „youth” includes anyone up to 35 years of age | We run workshops where you can learn about the possibilities of receiving subsidy to implement youth ideas and organize youth events. |
| Media Dizajn (Poland / Westpomeranian) | Szczecin Youth City Council | Local | <p>The Szczecin Youth City Council's primary responsibilities include working with the Mayor to support young people, meeting their needs and expectations. The Youth City Council's responsibilities also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing draft resolutions concerning youth, - co-creating strategic city documents related to young residents, - promoting the concept of civil society, - activating youth communities, - integrating and collaborating with youth communities. | The Szczecin Youth City Council is comprised of students from Szczecin's secondary schools – both those run by the city and private schools. This year, the Council could have included a total of 65 students – one from each eligible institution operating within the city. |
| Media Dizajn (Poland / Westpomeranian) | Youth assembly of the west Pomeranian voivodeship | Local | <p>Supports and disseminates the idea of self-government among young people, represents the interests of young people before the provincial government bodies and governmental and non-governmental institutions, promotes culture, shapes and strengthens democratic attitudes, and inspires young people to care for the natural environment, engage in charity and volunteering activities, and cooperate with student governments of schools located in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship.</p> | <p>The Youth Regional Assembly of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship (MSWZ) has specific tools, set out in its statute, that allow it to have a real impact on regional policy in 2026. The most important include:</p> <p>Adopting resolutions and positions: This is the main tool for expressing youth opinions. The MSWZ can adopt official positions on matters affecting young residents, which are then forwarded to the Management Board or the Regional Assembly.</p> <p>Legislative initiative (indirect): The Regional Assembly can submit proposals to authorized entities (e.g., regional councilors or the Regional Assembly) to undertake specific legislative initiatives important to young people.</p> <p>Financial support (Grant Programs): The</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| | | | | MSWZ actively participates in the distribution of funds for youth projects. For example, in January 2026, a call for applications for a grant program with a pool of PLN 100,000 for local initiatives was announced. Honorary Patronage: A promotional tool that allows for the recognition and support of valuable events or projects implemented by young people throughout the region. |
| Media Dizajn (Poland / Westpomeranian) | 1st, 2nd West Pomeranian Youth Convention – Szczecin | Local | On December 17, 2025, the 2nd West Pomeranian Youth Convention took place in Szczecin, bringing together young, active representatives of student governments and youth councils from across the region. The event provided an opportunity to summarize the second term of the West Pomeranian Youth Regional Assembly and to exchange inspiration for the future. | The program included a panel entitled "Marcin's Law" about social media activity and combining it with personal and professional life. |
| Odsherred Municipality (Denmark) | Youth Council | Local | A council of young people from elementary and high schools who engage in democratic activities in their free time and represent youth perspectives in the municipality. | Ensures that young people have a clear voice in local democracy and are included in municipal debates and decision-making processes. |
| Odsherred Municipality (Denmark) | FEO – Joint Student Council | Local / Inter-school | A cross-school student council bringing together representatives from individual school councils to strengthen student democracy through dialogue, joint activities, workshops, and campaigns. | Strengthens cooperation between schools, enhances student representation, and supports early democratic learning and civic engagement. |
| Odsherred Municipality (Denmark) | Youth Climate Network / Climate Council | Local / Inter-municipal | A youth-led climate initiative developed in cooperation with neighbouring municipalities, involving awareness-raising events, civic engagement, and environmental advocacy. | Demonstrates how youth civic participation can be linked to sustainability and climate action, increasing relevance and motivation among young people. |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------|--|--|
| Odsherred Municipality (Denmark) | NAU – Network of Youth Councils | Regional / National | A network connecting youth councils across Denmark, providing training, networking, and advocacy to strengthen youth influence in local democracy. | Supports capacity-building and peer learning, strengthening the long-term sustainability of youth councils at municipal level. |
| Odsherred Municipality (Denmark) | DUF – Danish Youth Council | National | An umbrella organisation for youth and student organisations that promotes democratic participation through advocacy, training, research, and policy dialogue. | Provides a strong national framework for youth influence and democratic education, supporting local initiatives with knowledge and resources. |
| Guldborgsund Municipality (Denmark) | Sundparken – Youth-led Placemaking | Local | A youth-led placemaking initiative focused on the co-creation and redesign of a public waterfront area. The practice involves participatory workshops and dialogue-based activities where young people collaborate with municipal staff and external facilitators to develop concepts and design solutions for the public space. | Demonstrates how youth-led placemaking can strengthen civic engagement, foster a sense of ownership, and contribute to the creation of inclusive and youth-friendly public spaces through co-creation. |
| Guldborgsund Municipality (Denmark) | Youthinfluence – Model for Youth Participation in Municipal Governance | Local | A structured model integrating youth perspectives into municipal planning through civic dialogues, documentation, feedback mechanisms, and follow-up procedures. | Ensures transparency and meaningful youth influence in decision-making, moving beyond consultation towards sustained participation. |
| Hässleholm Municipality (Sweden) | Youth Council (under development) | Local | A municipal youth council being established as a permanent democratic platform where young people can participate in decision-making and civic dialogue. | Supports long-term institutionalisation of youth participation within municipal governance structures. |
| Hässleholm Municipality (Sweden) | Youth Participation Hub | Local | A creative meeting space where young people design and lead initiatives, supported by youth workers using coaching and Motivational Interviewing (MI) approaches. | Encourages youth-led initiatives, strengthens motivation, and supports inclusive participation through non-formal and flexible formats. |
| Hässleholm Municipality (Sweden) | Civic Dialogue Model using MI and ELD | Local | A structured civic dialogue approach combining Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the ELD method (Experience–Learning–Development) to support | Demonstrates how coaching-based methods can strengthen trust, learning outcomes, and sustained youth engagement in civic processes. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|----------|---|---|
| | | | reflection and personal development through engagement. | |
| Hochschule Wismar (Germany) | Kinder- und Jugendparlament Wismar (KiJuPa) | Local | A municipal youth parliament enabling children and young people to engage in local civic participation. The practice includes regular meetings, discussion of municipal issues, formulation of proposals, workshops, and dialogue with representatives of the city administration and local politics. | Enables direct interaction between young people and regional political decision-makers, increasing transparency of political processes and strengthening young people's sense of political efficacy and trust in democratic institutions. |
| Hochschule Wismar (Germany/ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) | Jugend im Landtag | Regional | Participatory youth format organised by the Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for young people aged approx. 13–27 years. Participants meet in the state parliament to discuss societal and political issues through thematic workshops, group discussions, and direct dialogue with members of parliament. | Provides a high-visibility and structured opportunity for young people to engage directly with political decision-makers at regional level. |
| Hochschule Wismar (Germany/ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) | Jugend fragt nach | Regional | Follow-up dialogue format for young people aged approx. 14–27 years, building on Jugend im Landtag. Participants directly question members of parliament, review the status of previously discussed youth proposals, and reflect on political outcomes and implementation processes. | Introduces a follow-up and accountability mechanism by linking youth proposals to political feedback, thereby supporting continuity of participation and reducing the gap between youth input and political action |
| Hochschule Wismar (Germany/ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) | Jugend debattiert | Regional | Debate-based civic education programme targeting young people aged approx. 14–21 years (school pupils and students). The format focuses on structured argumentation, public speaking, and critical discussion of political and social topics through moderated debates and training sessions. | Builds foundational democratic competences such as argumentation, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue, contributing to long-term civic engagement and informed participation among young people. |

| | | | | |
|---|--|----------|--|--|
| Hochschule Wismar (Germany/ Mecklenburg- Vorpommern) | Conference of Children's and Youth Parliaments | Regional | Networking and exchange format for members of local children's and youth parliaments, typically aged 12–21 years. The conference includes workshops, peer exchange, and dialogue sessions with representatives of the state parliament. | Strengthens horizontal exchange and peer learning between local youth participation bodies while connecting municipal youth engagement with regional-level political structures. |
| Klaipeda University (Lithuania) | Youth Political Literacy Survey | Local | In spring 2020, a survey on youth political literacy in Klaipėda was conducted, involving 515 young people aged 14–29. The study used a structured questionnaire covering different levels and fields of political knowledge. Results showed an overall moderate level of political literacy, with stronger knowledge of current political facts and weaker understanding of political theory, the Lithuanian political system, and local self-government. In spring 2021, a follow-up survey (N=362) applied the same methodology. It revealed persistently low political literacy, especially regarding national political institutions and local governance, while basic political knowledge and youth policy remained at a moderate level. | The findings are highly relevant as they highlight structural gaps in youth political literacy that are not visible when only overall indicators are considered. While young people demonstrate adequate awareness of current political events, their limited understanding of political theory, national decision-making processes, and especially local self-government reveals a weak foundation for meaningful civic participation. The consistently low results in local governance knowledge across two consecutive years indicate a systemic problem rather than a temporary fluctuation. These insights underline the need for targeted civic education initiatives focusing on institutional literacy and local democracy to strengthen informed youth participation and long-term democratic resilience. |

4. THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF MAPPED YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

The mapping shows that, across the partner countries, youth civic participation is supported through a combination of participation structures, support mechanisms, learning formats, and youth-led initiatives. The practices are therefore grouped below into thematic clusters to highlight recurring focus areas and to show how different methods and tools can complement each other. The clustering is descriptive and does not imply evaluation or ranking.

4.1 YOUTH INFLUENCE IN GOVERNANCE

This cluster covers practices that give young people a recognised role in decision-making and create structured channels for dialogue with public authorities. In the mapped practices, this includes municipal youth councils in Poland (e.g., Elbląg, Olsztynek, Dzierzgoń) and the Szczecin Youth City Council, as well as the municipal Youth Council in Odsherred (Denmark). The mapping also includes youth representative bodies operating at regional level, such as youth assemblies/parliaments in Polish voivodeships.

Across these examples, youth influence is supported through regular meetings, defined roles, and clear cooperation arrangements with administrations and decision-makers. In practical terms, these formats enable young people to raise issues, comment on youth-relevant topics, and bring proposals into official dialogue spaces. Where follow-up elements are built in—such as returning to earlier proposals or receiving structured responses—participation becomes more predictable and credible for young people and helps strengthen trust in the process.

4.2 FUNDING AND YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

This cluster includes practices that connect participation to tangible action through funding, grants, or participatory budgets. Examples include the Warmia–Masuria Youth Initiatives Fund (Poland), which supports youth-led local initiatives, and recurring regional grant lines for NGOs focused on strengthening youth civic activity and social competences. In higher education, the ANS Elbląg Student Budget provides a participatory budgeting mechanism where students submit project ideas and vote on initiatives to improve student life.

These practices show how participation becomes more meaningful when young people can influence real decisions and see concrete outcomes—funded projects, implemented improvements, or visible community initiatives. They also support learning-by-doing: young people gain practical experience in planning, budgeting, teamwork, and responsibility. At the same time, the mapped examples suggest that transparent procedures and light but reliable support (e.g., guidance, mentoring, or coordination support) help ensure that funding-based participation remains accessible, including for youth groups with less project experience.

4.3 SUPPORT AND COORDINATION STRUCTURES

A number of mapped practices highlight that youth participation often depends on support structures that make participation possible in day-to-day work. This includes coordination units, networks, and umbrella organisations that provide training, exchange, and practical guidance. Examples include the Secretariat for Youth in Poland's West Pomeranian region, which supports youth councils and youth initiatives, as well as Denmark's NAU (Network of Youth Councils) and DUF (Danish Youth Council), which strengthen participation through capacity-building, advocacy, and peer learning. School-based cooperation formats, such as Denmark's FEO (Joint Student Council), also illustrate how structured coordination can strengthen student representation and democratic learning across institutions.

These structures matter because they reduce entry barriers and keep participation stable over time. They help youth bodies and youth-led initiatives avoid being dependent on a small number of motivated individuals, and they provide continuity even when people change. They also strengthen quality by offering shared tools, training opportunities, and peer learning—so local actors do not have to reinvent processes from scratch.

4.4 INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PARTICIPATION

This cluster refers to practices that broaden youth engagement by offering flexible and approachable formats—often outside formal representative bodies. In the mapped practices, Sweden's Youth Participation Hub in Hässleholm provides an example of an inclusive setting where young people can develop and lead initiatives with support from youth workers. Swedish contributions also highlight facilitation approaches that focus on trust, motivation, and reflection, including methods such as Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the Experience–Learning–Development (ELD) approach.

In Denmark, participation through practical, youth-friendly engagement formats also appears—for example through co-creation processes linked to public spaces and youth-oriented community activities. Overall, these practices show that participation is more inclusive when it is not limited to formal structures, but also supported through accessible spaces, flexible involvement options, and facilitation that helps young people feel confident to contribute. This is particularly relevant for reaching young people who may not be attracted to representative roles or who face barriers related to confidence, time, or prior experience.

4.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ENGAGEMENT

This cluster includes practices where youth civic participation is linked to sustainability goals and environmental action. A clear example is the Youth Climate Network / Climate Council in Odsherred (Denmark), which engages young people through awareness-raising activities, civic engagement, and local environmental advocacy, including cooperation with neighbouring municipalities. Environmental themes also appear in broader youth participation structures that explicitly encourage youth engagement with community and environmental priorities.

These practices highlight that sustainability can act as a strong entry point into participation: climate and environmental topics are often highly relevant for younger generations and can motivate sustained engagement. At the local level, this also shows how youth participation can support wider municipal priorities by connecting youth initiatives with broader sustainability agendas and community awareness.

4.6 CIVIC LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Many mapped practices combine participation with learning and competence-building. This cluster includes formats that support democratic competences such as communication, argumentation, leadership, and critical thinking. In the mapping, Lithuania's Youth Political Literacy Survey in Klaipėda adds an important diagnostic angle by identifying knowledge gaps related to political institutions and local self-government. While a survey is not a participation structure on its own, it supports participation by showing where young people may need targeted civic education and clearer pathways into local democratic processes.

Across the mapped examples, skills development appears both as a dedicated activity (training, workshops, debate and dialogue formats) and as a built-in outcome of participation itself (learning through involvement in councils, initiatives, project work, and public dialogue).

This cluster underlines that participation becomes more meaningful and sustainable when young people have not only opportunities to engage, but also the competences and institutional understanding needed to participate effectively.

4.7 CO-CREATION AND SHAPING PUBLIC SPACES

This cluster covers participation formats where young people engage through practical collaboration and visible change in their local environment. A key example is Sundparken in Guldborgsund (Denmark), where young people contribute to the co-creation and redesign of a public waterfront area through participatory workshops and dialogue-based activities. Such approaches connect participation to concrete outcomes and often appeal to young people who prefer hands-on engagement over formal meetings.

Co-creation is also reflected in youth-led projects and local initiatives supported through youth councils and funding mechanisms, where participation becomes tangible through events, campaigns, or community improvements. These practices show how civic engagement can be strengthened when young people have opportunities to shape their surroundings and see their contribution reflected in public spaces and everyday community life.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

5.1 PARTICIPATION IS STRONGEST WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE SEE REAL OUTCOMES

Youth engagement increases when young people can clearly recognise that their input leads to visible change. Simple follow-up routines—updates, responses, or implemented ideas—build credibility and reduce the “one-off consultation” effect.

5.2 INCLUSION IMPROVES WHEN PARTICIPATION HAPPENS ON YOUNG PEOPLE’S TERMS

No single format reaches all young people. Participation becomes more inclusive when formal structures (e.g., youth councils, assemblies, student bodies) are complemented by flexible options such as youth-led initiatives, events, creative spaces, and co-creation activities. This mix makes it easier for different groups of young people to engage in ways that fit their interests, confidence levels, and everyday realities.

5.3 SUPPORTIVE FACILITATION BUILDS TRUST AND LONG-TERM MOTIVATION

Coaching-oriented approaches, including Motivational Interviewing (MI), help create safe spaces for dialogue and strengthen sustained engagement. Facilitation supports quieter voices, reduces conflict in group processes, and helps young people stay motivated beyond initial enthusiasm.

5.4 RESOURCES AND FUNDING TURN PARTICIPATION INTO ACTION

Youth funds, grant schemes, and participatory budgets make participation tangible by enabling young people to shape projects and influence resource allocation. These tools strengthen ownership and provide learning-by-doing opportunities in planning, teamwork, and responsibility. Transparent procedures and light guidance are important to keep funding-based participation accessible.

5.5 CONTINUITY DEPENDS ON INSTITUTIONAL ANCHORING AND CLEAR ROLES

Participation is more sustainable when it is embedded in stable frameworks—clear mandates, predictable procedures, and defined responsibilities within administrations or partner organisations. Statutory or formal anchoring of youth councils and similar bodies reduces dependence on individual champions and supports long-term influence.

5.6 COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN PARTICIPATION ECOSYSTEMS

Regional coordination structures (e.g., youth assemblies/parliaments, secretariats, networks) help maintain participation across locations and support smaller municipalities with limited capacity. Cross-sector partnerships between youth, schools, universities, NGOs, and public authorities increase legitimacy and implementation capacity, making it easier to translate youth input into practical outcomes.

5.7 YOUTH-LED DIAGNOSIS IMPROVES RELEVANCE OF POLICIES AND MEASURES

Youth participation is not only valuable for consultation, but also for identifying problems and priorities. Youth-led research and problem definition can reveal barriers that are often underestimated in top-down analysis and can inform more grounded and actionable responses.

5.8 COMMON PRACTICAL GAPS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

Partner materials point to recurring barriers such as limited youth-friendly meeting spaces, insufficient micro-funding for informal youth groups, uneven access to competence development, and fragmented support for youth work and facilitation. Addressing these gaps helps widen access and strengthens participation over time.

CONCLUSION

This Best Practice Guide was prepared within the framework of the D-EFFECT project – Civic Society Democracy Lessons: Bringing a Youth Perspective in EU Policymaking at All Levels in Line with the EU Youth Strategy. It provides a shared, practice-based overview of selected methods and tools that support youth civic participation and local youth inclusion, based on examples contributed by project partners.

The mapping is illustrative rather than exhaustive. It reflects a selection of practices documented through partner inputs and does not represent the full range of youth participation approaches in the partner countries. Nevertheless, the collected examples offer a concrete basis for mutual learning within the partnership and for strengthening local youth inclusion strategies in the project context.

Annex A – Poland: Mapping of Good Practices in Youth Civic Participation

Annex B – Denmark: Mapping of Good Practices in Youth Civic Participation

Annex C – Sweden: Mapping of Good Practices in Youth Civic Participation



Interreg  Co-funded by the European Union
South Baltic

 D Effect



 CENTRUM SPOTKAŃ EUROPEJSKICH ŚWIATOWID W ELBLĄGU

 mediadizajn



D-Effect project is supported by the Interreg South Baltic 2021-2027 Programme with co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund.

Free copy

Local Youth Inclusion Strategies: Mapping of Good Practice on Youth Civic Participation Methods and Tools

Poland: West Pomeranian Voivodeship and Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship

1. Overview

Youth Demographics and Context

The West Pomeranian Voivodeship and Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship are two regions in northern Poland with a combined population of approximately **3.1 million residents**, encompassing major cities such as Szczecin (a voivodeship capital with circa 370,000 residents), Elbląg (a port city with circa 119,000 residents), and smaller towns including Olsztynek and Dzierzgoń. Both regions face **significant demographic challenges**: the population is aging, with an estimated dependency ratio exceeding 66–67%, and young people are migrating to larger metropolitan centres or abroad in search of better educational and employment opportunities. Youth aged 15–24 constitute approximately **13–14% of the total population** in these voivodeships, compared to the national average of around 12%.

Education remains a key concern in these regions. According to data from the West Pomeranian and Warmia–Mazury Education Authorities (Kuratorium Oświaty), the secondary school network serves tens of thousands of students annually. The **activation and civic engagement of young people** is essential to counteract social stagnation, preserve local communities, and build resilience in response to economic and demographic pressures.

Key Actors in Youth Civic Participation

The youth participation ecosystem in both voivodeships involves multiple stakeholders working at local and regional levels:

- **Municipal and county youth councils** (*Młodzieżowe Rady Miast* and *Rady Powiatowe*) function in Szczecin, Elbląg, Olsztynek, Dzierzgoń, and numerous other municipalities, acting as advisory bodies and platforms for youth dialogue with local government.
- **Regional youth parliament** (*Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa*) exists in both voivodeships, representing youth interests at the voivodeship level.
- **Local government authorities** (city councils, county councils, voivodeship offices) provide statutory frameworks, institutional support, and funding.
- **NGO sector and youth workers** deliver programmes, mentoring, and facilitating structures for youth engagement.
- **Educational institutions** (schools, universities, technical colleges) host student self-governments and participation initiatives.
- **Secretariat for Youth** (*Sekretariat ds. Młodzieży*) in the West Pomeranian Region actively supports youth councils and organises training and grant schemes.

2. Examples of Good Practice

2.1 Municipal Youth Councils (*Młodzieżowe Rady Miast*)

Initiative: Structurally embedded municipal youth councils, particularly those functioning in Elbląg, Olsztynek, and Dzierzgoń.

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Statutory foundation:** Each youth council operates under a formal resolution and statute adopted by the municipal council, ensuring legal status and continuity.
- **Formal representation:** Youth council members are elected or appointed through competitive processes, typically serving terms of 1–3 years.
- **Consultation and dialogue:** Regular meetings with the Mayor and municipal authorities; participation in city council sessions; review of draft local resolutions.
- **Project initiation:** Design and implementation of youth-led community projects (cultural events, environmental initiatives, social campaigns).
- **Inter-council cooperation:** Exchange visits and joint projects between youth councils in neighbouring municipalities (e.g., collaboration between Elbląg and Dzierzgoń youth councils).

Why It Is Relevant:

Municipal youth councils provide young people with a **structured, legal channel to influence local decision-making** on issues that affect their daily lives (education, culture, transport, public spaces). They serve as **training grounds for democratic citizenship**, enabling youth to develop negotiation, advocacy, and leadership skills while building trust between young residents and local institutions.

Key Takeaway:

When youth councils are **embedded in municipal law, provided with dedicated meeting spaces, and given real access to decision-makers**, they become sustainable mechanisms for bridging the generational divide and creating durable youth participation. The continuity of statutory frameworks across multiple years of operation signals municipal commitment to youth engagement.

2.2 Regional Youth Parliament (*Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa*)

Initiative: Youth Sejmiks in both the West Pomeranian Voivodeship and Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship, established by voivodeship council resolutions and operating under dedicated statutes.

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Competitive selection:** Young people aged 15–29 compete for seats through an annual or biennial selection process, ensuring diversity and merit-based representation.
- **Resolution and advocacy:** The Youth Sejmik adopts official positions and resolutions on regional youth policy, which are forwarded to the voivodeship management board and regional assembly.

- **Policy consultation:** Members draft recommendations on education, culture, environment, and civic engagement; input is sought when regional strategies are being developed.
- **Grant distribution:** In the Warmia–Mazury region, the Youth Sejmik actively participates in allocating funding for youth projects (e.g., a January 2026 call for proposals with a pool of 100,000 PLN for local initiatives).
- **Intergenerational dialogue:** Organisation of regional youth conventions (e.g., the 2nd West Pomeranian Youth Convention, December 2025) to facilitate exchange and networking among youth leaders from municipalities across the voivodeship.

Why It Is Relevant:

The Youth Sejmik **scales youth participation beyond the municipal level**, ensuring that young voices reach regional decision-makers on cross-cutting issues such as vocational education, public health, transportation, and economic development. By directly linking youth input to budget decisions and legislative proposals, the institution demonstrates that youth civic participation can produce **tangible policy outcomes**.

Key Takeaway:

A regional youth parliament with clear statutory powers—including the ability to adopt resolutions, propose legislation, and distribute grants—creates a **multiplier effect**, building regional coordination among local youth councils and elevating youth agency to a level where systemic change becomes possible.

2.3 Warmia–Mazury Youth Initiatives Fund (*Warmińsko-Mazurski Fundusz Inicjatyw Młodzieżowych*)

Initiative: A three-year grant scheme (2024–2026) financed from the state budget under the Government Youth Fund Programme, implemented by ESWIP and Braniewski Instytut Rozwoju.

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Two-track application process:**
 - Track 1: Municipal/county youth councils and the regional youth parliament apply on behalf of their constituent youth members.
 - Track 2: School and academic self-governments, student organisations, and youth associations apply independently.
- **Project planning support:** Applicants receive mentoring and technical assistance in designing projects aligned with regional youth needs and available funding.
- **Participatory grants:** Young people directly design, manage budgets for, and evaluate their own community projects (e.g., youth leadership workshops, cultural events, volunteering initiatives, environmental projects).
- **Transparent allocation:** Approximately 15 grants awarded annually (total budget: 1.1 million PLN), with selection criteria published and available to all applicants.

Why It Is Relevant:

The Fund **converts youth civic participation from consultation to decision-making** by giving young people direct control over resources. It operationalises the principle that youth have the capability to identify local problems and implement solutions. Furthermore, the dual-track structure ensures that both institutional youth bodies and grassroots youth groups can access funding, fostering inclusion across formal and informal youth sectors.

Key Takeaway:

A **multi-year, adequately funded grant scheme dedicated to youth-led initiatives**, combined with mentoring support and clear eligibility criteria, is a powerful tool for sustaining youth civic participation beyond episodic events. It signals long-term government commitment and builds local youth capacity in project management, financial stewardship, and civic advocacy.

2.4 Regional Cooperation Programmes with NGOs: Support for Youth Civic Competences

Initiative: Annual open call for proposals launched by the West Pomeranian and Warmia–Mazury voivodship governments in cooperation with the NGO sector, with a dedicated funding line for **"Strengthening the creative potential, civic activity and social competences of youth."**

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Systematic funding mechanism:** Voivodships allocate a specified budget each year for NGO-led youth initiatives through a transparent competitive process.
- **Eligible activities include:** Youth leadership training, civic education workshops, volunteering programmes, intergenerational cooperation projects, youth-initiated community projects, and cultural/social initiatives.
- **Partnership incentives:** Grants encourage collaboration between local government, schools, NGOs, and youth councils.
- **Programme continuity:** Announced annually, allowing NGOs and youth organisations to plan sustainable multi-year activities.

Why It Is Relevant:

This mechanism ensures **recurring, stable funding for youth-focused civil society activities** at the regional scale. By explicitly naming youth civic activity as a regional priority, the government creates an enabling environment where NGOs can design and deliver quality programmes rather than relying on one-off project funding. The annual cycle permits strategic planning and partnership building.warmia+1

Key Takeaway:

A **dedicated, recurrent funding stream within regional cooperation programmes** signals that youth civic participation is not a temporary initiative but a core component of regional social policy. It empowers NGOs to become systematic deliverers of youth engagement and skill-building activities.

2.5 Youth-Led Policy Programme: Programme for Youth of the Warmia–Mazury Voivodship

Initiative: A policy document developed in 2024 by the Warmia–Mazury Youth Sejmik and WAMA-COOP association, based on youth-led research and consultation.

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Participatory diagnosis:** Over 2 months (September–October 2024), Youth Sejmik members conducted local consultations, interviews, focus groups, and data analysis to identify the four most pressing youth challenges: (1) lack of support for youth initiatives, (2) declining mental health, (3) youth migration, and (4) transport exclusion.
- **Consensus-building workshops:** Sejmik delegates collaboratively developed recommendations grounded in evidence and good practices from other Polish regions.
- **Actionable solutions:** The programme proposes concrete measures such as youth budgets, free public spaces for youth projects, mental health support networks, leadership training, transport improvements, and intergenerational dialogue platforms.
- **Accessibility:** The document is written in accessible language, with illustrations and clear structure, making it a reference tool for policymakers, youth workers, and practitioners.

Why It Is Relevant:

This initiative demonstrates the **power of bottom-up policy design**: young people themselves diagnose regional challenges and propose solutions, filling gaps in formal government youth policy. Although regrettably not co-created with local government authorities (limiting immediate institutional buy-in), the programme exemplifies how youth-led research can **pressure decision-makers to act** and inspire collaborative policy-making.

Key Takeaway:

Youth-authored policy documents, grounded in participatory research and youth expertise, provide a powerful tool for advocacy and systemic change. When young people are given the resources and space to diagnose their own situation and propose solutions, they generate actionable insights that formal government analysis might overlook.

2.6 Student Participatory Budget: ANS Elbląg Student Budget (*Budżet Studencki*)

Initiative: An annual participatory funding mechanism at the Academy of Applied Sciences (ANS) in Elbląg, allocating up to 20,000 PLN for student-proposed improvements to campus life and learning conditions.

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Open call:** Any ANS student (except commission members) can submit project proposals via an online form.
- **Initial screening:** A mixed review commission—comprising the Pro-Rector for Education, administrative staff, and three Student Council representatives—evaluates proposals against criteria including feasibility, legal compliance, alignment with university mission, budget fit, and sustainability of costs.
- **Democratic voting:** Shortlisted projects are submitted to a university-wide vote via the USOS student portal; every student and staff member casts one vote for their preferred project(s).
- **Implementation:** Top-voted projects within the budget envelope are approved by the Rector and implemented in the same calendar

Why It Is Relevant:

The Student Budget **empowers students to directly decide on campus improvements**, fostering ownership and responsibility. By combining student proposals, administrative oversight, and broad-based voting, it exemplifies a **scalable model for higher education participation** that balances student agency with institutional sustainability.

Key Takeaway:

Participatory budgeting in educational institutions, even at modest budget levels (20,000 PLN annually), demonstrates to young people that they have real influence over resource allocation. This experience builds democratic competence and trust in institutions, while yielding tangible improvements to the student experience.

2.7 Youth Secretariat and Support Services: West Pomeranian Region

Initiative: The Secretariat for Youth (*Sekretariat ds. Młodzieży*) of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, which provides capacity-building, grant-writing support, and facilitation for youth councils and youth-focused organisations.

Methods, Tools, or Activities Used:

- **Youth council support:** Direct assistance to municipal and county youth councils in navigating statutory requirements, planning meetings, and designing projects.
- **Training workshops:** Regular programmes teaching young people about grant opportunities, advocacy techniques, and civic engagement strategies.
- **Funding facilitation:** Guidance on applying for regional and national grants; assistance in project planning and reporting.
- **Networking events:** Organisation of regional youth conferences and exchange visits to foster peer learning among youth leaders.
- **Advocacy:** The Secretariat actively promotes the concept of youth participation to local municipalities and regional institutions.

Why It Is Relevant:

The existence of a **dedicated, well-resourced youth support service at regional level** removes barriers to youth participation. Young people who might lack experience in grant-writing, institutional navigation, or advocacy receive practical mentoring. This infrastructure approach ensures that participation opportunities are not limited to youth with existing social capital or family connections.

Key Takeaway:

Dedicated youth secretariats and support services, funded and staffed at voivodeship level, are critical infrastructure for scaling youth participation. They function as **bridges between grassroots youth and regional decision-makers**, ensuring sustained attention to youth engagement even when political priorities shift.

3. Supporting Documents and References

Local and Regional Documentation

- **Statutes of Municipal Youth Councils** (Statuty Młodzieżowych Rad Miast): Elbląg, Olsztynek, Dzierzgoń – municipal council resolutions establishing legal frameworks and operational procedures.
- **Youth Sejmik Statutes** (Statuty Młodzieżowych Sejmików Województwa): West Pomeranian and Warmia–Mazury voivodeships – defining roles, election procedures, and powers.
- **Programme for Youth of Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship** (Program na rzecz Młodzieży Województwa Warmińsko-Mazurskiego) – youth-led policy roadmap developed by the Youth Sejmik (2024).
- **Student Budget Regulations** (Regulaminy Budżetu Studenckiego) – ANS Elbląg and other educational institutions.
- **Cooperation Programmes** (Programy Współpracy Samorządu Wojewódzkiego z Organizacjami Pozarządowymi) – annual calls for proposals from West Pomeranian and Warmia–Mazury voivodeships, including dedicated funding lines for youth civic engagement.
- **Youth Initiatives Fund Documentation** (Dokumentacja Warmińsko-Mazurskiego Funduszu Inicjatyw Młodzieżowych) – grant guidelines, project reports, and impact evaluations.

National Policy Framework

- **Polish Youth Policy 2023/2024** (Polityka Młodzieżowa w Polsce) – produced by the Centre for Youth Education and Development (FRSE), outlining national strategy.
- **Government Youth Fund Programme 2022–2033** (Rządowy Program Fundusz Młodzieżowy) – national funding framework supporting youth initiatives in regions.
- **Standards for the Functioning of Local Youth Self-Governments in Poland** (Standardy Funkcjonowania Młodzieżowych Samorządów Lokalnych w Polsce) – best practice guidelines produced by youth organisations and research institutions.

4. Lessons Learned and Critical Gaps

Successes and Learning Points

1. **Statutory Embedding Ensures Sustainability:** Youth councils and parliaments embedded in municipal and voivodeship law, operated under formal statutes, and provided with meeting spaces and modest budgets show greater longevity and influence than non-statutory initiatives. Multi-year operation (e.g., Elbląg youth council since 2024, Warmia–Mazury Youth Sejmik since 2022) demonstrates continuity when institutional frameworks are in place.
2. **Funding Multiplier Effect:** Dedicated grant schemes (Warmia–Mazury Youth Initiatives Fund, regional cooperation programmes) that allow young people to control resources stimulate participation exponentially more than consultation-only mechanisms. Young people who design and manage projects develop **project management, financial, and leadership skills** that transfer to other life domains.
3. **Regional Coordination Strengthens Local Initiatives:** Youth Sejmiks and regional secretariats that actively support municipal youth councils create a **multiplier effect**, enabling smaller towns (Olsztynek, Dzierzgoń) to sustain participation even with limited municipal budgets.
4. **Inter-Council and Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Joint projects between youth councils in different municipalities (e.g., Elbląg–Dzierzgoń cooperation) and partnerships with NGOs, schools, and cultural institutions broaden young people's perspectives and create economies of scale for larger initiatives.
5. **Young People as Diagnosticians:** The bottom-up policy process used to develop the Warmia–Mazury Youth Programme demonstrated that **youth-led research and problem definition generates solutions that top-down policy analysis often misses**. Youth voices are particularly valuable in identifying systemic barriers (transport exclusion, mental health, migration drivers) that require coordinated regional response.

Critical Gaps and Areas Requiring Intervention

Despite significant progress, several systemic gaps persist across both voivodeships:

4.1 Lack of Accessible, Multi-Purpose Youth Meeting Spaces

Gap: While municipal and voivodeship government offices host youth council meetings, there are few **publicly accessible, youth-friendly spaces equipped with lighting, weatherproofing, and seating** where young people can spontaneously gather, organise, or meet peers. Cities such as Gdynia (West Pomeranian Voivodeship) have invested in dedicated "Youth Palaces" (*Pałace Młodzieży*), but this model is not widespread across smaller municipalities in Elbląg, Olsztynek, or Dzierzgoń.

Recommendation: Develop a regional standard and funding mechanism for **open-air and indoor youth gathering spaces** in each municipality, with basic infrastructure (shelters, seating, lighting, Wi-Fi). Partner with municipal parks/recreation departments to integrate these into urban planning.

4.2 Absence of Micro-Project Funding for Small Youth Groups

Gap: While youth councils and larger organisations can apply for grants from the Warmia–Mazury Youth Fund (minimum project scope often requires institutional backing), for **small informal youth groups (5–15 people) there is lack of accessible funding** for micro-initiatives.

Recommendation: Establish a "Youth Micro-Grants Scheme" at municipal level, allowing groups of 5+ young people to apply for 500–2,000 PLN for small-scale activities (workshops, clean-ups, cultural events). Streamline application processes and provide peer mentoring rather than heavy bureaucracy.

4.3 Limited Intergenerational and Cross-Age Projects

Gap: Most youth participation mechanisms target a narrow age band (15–29 years), with little **structured collaboration between youth councils, school students, and adult civil society leaders or mentors**. Intergenerational projects that connect youth with experienced community figures, business leaders, artists, or civic activists are episodic rather than systematic.

Recommendation: Design and fund **regular intergenerational dialogue programmes** where young council members meet with municipal mayors, business owners, cultural figures, and social activists. Create "mentorship circles" pairing youth leaders with established community figures for ongoing dialogue.

4.4 Under-Investment in Personal and Group Competence Development

Gap: While some training exists (e.g., through youth secretariats and NGOs), systematic programmes in **future-focused competences (digital literacy, project management, emotional intelligence, systems thinking, entrepreneurship)** are limited. Many young people entering youth councils lack prior experience with public speaking, conflict resolution, or strategic planning.

Recommendation: Develop a **regional "Youth Leadership Competence Curriculum"** funded jointly by voivodeship and municipal budgets. Offer quarterly or biannual training modules (in-person and online) covering: project planning, financial management, public speaking, digital

citizenship, mental health and resilience, advocacy skills, and EU/regional institutional navigation. Partner with universities and vocational schools to deliver training.

4.5 Shortage of Educational Study Visits and Institutional Exposure

Gap: Young people in Elbląg, Olsztynek, and Dzierzgoń often have limited exposure to **regional, national, and international institutions** relevant to youth policy. Few youth council members have visited the voivodeship parliament, the Children's Ombudsman office (*Rzecznik Praw Dziecka*), regional education authorities, or EU institutions. International youth exchange programmes are available but reach a small percentage of young people.

Recommendation: Fund an annual "**Youth Civic Exposure Programme**" offering all-expenses-paid study visits for youth council members and school representatives to:

- Voivodeship parliament, city hall, and municipal offices (observe debates, meet decision-makers).
- Office of the Children's Ombudsman (Warsaw) and regional ombudsman offices.
- Regional development centres, entrepreneurship incubators, and vocational training institutions.
- EU institutions (Brussels) for cross-border youth policy learning.
- Neighbouring European youth participation initiatives (e.g., Swedish, German, Danish youth councils).

Visits should include structured reflection and networking opportunities, with participants tasked with returning to their communities and reporting findings.

4.6 Fragmentation of Youth Work and Youth Animation Network

Gap: Youth workers, youth animators, and youth councillors operate in relative isolation across municipalities and voivodeships. There is **no systematic network for knowledge sharing, professional development, or joint standard-setting** among practitioners. Training for youth workers and animators is ad hoc rather than part of a coherent regional framework.

Recommendation: Establish a "**Regional Network of Youth Workers and Animators**" (*Sieć Pracowników Młodzieżowych*) with the following functions:

- Quarterly peer learning forums (in-person and online) for youth workers to share practices and troubleshoot challenges.
- A shared online platform (repository of tools, training materials, project templates, funding opportunities).
- Joint professional development programme in partnership with universities: certification courses in youth participation facilitation, youth animation, project management, and mental health awareness.
- Advocacy function: the network collectively represents practitioner interests to voivodeship and municipal authorities.
- Mentoring programme pairing experienced youth workers with newcomers.



Conclusion

The West Pomeranian Voivodeship and Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship have established a **solid foundation for youth civic participation** through municipal youth councils, regional youth parliaments, grant schemes, and support services. However, realizing the full potential of youth engagement requires addressing systemic gaps in accessible spaces, micro-funding, competence development, institutional exposure, and professional support for youth workers.

By implementing the recommendations above—particularly the creation of accessible youth gathering spaces, the establishment of micro-grant schemes, the formalisation of a regional youth workers network, and the integration of youth participation into municipal strategic planning—both voivodeships can transform youth civic participation from a consultative add-on to a **core pillar of local democracy and regional development**.

The young people of Elbląg, Szczecin, Olsztynek, Dzierzgoń, and across both voivodeships have demonstrated their capacity to diagnose problems, design solutions, and lead community change. The task for policymakers and practitioners is to **expand the infrastructure, funding, and institutional space** that allow this emerging generation to fully exercise its civic agency and shape the future of their regions.

Additional materials and documents:

1. https://olsztyn.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_warminsko-mazurskie/portrety_miast/miasto_elblag.pdf
2. http://www.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_zachodniopomorskie/portret_wojewo_dztwa/wojewodztwo_zachodniopomorskie.pdf
3. https://wspolnota.org.pl/fileadmin/news/Ranking_25-2021_Zmiany_demograficzne_2004-2020.pdf
4. <https://www.kuratorium.szczecin.pl>
5. <https://www.kuratorium.szczecin.pl/pl/szkoly-i-organy-prowadzace/rekrutacja/>
6. <https://ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/web/direct-files/attachments/26334944/d3651f09-4536-43a2-a596-0584cc2f492e/Mapping-of-good-practice-on-youth-civic-participation-methods-and-tools-Tabellenblatt1.pdf>
7. <https://olsztynek.pl/mlodziejowa-rada-miejska/>
8. <https://bip.elblag.eu/artykul/75/205/statut-mlodziejowej-rady-miasta-elblaga>
9. <https://ryszard-galla.pl/jak-dziala-mlodziejowa-rada-miasta>
10. <https://bip.elblag.eu/attachments/download/15773>
11. <https://www.info.elblag.pl/28,82868,Za-nami-druga-sesja-Mlodziejowej-Rady-Miasta-Nad-czym-glosowali-mlodz-radni.html>
12. https://civispolonus.org.pl/media/publication_block/mlodziejowe-rady-gmin-sposob-na-wzmocnienie-aktywnosci-obywatelskiej-i-spoecznej-mlodych-na-poziomie-lokalnym.pdf
13. <https://soclab.org.pl/blog/mlodziejowe-rady-gmin-w-polsce-glos-mlodego-pokolenia-w-samorzadzie/>
14. <https://elgl.org/youth-councils-can-strengthen-local-government-and-build-trust/>
15. <https://bip.warmia.mazury.pl/kategoria/143/mlodziejowy-sejmik.html>
16. https://bip.warmia.mazury.pl/2031/4987_mlodziejowy-sejmik-wojewodztwa-warminsko-mazurskiego.html
17. <https://warmia.mazury.pl/polityka-spoeczna/aktualnosci/9520-nowy-program-dla-mlodziezy-warmii-i-mazur>
18. <https://www.mlynary.pl/artykul/4474,program-na-rzecz-mlodziezy-wojewodztwa-warminsko-mazurskiego>
19. <https://bip.warmia.mazury.pl/attachment/informacja/21177/ff2dcf3680a7ddc8a90da25b15de0ba27c47fa97.html>
20. <https://warmia.mazury.pl/polityka-spoeczna/wspolpraca-z-organizacjami-pozarządowymi/10116-otwarte-konkursy-ofert-dla-organizacji-pozarządowych-2026>
21. <https://bip.warmia.mazury.pl/3833/ogloszenie-otwartych-konkursow-ofert-na-realizacje-w-roku-2026-zadan-publicznych-samorzadu-wojewodztwa-warminsko-mazurskiego-przez-organizacje-pozarządowe-oraz-podmioty-wymienione-w-art.-3-ust.-3-ustawy-o-dzialalnosci-pozytku-publicznego-i-o-wolontariacie.html>
22. https://ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/web/direct-files/attachments/26334944/b9e7bd34-a3c7-4d2f-bb9f-a0165a998ead/Program_na_rzecz_Mlodziezy_z_Wojewodztwa_Warminsko-Mazurskiego.pdf



23. https://ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/web/direct-files/attachments/26334944/b24abc86-d853-4a3c-87a3-e358f7e02297/Budzet_Studencki_ANS_Elblag_Regulamin_2024.pdf
24. <https://www.frse.org.pl/czytelnia/polityka-mlodziejowa-w-polsce-20232024>
25. <http://stop-klatka.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/standardy.pdf>
26. <https://ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/web/direct-files/attachments/26334944/88691ecd-c98e-476a-994a-273e8c86b439/PP4-Hassleholm-WP2.3.pdf>
27. <https://olsztyn.stat.gov.pl/publikacje-i-foldery/foldery/wojewodztwo-warminsko-mazurskie-w-liczbach-2025,3,14.html>
28. https://olsztyn.stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/olsztyn/en/defaultaktualnosci/712/2/13/1/folder_woj_w_liczbach_2024_nnn.pdf
29. <https://www.wup.pl/images/uploads/porownanie.pdf>
30. <https://www.powiat-olsztynski.pl/mlodziejowa-rada-wybrala-nowe-wladze.html>
31. <https://tvregionalna24.pl/aktualnosci/47629,mlodziejowy-festiwal-demokracji-w-dzierzgoniu-przy>

Work Package 2

Activity 2.3.

Local Youth Inclusion Strategies – Mapping of good practice on youth civic participation methods and tools (1 best practice guide)

Local actors

Youth Council

The local Youth Council in Odsherred Municipality consists of young people from elementary school and high school, who use their leisure time engaging in democratic activities. Odsherred's Youth Council is the voice of young people in Odsherred, who work with democracy and co-influence on many levels and ensure that young people are included in the democratic debate.

FEO/Joint Student Council

FEO is an organization or council typically found in Danish municipalities, regions, or school networks, where representatives from individual school student councils meet and collaborate across schools. Its purpose is to give students a united voice and strengthen student democracy.

The purpose of FEO is:

- To **represent the interests of students** across different schools.
- To **create dialogue** between students and decision-makers (such as school leaders, local politicians, youth committees, etc.).
- To **share experiences and ideas** between schools to improve student involvement and the school environment.
- To **organize joint activities**, such as student council seminars, workshops, campaigns, or events.

FEO participants

- One or more **representatives from each school's student council** (usually from upper primary or secondary grades).

- Sometimes **coordinators**, teachers, youth school representatives, or municipal staff participate as support.

FEO works with, among others, student well-being, anti-bullying, sustainability and green schools, youth culture, youth democracy, digital media etc.

Klimaråd/Climate Council

In Odsherred we are in the process of starting a youth climate network together with five nearby municipalities: Frederikssund, Halsnæs, Roskilde, Lejre and Holbæk.

A group of the young people from the municipalities, among others from Odsherred's Youth Council, have arranged and held an event promoting the surrounding inlet's bad condition due to agricultural emissions – the climate is very much on their minds.

Regional actors

NAU/Netværket af Ungdomsråd/Network of Youth Councils¹

Odsherreds Youth Council is a member of Network of Youth Councils (NAU) in Denmark, which is a regional network for Youth Councils in Denmark. NAU represents a political youth council movement that provides advice on relevant democracy workshops, networks etc. to promote political involvement in local Youth Councils. NAU are currently working on making it legally required for Danish municipalities to have a Youth Council in each municipality.

In February 2025, board members of NAU participated in "Youth Democracy Conference 2025 – Democracy in action", which was held in Portugal. The main purpose of the conference was to gather information for the development of the European Charter document, which ensures a better framework for young people's engagement in democracy. 140 participants from various European political youth areas participated in the conference.

DUF/Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd

¹ NAU: <https://nau.dk/>

DUF² brings together youth

DUF is an umbrella and interest organization for 78 ideologically determined and socially engaged children's and youth organizations that work to promote democratic communities for children and young people in association life.

Because voluntary association life is a cornerstone of our society, where children and young people receive democratic education across interests, culture, education and social conditions.

DUF brings together youth in a diverse umbrella organization. Scouts, student organizations, church associations, humanitarian organizations and political youth organizations are among the members.

DUF's mission

DUF was founded in 1940 to inform, engage and educate young people in democracy as a defense against Nazism and undemocratic forces. Ever since, DUF has sought to promote the active participation of young people in democracy and association life. DUF has done this based on the core values of participation, dialogue, volunteerism and influence.

As an organization, DUF works for democracy, youth influence and association development:

Democracy

DUF develops and supports local organized and democratic communities. In an increasingly globalized world, Danish youth must be at the forefront of the fight for democracy, rights and sustainability - locally, nationally and globally. Through local commitment and change, we can together strengthen young people's belief that democratic participation can solve the many challenges that youth and society face.

² DUF: <https://duf.dk/>

Youth influence

DUF works as the voice of youth to ensure that more children and young people have a voice and influence on our common future. Based on a foundation of knowledge about youth life and experiences from DUF's diverse umbrella of associations, DUF highlights young people's challenges, potentials and new solutions to actors in the children and young people's field, decision-makers and in the public debate.

Association development

DUF works to create a community that strengthens and develops association life for children and young people. With association development, education and networks, DUF contributes to member organizations becoming stronger and having access to tools and sparring, so that they can best work for their own ideas and values, develop their democratic culture and create good and safe frameworks for children and young people in association life.

Democratic analysis 2024

DUF has made a very interesting report about young people and democracy, which among other things examines young people's political participation, their democratic confidence and political agendas. The report can be found here (in Danish): [Demokratianalysen 2024 - final version PDF.pdf](#)

SE PP4 – Hässleholm Municipality / Ung Fritid

Activity 2.3 – Local Youth Inclusion Strategies: Mapping of Good Practices in Youth Civic Participation

1. Overview

Hässleholm Municipality is located in northern Skåne, Sweden, with around 52,000 inhabitants. *Ung Fritid* (Youth Leisure Services) is responsible for open youth work, promoting inclusion, and supporting youth participation for young people aged 13–25. Our mission is to create safe, inclusive spaces where young people can express themselves, influence decisions, and actively shape their local community.

2. Example of Good Practice: Developing a Youth Council and Youth Participation Hub

Description

Ung Fritid is currently working to **establish a Youth Council** as a long-term and sustainable outcome of the D-EFFECT project. The Youth Council will serve as a democratic platform where young people can participate in decision-making, collaborate with local policymakers, and contribute to community development.

Parallel to this, Ung Fritid is developing a **youth participation hub** – a creative meeting place where young people can plan, design, and lead their own initiatives. Youth are encouraged to bring their ideas and dreams forward, and receive support from youth leaders using a **coaching approach and Motivational Interviewing (MI)** techniques. This method helps strengthen motivation, responsibility, and personal growth.

Within the D-EFFECT framework, young people have already had opportunities to **meet decision-makers, participate in civic dialogues**, and influence planning processes. D-EFFECT has proven to be a valuable tool for making youth participation real and visible.

We also implement the **ELD method (Experience – Learning – Development)**, which helps make learning visible for each young person, enabling reflection and personal development through civic engagement.

From a preventive and social perspective, the municipality is also working to create a **youth civic dialogue model** within crime prevention strategies. This approach aims to include young voices in community safety and wellbeing discussions – ensuring that youth perspectives are present in all areas of local governance.

Goals

- Establish a permanent Youth Council after the D-EFFECT project.
- Promote youth engagement and influence in local democracy.
- Strengthen youth-led initiatives through coaching and motivational support.
- Develop a structured method for youth civic dialogues in preventive work.

Expected Results

- Increased youth participation in municipal decision-making.
- Stronger collaboration between young people and local authorities.
- Empowered youth with leadership, dialogue, and democratic participation skills.

3. Supporting Documents and References

Local and Regional

- Hässleholm Municipality Youth Policy Program (*Ungdomspolitiskt program*)
- *Vision Hässleholm 2030* – municipal strategy for inclusion and participation
- Ung Fritid internal guidelines for youth participation and coaching methods

National

- MUCF (Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society):
 - “*Delaktighet – ungas rätt att vara med och bestämma*”
 - “*Unga och demokrati*” (reports and tools for youth influence)
- SKR (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions):
 - “*Ungas inflytande i kommuner och regioner*”
- Swedish Government’s Youth Policy: “*En politik för ungas organisering, inflytande och välfärd*”

- European Youth Work Agenda (Council of Europe)

4. Lessons Learned

- Youth participation increases when young people **see that their input leads to real change.**
- Engagement is highest when participation happens **on young people's own terms.**
- A **coaching and MI-based approach** helps create trust and long-term motivation.
- Sustainable youth participation requires **continuity, feedback, and strong partnerships** between youth and decision-makers.

5. Contact

PP4 – Hässleholm Municipality / Ung Fritid

Contact person: *Ella Burazerovic*

ella.burazerovic@hassleholm.se

+46 70 219 11 36

www.hassleholm.se