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Citizen Z

*Strengthening the participation of young citizens
in democratic and civic life*

D13.1 Event Report and Policy Recommendations from all participant countries

October 2024



28-10-2024

Disclaimer

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EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	1 - Plateforme de Dialogue Interculturel (IDP)
PIC number:	903200660
Project name and acronym:	Citizen Z: Strengthening the participation of young citizens in democratic and civic life – Citizen Z

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	13
Event name:	Democracy Beyond Elections - Deliberations with young people on common issues for European citizens
Type:	Panels, Workshops
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	Belgium, Brussels
Date(s):	October 14-15, 2024
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.citizenz.eu/
Participants	
Female:	35
Male:	29
Non-binary:	1
From country 1 Belgium:	45
From country 2 Italy:	9
From country 3 Netherlands:	3
From country 4 Croatia:	1
From country 5 Spain:	2

From country 6 Greece	1		
From country 7 Estonia	1		
From country 8 Austria	1		
From country 9: Romania	2		
Total number of participants:	65	From total number of countries:	9

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

I. Short Description and Aim of the Events

On October 14-15, the final event of the Citizen Z project took place at the InfoHub of the European Parliament in Brussels. Organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Platform in collaboration with Citizen Z project partners, Stand Up for Europe, and in partnership with the European Parliament, the two-day event centered around the theme "Democracy Beyond Elections - Deliberations with Young People on Common Issues for European Citizens."

The event aimed to provide a platform for in-depth discussions on the future of democracy, focusing on the voices of young people. Participants from Belgium, Italy, Croatia, and the Netherlands shared the outcomes of two rounds of deliberations, presenting their final recommendations on pressing European issues.

II. Detailed Description

The two-day event aimed to make democracy an everyday practice, fostering meaningful discussions and civic engagement beyond the electoral cycle. Through participatory and deliberative methods, the event sought to create an inclusive space for interaction, focusing on common issues affecting European citizens. By bridging the gap between governance and daily life, it emphasised the importance of continuous civic participation.

The event featured interactive sessions and collaborative initiatives designed to amplify young voices and cultivate a more participatory and engaged democratic society. It also provided a platform to share the outcomes of the two-year, EU-funded Citizen Z project, presenting the recommendations resulting from the two rounds of deliberations conducted in Belgium, Italy, Croatia, and the Netherlands.

The comprehensive program included a diverse range of activities such as panel discussions, presentations, workshops, quizzes, and networking opportunities. It was tailored to a wide audience, including civil society organisations, practitioners, researchers, academics focused on democratic innovations, young individuals and youth associations, as well as policy experts, policymakers, and representatives of public authorities.

Ultimately, the event aimed to create a conducive environment for dialogue, empowering youth to take a more active and informed role in democratic life.

III. Detailed Program

Day 1: Democracy in Action: Youth Policy Recommendations

Monday, October 14 | European Parliament, InfoHub, Brussels

13:00 – 13:30 Arrivals and registration | Get your badge

Welcome and registration of the attendees.

13:30 – 13:45 Opening Speech, EP, Partnership Teams, Civil Society Outreach Unit

Presentation of the flagship initiatives of the EP

13:45 – 15:15 Workshop: Amplifying Ideas: Co-Creating the Future of Youth Centres

This workshop invited participants to actively engage in a collaborative, non-formal, and participatory session aimed at shaping the future of youth centers across Europe. Through interactive activities and discussions, each participant had the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns, ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard. The goal was to collectively develop concrete recommendations for the creation of inclusive, accessible, and empowering youth centers that would be presented to European policymakers, including members of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Facilitated by Silvestar Petrov, President at Udruga Prizma, Croatia

15:15 – 15:45 Coffee Break | Refresh and Network

A Break to enjoy coffee and meet new people.

15:45 – 17:00 Panel Discussion: From Crisis to Right - A Youth Approach to the Housing Shortage in Europe – Recommendations from Dutch Youth

This panel discussion addressed the housing crisis, focusing on how to tackle this problem collectively. Highlighting the voices and recommendations of young people in the Netherlands, the aim was to find solutions that ensure access to affordable housing for all. Furthermore, the panel examined the increasing influence of European measures on the housing market from 2021 onwards and explored how everyone can contribute to securing the fundamental right to housing.

Speakers:

Teun Otte, Youth Activist, Chairperson at ASVA Student Union, Amsterdam

Emiliano Rocchetti, Policy Officer at the International Union of Tenants (IUT), EU Liaison Office

Suzana Carp, European Policy Specialist, European expert in industrial strategy, decarbonization of heavy industry, energy, climate and nature protection.

Moderated by Kamila Boukfouz, Program Manager at Platform INS (Netherlands)

Day 2: Everyday Democracy: Youth Participation beyond Elections

Tuesday, October 15 | European Parliament, InfoHub, Brussels

9:00 – 9:30 Arrivals | Welcome

Welcoming and registration of the attendees

09:30 – 11:00 Panel and Workshop | A European Citizens Initiative : A Unique Public Transport Pass – Stakeholder Perspectives and Communication Campaign

In the first part, this session provided an opportunity to discuss with young elected Members of the European Parliament the idea of a unique pass for public transport in the EU, building on the insights from proposals generated during previous Deliberative Democracy Days. In the second part, the participants had the chance to develop a communication campaign to promote the proposal elaborated earlier for a potential submission to the European Citizens' Initiative instrument.

Speakers:

Vasiliki Mustakis, Participatory Democracy Manager at ECAS

Tony Venables, ECIT Foundation on European Citizens' Rights, ECI Campaign on Voters without Borders

Moderated by Sebastian Berchesan, Executive Secretary at Stand Up for Europe

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break | Refresh and Network

Break to enjoy coffee.

11:30 – 12:45 Panel discussion: The role of diversity and inclusion in empowering young people

This panel aimed to converge theoretical paradigms, empirical research, and pragmatic insights to elucidate the integral role of diversity and inclusion in the socio-political and economic empowerment of youth across Europe. By synthesizing recent fieldwork studies and the substantive findings of the Citizen-Z project, the panel presented a nuanced understanding of how inclusive practices can foster resilience, innovation, and societal cohesion among young populations.

Speakers:

Prof. Luigi di Santo, Professor of Philosophy and Law at the University of Cassino and Lazio Meridionale

Prof. Katuscia Carnà, Head of Education, Director of national and international training courses on the topics of Active and Global Citizenship

Marco Tarquinio, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

Domenico De Carlo, Youth Representative, Youth Forum of Potenza

Ludmila Malai, EU Project Manager and Coordinator of the Citizen Z Project

Moderated by Dr. Cenap Mustafa Aydin, Director at Istituto Tevere, Italy

12:45 – 13:30 Test your knowledge – European Parliament Quiz

In this final session, all attendees were invited to participate in an engaging quiz covering a wide range of questions related to one of the main legislative bodies of the EU – the European Parliament. An opportunity to enhance our knowledge about the EP and have fun together!

Moderated by Nisa Yildirim and Esra Tekinkaya, Members of the Youth Advocacy Team for the Citizen Z Project

IV. Participants

The event attracted a broad and diverse group of participants from across Europe, with strong engagement both in person and online.

Day 1: The first day of the event saw **47 participants** attending in person, representing **9 different countries**. These countries included Belgium, Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Spain, Greece, Estonia, Austria, and Romania. The presence of participants from such a varied range of regions contributed to a rich exchange of perspectives and ideas. In addition to the in-person attendees, the event garnered significant online attention, with **81 virtual participants** joining via online streaming platforms.

Day 2: The second day was more focused, with **29 participants** attending in person from **7 countries**: Belgium, Croatia, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Greece, and Spain. While the number of countries represented slightly decreased, the discussions remained dynamic, driven by the active participation of this group. The online component remained strong, with **58 online views**, ensuring that a wide audience could continue to engage with the event's key panel discussions.

Over **65 unique participants** attended the two-day event in person, including 35 women, 29 men, and one non-binary person. Among them, 21 were 25 years old or younger, while most of the remaining participants were between 26 and 35.

V. Participants' feedback

The feedback from participants who attended the event reflects high levels of satisfaction with both the content and organisation. All respondents participated in at least three sessions, indicating strong engagement and interest in the program. In terms of overall satisfaction, every participant rated the event 5 out of 5, demonstrating their appreciation for the way it was conducted.

Venue and Facilities

Participants had positive remarks about the venue, InfoHub, noting its excellent location near the city centre and its peaceful and pleasant atmosphere. They highlighted the welcoming and attentive staff, cleanliness,

and suitability of the venue. Some specific comments included: "InfoHub is a great location, offering a calm and nice environment."; "The hospitality of staff members was great, as well as the cleanliness of the venue."; "Very comfortable and central."; "I felt welcomed."

Speakers and Sessions

Participants were particularly impressed with Suzana Carp, the European Policy Expert who spoke on the housing crisis. Other speakers, such as Tony Venables, Vasiliki Mustakis, and Luigi di Santo, who contributed to panels on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and Diversity and Inclusion, were also mentioned and praised by participants.

Suggestions for Improvement

While feedback was overwhelmingly positive, some participants suggested that holding future events after 5 pm would allow more young people to attend, as many have daytime commitments such as classes. Additionally, there were calls for a greater variety of food and drinks. Despite these logistical suggestions, there were no criticisms regarding the content of the program itself. Participants praised the organizers for fostering an engaging and safe environment where they felt welcomed and comfortable expressing their ideas freely.

Memorable Moments

When asked what they would remember most from the event, participants highlighted the interactive nature of the sessions and the sense of community. Some key takeaways included: "The active sessions and talks with participants."; "I will remember that many young people across Europe face similar issues regarding housing."; "The quality of the discussions and the great energy shared with everyone."; "The panels on the housing crisis and the European Citizens' Initiative."; "The EP Quiz."

Overall Enthusiasm

Participants expressed their enthusiasm for the event and their desire for more opportunities to engage in similar discussions. A few final comments summarized their experience: "I am happy to be involved and think we should find ways to attract more participants by hosting events after 5 p.m.";

"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to deliberate on important topics."; "I am super glad about the book gift—thank you again! It was lovely!".

Overall, the event was met with great enthusiasm, leaving participants with positive memories and a sense of connection around shared concerns.

VI. Policy Recommendations

The following set of policy recommendations is the result of two rounds of deliberations held in each consortium member country (Belgium, Croatia, Italy and the Netherlands) over the past two years of the Citizen Z project.

1. Final recommendations from the Netherlands on the Housing Crisis

➤ Increased Investments in Social Housing:

- Boost investments in social housing to expand the supply of affordable homes and lower rental prices, alleviating strain on the housing market.

➤ Tighter Regulations for Equitable Renting:

- Introduce stricter regulations to address disparities in renting.
- Prioritize social housing allocation for those in greatest need to ensure fairness and accessibility.

➤ Support Programs for Youth:

- Implement initiatives such as starter loans or incentives for constructing student accommodations.
- Provide tailored financial support to help young people access the housing market.

➤ Enhanced Collaboration:

- Foster closer cooperation among governmental bodies, housing associations, and stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions to the housing crisis.
- **Awareness and Education:**
 - Raise awareness and provide education on housing rights to empower tenants.
 - Equip individuals to assert their housing rights effectively.
- **Addressing Structural Issues:**
 - Tackle systemic challenges like speculation and income inequality to establish a stable and equitable housing market.
 - Implement structural reforms for enduring change.
- **Revitalizing Shrinking Regions:**
 - Focus on revitalizing shrinking regions through construction efforts.
 - Mitigate housing shortages and promote regional development.
- **Efficient Use of Existing Housing Stock:**
 - Encourage communal living arrangements and repurpose vacant buildings into affordable housing units.
 - Explore adaptable housing concepts to maximize the use of existing housing stock.
- **Supplementary Actions:**
 - Accelerate the construction of affordable rental homes to meet increasing demand.
 - Promote the renovation and repurposing of vacant properties.
 - Explore innovative housing solutions such as tiny houses.
 - Adjust regulations to facilitate converting long-vacant properties into studios for young people.
 - Encourage programs enabling young individuals to work for housing or actively contribute to society.
- **Youth Participation and Advocacy:**

- Ensure active involvement of young people in housing-related policymaking by establishing forums or advisory groups.
- Listen to their needs and involve them in decision-making processes related to housing policy.

➤ **Storytelling:**

- Use storytelling to convey the realities of the housing crisis and foster empathy among policymakers and the public.
- Share personal experiences to illustrate the impact of housing challenges, enhancing advocacy efforts.

2. Final recommendations from Croatia on Education and Youth Centres

Recommendations for the theme "Education for Active Citizenship - European Perspective" include:

- Croatia should consider reducing the number of mandatory subjects in primary and secondary school to allow for more elective subjects (national level).
- Promote volunteering from primary school as it fosters an active citizenship mindset among youth (EU level).
- Implement a non-obligatory EU framework for civic education that includes basic curriculum and teacher training, benefiting member states (EU level).
- Member states should enhance promotion of EU programs like Erasmus+, ESC, and CERV to supplement formal civic education efforts (national level).

The recommendations for the theme "Services and Activities of the Youth Centre" aim to ensure that youth centers both locally and across the European Union effectively meet the diverse needs and interests of young people, providing a safe and enriching environment for their personal development and community engagement:

- Services and activities at the youth center should be accessible to a wide spectrum of youth, ensuring affordability through mechanisms such as a volunteer points system. This system could allow youth facing economic and social challenges to earn points that can be exchanged for paid services at the center or donated to others. Additionally, extended operating hours and enhanced public transport options should be provided to enable young people from surrounding areas to easily access the center's activities and return home via public transport.
- Participatory budgeting must form the foundation for engaging youth in developing and implementing activities and services at the youth center. Establish mechanisms to enable participatory budgeting, such as monthly or quarterly forum discussions and open calls for projects. These processes should be clear, transparent, and designed to minimize administrative burdens for youth applicants.
- Establish continuous mechanisms for monitoring and assessing youth needs, incorporating regular feedback channels from the youth community.
- Communication with and for youth should be transparent, youth-friendly, and accessible in various formats, particularly for those facing health, geographical, and cultural challenges. Establish an info-point within the youth center that provides relevant information and services catering to youth interests.
- Youth centers should offer access to psychological counseling services in a confidential manner, with options for anonymous access when needed. Additionally, organize group counseling and therapy sessions led by young psychologists under supervision, to facilitate peer learning and engage youth with specific skills and knowledge.
- Allocate a dedicated physical space within the youth center, such as a room, specifically for youth to self-organize and manage leisure activities. This space could include youth clubs or sections within the center with a small kitchen, facilitating meal preparation and cultural exchange activities through cuisine.
- Offer free access to technology, including apps and paid programs for activities like programming, video production, graphic design, and

communication at the youth center. Ensure comprehensive support services are available for using this technology, such as assistance with sound production for concerts and using photography or video equipment for production and post-production needs.

- Create dedicated zones for quiet study, reading and relaxation with round-the-clock free access to youth-oriented print and digital publications.
- Provide advisory services for formal education, offering quarterly or yearly informative sessions on various learning opportunities, including high school options, study programs, and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Facilitate a wide range of opportunities for creative expression, encompassing visual art, music, video, photography, dance, theatre, and more. Provide both physical and digital spaces, including equipped art studios, rooms for sound and video production, music rooms, and relevant programs. Ensure supportive feedback and reflection on creative outputs from artists, musicians, producers, and other experts.
- Coordinate short-term and long-term non-formal educational programs focusing on digital literacy and safety, media and information literacy, project management, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy, aiming to foster inclusive communication skills, life-applicable skills such as writing CVs and basic home repairs, as well as creative development through workshops like ceramic and clay crafting.
- Facilitate volunteering opportunities within the youth center to encourage peer learning, skill exchange, self-organization of leisure time, and the development of diverse skill sets relevant to the labor market.
- Support young people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, including foreigners, in integrating into society and familiarizing themselves with local culture. Organize activities such as cultural exchanges, language learning, communal cooking events, and social gatherings to facilitate integration and foster community understanding and cohesion.

3. Final Recommendations from Italy on Youth Education and Engagement

- Invest in Youth Engagement and Infrastructure: Regions like Basilicata should prioritize creating opportunities for young people by improving infrastructure, fostering entrepreneurship, and offering incentives to retain and attract talent. Local governments should partner with the youth to develop solutions tailored to regional challenges.
- Strengthen Civic Education and Democratic Participation: Educational initiatives and community programs across Europe should continue to emphasize the importance of democratic engagement and social responsibility, particularly among young people. Encouraging youth-led initiatives and offering platforms for dialogue can foster a culture of active citizenship.
- Leverage Sports as a Unifying Tool: Sports should be actively promoted as a means of bringing diverse communities together. Governments and NGOs could collaborate to create mixed-sport teams, raise awareness among sports officials, and host inclusive events that promote social cohesion.
- Promote Interfaith and Multicultural Education: Schools should integrate interfaith and multicultural education into their curricula to prepare students for global diversity. This could include exchange programs, cross-cultural workshops, and interfaith learning projects that promote mutual respect and understanding.
- Foster Continuous Dialogue: Ongoing dialogue between communities, governments, and youth on key issues such as migration, cultural integration, and infrastructure development is critical. By promoting transparency and open communication, these discussions can lead to more inclusive policy decisions and social progress.
- Tackle Student Discrimination & Employment Issues: Strengthen policies that address discrimination in housing and employment for students, particularly international and marginalized groups. Additionally, create platforms that facilitate better communication

between students, educational institutions, and local governments to address these challenges proactively.

4. Final Recommendations from Belgium on Social Justice

➤ Invest in Affordable and Healthy Housing:

Policymakers should prioritise investments in social housing to ensure that individuals with lower incomes have access to affordable and decent housing. Additionally, support should be extended to homeowners to make their properties more energy-efficient and climate-neutral, despite the associated costs. While some measures are mandatory, the financial burden should be acknowledged.

➤ Increase Social Support for Vulnerable Groups:

There is a need for enhanced social support systems for individuals living in low-income and unhealthy environments. This support should facilitate greater social inclusion, enabling for instance children to participate in sports clubs or attend social activities.

➤ Strengthen Community Integration:

Creation of inclusive spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can interact and learn from each other. Considerations such as transportation accessibility, venue locations, and affordability are crucial. Organizations dedicated to fostering community integration should receive increased financial support to expand their outreach.

➤ Role of Schools in Social Justice Education:

Schools play a pivotal role in raising awareness about social (in)justice issues. Practical examples illustrating the consequences of inequity should be integrated into educational curricula from a young age. This approach aims to inspire proactive engagement among future generations.

➤ Engage with Youth Culture and Media:

Policymakers should actively engage with youth culture, including social media platforms and youth organizations, to effectively communicate and

raise awareness about pressing issues. Establishing a presence in these spheres can foster meaningful dialogue and engagement.

➤ **Think Globally, Act Locally, Plan for the Future:**

Acknowledge the interconnectedness of local communities within a global context. While decisions are often made with local interests in mind, policymakers should also prioritize long-term global impacts. This forward-thinking approach ensures sustainable decision-making that considers future generations' needs and challenges.

These recommendations reflect the perspectives and aspirations of young people in Belgium, emphasising the importance of equity, sustainability, and community integration in policymaking.