



BE MORE YOUTH-FRIENDLY!

HOW TO MAKE CITIES/TOWNS MORE YOUTH-FRIENDLY TO ENSURE SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Context

This workshop aims to empower local youth from age 14 to actively participate in decision-making processes and take ownership of their communities.

The workshop addresses the challenge of youth migration by fostering a sense of belonging and providing opportunities for local engagement. Through activities designed to help participants understand their hometowns, identify youth needs, and envision youth-friendly cities, we aim to develop critical thinking and strategic planning skills.

Participants who are already familiar with each other and eager to take local action will explore ways to engage their peers in decision-making in town and promote social sustainability. No special skills are required, just an open mind and enthusiasm for community engagement and involvement.

While tailored for European contexts, this workshop's principles of youth empowerment and grassroots action are universally applicable and adaptable to various cultural settings.

Objectives

The workshop aims to promote active citizenship and participation among young people by involving them in reflecting on their neighbourhood's good qualities, problems, and areas for improvement.

The first part of the program aims to create a safe space for the participants where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and listening to each other.





Objectives:


- ✦ Communicate and share personal experiences, emotions, thoughts and reasoning;
- ✦ Using observation as a cognitive tool of reality and as a basis for critical thinking;
- ✦ Stimulate young people to observe (not just look) what surrounds them;
- ✦ Understand the importance of forming one's own opinion on goods of common interest;
- ✦ Understand the importance of contributing to the well-being of your community by expressing your opinion on what could be improved;
- ✦ Empower young people to figure out where they can start their active citizenship to make their city more youth-friendly and sustainable and actively engage in decision-making processes within their communities;
- ✦ Improve speech techniques, from presentation structure to oral skills;
- ✦ Through discussions and activities, participants will learn to identify their needs and the main local problems they are willing to reflect on;
- ✦ Participants will be more aware of their social, cultural, and historical heritage;
- ✦ Participants will work towards shaping a more inclusive, tolerant, and equal vision of the future, addressing barriers that hinder the realization of ideal societal visions;


The workshop scenarios' learning objectives align with the goals of the project EUtopia and with European values regarding active citizenship.

Tools, resources and facilities

This workshop can primarily be conducted offline, but certain elements, such as sharing resources or follow-up activities, could benefit from online platforms or communication tools.

Tools, Materials, and Equipment:

- ✦ Paper
 - ✦ Markers/Pencils
 - ✦ Flipchart or Whiteboard
 - ✦ Chairs
- 

- 
- ✦ Observation game in the neighbourhood worksheet is provided for you to follow. Therefore, it can be used online or printed. (Possibly also to modify the worksheet, adding aspects that may be relevant).

Venue

A workshop space large enough to accommodate participants for group discussions and activities (indoor or outdoor).

Description of workshop activities

These workshop scenarios were designed for local youth workers to take the first steps in engaging young people in local actions to make their hometowns more youth-friendly.

The main goals are to develop a sense of belonging, recognise the local problems, and identify the needs of the local youth.

The suggested time frame for the sessions:

- ✦ Part I. The place where we are living: 60 minutes
- ✦ Part II. Observation game in the neighbourhood: 60-90 minutes
- ✦ Part III. Youth-friendly cities: 90-120 minutes

If you have more time, we suggest you start identifying the steps and actions needed to reflect on the needs of local youth. For the following sessions, check the workshop ["Define your impact project!"](#), or you can use the activities ["Brainwriting," "Laboratory of context analysis"](#), the ["Action Plan,"](#) and the ["Action template"](#) provided by Project EUtopia.

Part I. The place where we are living

Start with the introduction of the aims of the workshop, and the facilitators.

1. Introduction circle

Participants introduce themselves shortly, sharing their name and their motivation for participating in this workshop.





2. Who is the conductor?

In this activity, one participant leaves the room, while the others choose a conductor to lead movements for everyone to follow simultaneously. The person who left the room returns and tries to identify the conductor. Repeat the process at least three times, involving different volunteers in guessing and leading.

3. Safer space

Along predefined headings (e.g. encouragement, respect, avoiding judgement), participants individually write down their thoughts about what they need in order to feel safe and comfortable in the cooperation, discuss them in small groups, and then stick their own thoughts on the wall, thus sharing their needs with the large group.

4. Concentric circles

Divide participants into two groups, forming concentric circles facing each other. Assign simple topics based on the learning objectives of the workshop. In these variations we suggest topics like "Which is your favourite place in town?" or "What do you like about the city?" for pairs to discuss within a two-minute timeframe. Rotate the circles to create new pairs at least five times.

Part II. Observation game in the neighbourhood

First of all, the young people participating in the activity should be divided into small groups. A walk around the neighbourhood is then planned. The worksheet can be filled in either during the walk itself or afterwards. It may be useful for the facilitator to carry out the walk before accompanying the group, so that they know what and where it is appropriate to focus attention. The activity will take at least 1-1.5 hours depending on the locations you would like to visit.

After the worksheet has been completed, it is always helpful to compare others who have thought similarly and may have come to different conclusions. The exchange of opinions can allow for the elaboration of a final profile, in which, after the comparison, the work of the individual or small group is enriched by the comparison with the others. A final phase can be the writing of a document to be shared with the local administration or even a small petition to be signed by the inhabitants.





This tool is very useful for stimulating young people to observe (not just look). In fact, correct observation leads to the development of critical thinking about responsibilities, problems, opportunities and the need for inclusion, improvement, safety, etc. interventions. It will also help them to communicate, share personal experiences, emotions, thoughts and reasoning and to express their point of view.

If no one asks the questions, things will never change. Everyone can be responsible and promoter of improvement, starting right from the community and the neighbourhood in which they live. We therefore want to stimulate young people to understand that the well-being of a community is linked to many visible and even hidden factors, which may not be the same for everyone. It is important to encourage young people to observe and go beneath the surface of things. Remember that acting for the widespread well-being of the community also means considering the needs of minorities or people with special needs.

Pro tips for youth workers

Tips and tricks for practitioners on how they can implement the tool/activity into their practice. It may be interesting to make this work evolve into a request to the administration to intervene on some aspects to be improved in the neighbourhood, or into an awareness campaign for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who could all contribute together to improve things.


Part III. Youth-friendly cities

1. This is my seat

Ask the participants to create a circle with their chairs and join them with yours. Then, leave your chair in the circle and stand in the middle. You will be the first person to look for a place to sit. The rules are the following:

The participants sitting on the left of the empty chair say, "This is my chair", and sit on it. The next person on the left of the new empty chair does the same. The third person on the left of the new empty chair says, "This is the chair of XY", so call somebody to sit there. Now, the empty chair is somewhere else in the circle. The goal of the person in the middle is to sit down before it belongs to





somebody else (a person is sitting there, or somebody is already called to sit there). Repeat the steps until you feel it is joyful (5-10 minutes max).

2. The map of your city

Step 1

Instruct the participants to draw a map of their city/town individually without specific instructions. This activity is about understanding the significance of their hometowns through their eyes and fostering a sense of community. Encourage them to include anything they think should be on the map.

Step 2

When they are done with the maps, ask them to show their maps to the others and start a sharing conversation based on the following questions:

- ✦ What is on your map?
- ✦ Why are these places important to you?

At this stage, the main focus is on getting to know each other's reality; it is not necessary to dig deeper yet, but let them react, ask questions and give details they consider important.

Step 3

Now ask them to create a map of the group about their hometown. Highlight that it has to be agreed upon by the whole team, but let them facilitate themselves. They can decide to put all the individual things or only the ones appearing on all the individual maps. This will show you what is important to them as a group and how their dynamic is together.

Step 4

Ask the participants to showcase their final map based on the following questions:

- ✦ What was your strategy to create your map? Why?
- ✦ What is on your group map?
- ✦ Why are these places important to you as a team?
- ✦ Did you learn something new about your hometown thanks to the other? If yes, what?





Timeframe suggested:

- ✦ 5-10 min for introduction
- ✦ 15-20 minutes for drawing the maps individually
- ✦ 30-40 minutes for creating the final map and reflection

3. Think - Pair - Share

In this variation, follow the steps below:

Think

Have participants write a response to the following question:

What makes a city/town youth-friendly? Which are the main aspects?

Pair

For the 'Pair' step, participants should find a partner and share their individual responses to the question.

Share

Reconvene the class and ask pairs to report back their conversations.

Meanwhile, create a list of their thoughts on a flipchart or whiteboard.


4. Group discussion

Check the list you created before based on the participants' ideas. Discuss whether there are more aspects to add. Think about an ideal (utopic) youth-friendly town/city. Feel free to suggest things or ask support questions to fill the list. The goal is to see the bigger picture and the final/ideal goal to reach.

5. Working in small groups

Step 1





Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to consider the needs of the local youth based on the list you created earlier. Tell them that it is not necessary to think about all aspects of a perfectly youth-friendly city/town, but they should rather focus on the ones connected to their needs the reality of their hometown and that they consider most important or urgent to develop. The main goal is to map the first possible territories of action.

Step 2

Ask the small groups to summarise their discussion and highlight the most important needs and problems they would like to reflect on.

Create a list of all the needs and problems they highlighted meanwhile the discussion.

6. Debriefing

Invite the participants to an evaluation discussion based on the following questions:


- ✦ What did you learn?
- ✦ What can we do to reflect on the needs?
- ✦ What should be the next steps or concrete actions?

If it is possible schedule another date to meet and continue with concrete action planning. We suggest taking a look at our workshop "Define your impact project!" as an inspiration for the next steps.

Learning Outcomes

- ✦ Participants will create individual maps of their hometowns and collaboratively develop a group map, highlighting significant places and community assets.
- ✦ Participants will identify the advantages, problems, and areas for improvement in their neighbourhood, as well as possible solutions, on the observation game's practical sheet.
- ✦ Participants will demonstrate the ability to analyse and understand the criteria that contribute to a youth-friendly city or town.
- ✦ Participants will actively engage in group discussions and collaborative decision-making processes to prioritize community needs and plan actionable solutions.



- 
- ✦ Participants will evaluate their workshop experience and reflect on their learning, identifying areas of growth, challenges encountered, and potential next steps for further action.
 - ✦ Participants will contribute to the well-being of their community by expressing their opinions about necessary/possible improvements.
 - ✦ Participants will improve their speech techniques, presentation structures, and oral skills.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union (Project code: 2021-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000033162). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution- NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>).

