

 Youth
Goals

EUYD10

WE NEED YOUTH

*EUYD10 Results of the
Consultation Phase: We
Need Youth*

Dan Moxon and Ondřej Bárta

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Authors: Dan MOXON and Ondřej BÁRTA on behalf of People, Dialogue, and Change

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Introduction

'The consultation phase' of the 10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (EUJD10) ran from July 2023 to January 2024, under the TRIO Presidency of Spain - Belgium - Hungary. This document summarises results of consultation activities conducted by National Working Groups (NWGs). Input from International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) participating in the cycle, as well as the outcomes of the EU Youth Conference in Alicante, Spain (1st to 4th October 2023) are also incorporated.

Introduction to the thematic framework from the European Steering Group

The topic of the 10th cycle is European Youth Goal #3 on Inclusive Societies which aims to "Enable and ensure the inclusion of all young people in society."

In particular, target 3 on access to learning environments, 4 on the capacities of educators and 6 on social support were **the basis of the consultation** work during the cycle.

	<p>Youth goal #3: Enable and ensure the inclusion of all young people in society.</p> <p>One third of young people in Europe are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Many do not have access to their social rights. Many continue to face multiple discrimination, experience prejudice, and hate crimes. New migratory phenomena brought several social and inclusion challenges. Therefore, it is crucial to work towards the fulfilment of the rights of all young people in Europe, including the most marginalised and excluded.</p>
<p>Targets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide legal protection and enforce international legal instruments to fight against all kinds of discrimination and hate speech, recognising that young people are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination.2. Strengthen outreach of information to marginalised young people, to ensure they are aware of spaces, opportunities, and experiences available to them.3. Ensure that all marginalised young people have equal access to formal and non-formal learning environments, addressing all the dimensions of inclusion.4. Strengthen the capacities of educators to work with marginalised young people.5. Provide more spaces, opportunities, resources, and programmes to foster dialogue and social cohesion, and combat discrimination and segregation.	

6. **Strengthen social support by implementing the right to a living wage, fair work conditions, universal access to quality health care, and ensure specific measures for marginalised young people.**
7. Ensure that marginalised young people are participating in all decision-making processes and are key players, particularly in processes concerning their own rights, wellbeing, and interests.

Subgoals 2 on outreach of information and 7 on participation in decision-making processes will serve as methodological baseline: as both sub-targets have already been addressed during previous cycles of the EUYD, and in order to avoid repetition of the work already done. In order to ensure continuity and coherence in the dialogue, this cycle will further the work on social inclusion that was undertaken during the third, fifth and ninth cycles of the structured / EU youth dialogue. Furthermore, instead of focusing on marginalised young people, the activities will address young people with fewer opportunities' perspectives¹.

Societal challenges | The European landscape has also changed considerably since the creation of the Youth goals during the 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue entitled Europe – what's next? (2017-2018). The Youth Goals and their targets ought therefore to be understood in a new reality, and alongside contemporary social challenges. #EYG3-Inclusive Societies aims to enable and ensure the inclusion of all young people in society. Recently, their societal position has been impacted by global crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, as well as the Russian aggression in Ukraine and its ensuing societal and economic impact on European societies, among others. More specifically, in recent years young Europeans identified² the following challenges: persistent poverty, social exclusion of minorities and vulnerable youth, health problems (such as Covid and mental wellbeing-related problems), access to quality employment and training, the climate crisis, peace and security, migratory flows (and the associated distribution of resources) and the use of new technologies (including artificial intelligence).

These developments put a strong pressure on social cohesion in European societies and on the situation of young people in particular. Strengthening social inclusion and cohesion contributes to the resilience of European societies and of young people, especially young people with fewer opportunities. Aiming at more inclusive societies offers young people the opportunity to take an active role in tackling new challenges. By reaching out to those from minorities, in rural areas, with a disability, from a socially vulnerable background, inter alia, the EU youth dialogue partners strive to enable all young people to take an active part in and contribute to the dialogue in the fields impacting their lives.

¹ Young people with fewer opportunities is agreed language within the Council that is defined in article 2 of the Erasmus+ Regulation (Regulation 2021/817): 'young people' means individuals aged between 13 and 30; and 'people with fewer opportunities' means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme;".

² See cycle explanatory note for accompanying citations.

From Goals to Actions | The common ambitions of the trio in rolling out the 10th cycle are laid down in annex 1 of the cycle explanatory note. Throughout the EUYD process, concrete recommendations on how to implement European Youth Goal #3 on European, national, regional, and local levels will be sought. These recommendations will be put into practice, whenever this is possible. In a coherent participation process, young people, youth organisations and policy / decision-makers in the EU discuss topics important to young people and implement dialogue results. This is how European Youth Goals translate into Youth Actions. This cycle should also allow for flexibility in its implementation, depending on the results of consultations for example, but also depending on the current context (e.g., pandemic, or other pan-European crises).

Section 1: Barriers to social inclusion

This section explores the barriers to social inclusion identified through EUYD10 qualitative consultation. National Working Groups (NWGs) within the consultation were asked to design their consultation activities using the guiding question:

‘What are the current barriers to the full inclusion of all young people in society, especially young people with fewer opportunities? This includes:

- *Barriers to being fully included in education and to having access to quality learning.*
- *Barriers created by the action or inactions of educators.*
- *Barriers to accessing quality work opportunities and accompanying labour and employment protections.*
- *Barriers to accessing quality healthcare or other forms of social support’*

A range of barriers were identified through NWG reports and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation (INGYO) expert statements. **The major themes and barriers** reported by NWGs and INGyOs are summarised in this section. Links are also made to the outcomes of the EU Youth Conference (EUYC) in Alicante.

Some of the barriers described will apply to greater or lesser extent within different countries and to different young people. The EUYD10 qualitative consultation is not able to identify the prevalence of each barrier, the report intends simply to summarise the major areas of discussion within the consultation as reported by NWGs and INGyOs.

1.1 Barriers relating to education and learning environments

The EUYC in Alicante identified that *'barriers within the educational system, including a lack of schools in remote areas, inadequate infrastructure for disabled individuals, and a shortage of qualified educators and staff, hinder the participation of young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities.'* During the conference there were concerns that access to education is not equally accessible to all people and about gaps in non-formal education.

These same barriers were largely reflected within the EUYD consultation, along with a range of other barriers to education.

Note - in this report the terms education and learning environments are used in the broadest sense, to include formal education (e.g., schools, universities), non-formal education (e.g. youth work and youth projects) and informal learning environments (e.g., libraries, museums, public spaces).

Accessibility of education and learning environments

The **physical (in)accessibility of learning environments** was highlighted as a barrier to education. Concerns were frequently raised about buildings and learning environments too often being unsuitable or inaccessible for people with physical disabilities (e.g., lacking ramps, elevators etc.). There was also concern about the lack of gender-neutral toilets in learning environments to accommodate transgender and gender non-binary young people.

Language barriers, and lack of understandable, accessible, or adapted language within learning environments and also within the promotion of educational opportunities was identified as a further accessibility barrier to learning environments. This relates to both languages being understandable but also to the need for use of multiple languages. The EUYC working groups highlighted barriers relating to *'discrimination of non-native speakers and lack of language support available for them.'*

Concerns about language barriers in the consultation included:

- Lack of simple, accessible, and understandable language within educational environments, which particularly excluded young people with learning or communication disabilities.
- Educational institutions which prioritised one language over another commonly spoken language. For example, German speaking Belgian young people identified that German translation of textbooks was often poor. Concerns were identified by young people in Estonia about the removal of support for Russian speakers from educational programmes. Deaf young people identified the lack of sign language interpreters available in learning environments.
- International educational opportunities requiring high understanding of foreign languages to access - leading to exclusion of young people without advanced language skills.
- Barriers to education faced by recent migrants (including refugees) who are not able to speak the language which education was offered in.

‘Students who do not master the language of instruction have a harder time adapting, they often do not understand the subject, they can lag behind their classmates much more easily, the problem also occurs in students with impaired communication skills or various learning disorders’

Slovakian NWG Report

Financial barriers to education and learning environments

During the consultation, financial costs related to accessing education and learning environments were raised as a barrier, which was said to disproportionately affect young people in weaker financial situations. This included:

- The financial difficulty of taking part in formal education, associated with regular expenses for transport, school lunches, textbooks and aids or class trips.
- Financial strain associated with relocation for university opportunities, and particularly the costs of accommodation.
- Direct fees to take part educational activities or to and access learning environments such as:
 - Tuition fees,
 - Entry fees musical, cultural, leisure and sport activities,
 - Participation fees for international mobility opportunities,
 - Fees for participation in informal / non-formal learning opportunities and youth activities.

‘The majority of young people say that the school system in France is free but requires additional costs such as buying supplies, renting an apartment depending on where your university is, etc which is difficult for some families. Financial problems, precarious situations and social background were clearly identified as obstacles to quality education in primary, secondary or higher education.’

French NWG Report

Cultures of exclusion within education and learning environments

(see also Section 1.2 and 1.5)

Social exclusion when taking part in education or learning environments was identified as a further barrier to quality education and learning. Many NWG reports identified issues with a **culture of exclusion, including prejudice, hate speech, discrimination, and bullying** directed at young people from a range of minority groups occurring within schools and learning environments. This was primarily reported in relation to formal education, but also occurred in other environments including within the youth sector.

Across the various reports these issues relating to a culture of exclusion were raised by young people from ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority backgrounds, including young Roma, young Irish Travellers, and young Jewish people. The issue was also raised by young people with disabilities, young people with mental health needs, and those from LGBTQ backgrounds.

From these reports, it was clear that in some cases **teachers and educators were not just failing to take action to challenge cultures of discrimination but were actively perpetrating them** (see section 1.2 for further details). Concerns were also raised about lack of mechanisms to deal with bullying.

'In formal education, issues of inclusivity persist, with young people from ethnic minorities often reporting feelings of exclusion in school settings. This exclusion extends to racial stereotypes used by teachers, affecting their overall experience. Similarly, individuals with a migration background face instances of avoidance by peers in school.'

Austrian NWG Report

"I have experienced racism every day in school, from the age of 7 to 9 years old"

Young person quoted in the Luxembourg NWG Report

Some young people from minority backgrounds reported **experiencing violence or feeling unsafe** within educational settings.

'Violence is rife in schools, both between students and from teachers, in various forms: physical, psychological, insults, pressure, etc., especially homophobia and bullying.'

Belgian French Community NWG report

'Inclusion is about people just being able to be themselves without feeling scared – to feel safe without the world being against you'

Irish LGBTQ young person quoted in NWG report

Other young people described **a feeling or experiencing 'otherness'** within learning environments. This was said to occur from things such as being made to feel different, not having needs understood, a lack of contact with others, reproduction of cultural stereotypes, and an overall ignorance and low awareness of the majority of young people about the life of people with some form of disadvantage. An example of this was young people not being allowed to show religious and cultural symbols such as headscarves in schools.

'[The focus group] participants were female [and neurodivergent] they mentioned that especially as girls, their neuropsychological challenges were not understood, which made them feel like there was something wrong with them'

Finnish NWG report

Problems with structure and culture of formal education and schools

Within the consultation, concerns were raised that the current approach **to teaching and school is based too heavily on instruction and examination and so is not flexible or adaptable enough** to accommodate the different needs, learning styles or diversity of young people. As a result, the school system was said not to create inclusive learning environments where all present could experience quality education. During the EUYC in Alicante, this was described as a lack of *'needs-centred'* education. Large class sizes, pressure of examination and prioritisation of students who could 'conform' to the school system and achieve well academically was often mentioned in relation to this during the consultation.

The lack of emphasis on youth participation in formal education environments was raised as a barrier to quality education. This was particularly said to impact at the social and cultural level, in that teachers often did not treat young people as if their voices were of concern or value, leading to young people having feelings of **'disconnection' and 'distance,'** which could be particularly impactful on those who were already experiencing social exclusion.

During the consultation, some concerns were also raised about the content of formal education curricula including:

- Lack of education on the topic of inclusion,
- Lack of history teaching which took into account the diverse histories of young Europeans (e.g. young people affected by colonialism in French Martinique).
- Lack of life skills and civic education,
- Lack of education that is relevant to the labour market such as digital skills (see section 1.3. For more on this).

Lack of diversity within schools was said to be a barrier to social inclusion both within the EUYD consultation and the EUYC in Alicante. In the consultation, some participants were concerned about the use of special educational schools for young people with disabilities - said to prevent these young people from having contact with non-disabled young people and to perpetuate exclusion. (However, other participants identified the value of special schools as a tool to meet the needs of young people with disabilities). Issues were also raised regarding lack of diversity within schools in terms of the economic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds of students. Schools which mainly served young people from the same social background were said to reinforce prejudice, segregation and a general lack of contact and understanding between different social groups.

Gaps in non-formal education and the youth field

Recognising the role that the youth field and youth work can play in relation to social inclusion (see Section 4), **gaps and generally weakness in the youth field were highlighted within the EUYD consultation as a barrier to social inclusion.** These gaps were said to lead to unequal access to non-formal education and youth opportunities amongst young people. According to the working groups at the EUYC in Alicante *'the deficiency in [youth] associations leads to a scarcity of non-formal education opportunities, enhancing the overall inequality experienced by the youth.'*

Within the consultation concerns were expressed around:

- Lack of a basic youth work offer to young people in some EU countries,
- Lack of youth provision in rural areas,
- Lack of youth provision that was accessible to groups with additional support needs such as young people with disabilities or young Roma, or young people from linguistic minorities,
- Lack of training (and resources for training) for youth workers and volunteers around the topic of social inclusion and working with young people with fewer opportunities - leading to lower competences in these areas,
- Lack of effective information and promotion of youth provision to young people (see section 1.5) - making youth provision harder to access for young people,

- Limited or inadequate sports training facilities, youth centres and other physical spaces.
- Lack of recognition of the value of non-formal education.

The gaps in provision and delivery were ultimately said to stem from a **lack of resourcing and political recognition of the role of the youth sector**. Though the situation is not equal in all countries, some NWGs highlighted a lack of funding (especially long-term funding) for youth work and youth civil society, a lack of legal basis or established national policy frameworks for youth work and youth workers as well as low salaries, poor terms and conditions and weak career pathways. Ultimately, **a lack of capacity and resource within the youth sector can be identified as a barrier to effective work around social inclusion by the youth field**.

1.2 Barriers relating to educators

Within the consultation, the exclusion of young people with fewer opportunities was said to be perpetuated by educators (including teachers, youth workers, youth leaders and other types of educators) in three distinct ways.

- 1) Though **a lack of understanding amongst educators of the needs of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds** and lack of skills to support these young people effectively. This was said to lead to educators providing poor support for those young people. These concerns were often related to the young people with disabilities or mental health needs.
- 2) By **educators failing to take action to challenge incidents or cultures of discrimination and exclusion between learners** (see also Section 1.1), such as not taking bullying seriously, or not actively promoting inclusion.
- 3) By **educators actively expressing prejudicial or discriminatory attitudes and practices** towards young people from specific backgrounds (see also Section 1.1). This included:
 - a) Educators holding low expectations of young people with fewer opportunities and discouraging those young people from taking part in secondary education, higher education, extracurricular activities and/or non-formal education.
 - b) Use of racial stereotypes, and/or expression of stigma relating to gender and disability by educators.
 - c) Conscious bullying on the part of educators (abuse of power, condemnation, public comparison, mocking or putting down the student's performance in front of the class.)
 - d) Favouritism (especially from youth leaders) towards some young people over others

'Young people in several consultations reported being made fun of or put down by teachers because of their background or poor English language skills.'

Irish NWG report

'Roma youth are not encouraged to do well, aim high or pursue higher degrees, but rather pushed to low-paying jobs that are deemed suitable for the Roma'

Finnish NWG report

The EUYD consultation is **not able to identify how common these issues above are**. However, reports of them were too widespread to be considered isolated incidents, and they were identified within both formal and non-formal education. At the same time, it is clear these issues also do not necessarily occur in all learning environments across Europe, many young peoples reported good experiences of educators.

Several consultations linked the above issues to a **lack of training for educators on addressing inclusion**. Some NWGs noted the particular challenges faced by volunteer youth leaders in youth organisations, who did not always have the needed training and experience to support young people with fewer opportunities effectively.

During the consultation, it was also said that educators can have a **general approach of a lack of respect toward young people** and a failure to value participation and equal communication as an important element of young people's learning and development. This was said to be a barrier towards inclusive learning environments.

1.3 Barriers relating to employment and work

The EUYC in Alicante identified that barriers to social inclusion related to work and employment included:

- Socio-economic inequality that results in unequal access to opportunities, for example in the labour market or youth activities
- Lack of correlation between education and labour market.
- Lack of discrimination-free workspaces and equal opportunities to access the labour market
- Lack of innovation and updated curriculum in education centres which obstacles fair work conditions.
- Different socio-economic backgrounds can have less impact on future decisions if the state provides opportunities, some participants manifested this being their case.

These barriers were reflected in the EUYD consultations as follows:

Limitations in employment opportunities

There were general concerns raised about the **limited number of quality work opportunities** and challenges faced by young people trying to enter the labour market. These included:

- The limited number of quality internships, traineeships, and apprenticeships, or entry level positions.
- Widespread precarious work opportunities and unstable employment
- Limited quality work opportunities for young people in rural areas or living in lower socio-economic areas. This is connected to poor transport links making travel to other areas for work challenging (see section 1.5).
- Use of unpaid internships and badly paid apprenticeships - which are less accessible to young people in weaker financial circumstances due to the need to support oneself financially whilst working.

Mismatch between education and employment

A number of NWG reports highlighted barriers to work and employment coming from a **mismatch between the skills and experience developed during education and the needs of employers**. There were concerns that young people are leaving formal education having received insufficient access to the training and work experience needed to enter many professions, and that employers often require high levels of experience or qualifications making some fields inaccessible. This topic was also well explored within the [7th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue Consultations](#), where it was identified that education systems do not prepare young people sufficiently for the current and future forms of work, particularly in relation to digitalisation.

'The school system lags behind the needs of students and the expectations of labour market, especially when it comes to digitalization and STEM education and training'

Hungarian NWG report

‘One of the primary issues related to the scarcity of professional opportunities for young people is often limited access to initial work experience. Limited experience can hinder entry into the job market, particularly when employers require practical experience. This is especially true for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may not have access to [un]paid internships or apprenticeships.’

Polish NWG report

During this cycle's consultation it was suggested that young people who leave education sooner (e.g. those who had not attended university) were most strongly affected by this mismatch and lack of employment skills. Therefore, the **barriers that some young people with fewer opportunities face during education** (see section 1.1 and 1.2) which may encourage them to exit education at a younger age and then **continue to affect these young people as they try to move into the labour market.**

‘Young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face the dilemma of choosing between paid work and gaining experience through internships or extracurricular activities. This trade-off significantly impacts their career prospects, as many sectors value experience gained through unpaid internships, which they cannot afford to undertake’

The Netherlands NWG Report

Several NWGs highlighted that young people (especially from non-academic backgrounds) **seek careers in fields they know of from their family** and that in disadvantaged families, the type of work is inherited, leading to inheritance of inequalities between generations. Therefore, **a lack of career guidance**, and educators holding low expectations of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (see Section 1.2) could be seen as a barrier to improving the career possibilities of young people in these situations.

Reluctance of employers to accommodate diverse needs

Some working group reports raised concerns from young people about the **reluctance of employers to accommodate the additional needs** of young people with fewer opportunities, particularly those with disabilities.

‘There is a noted lack of understanding and adequate support for people who require more assistance in the workplace. This includes a scarcity of jobs that cater to individuals with specific needs, whether due to chronic illness, disability, or mental health conditions’

The Netherlands NWG report

It was also said that employment schemes/workshops specifically for young people with disabilities could also be hard to access, poor quality, or offered limited financial reward, and there were concerns that some measures to support young people with disabilities into employment were not effective.

‘Companies exploit individuals with disabilities, through the Employment Agency comes a trial period with subsidies to the company that ends if the employment transitions to full-time. Companies take advantage of what should be an incentive for hiring.’

Swedish NWG Report

Issues relating to **gender disparity within the workplace** were also a concern for some young people:

'Some participants mentioned issues relating to gender disparity in the workplace impacting young women such as the gender pay gap and limitations with career advancement if they take maternity leave. There was also awareness of the challenges single parents face like flexible working for childcare and some said this might be more challenging for single fathers due to a perception they will be taken less seriously than single mothers.'

Irish NWG report

Discrimination within recruitment

A range of reports highlighted young people's concerns about **discrimination and unfair practices within recruitment processes** of employers. This was said to make it harder for some young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities to secure employment. Discriminatory /unfair practices were identified in two ways.

- 1) Young people's experiences of **discrimination based on disability or ethnic, religious, or cultural background** during recruitment.

'[There] are very common prejudices and stereotypes, which are manifested in the reluctance of employers to employ Roma'

Slovakian NWG report

'Young people with disabilities highlighted what they perceived as a stigma about disability among employers including perceptions they are 'less able' in the workplace, lack of understanding about appropriate supports, and employers who blame health and safety concerns as an excuse to exclude young people with disabilities. Some with intellectual disability and/or autism felt their employment can be a 'tick-box exercise' that fails to meaningfully include them in the workplace. The decision about whether to disclose a disability is also a key challenge for fear of judgement by an employer or colleagues.'

Irish NWG report

'A young participant of Turkish nationality shared her personal experience. The young woman studied Psychology in Portugal and is currently seeking employment in the country, open to any type of job, not necessarily within her field of study. Despite demonstrating proficiency in the Portuguese language, she highlights that being from a different country, culture, and religion has become a reason for exclusion in accessing job opportunities.'

Portuguese NWG report

- 2) Young people's experiences of **Nepotism** and filling positions in which family relatives or social contacts are preferred over the others, often better qualified candidates.

'A limited professional network can also pose challenges for young job seekers. The contemporary job market heavily relies on social networks and relationships. This can make it challenging for young people who lack access to such resources to begin their careers.'

Polish NWG report

Some concerns were also raised by young people about **gender bias within particular professions** (such as STEM) and it was said that discrimination based on gender can limit job opportunities and access to certain professions for women. Challenges faced by young refugees getting legal permission / permits to work were also noted.

1.4 Barriers relating to healthcare and social support

Barriers related to mental health

Working groups at the EUYC in Alicante identified that *'mental health issues, as they disrupt youth emotional and cognitive development that can lead to long-term challenges in personal, academic, and social life,'* and that poor mental health is a barrier preventing the social inclusion of the person experiencing it.

Within the EUYD consultation, under the topic of healthcare and social support, mental health was the most commonly discussed issue, and so can be presumed to be a strong area of concern for young people. NWGs noted rising issues relating to young people's mental health. They linked these increases to the impact of COVID-19, challenges with pressure within schools and balancing work/life as well as use of social media.

Many NWGs also said **young people with fewer opportunities felt their poor mental health was linked to other inequalities and sources of exclusion.** These young people described the impact of experiences bullying, racism and prejudice on their mental health. Others, particularly those with disabilities and long-term health conditions, discussed how continually having to fight for services and support lead to worsened mental health. Some young people are described as 'giving up' after facing persistent challenges and exclusion in other areas (such as education, employment etc).

'Another strong message was that they [young people with brain damage] need to fight for their rights for healthcare, income, insurance, or hobbies even in courts, which is very mentally exhausting especially for a person with brain damage. Falling in between support systems (benefits, social services) means that it is very difficult to do anything or to participate in. They felt left out and expressed that they feel like they do not have similar rights as other people'

Finnish NWG report

'[Challenges face by disadvantaged young people during education] result in psychological obstacles such as lower frustration tolerance (they give up more easily when put under pressure), disrespect for authority (overreaction to being told they are wrong), psychological difficulties (anxiety, insecurity, trying to please the collective, lack of concentration)'

Czech NWG report

Stigma and cultural barriers relating to mental health were said to prevent some young people from accessing support in this area. Some NWGs identified this affecting young people from some backgrounds more than others, such as young men, or young people from Irish Traveller communities.

‘Stigmatization, particularly regarding mental health issues, was highlighted as a significant barrier. Young people noted that societal stigma surrounding mental health creates additional challenges in seeking support.’

Cyprus NWG report

‘They think we are in the foster home because we did something wrong, because we are bad. You also can’t tell that you are seeing a therapist. They think you are crazy. We are different and people think that’s not normal. They don’t understand it.’

Luxembourg NWG report

There were strong concerns about the **lack of access to support for young people's mental health needs**. Barriers to accessing services identified included:

- A shortage of mental health services and supporting professionals for young people, leading to long wait times or no available services or appointments.
- Lack of youth information on how and where to seek support.
- A lack of understanding from teachers and youth workers about how to signpost or direct young people to further support.
- High costs of accessing mental health services, and/or lack of coverage by health insurance systems.
- Bureaucratic obstacles when trying to access mental health support.
- Gaps in services in rural areas.
- Service being unsuitable for young people or poor quality.

Barriers related to other aspects of health and social support

(see also Section 1.5 on Housing)

The **EU youth conference in Alicante** identified the following barriers relating to access to health care:

- *‘Lack of resources of healthcare systems and continuous capacity building of health care professionals aimed at including diverse youth collectives and their specific needs.’*
- *‘There is a disparity in access to mental and physical healthcare services. Our social protection systems are not universally inclusive.’*

These concerns were generally reflected in the EUYC consultation, though (outside of mental health, discussed above) dialogue on health care seems to have been rather general. Across the various NWG reports, there were various comments related to **gaps in healthcare services, general underfunding** as well as **bureaucracy and administration**. There were some concerns about unequal access or exclusion from healthcare identified but these were not widely discussed within the consultation. Specific gaps and inequalities identified included:

- **Gaps in services within rural areas**, affecting young people in those areas
- Issues of **discrimination towards Roma young people** from healthcare professionals, exclusion of migrants from general healthcare systems and challenges accessing support for transgender young people

- Issues with **costs of healthcare services creating barriers** for young people in weaker financial circumstances - identified in a small minority of NWG reports.
- Young people with long-term health conditions or and disabilities being most affected by general gaps and weakness in healthcare systems.

Outside of health and housing (see section 1.5) **other barriers related to accessing social support** were not widely discussed within the consultation. Some general concerns were expressed about bureaucracy of support services and language barriers making support difficult to access. Some NWGs and IYNGOs reported concerns about a lack of support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people of families.

'[There is a] lack of instrumental and infrastructural support to youth at risk of exclusion and excluded youth who experience/d poverty'

Italian NWG report

ATD Fourth World described more systematic barriers occurring when young people in poverty attempted to access support:

'What worries us is institutional maltreatment. Young people living in poverty insist on their constant negative experiences with various institutions (school, training centre, police, health service, social works). This consolidates a fear/rejection by young people of institutional support, which creates a vicious circle of lack of trust and non-take up of rights. As mentioned before, this is mainly due to the fact that we very often genuinely do not understand what young people experiencing exclusion and poverty are going through. Consequently, society and more precisely the professionals (teachers, social workers, doctors) very often rely on misconceptions, stereotypes and misunderstandings when dealing with them.'

ATD Fourth World Expert Statement

1.5 Cross cutting barriers to social inclusions

Structural barrier 1: Housing, financial insecurity, and economic inequality

The weak financial situation of many young Europeans and their families can be understood as a cross cutting barrier to social inclusion. During the consultation, being in a weak or insecure financial situation was identified as leading to barriers for many young people to access things such as education, health and healthcare, transport, leisure, and culture activities as well as full access to social rights. A particular concern for young people was the combination of high cost of living, precarious or low paid employment, and high cost of housing which were said to act together to make it difficult to transition to independence.

Working groups during **the EUYC in Alicante** identified that *'access to all parts of life while being young is limited by socio-economic background'* and *'the socioeconomic circumstances one grows up in determines their quality of life significantly.'* There was concern that *'individual resource constraints, including financial means ... restrict the social inclusion and participation of young people with fewer opportunities'* and that *'lack of affordable accommodation limits young from participating in society.'*

In the EUYD consultation, **financial insecurity for young people, high costs of living and the high cost of housing** was raised as a barrier to inclusion across several NWG reports. It was identified that these things made it difficult for young people to transition to independence, making it challenging to pursue education or career goals. There was said to be a lack of access to a decent and fair economical support system for young people from the state.

'Young people brought into discussion ... financial insecurities and housing shortage. They don't feel supported enough by the state in order to be able to stand on their own feet, move out of their parents' homes and get an education.'

German NWG report

'Housing is a significant issue for students, with expensive rented accommodation, limited availability of places in student halls of residence, high prices for such accommodation and limited prospects for purchasing their own homes. These factors often result in young people, particularly those with limited financial means, dropping out of their course of study or, in some cases, leaving university altogether.'

Polish NWG report

'Young people also noted that these economic challenges then intersect with educational undervaluation, and discrimination in various forms compounds the difficulties faced by those with fewer opportunities. Participants noted that some young individuals end up undervaluing education, potentially influenced by familial pressures or difficulties, diverting attention from academic pursuits.'

Maltese NWG report

Structural barrier 2: Inadequate transport and physical infrastructure

Working groups at the **EUYC in Alicante** expressed concern about *'lack of physical infrastructure to participate in societal and community life, and to access opportunities and public services.'* It was identified that *'the lack of transport services and infrastructure from rural and urban areas decrease accessibility of education, social services, and participation mechanisms.'* During the conference, several concerns were expressed about the general poor quality of public transport and transport accessibility barriers for people with disabilities. In addition, limited infrastructure and availability of public services was said to be a significant concern in rural areas.

During the EUYD consultation, **limitations with transport systems** were highlighted as a cross-cutting barrier affecting young people's ability to access education, work, healthcare, leisure, and other opportunities, making it harder for young people to access these things outside of their neighbourhood of residence. Issues mainly related to public transport costs, reliability, limited as well as timetables and services. While this was said to affect all young people, it was most pronounced for those in rural areas and young people with disabilities. Some young people also reported **challenges accessing driving tests and driving instruction**, caused by language barriers or lack of availability.

'For young people in rural areas a key barrier was the quality of public transport - frequency and clarity of timetables. Participants said that the lack of regular public transport seriously exacerbated the barriers they already faced in accessing education, employment, and healthcare.'

Bulgarian NWG report.

'Transportation emerges as a notable challenge for almost all rural youth. Many can only partake in extracurricular activities if their parents provide transportation, and even when available, transportation is inconvenient, characterised by infrequency and failure to reach necessary destinations. A significant number lack motivation to travel to urban centres for activities, resulting in missed opportunities. Among the respondents, some have already relocated from their hometown due to limited opportunities, and several anticipate doing so soon.'

Estonian NWG report

Young people with disabilities were concerned about the lack of adaptations on public transport systems, making it hard to physically access, or navigate public transport and transport infrastructure. Issues included, lack of ramps and escalators, hard to understand signage, inaccessible systems for stopping buses, and uneven / unsuitable sidewalks and pavements. Young people with disabilities also had similar concerns about **limited accessibility of public spaces, public buildings, and other public infrastructure** (see Section 1.1 for further details on this in relation to learning environments).

Young people in rural areas were concerned about lack of public services and infrastructure within rural areas. This, combined with poor public transport preventing them accessing services in other areas lead to exclusion. This topic was discussed in the [EUJD7 Consultation Results](#).

Structural barrier 3: Policymaking

Insufficient focus on young people and young people with fewer opportunities within policy making was identified as a barrier to social inclusion during the EUYC in Alicante where working groups stated, *'the barrier to inclusion of all youth, at national and local levels, is having insufficient youth policies.'* These concerns were reflected in the consultation, and young people expressed a lack of confidence in current systems to deal with issues of social inclusion.

'Inadequate policies and programs specifically designed to address the needs of young people with fewer opportunities can be a barrier. Supportive policies, such as those promoting youth employment, education, and social inclusion, are crucial for overcoming these challenges'

Greek NWG Report

As part of this, **lack of youth participation in policy making** was highlighted as a barrier to social inclusion. The specific barriers relating to youth participation in decision making are already well explored in the [8th Cycle of EUJD Consultation Results](#).

‘Achieving real change requires collaboration with young people as equal partners to build a society with equal opportunities for all generations. Considering inclusion and exclusion within social policies and involving different groups provides insight into the key challenges and injustices that young people experience in society.’

Croatian NWG Report

Working groups at the EUYC in Alicante identified **barriers to social inclusion relating to lack involvement of people with fewer opportunities in policy making**, as follows:

- *‘[There is a] lack of [political] representatives of diversity: including vulnerable youth, religious, ethnic minorities, people with mental and physical disabilities, migration backgrounds and others.*
- *Superficial inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, without ensuring their meaningful participation [is a barrier]’*

Similar concerns were identified in the consultation:

‘Both Traveller young people and young people with disabilities who participated in the consultations highlighted the significance of representation and would like to see more people from these communities in decision-making positions at the local level e.g. on management boards or in political life and government.’

Irish NWG Report

‘Participation of the young people experiencing poverty and exclusion is still not guaranteed. We cannot continue to ignore the fact that this is the biggest barrier to reaching [Youth Goal 3] Target 6 and the real effectiveness of European and national measures designed to improve the lives of the most marginalised young people. When policies are designed for them but without them, they end up having no impact -or worse, a negative effect- on their lives and those of their communities ... To enable the inclusion of all young people, especially that of the most excluded youth, we need to realise the importance of rethinking policies and measures with them.’

ATD Fourth World Expert Statement

‘Underrepresentation in decision-making processes and public platforms can marginalise certain groups, making it difficult for them to voice their concerns and contribute to shaping policies that affect them.’

Greek NWG Report

Cultural and social barriers

Concerns about direct **discrimination, societal non-acceptance, prejudices, and negative stereotypes** at a personal and cultural level were widely raised through the consultation. There was dialogue about fear of being different, and differences not being respected. Young people expressed concern about **intolerance and even hatred towards those who are different** within society. Young people from marginalised backgrounds described experiences of facing prejudice and hate speech, based on racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, ableism, antisemitism, and similar.

'Respondents emphasise that discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion or other factors can pose a barrier to the inclusion of young people in society.'

Slovenian NWG Report

'Young people frequently recount experiences of severe hate speech based on their gender, sexuality, skin colour, economic status, or religion. Sexism, racism, and classism significantly contribute to their discomfort in various environments, limiting their ability to express themselves freely.'

Austrian NWG Report

'Consulted young people feel they face age discrimination, where their youth is perceived as a lack of experience. This perception is compounded when the individual is also a migrant, racially marginalised, [LGBTQ+] and/or disabled.'

Spanish NWG report

Some young people related this to a core problem in how people treat each other due to lack of respect and false interpretations of people's life and behaviour. This was described as a lack of empathy for others during both the consultation and the EUYC in Alicante. **A lack of social cohesion** was described within consultation reports.

It was also said that there was a **lack of visibility or awareness** for crucial issues such as gender equality, inclusion, combating racism, and homophobia and general ignorance or low awareness of the majority about the life of people with some form of disadvantage was a contributing factor. This included the prevalence of negative stereotypes such as disabled young people being dependent and young Roma being untrustworthy.

'Intercultural conflicts contribute to discrimination among young people with fewer opportunities, fostering the emergence of parallel societies where people who feel discriminated [against] or who don't feel that they belong to society meet.'

Belgian German Speaking Community Report

'Marginalised groups often find themselves unheard, unrespected and underrepresented.'

European Union of Jewish Students Expert Statement

The barriers above were also widely present in the education system (See Section 1.1 and 1.2).

Barriers related to young people's access to information

Working groups at the **EUYC in Alicante** identified cross cutting barriers relating to lack of clear, comprehensive, accessible information for young people. It was said that inaccessibility to information and [lack of] digital knowledge or skills hurts young people from participating in all aspects of society including education, work, and social life. Lack of information was described as not having knowledge regarding rights, opportunities, obligations, and services. Concerns were also raised about digitalisation-infrastructure and lack of access to essential digital tools in rural areas such as internet access.

In the EUYD consultation, young people's **lack of access to information on measures that could support their social inclusion** was also raised. Absence of information in these areas was said to prevent young people making informed choices about their education and employment services, as well as prevent them accessing the help and support available to them.

Lack of access to information was said to be affected by

- Educators or other support professionals such as social workers not providing information,
- Official information sources being produced in complex or inaccessible language(s),
- General lack of information on youth opportunities and support, including information on:
 - Leisure and cultural activities
 - School councils and student councils,
 - Youth organisations, youth opportunities and youth spaces etc (including lack of understanding of their purpose)
 - Informal education opportunities
 - Employment opportunities
 - Mental health support
 - Volunteering opportunities
 - International study opportunities
 - Education scholarships and financial bursaries
 - preventative health care measures and rights.
- General lack of information on rights, including:
 - Rights to health care,
 - Rights to education,
 - Labour rights,
 - Rights and entitlements to social protections such as social security support.

Concerns about information disorder (disinformation, misinformation and malinformation) and so called 'fake news' spread through social media were also raised during the consultation. Information disorder was said to increase political and social polarisation within society, leading to biased opinions through echo chambers which ultimately alienate young people by fostering an environment of marginalisation. It was said that young people receive information from too many unreliable platforms and lack the circumstances or opportunities to talk about and process the information they receive in a satisfying way. **Lack of educational programmes to develop young people's digital literacy** was also raised as part of this issue.

These messages on information disorder supports the outcome of the **EUYC in Alicante regarding prevalence of algorithms in social media platforms** which were said to *'create barriers by fostering informational bubbles that can lead to polarisation among the youth' as well as negative portrayal of young people and marginalised groups in both traditional and online media.'*

Section 2: Current good practices to support social inclusion

This section explores the current practice and support young people receive to enable social inclusion, as identified through EUYD10 qualitative consultation. National Working Groups (NWGs) within the consultation were asked to design their consultation activities using the guiding question:

'What sort of effective support is currently being given to enable the full inclusion of all young people in society, especially young people with fewer opportunities? This includes:

- *Support to be fully included in education and have full access to quality learning. (This refers to education and learning in the broadest sense, including both formal and nonformal education as well as informal learning environments).*
- *Support provided by educators to promote inclusion. (This refers to educators in the broadest sense, including teachers, youth workers, youth leaders, mentors, coaches, peer educators and other related roles)*
- *Support to enable access to quality work opportunities and conditions*
- *Support to enable quality healthcare or other forms of social support (e.g., housing support, social care, protective services, personal care, legal or psychological counselling and advice etc.)'*

A range of practices were identified through NWG reports and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation (INGYO) expert statements. **The major themes reported** are summarised in this section. These practices and support are not necessarily available in all EU countries, or equally accessible to all young people within a single country.

2.1 Current good practices in education and learning environments

The section explores good practice and support for social inclusion in education and learning environments. These terms are used in the broadest sense, to include formal education (e.g., schools), non-formal education (e.g. youth projects) and informal learning environments (e.g., libraries, museums).

Removing access barriers to education and learning environments

The value of educational institutions making **reasonable accommodations and adaptations** to learning environments to make them more accessible was highlighted. Specific measures discussed included:

- Adaptation to the physical environment to make it more accessible to people with physical disabilities. (ramps, elevators, adjusted high of benches and tables etc.).
- Adaptation to learning materials and formats such as provision of large font or accessible texts, adapted/sorter class times with increased breaks, smaller class sizes. (e.g., Use of universal design for learning to provide personalised learning approaches).
- Toilets which are not gender specific, to enhance accessibility for transgender and gender nonbinary learners.
- Providing catering which accommodates a range of diets (Halal, Kosher, vegan etc.)
- Dedicated budgets within youth organisations for personal assistants, translators, or inclusive pedagogues.
- Permitting religious symbols such as the veil to be allowed in school settings as a practice which promotes inclusion of religious groups.

The use of special educational schools for people with disabilities was highlighted as a practice which enabled those young people better access suitable education. (Although there were also concerns about this leading to segregation, see previous section 1.1)

Providing additional **language classes and support for multiple languages** within education systems was identified as a practice to promote inclusion. This included

- Integration and language classes for young people arriving in the country to help build up language skills and access formal education. (e.g., DASPA in Belgian French Community.)
- Bilingual / Multilingual education systems and education frameworks.

Removing financial barriers to education and learning environments

Providing free access to education and learning environments was highlighted as an important practice enabling inclusion, though it was noted that not all countries provide this at all levels and forms of education. Therefore, the use of scholarships and grants particularly for young people from marginalised backgrounds to remove the costs of education was highlighted, as well as ensuring non-formal education opportunities are free to access.

Alongside this, various financial measures were identified that **support the costs associated with education**, such as provision of free textbooks, free school meals, free public transport to schools, and free or subsidised accommodation for students. Some NWGs also highlighted the value of providing wages or stipends for learners - particularly those within vocational education programmes and apprenticeships, traineeships etc.

'Scholarships are crucial for financially disadvantaged students to continue their education without any hindrance. They provide necessary financial support to students who might otherwise have to give up their studies due to financial difficulties in their families. Not only do scholarships motivate students to achieve better academic results, but they also provide opportunities to participate in additional activities and cultural events, which are important for personal development.'

Polish NWG Report

Various practices to **provide free or reduce cost access to informal learning environments** and non-formal activities were identified, including:

- Kroužky dětem (Circles for Children), coordinated by the Czech Council for Children and Youth which helps children and young people financially access extracurricular activities through providing funding to pay for a club, equipment, or other necessities to families in need.
- The 'Uitpas' Program which offers discounts on cultural, leisure, and sports activities in Flanders and Brussels for young people with fewer opportunities. The programme is available to everyone, with 'hidden discounts' for those who need it, avoiding a separate or special pass which many young people with fewer opportunities found uncomfortable
- Cultural and sport passes in France, which help young people to have free or discounted access to museums, exhibitions, or sport centres.

Close cooperation between education and other support services

The value of **educators who cooperate with other professionals** to support young people with fewer opportunities was highlighted. This included educators signposting young people to access other support persons, but also formal cooperation within learning environments. **Having a varied range of supporting professionals working within schools and other learning environments** enabled these professionals to work alongside educators collaboratively to address the diverse needs of learners and provide additional support to those who need it. Examples of these roles included:

- **Career guidance counsellors:** to help students make the right educational and employment choices
- **Mediators:** to act as neutral person who promotes dialogue and resolves conflicts.
- **Psychologists and counsellors:** to provide mental health support.

- **Teaching assistants**, special education needs assistants, speech and language therapists and scribes or readers for exam assessments: to provide additional support to enable young people to engage in the educational programme.
- **Social workers**: to provide support for young people involved with social care services.

Targeted support programmes for young people with fewer opportunities

Programmes and support centres to **increase educational attainment of young people with fewer opportunities** (especially at university level) were highlighted as an example of good practice to promote inclusion by a number of NWGs. These programmes included support such as provision of **additional tutoring and/or mentoring** for young people with fewer opportunities as well as peer support groups, small group tutoring and financial assistance. With the primarily goal of these programmes being to assist the young person progress in formal education. Examples included:

- **Higher Education Access Route** (Ireland) - aimed at those whose economic or social background is underrepresented in higher education
- **Slovakian Support Centres for students with specific needs** - which provide information, advisory, consultation and technical services to applicants and students with specific needs, university teachers, coordinators, and pedagogical assistants.
- **The János Arany Gifted Care Program** (Arany János Tehetséggondozó Program) in Hungary whose goal is to help disadvantaged, talented students continue their education.
- The assistance provided by the **Flemish Education system supporting young Ukrainians**, who were given access to a rapid and simplified procedure for integration into secondary education, classes for non-Dutch speaking students and psychological support with trauma.
- Initiatives to engage young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET) back into education or work (See Section 2.2).

Alongside this, various **non-formal education programmes**, or civil society initiatives **targeted at young people with fewer opportunities** were highlighted as forms of effective support for social inclusion. These examples focused on providing a range of different learning opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities and were often focused on one specific group (e.g., young immigrants, young people living in poverty, young people with disabilities) in order to deliver programmes tailored to their specific needs. A key feature was that such projects had a **low threshold** to access.

Educational programmes on the topic of social inclusion

Formal education and non-formal education that offered content to foster knowledge about inclusion issues and create environments of tolerance and acceptance was highlighted as an important practice. Examples included:

- **Non-formal education programmes to address discrimination**, such as 'School zonder Racisme' (School without Racism, Belgium) and Red Cross training (Spain) to raise awareness of legal issues and foster respect for sexual and gender diversity, as well as civic/democracy education and human rights education.
- **Educational programmes to address bullying** such as the [MOT](#) (used in Latvia)

School parliaments, student councils and other participatory activities to enable young people to have a voice in educational activities was also identified as a practice that better enabled an inclusive environment.

Informal and non-formal education opportunities that encourage social cohesion

Initiatives that encourage contact between young people from diverse backgrounds were highlighted by NWGs and as examples of effective support. Integrative events for young people from various backgrounds were said to enable participants to feel accepted and better acquaint themselves with other cultures / diversity as well as building up opportunities for understanding and social cohesion. Examples included:

- Cultural or social events (e.g., Hangouts for young people, social mixing night at youth centre),
- Interfaith dialogue events,
- International exchanges such as Erasmus +,
- Bi-lingual or multi-lingual youth events (in areas with multiple language groups),
- Sports activities.

Volunteering and associative projects for young people with fewer opportunities

The opportunity for young people with fewer opportunities to volunteer or develop projects and initiatives to support their own communities was highlighted as an example of effective practice around social inclusion. The ability to receive funding or backing from the municipality or other institution was a key part of such projects.

'A diverse range of young people indicated that engaging in volunteering activities, such as, fundraising or food-raising events, second-hand bazaars and flea markets proves to be a way to support youth experiencing poverty. They emphasised on the dual role of these initiatives, providing tangible assistance to economically challenged youth and the community-building aspect, showcasing how these initiatives create spaces for interaction and a sense of belonging among marginalised youth groups, contributing effectively to their full integration into society.'

Cyprus NWG Report

Outreach methods within non-formal education

Although outreach to young people with fewer opportunities highlighted as a topic for exploration within the consultation, outreach methods were not discussed in detail. However, several approaches to outreach were noted, including:

- 'Street corner' or detached youth workers: Who engage with young people on the streets, providing guidance and connecting them to specific organisations for further assistance.
- Civil society organisation and youth organisations undertaking promotion of their activities within / through schools and formal education.
- Use of links between youth organisations and civil society organisations or community workers specialising in working with people with fewer opportunities. Used to recruit young people to engage in the activities of the youth organisation.
- Youth information services undertaking promotion campaigns, particularly online. (see Section 2.5).

2.2 Current good practices and support from educators

Several NWGs reported the sorts of **qualities and practices from educators** (including teachers, youth workers, youth leaders and other types of educators) that young people felt supported social inclusion. These were:

- **Having a good knowledge of inclusion issues** and good understanding of the needs of specific groups of young people (e.g., young disabled people) as well as constantly learning about social inclusion.
- **Taking time to understand individual learner's situations** and listening to learners' needs. Then, finding ways to integrate them into the learning environment. (e.g. through creating personalised study plans or taking a flexible approach to the delivery of learning.) as well as avoiding methods or tools which might exclude some young people.
- **Creating a safe talking space and acting as a trusted person** to talk with by developing good interpersonal communication with learners to increase trust and creating informal moments with young people to get to know them.
- Showing **respect to learners**, and other educators / professionals. **Holding a caring attitude** toward learners and **encouraging mutual support** between learners. Recognising and valuing the commitment and involvement of learners.
- Being willing to signpost or **involve all learners in other opportunities** (e.g. extracurricular activities), rather than limiting some students based on background.
- Actively, **informing and educating young people about the different forms of discrimination**, as well as taking steps to foster social and group cohesion within the learning environment.

- **Involving young people in the development and planning** of learning opportunities

Some NWGs also highlighted the value of **educators who act as good role models** and demonstrate respect for the diversity of others.

'Student respondents [to the EUYD consultation] emphasised the importance of the role model side of educators, which - besides factual knowledge - helps students to learn how to act in formal situations, how to gain self-confidence, prudence, and respect from others, thus, helps them to successfully access the labour market. Respect towards each other is one of the values respondents are most afraid to see being lost from society.'

Hungarian NWG report

Several specific training programmes were identified as good practices to develop the competences of educators around social inclusion:

- **Teach for Slovakia** - A two-year leadership programme for educators focusing on systemic change in education with an emphasis on improving the situation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly young Roma
- **The merging of knowledge methodology** (ATD Fourth World) - which uses co-training to bring together professionals and people with experience of poverty to get to know each other and identify together the conditions that will improve relations, change practices and act in partnership.
- **Worldly Leadership Mindset'** - (World association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) - used within training for guiding leaders to develop understanding of diverse backgrounds, traditions, and values and to create an inclusive learning environment.

2.3 Current good practices relating to work and employment

Educational opportunities with close connections and relevance to work were highlighted as a practice that supports better access to employment and better transitions from education to employment. Many NWGs identified the value of **blended work and learning opportunities** such as internships, apprenticeships, student work and skill-based learning as well as opportunities under Erasmus+ for internships and career development. Concrete examples of closely linked education and work training programmes given included:

- **Dual education** (Slovakia) - which represents a system of professional education and training for the performance of a profession, leading to acquisition of knowledge, abilities, and skills necessary for the profession. It is characterised by a close connection of general and professional theoretical education in a secondary vocational school with practical training at a specific employer.
- **CEFA** (Belgian French Community) - A work-study program combining practical training (3 days at work) and theory (2 days at school) with a financial compensation system.
- Introduction of **Business and Management in Polish Schools**. Which covers fundamental principles of entrepreneurship and fosters skills and habits related to personal finance, saving, and real-life economic phenomena. It aims to create an equal

educational opportunity, enabling young people to develop their business competence regardless of their financial situation.

- **Mobile Laboratories of the Future** (Poland)- described as innovative mobile learning centres that aim to provide young people with tools to develop the skills necessary for full social and professional integration.
- **Action day'** (Luxembourg) - which allows high school students to gain experience through a one-day internship.

Employment training support provided by civil society organisations including both training organisations and youth organisations was also commonly highlighted by NWGs. This included support to enable young people to enhance their employability through personal development programmes or volunteering and providing a clear path to employment.

Several NWGs highlighted the role that **financial assistance** (including social security payments) during training and job seeking can play in making pathways to work accessible to young people in weaker financial circumstances. Examples included:

- Receiving wages or payments during vocational training (including apprenticeships and internships),
- Employment agencies or other bodies covering costs of travel to work interviews,
- Being able to access social security payments such as disability allowance or child allowance while on training programmes,
- Incentive measures for the newly self-employed.

Careers guidance and counselling, particularly when targeted at young people with fewer opportunities was highlighted as good practice. It was noted this support could come from a range of sources including, youth centres and youth organisations, employment agencies and job placement services and schools. The value of career guidance and support that was proactive and well linked to vocational training was described by several NWGs. The **Youth Guarantee Support System**, where local youth workers assist in identifying opportunities for reintegration into educational and vocational pathways was highlighted as an example of this. Some NWGs identified the value of **career guidance and training services** that are specifically **targeted to particular groups of young people with fewer opportunities**. Examples included:

- The **'Youthreach'** programme (Ireland) - aimed at young people, and particularly young Irish Travellers, who have left school without any formal qualifications and offering opportunities to access basic education, personal development as well as vocational training and work experience
- Programmes for young people who are not in education employment and training (NEET), such as **Spoorzoeker** (Belgian Flemish Community) which offers a 16-week trajectory towards employment for NEET youths, with intensive guidance and opportunities for stable work.
- Employment for young disabled people in **sheltered workshops and social enterprises** (Slovakia).

Across the consultation, there were very few concrete examples of support or practices that can make workplaces themselves more inclusive. Some young people highlighted their experiences with **companies and employers who actively tried to create and maintain an inclusive work environment** for their employees, and the value of informal support directly from colleagues. **Good employee benefits were** highlighted as a tool for making work accessible. This included financial benefits such as allowance for commuting to work, allowance for meals, allowance for accommodation or non-financial benefits such as flexible working hours, the possibility to work from home, childcare for employees' children.

2.4 Current good practices relating to healthcare and social support

Current good practice relating to mental health

The range of current good practices and support for young people's mental health identified through the consultant was limited. Based on the concerns raised about lack of access to mental health support (see Section 1.4) it might be assumed relatively few young people in the consultations had concrete experiences of good quality support for mental health. Three forms of support were the most widely described:

1) Provision of psychological counselling especially through school,

'Every school has a psychologist whose doors are always open, and they are always up for a chat if you need one'

Lithuanian NWG report

2) Membership of a youth organisation as a way of feeling part of society,

'Members of youth organisations also report better mental health and more ability to deal with difficult situations than young people that do not engage within youth organisations. Being a member of a youth organisation also strengthens the feeling of being part of Austrian society.'

Austrian NWG report

3) Support for emotional health and wellbeing from youth organisations.

'We consulted with youth organisations to see how they support young people's mental health care. Although the situation varies across organisations, examples of what works for youth workers include clear guidance, crisis intervention training, the role of an ombudsman, supervision, or a code of ethics. In the case of children and young people, organisations look after their wellbeing at summer camps through sleeping arrangements, time for rest, warm-ups, and support for healthy eating. Social aspects are reinforced by helping each other and connecting children across age groups. Spiritual support is expressed through a symbolic code, respect for nature, traditions, and relaxation. Cognitive stimulation includes knowledge quizzes, creative games, and manual activities. Emotional support consists of open communication and creative programs. These examples help to nurture the mental health of children and young people in youth organisations.'

Czech NWG Report

Alongside these three areas, mention was made of educational programmes to develop mental health literacy such as All Five Together ([Všech pět pohromadě](#) - Czechia) and online support tools such as [Peaasi](#) (Estonia).

Current good practices relating to other aspects of health and social support

Good practices in healthcare (other than mental health) and other forms of social support were not widely discussed in the EUYD consultation. Several forms of support were identified but not widely discussed:

- **Access to health services free of charge**, or with costs covered through some form of insurance was the most widely identified good practice. As healthcare is not offered free at the point of use in all EU countries, this included reports from some NWGs of schemes to **reduce or remove the costs of healthcare for specific groups**, such as students, or young people from disadvantaged families.
- **Health outreach services customised to meet the needs of specific groups** (such as young Irish Travellers, students, or Transgender young people) was highlighted by a small number of NWGs. It was said that for some groups specifically designed services could better meet their needs.
- **The role of sports** as a facilitator of social inclusion was highlighted by a small number of NWGs. It was said sports not only provided opportunities for physical exercise but also fostered teamwork and camaraderie. To best foster social inclusion, sport activities need to be developmental rather than based on performance.
- **Holistic support programmes or centres** for families and children, young people and families from marginalised backgrounds or in poverty, such as "[Caixa ProInfancia](#)" (Spain) and Family Resource Centres (Ireland), were mentioned as practices that offer comprehensive social support to the most vulnerable.
- **Financial assistance** provided through social security payments.

2.5 Current good practices and support relating to cross cutting barriers

Current good practices and support related to structural barriers

Existing practices and support relating to **transport, financial insecurity and housing** were not widely discussed in the EUYD consultation. Nevertheless, some examples of current support for these were identified. These included:

- Provision of free transport to education in some countries,
- Credit 2% (Poland) which provides young people with the opportunity to purchase their first home, countering social exclusion and enabling them to live anywhere, regardless of their background or financial limitations.
- PIT 0 until age 26 (Poland) which offers an income tax exemption for those under 26, providing young people with more disposable income, increasing their financial capacity, and improving their living conditions.

- Family Allowance Fund (France) which gives access to financial support such as accommodation funds for young people under 11-30 depending on how low their income is and solidarity income if you are above 25 and have a low income.
- 3+ Family Card (Latvia) providing various opportunities for families with three or more children such as discounts for public transports, events, activities etc.
- The Csányi Foundation (Hungary), which provides a range of support including helping disadvantaged young people gain a driver's licence.

Alongside this, young people in the consultation identified **the importance of social security payments** to individuals or families in disadvantaged circumstances as a method of alleviating financial insecurity (e.g., housing benefits, disability support allowances, child support allowances etc).

Various current **practices for making public infrastructure and transport more accessible to people with disabilities** were identified. These included use of ramps, automatic doors, bell systems to alert bus/train, wider flatter sidewalks, accessible signage, and information on accessible transport routes.

Current good practices and support related to **youth involvement, and inclusive policy making** were not extensively explored within the EUYD10 consultation. These have been discussed extensively in the [8th Cycle of Youth Dialogue Consultation](#).

Current good practices relating to cultural and societal barriers

Cross cutting practices and support related to addressing direct discrimination, societal non-acceptance, prejudices, and negative stereotypes at a personal and social level were not an explicit focus of the EUYD consultations. However, taking into account that education plays a crucial role in addressing these, the various examples of education on the topic of social inclusions (see Section 2.1 this report) can be considered to address this area.

Alongside this, some NWGs highlighted the importance of **equalities and human rights legislation designed to provide legal protection against discrimination**. This included national legalisation linked to the [EU Charter on Fundamental Rights](#) and/or [The European Convention on Human Rights](#).

Current good practices relating to information

Support relating to information was not set as a part of the EUYD10 consultation topics, so this area was not widely discussed during the dialogue. Nevertheless, the value of **youth information services** and **EURODESK** was noted as existing practices providing information on career and educational opportunities. The value of **teachers who provide information** about employment, non-formal education and other opportunities was also identified.

'Educators play a pivotal role in promoting inclusivity, especially for minority groups and those with fewer opportunities ... By staying informed and guiding their students, educators become advocates for bridging informational gaps and creating a more accessible educational landscape.'

Some initiatives relating to **developing young people's digital literacy** were identified:

- The Polish NWG highlighted the 'AI in Education' project and the 'Chat GPT in School - Opportunities and Threats' handbook, which provides support for educators around digital literacy.
- Link in de Kabel (Belgian Flemish Community) - A youth work organisation that informs and engages children and young people in the digital society in a playful way, aiming to provide digital assistance to children and youth with fewer opportunities.

Section 3 Changes and actions needed

This section explores the changes and actions needed to better enable social inclusion of all young people, as identified through EUYD10 qualitative consultation. National Working Groups (NWGs) within the consultation were asked to design their consultation activities using the guiding question:

'What further actions need to be taken to enable the inclusion of all young people in society, especially young people with fewer opportunities. This includes:

- *Actions to enable young people to be fully included in educational opportunities and have full access to quality learning. (This refers to education and learning in the broadest sense, including both formal and nonformal education as well as informal learning environments.)*
- *Action which can be taken by educators to promote inclusion. (This refers to educators in the broadest sense, including teachers, youth workers, youth leaders, mentors, coaches, peer educators and other related roles.)*
- *Action which would improve access to quality healthcare and other forms of social support. (e.g., housing support, social care, protective services, personal care, legal or psychological counselling and advice etc.)'*

A range of changes and action were identified through NWG reports and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation (INGYO) expert statements. **The major themes and changes needed** reported by NWGs and INGyOs are summarised in this section, focusing on changes needed that are identified by multiple reports and/or are linked to identified barriers (Section 1). Links are also made to the outcomes of the EUYC in Alicante.

3.1 Changes within education

The section explores changes needed relating to education and learning environments. These terms are used in the broadest sense, to include formal education (e.g., schools), non-formal education (e.g. youth projects) and informal learning environments (e.g., libraries, museums).

Making learning environments and educational opportunities more inclusive

Key changes identified within the consultation **to make learning environments and educational opportunities more inclusive** were:

- 1) **Increasing accessibility of learning environments**, though
 - Better adaptations of physical spaces and learning materials to accommodate the needs of young people with disabilities, including increasing access to assistants and assistive technology / aids.
 - Stronger provision for young people excluded by language barriers (e.g., simple/ clear language in learning materials, education available in multiple languages, support for language learning classes)
 - Providing physical spaces that support inclusion such as safe spaces / retreat rooms, sensory rooms, and unisex toilets
 - Increasing the amount of educational opportunities in rural areas and/or improving transport links to learning environments from rural areas.
- 2) **Removing or reducing the costs** to access educational opportunities and learning environments, including subsidising the indirect costs (e.g., costs of transport, materials etc), through:
 - Assistance programmes for those who are financial disadvantaged (e.g., access cards)
 - Offer education free at the point of access.
- 3) **Increasing the use of outreach programmes and information campaigns** to ensure **awareness of non-formal and informal education opportunities** - including outreach and awareness raising targeted at young people with fewer opportunities. A recommendation at the EUYC in Alicante was *'Build local outreach through people working with/for the youth, such as youth workers, volunteers and young ambassadors; and ensure that these individuals are provided with high-quality capacity-building activities.'*
- 4) **Diversifying learning methodologies and allowing for an adaptable and flexible curriculum with modern teaching methods**, which are customised to the individual needs of learners. This means tailoring educational methods to the varied capacities of students ensures that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can benefit from quality learning experiences. For example, by:
 - Reducing class sizes to allow for greater focus on individual needs,

- Using non-formal education methods within schools,
- Providing more flexible approaches to use of homework, length of day, breaks within the school day etc.
- Reducing emphasis on performance and exam results and focusing on skills and competences needed for life and transition to employment.

The EUYC in Alicante recommended 'Providing the necessary skills, knowledge, and infrastructure, to create more adaptive, inclusive and needs-centred educational systems.'

5) Change cultures of exclusion with learning environments through:

- Promoting comprehensive approaches to combating bullying and discrimination within learning environments.
- Ensuring diverse voices are represented in the educational curriculums.
- Improving the practices of educators (see Section 3.2).
- Introduction of anonymous examination marking.

Better utilising education as a tool for social inclusion

Key changes identified within the consultation **better utilise education as a tool for social inclusion** were:

- 1. Increasing the diversity of young people within individual schools and learning environments and increasing opportunities for interaction with young people from different backgrounds**, as a way to foster social cohesion through:
 - Reducing segregation of communities between schools, particularly of young people with disabilities.
 - Encouraging exchanges between schools / non-formal education projects, to enable contact between diverse groups of young people.
 - Increasing use of learning mobility opportunities, as a method of providing education based on contact with other cultures and communities.
 - Use of 'inclusion events' to bring together young people from different backgrounds.
 - Education and learning on social cohesion and valuing of diversity linked to the above.
- 2. Promoting specific learning activities focused on inclusion and anti-discrimination** in order to foster an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and heard, as well as to challenge wider discriminatory attitudes and prejudices within society. Types of initiatives suggested included:
 - Human rights education and civic education.

- Anti-discrimination training and sensitization activities to raise awareness of diversity as well as awareness raising campaigns or education to combat discrimination.
 - Engagement of young people in decision making within schools and learning environments - to better foster inclusive learning environments
- 3. Improve the relevance of educational content and curricula**, by placing emphasis on skills needed for civic life and to transition to independence. This includes:
- Linking education more effectively to employment skills, to improve access to employment, including investing in vocational training and blended work / learning opportunities (see Section 3.2)
 - Use of digital literacy programs to ensure that all young people, including those with fewer opportunities, have the skills to navigate and benefit from online resources.
 - Civic education and education on democratic engagement.
- 4. Promote multidisciplinary collaboration and coordination between educators and other professionals, and better enable young people to access other forms of support through learning environments** This includes strengthening the presence of external stakeholders in school, (including civic society or other professional support persons such as counsellors) and ensuring that educators can provide information about access to other forms of support (e.g. careers advice, mental health support, extracurricular activities, participation opportunities).

Investing in education

Across the various consultation reports, achieving the changes above was said to require **stronger investment in the education system as a whole.**

‘By prioritising and investing in public education, society can guarantee that every student, irrespective of their socio-economic background, receives a high-standard education that equips them for a successful future.’

The Spanish NWG Report

The EUYC in Alicante recommended:

- *‘A well-funded, affordable education and the implementation of non-formal methodologies into formal education at all levels, whilst improving recognition of non-formal education.’*
- *‘Establish a Comprehensive Education Approach that encompasses not only learning outcomes (knowledge and skills) but also prioritises the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of young people. To achieve this, there should be a budgetary increase for the educational system, allowing for adapted group class sizes, increased personalised support, and targeted assistance.’*

As part of this, many NWG reports identified the need to **invest in and prioritise non-formal education and youth work in order to remove gaps in non-formal education** (see Section 1.1). This included investment in the youth field in general as well as specific investment in programmes, support and policies relating to young people with fewer opportunities, such as targeted support programmes and training.

The EUYC in Alicante recommended:

- *‘Creating and promoting spaces for young people that help reduce socio-economic inequalities through recognising non-formal education.’*
- *‘Recognition and validation of skills and competencies in formal, non-formal education and informal learning.’*
- *‘Recognising and providing political and financial support for youth civil society.’*
- *‘Creating a mandatory ratio of a number of public youth spaces and youth workers to the number of young people in each community.’*

3.2 Changes relating to educators

Key changes identified within the consultation relating to **the ability and practices of educators** (including teachers, youth workers, youth leaders and other types of educators) were the need for educators to:

- Have better understanding of the needs of young people with fewer opportunities and have stronger skills to accommodate those needs by adapting teaching or learning methodologies and materials.
- Take stronger approaches to preventing discrimination and bullying between learners and within learning environments
- Demonstrate and practise respect, fair treatment and non-discrimination toward young people including:
 - Not engaging in discriminatory behaviour and practices,
 - Supporting and encouraging all young people, regardless of background, to take part in external activities or further educational opportunities.
 - Valuing the views and opinions of learners, including being able to engage in two-way respectful dialogue with young people and value their participation.
- Better support and signpost young people to other forms of support around social inclusion,
- Be more able to identify and support the mental health needs of young people,
- Have more effective communication and interpersonal skills in order to be able to build up environments and relationships of trust and support.

Within the consultation this was often discussed within the context of **a need for training for educators relating to social inclusion**. This supports the changes identified by working groups at the EUYC in Alicante which included:

- *‘Provide more training on intersectionality and inclusion to formal and non-formal educators to achieve long-term impact through early intervention, the construction of safe and inclusive educational environments and pursue long-term inclusive society.*
- *Improve financial and human resources to ensure competence of educators regarding inclusion, support for low-income families & quality learning, especially in the fields of media literacy, civic education, and career education.*
- *In order to abolish hate speech and foster acceptance, young people & educators should be educated on sensitive topics (like gender & sexuality, to name a few) and civic competence in a neutral way*
- *[Undertake] Training for teachers and other educators on mental health (signs of panic attack, signs of anxiety, depression) and bullying (online harassment - what action to take)’*

3.3 Changes relating to work and employment

Recognising that a secure and stable work environment is crucial for the well-being of young professionals, especially for those with fewer opportunities, the consultation identified a need for **more active policies to address young people’s access to quality employment**, and to tackle issues such as high unemployment and precariousness. The EUYC in Alicante suggested a need for stronger legislation on working conditions.

‘There is a strong advocacy [from young people in the consultation] for policies that promote equal opportunities, such as fair hiring practices, mentorship programs, and internships that provide valuable work experience. Additionally, there is a demand for measures that counteract discrimination and ensure a diverse and inclusive workplace. The young respondents see these changes as vital for creating a labour market where everyone has a fair chance to succeed based on merit’

The Belgian Flemish Community NWG Report

Within the consultation more concrete proposals were made in four areas:

- 1) **Promotion of initiatives to encourage employers recruit a more diverse workforce** by developing better understanding of the unique challenges faced by young people with fewer opportunities so that employers can offer a more meaningfully inclusive work environment. Suggested measures to encourage this include:
 - Anti -discrimination training, or diversity and inclusion training for employers.
 - Implementing employment quotas, requiring organisation to recruit a certain proportion for young people with fewer opportunities.
 - Financial incentives for companies to hire young people with fewer opportunities.
 - Implementing anonymous recruitment processes.

- Reassessing job requirements, such as the necessity of a high school or bachelor's degree.
- 2) **Promotion of initiatives to make workplaces and work more accessible**, such as:
- Increased flexible work arrangements (including maternity leave and work from home options)
 - Increasing the physical accessible workplaces,
 - Ensuring internships are paid,
 - Providing mentoring for new entrants to the workplace,
 - Support for entrepreneurship,
 - Stronger opportunities for employees to question and report discrimination,
 - Reducing the gender pay gap,
 - Making work permits access for young refugees easier to access,
 - Increasing availability of affordable childcare.
- 3) **Development of stronger links between education and employment**, such as
- Ensuring educational and training programs (particularly formal education) that enable young people to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for employment and encouraging a focus on work at an earlier age in the curriculum.
 - Development of more traineeships, apprenticeship and internships, and volunteer work experiences, particularly those that lead to guaranteed employment.
 - Mentorship programs for guidance in entering the workforce.
 - Investing in training programmes and vocational training.
 - Cooperation between schools/university and employers.
 - Co-operation between civil society organisation and employers to provide support programmes for young people with fewer opportunities to access workplace.
 - Support and guidance for entrepreneurship.
- 4) **Increasing access to information on career and work opportunities**. For example, though, local, or regional support desks and national job platforms. With a particular emphasis on ensuring the accessibility of this information (See also Section 3.5 on youth information)

3.4 Changes relating to healthcare and social support

Improving access to mental health support

Working groups at the EUYC Alicante identified the need to *'improve the accessibility of mental health services [and]` integrate mental health services into our healthcare system and make sure it is free of charge. We need to expand our mental health facilities and create more spaces to cope with the – increasing – demand and the long waiting lists. Additionally, we should implement peer-support systems in schools to destigmatize mental health issues and promote early intervention.'*

This supports a very widespread call across the EUYD consultation to **increase the availability of mental health and psychological support available to young people**. There were strong demands for more, and swifter access to, therapists, psychologists, counselling helplines, and similar. It was said mental health support should be tailored to the needs of young individuals, and without financial barriers. Various reports indicated the need for making mental health support accessible through schools and educational institutions, and the importance of making access free to young people.

Alongside this it was said that **mental health awareness raising** measures were needed to provide young people with **access to information about basic mental health self-care**, and to **challenge stigmas relating to mental health**.

Suggestions were also made for provision of **mental health education programmes**, and it **was noted that educators might also play an enhanced role** to support young people's mental health if trained effectively to do so. However, the general feedback suggests that young people more often see educators as people who can signpost them to more specialist mental health support.

Other forms of healthcare and social support

Across the consultation, the small number of proposals and recommendations given related to health care (other than mental health) can broadly be interpreted as a call for **greater investment and resourcing in healthcare services and social support in general**. There was **some suggestion to make healthcare services more accessible through schools**. However, it is clear the situation is highly variable between countries, with some young people not identifying this as a significant change needed.

Young people with disabilities, transgender young people and young people with chronic health conditions identified the need for health services that better met their needs.

There were no pronounced themes in the consultation that clearly identified the changes in other forms of social support (e.g., social work and care, social protection etc), with the exception of access to housing, which is discussed in section 3.5.

3.5 Cross cutting changes

Increasing young people's access to information on rights and opportunities

The consultation identified the need to:

- 1. Increase young people's access to information on their rights.**
- 2. Increase young people's access to information on the opportunities and support available to them.**

(See section 1.5 on Barriers to information for more details of specific information topics).

It was stressed that this **information needs to be well targeted**, to ensure it reaches all young people.

'There is an emphasis on the need to ensure that information about supports that can improve their lives is shared correctly and reaches the target audience'

The Portuguese NWG Report

'Attending to disseminating accurate information and ensuring equitable opportunities and access to information for all youth cohorts is imperative.'

The Estonian NWG Report

The EUYC in Alicante highlighted the importance of *'tailor[ing] the language and channel of information to the target groups through target group participation in its creation and implementation.'*

In the EUYD consultation, various suggestions for the delivery of youth information were made including:

- Centralised platforms or websites where all opportunities and support measures for young people are easily accessible and online promotion campaigns.
- General awareness campaigns for young people on the types of social help or resources available, and better communication of public and social services generally.
- Targeted awareness campaigns for specific groups of young people with fewer opportunities, using channels that resonate with those groups.
- Better use of non-formal education activities and informational events, by school student and youth councils, local youth organisations or other organisations working with young people.
- Information events on available educational opportunities such as Erasmus+.
- Career guidance and support services as well as youth information services.

'Informational events should be held to better inform young people and their parents about various opportunities both locally and internationally, including programs like Erasmus+.'

The Latvian NWG Report

'The young people stressed the need for better awareness of available opportunities, suggesting a reorganisation of youth information and increased collaboration among entities working with young individuals.'

The Maltese NWG Report

Working groups at **The EUYC in Alicante** also identified several changes needed relating to promoting **young people's digital literacy** and **access to digital technologies**.

- *'Ensure every young person has access to using electronic devices and the internet by 2030 in order to access information, opportunities, training, and thereby exercising their rights enhancing their autonomy and independent decision-making.'*

- *'Enhance digital literacy, from the baseline of computer skills to advanced digital competencies.'*

As well as to address **issues of information disorder** (so called fake news) online:

- *'Engage with social media platforms to promote transparency and honesty about their algorithms. Push for changes that expand content variety, helping to break the cycle of repetitive information and reduce division. Ensure that young people have access to diverse viewpoints from different sources. We should take strict action against non-compliant firms.'*
- *Increase fact-checking and media literacy.'*

Structural changes 1: Housing, financial insecurity, and economic inequality

The consultation responses highlighted the need to **ensure the labour market and economy provides access to stable, well paid employment and work opportunities and secure income for young people**. This included reducing precarious employment and unemployment, providing greater financial security, and reducing cost of living. However, concrete measures for how this might be achieved were not generally identified.

Various measures were suggested to **ensure young people were better financially protected by accessing state subsidies or by having higher wages**. The EUYC in Alicante identified the need to *'push for the implementation of a minimum income from the age of 18 in every country'* and there were various calls to enhance minimum wage rates for young people and ensure that these were not varied by age (e.g. different rates for over and under 25-year-olds). There were also calls for universal youth incomes and financial start up incentives for young people as well as subsidies during first-time employment.

Considering issues of housing, there were recommendations in the consultation to:

- 1) **Make housing more affordable to young people**, through measures such as rent caps and reduction, reduced house prices, construction of cheaper state-funded rental housing or low costs rental housing programmes. The EUYC in Alicante proposed *'creating decent social housing programs that focus on young people with fewer opportunities.'*
- 2) **Improve access to accommodation whilst in education**, though measures such as such as increasing availability of student dormitories, reducing the costs of student accommodation, reserved flats for trainees and students, assistance in finding lower-priced options, modernising and constructing new dormitories, help for young people unable to provide a guarantor.

Structural changes 2: Transport

Recognising that transport is an enabler to accessing social rights and support the consultation identified the need to:

- 1) **Improve public transport infrastructure and transport services, particularly in rural areas.**

- 2) **Reduce or remove the cost of public transport for young people** - for instance by providing free public transport to students, to young people with fewer opportunities or simply to all young people.
- 3) **Increase the physical accessibility of public transport for young people with disabilities.**

This build on the changes needed identified by working groups in at the **EUYC in Alicante**:

- *‘Provide a new EU-wide standard for public transportation.*
- *Improve infrastructures and sustainable means of transport to develop mobility in rural areas*
- *Provide affordable and accessible public transportation for youth, especially in rural areas and for those with disabilities. Prioritise enhanced safety and improved connectivity.’*

In the consultation there were also clear recommendations in the consultation to **increase the physical accessibility of public infrastructure and public spaces for young people with disabilities.**

Structural changes 3: Policy making

Across the various NWG and INGYO reports, a general sentiment for improvements in policy making relating to social inclusion was expressed, though concrete details of what this involved were not always elaborated.

‘The overarching trend is a demand for systemic change across educational, labour, and healthcare sectors. Young people are asking for reforms that not only address immediate concerns but also lay the foundation for long-term societal change ... Recommendations include policy reforms to modernise education, create fair and inclusive labour markets, and improve healthcare accessibility. There is also a need for platforms where young voices are heard and considered in policy making, ensuring that the solutions implemented are reflective of their needs and aspirations’

The Netherlands NWG Report

Between the various reports and the outcomes several actions needed within policy making can be identified:

- 1) **Strengthening of youth policies in general** - The perceived lack of attention to youth issues was said to contribute to barriers in achieving full inclusion, as the essential perspectives and needs of young individuals are not adequately addressed within the broader societal framework. The EUYC in Alicante identified the need for:
 - *‘Mainstreaming youth in policies: Integrate youth concerns into all policies by considering the diverse needs of this heterogeneous group. Implement youth impact assessments across all policies, not limited to youth-specific policies, to ensure that the interests and needs of young people are considered comprehensively.’*
 - *‘Youth policies at all levels need to be evidence based, co-managed, cross-sectional, actively targeting youth with fewer opportunities, follow international standards, fully*

funded, actively implemented and ensuring a fully inclusive and thriving youth community'

- 2) **Development of stronger inclusion policies and strategies** including **strategies and policies which targeted specific groups** of young people with fewer opportunities. This involves the **prioritisation of public funding and resources** towards those young people with fewer opportunities or to geographic areas of high disadvantaged (e.g. by increasing the number of clubs, youth centres in housing estates with a higher proportion of low-income earners). Overall, it was said there is a need for more targeted and comprehensive strategies to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background, have full access to quality education, supportive educators, fair work opportunities, and adequate healthcare and social support. There was said to be a need for policy and policy making which recognised a range of disadvantages and intersections and created a society of equal opportunities for young generations, and that promoted meritocracy. The EUYC in Alicante identified the need for:

- *'Implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to address the needs of excluded and marginalised young people, especially NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) by strengthening cooperation and fostering interconnection among public services at all levels.'*
- *'Prioritising funding of public services to specific areas, as people from lower socioeconomic or rural backgrounds are more adversely affected by underfunding of healthcare, public transport, or housing'*

- 3) **Better use of equalities and human rights legislation and frameworks**, including increased enforcement of laws protecting minority groups

'We call for governments and institutions to act and implement policies and laws that combat discrimination and exclusion, with special attention to young people. Especially, promoting and defending Human Rights should be at the core of all policy actions enabling everyone to enjoy a dignified life in Europe'

World Organization of the Scout Movement Expert Statement

- 4) **Stronger involvement of young people in policy making particularly young people with fewer opportunities**. This topic is already elaborated in the [EUJD8 Consultation Results](#). The working groups at the EUYC in Alicante identified the need for *input from young people and all their diversity into political, decision making, and implementation processes.*
- 5) Promotion of **strategies and policies that encourage partnership and collaboration** between the government, civil society organisations, youth and educational institutions, and businesses to build synergy around the theme of social inclusion.

Structural Changes 3: Culture and society

The general sentiment within the consultation was **a need to reduce discrimination, foster empathy, and promote tolerance and respect for diversity**.

'The value mentality must change - everyone must understand that everyone is valuable and important.'

Latvian NWG Report

It was identified that this could be addressed **through education on the topic on social inclusion and non-discrimination** (see Section 3.1). The working groups at the EUYC in Alicante identified:

- *'In order to abolish hate speech and foster acceptance, young people and educators should be educated on sensitive topics (like gender & sexuality, to name a few) and civic competence in a neutral way.'*
- *'We need to raise awareness not only through activities for everybody, but also through mandatory courses involving NGOs in formal education and continuously fighting disinformation caused by a stereotypical mindset.'*

Section 4 Role of the youth field in relation to social inclusion

This section explores Role of the youth field in relation to social inclusion as identified through EUYD10 qualitative consultation. National Working Groups (NWGs) within the consultation were asked to design their consultation activities using the guiding question:

How can youth work and the youth field better enable the full inclusion of all young people within society, especially young people with fewer opportunities?

This includes:

- *The sorts of good practices that might be undertaken within the youth field to promote inclusion.*
- *The types of outreach methods which might be used to engage young people with fewer opportunities.*
- *The role that youth workers and other educators in the youth field might play to promote inclusion and access to social rights.*
- *The actions the youth field might take to promote the social rights of young people with fewer opportunities*

This consultation question was optional for NWGs, and it was suggested it should be explored with young people who have an understanding of youth work or the youth field, or by using methods which enable young people to develop this understanding

Various responses were given throughout NWG reports and INGYO expert statements. This section summaries the main findings in relation to this consultation question, although examples of good practice have also been incorporated into section 2 of this report.

4.1 Role of the youth field and youth work in relation to social inclusion

Based on the various NWG reports and INGYO statements, it is clear that youth work and the youth field currently plays a variety of roles in relation to supporting social inclusion. These can be summarised as:

Providing places of belonging and mutual support

It was said that access to a youth centre, youth space or similar can provide young people with a space and community of belonging. This helps young people feel part of something meaningful, providing a platform for social connection, self-expression, fostering acceptance and a stronger sense of community, solidarity. This was said to be particularly important for young people with fewer opportunities who experience issues of exclusion elsewhere.

'An overarching trend in the focus group discussions with young people with fewer opportunities was the importance of peer support groups and organisations. The participants mentioned them as key places where they feel normal and included'

Finnish NWG Report

The reports noted that emphasising a relaxed atmosphere, a friendly approach, and information on accessibility created inclusive spaces, raised awareness, and developed places where young people with fewer opportunities could safely express their needs and issues. This in turn led to the development of informal peer to peer support between participants.

Creating opportunities for contact with diversity and fostering social cohesion

Various reports highlighted the importance of youth activities which enabled collaboration among young people from various language, social and cultural groups. Examples were given of leisure and cultural activities (such as social game nights, hangouts, and sports) which brought young people from different backgrounds together to promote acceptance and openness, eliminate prejudices and learn to think and plan inclusively for all groups in society.

Providing access to support

The role of youth work in providing direct support to young people around issues of social inclusion and access to social rights was highlighted. This included things such as support with transition from education to employment, but also support in times of crisis, with personal and social development and support to better enable participation in community life.

Support was said to currently occur in three ways:

- **Direct support from a youth worker, youth leader (or similar) to a young person** - providing programmes of education and development, 1 to 1 counselling and advice, and encouraging the participation of young people in societal activities.
- **Creating peer-to-peer support networks between young people** - by developing spaces and platforms for connection with other groups of young people, youth work

was said to enable informal peer-to-peer support between participants in youth projects.

- **Youth workers informing and signposting young people to access other forms of support** - by acting as a link between young people and various (non-youth work) support services, youth workers can act to lower the barriers to accessing support around social inclusion and help make young people more informed of them

The importance of youth work as a **low threshold** point of access to gaining support was highlighted. This was said to be particularly important for young people with fewer opportunities who may experience barriers to accessing other services and forms of support.

The value of **support targeted at specific groups** (e.g. young Travellers) of young people with fewer opportunities was also raised. This was said to allow projects and youth opportunities which better understood and met the needs of those young people. A key part of this also seemed to be about young people being able to identify that the youth project/organisation was specifically for them and was aligned with their needs and interests.

Advocacy for the rights of young people with fewer opportunities

Several reports identified the role that youth organisations (and civil society organisations working with young people) play in **advocating for the rights, needs and interests of specific groups of young people with fewer opportunities**, as well as for young people in general. It was said this occurred through participation in movements such as anti-racism campaigns or engagement in LGBTQ pride. For some young people with fewer opportunities, it was clear that they saw parts of the youth sector, particularly civil society organisations, as one of the few institutions that was aligned with their interests.

'The role of NGOs in making diversity more visible was highlighted in many discussions, but especially in a focus group discussion with Roma youth. The participants felt that Roma organisations and projects have a crucial role in preventive work, and expressed that such actors are the only ones who they felt were actually on their side'

Finnish NWG Report

'[Young people with hearing loss and deafness] highlighted the crucial role of the youth sector in giving visibility to their unique challenges and increasing awareness within society. They expressed a desire for platforms that amplify their voices, break the stereotypes, and foster understanding. The emphasis on societal awareness was seen as essential in addressing misconceptions and fostering a more inclusive environment ... the majority of the group shared experiences of concealing their disability due to fear of differential treatment, fewer opportunities, and potential job loss. So, they see the youth sector and youth work as a means towards a social change that will enable them to access equality in all aspects of life'

Maltese NWG report

4.2 Actions the youth field might take to better promote social inclusion

The German NWG raised an important point on the current limitations of the youth field to address social inclusion.

'York work is not the answer to society's systematic problems. The misuse of youth work as a repair shop by state agencies must be rejected in terms of youth policy. These problems must be solved where they arise. The attempt to solve the problems half-heartedly (because of too few staff and too little money, with still high hurdles, extra effort for those affected, etc.) retrospectively with youth work is part of the problem of a lack of social participation.'

German NWG Report

The various NWG and IYNGO reports suggest that the following actions might be needed for the youth field to better support the social inclusion of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities:

At a policy level:

- 1) **Strengthening the recognition, legal basis and policy support for youth work and non-formal education**, including development of national youth strategies and policy in countries that lack this - as a method for strengthening the youth field as a whole
- 2) **Expanding youth policy to work cross sectorally** with other policy areas such as economic and labour policy, mental health, transport, and housing. To allow for stronger advocacy for the needs and interests of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities within these policy areas.
- 3) **Strengthening the advocacy and participatory work** undertaken by the youth field and youth civil society to ensure the voices and views of young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities are better taken into account **across all areas of policy**.

At a delivery level:

- 1) **Increasing the capacity building the youth field to be able to address gaps in the delivery of non- formal education** (see Section 1.1) This might require:
 - a. Increasing funding to the youth field as a whole and/or prioritising funding or resources toward young people with fewer opportunities or programmes and organisations that support social inclusion.
 - b. Investing in the training and competence of youth workers, youth leaders and young volunteers to better work with young people with fewer opportunities.
 - c. Investing in reducing or removing access barriers to existing youth programmes and projects (see Section 1.1)
 - d. Building stronger networks between the youth field and other sectors such as formal education, employers, and mental health to better support collaboration around social inclusion.

- 2) **Increase the visibility of youth field programmes and support offered by the youth field to young people with fewer opportunities** through youth information, awareness raising and outreach measures (See Section 3.5).
- 3) **Enhancing the role the youth field plays in providing information to young people on their rights and opportunities that might support their inclusion** (See Section 3.5).

Annex: Participant and methodological details

Consultation phase methodology

The EUYD10 consultation phase ran from July 2023 to January 2024. During this time NWGs in the member states of the European Union and INGYOs conducted consultation activities with young people on the themes of the cycle.

To inform the consultation activities a thematic framework and methodological guidance was created by the researchers supporting the cycle, under the guidance of the ESG. Guiding questions were developed to support this (see findings chapters). NWGs were asked to use a variety of consultation methods with young people with an emphasis on qualitative meaningful participation. INGYOs were asked to submit an expert's statement report, and to participate in an online roundtable discussion. Support was also provided to all stakeholders via the Inclusion Toolbox³ prepared by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Each NWG produced a report of its consultation findings. In total there were 28 NWG reports received. Romania was the only country which did not submit a report. Belgium submitted three reports, one for each of the Belgian communities. Experts statement reports were submitted by 4 INYGOs (ATD Fourth World, European Union of Jewish Students, World association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Organization of the Scout Movement).

This data was thematically analysed by the researchers supporting EUYD10 to produce this consultation phase reports. The findings of the European Youth Conference in Alicante (1 - 4 October 2023) were also incorporated.

³ *Toolbox: how to make the EU Youth Dialogue more inclusive.* Available at <https://youth-goals.eu/lab/toolbox-how-to-make-the-eu-youth-dialogue-more-inclusive>, accessed 19 February 2024.

Methods used by NWGs

Face to face methods of consultation was the most commonly used method, with all NWGs delivering this form of activity.

Method	% of NWGs using this method
Visual participatory methods	11.1%
Social media polls	11.1%
Other methods	14.8%
Other survey (not based on standard EUYD10 survey questions)	37.0%
Online meetings	51.9%
Survey based on standard EUYD10 survey questions	63.0%
Face-to-face activities	100%

*Data from the Swedish NWG is not included in this table due to late submission

Participants details

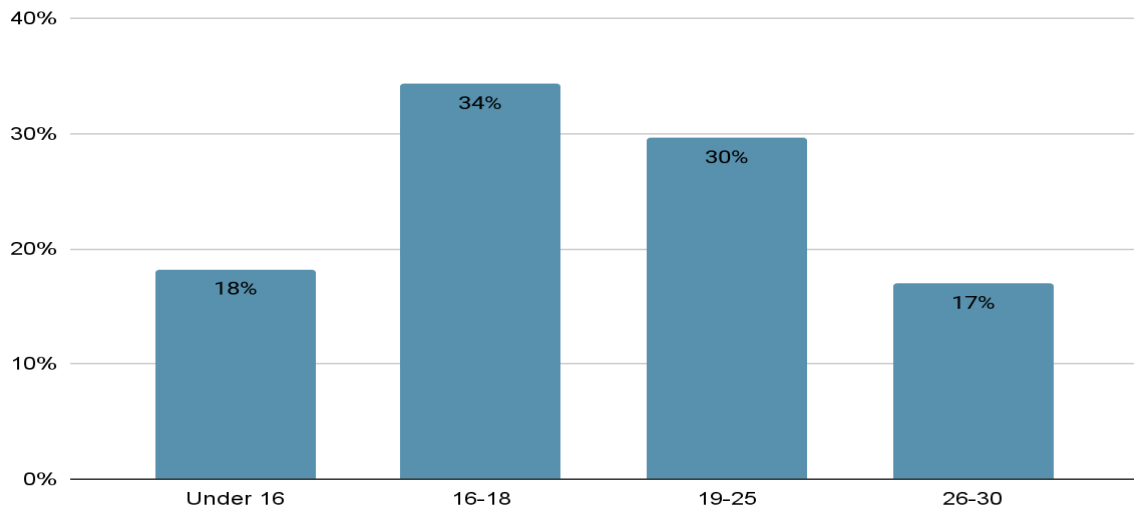
Overall, an estimated **28723** young people took part in EUYD10. This included:

- **9831** who took part in meaningful participation activities (physical or virtual events, visual methodologies, or any activity requiring dialogue or engagement for in dialogue with others for a continued period of time)
- **18892** who gave feedback through other means (surveys, social media opinion polls and comments online and other similar consultation activities).

Age of participants

Age of participants is shown in the graph below. The proportion of EUYD10 participants who are 18 or under (52%) has risen substantially compared to EUYD9 (26.7%) bringing it back to a similar rate within previous cycles.

Graph 1: Age of participants



Gender and backgrounds of participants

Around 60.1% of participants provided details on their backgrounds (see Appendix: EUYD 10 participant data). Based on this sample, backgrounds of participants are shown in the table below. This is compared to the previous two cycles and the EU-27 benchmark target, which illustrates the proportion of young people expected from that background, had they been randomly selected from European youth.⁴

⁴ For details see Moxon D., Barta O. [2023]. Evaluation of participant inclusion levels within the EU Youth Dialogue. EU-CoE Youth Partnership.

Table 1: Marginalised groups and gender

	EUJD8*	EUJD9	EUJD10	EU-27 Benchmark target
Gender	F= 60.9% M= 38.6% Other gender = 0.5%	F = 63.7% M= 34.3% Other gender = 1.9%	F = 56.0% M= 42.2% Other gender = 1.8%	Equal Male:Female Ratio, no benchmark for Other gender
% of participants identifying as having a disability	3.7%	19.2%	6.6%	1.95%
% of participants identifying as being part of a religious minority group	8.0%	20.8%	23.1%	4.58%
% of participants identifying as being part of an ethnic minority group	11.7%	20.3%	14.5%	4.21%
% of participants identifying as LGB or sexuality other than heterosexual	8.2%	28.0%	14.7%	3.15%
% of participants who are Not in education employment or training (NEET)	5.8%	9.6%	14.5%	11.20% (applies to EUJD10 only)
% of participants who are living in rural areas	34.4%	26.3%	30.1%	32.25%
% of participants with no parent holding a university degree	-	-	48.6%	-
% of participants taking part in EUJD for the first time	-	-	84.2%	-

*EUJD8 consultations took place during COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, figures for the common European survey are not included in this column.

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