



Citizen Z



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**Strengthening the Participation of Young Citizens in
Democratic and Civic Life**

2022–2024



Co-funded by
the European Union

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1. Introduction to the Citizen Z Project

Contemporary political attitudes among young Europeans are marked by disengagement and apathy. Many young people feel disconnected from public life, and political participation is declining. Citizen Z is an innovative project designed to address the democratic deficit by reimagining how civic engagement works for the next generation.

Through the use of deliberative and participatory methods, Citizen Z empowers young people in different EU countries, enabling them to become informed and active participants in shaping their future and the future of their communities.

2. Vision & Priorities

- Strengthening democratic participation
- Empowering young citizens
- Fostering inclusion in the EU
- Bringing young citizens closer to the EU
- Countering misinformation
- Contributing to creating informed choices among citizens.

3. Project Objectives

Informing

Enhancing young people's understanding of EU institutions, values, policies

Promoting

Stimulating interest in civic life, debate, and democratic processes

Empowering

Providing the tools, knowledge, and spaces for informed decision-making and action.

Participating

Supporting youth involvement in both formal and informal political activities.

Contributing

Fostering trust and collaboration between youth and institutions.

4. How We Engaged: Activities & Methodologies



Youth-led Agenda through pre-consultations

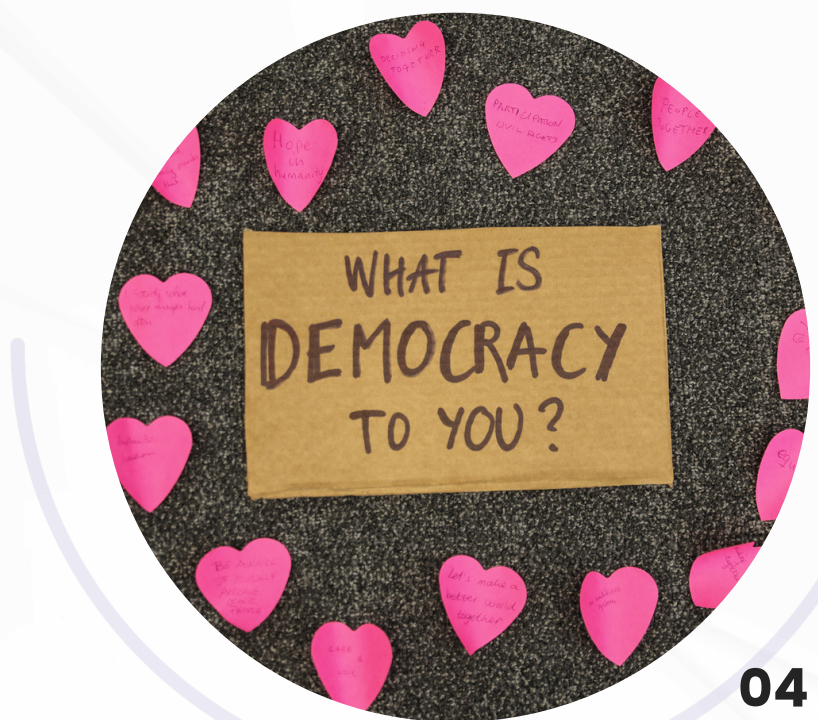
Citizen Z aims at genuine youth participation, where young people own the process and lead it from the very beginning. This is why the project started with pre-consultations of young people which allowed the organizers to identify specific youth priorities and issues. The agenda for the deliberations in the 4 countries participating in the project (Belgium, Italy, Croatia and the Netherlands) was set according to young people's interest and the priority topics identified during the pre-consultations.

The project used a two-round deliberative model:

- Round 1: Local-Level Deliberation: Participants discussed local issues that have a direct impact on their daily lives. Several deliberative and participatory methods were used to conduct local deliberations and to formulate issue-specific recommendations.
- Round 2: European-Level Dialogue: Youth contextualized their local concerns within a broader European perspective. They analysed how EU institutions respond to shared challenges and developed policy proposals reflecting both local and regional needs.

Methods:

- Pre-consultations and youth-led discussions
- Expert panels
- Deliberative forums
- Citizens' Assemblies
- Citizens' Juries
- Deliberative Polls
- Deliberative Workshops



The Netherlands: Housing Crisis Solutions

- Invest in social housing and regulate rental markets.
- Provide financial support and education on housing rights.
- Encourage youth participation in policymaking through forums.
- Promote sustainable development in shrinking regions.



Croatia – Education & Youth Centers

- Reduce mandatory subjects to expand elective choices.
- Integrate volunteering and civic education into school curricula.
- Promote Erasmus+, ESC, and CERV programs.
- Ensure innovative, inclusive, participatory, tech-equipped youth centers with advisory and mental health services.

Italy: Youth Engagement & Inclusion

- Improve regional infrastructure and create youth opportunities.
- Use sports and interfaith programs to build social cohesion.
- Tackle discrimination in housing and employment.
- Engage youth in continuous dialogue with policymakers.

Belgium: Social Justice & Integration

- Support affordable and healthy housing initiatives.
- Promote social inclusion through youth-friendly spaces.
- Teach social justice in schools.
- Leverage media and youth culture to raise awareness.



6. Policy Recommendations

A synthesis of deliberative outcomes:

- **Housing & Urban Development**
 - Expand social housing
 - Prioritize youth in housing policy
 - Adaptive reuse of urban spaces
- **Education & Civic Literacy**
 - EU-wide civic education frameworks
 - Early introduction to volunteering
 - Support for youth-led learning initiatives
- **Youth Centers & Wellbeing**
 - Access to digital and creative tools
 - Psychological support services
 - Participatory governance in youth spaces
- **Social Justice & Equality**
 - Anti-discrimination legislation
 - Inclusive community programs
 - Youth involvement in policy advocacy



Across all four countries, youth recommended:

- **Housing:** Expand social housing, promote adaptive reuse of buildings, and offer youth-targeted housing programs.
- **Education:** Develop EU-wide civic education standards and promote volunteering from early schooling.
- **Youth Services:** Invest in youth centers offering tech, mental health, and creative resources.
- **Social Inclusion:** Support community integration, anti-discrimination efforts, and multilingual engagement platforms.
- **Civic Participation:** Create structures for participatory budgeting and policy co-creation with youth.



7. Key Numbers

Impact & Reach

- Indirect Participants Reached: **135,177** individuals
- Direct Participants Engaged: **1,415** people
- EU Member States Benefiting: **22** countries, including Belgium, Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Germany, Romania, Greece, France, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Malta, Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Luxembourg.
- Additional Countries Reached: Norway, Ukraine, Kosovo, United Kingdom, Turkey, US and others.
- Cities Hosting Events: Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Osijek, Rijeka, Zadar, Zagreb, Rome, Perugia, Potenza, Rolo, Houthalen-Helchteren, Ottmaring.



Key International Events:

Deliberative Democracy Days at the European Parliament's InfoHub
5 Editions | March 2023 – October 2024 | Brussels, Belgium

International 2–3-day events featuring panels, workshops, and networking sessions. These events presented results from local deliberations and created space for dialogue with EU policymakers.
Audience: 460+ participants from 15 EU countries

EU Regions Week 2023
October 10, 2023 | Brussels, Belgium

Policy Lab session entitled “*Deliberative Democracy and Youth Engagement*”, highlighting Citizen Z's methodology and focusing on youth inclusion through deliberative processes.
Audience: 90 participants

SDGs Conference 2023
September 2023 | New York, USA

Presented Citizen Z's alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing youth participation and democratic innovation.
Audience: 150+ participants from 27 countries

68th UN Commission on the Status of Women
March 12, 2024 | New York, USA

Panel entitled “*Transforming Tomorrow: Amplifying Youth Voices to Foster Gender Equality*”, presenting Citizen Z's youth advocacy efforts as a model for fostering gender equality through participatory engagement.
Audience: 100+ participants

Youth Advocacy Team (YAT):

Established in Autumn 2023 by IDP and Fedactio to represent youth perspectives.

Contributions:

- Shaped the agenda for the different editions of the Deliberative Democracy Days.
- Moderated and facilitated discussions during events.
- Provided recommendations to improve event formats and content.



Participation & Inclusion

Youth Engagement:

75% of participants
under age 26

Gender Parity

Achieved:

50% Female
Participation

Feedback & Evaluation

Citizen Z's events received highly positive feedback from participants, reflecting both the quality of organization and the impact on attendees.

EU Survey Respondents: *172 participants* completed the post-event surveys reflecting overwhelmingly positive feedback

Key Takeaway: *"Well-organized, thoroughly prepared, and effectively implemented."* – Youth participant



8. Future Directions

Scaling Deliberation: Bringing deliberative democracy into more schools and local communities.

Inclusive Spaces for Participation: Developing innovative, inclusive and youth-friendly spaces for continuous civic engagement.

Policy Influence: Presenting findings at EU-level events and integrating youth voices into policymaking.



9. Acknowledgements & Partners

This project was made possible through the cooperation of youth, civil society organisations, facilitators, and decision-makers in Belgium, Croatia, Italy, and the Netherlands. Special thanks to our Youth advocacy Team members, volunteers, and all the young people who shared their ideas.

Contact US



www.citizenz.eu



www.dialogueplatform.eu



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The future of democracy depends on the voices we choose to include today. Today is when we decide for tomorrow, therefore do not leave young people in the waiting room. Their future is today.

— *Citizen Z Team*

