



BEYOND TOKENISM:
YOUTH LEADING
INCLUSION
BETILI



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Combat Tokenism

 **TOOLKIT**



PROJECT

Beyond Tokenism Youth Leading Inclusion (BETYLl)
2024-2-HR01-KA220-YOU-000288789

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Introduction

Youth participation has become a widely used concept in project proposals, policy papers, and mission statements - but its widespread adoption doesn't always mean it's being done meaningfully. In many cases, young people are invited to take part in activities or discussions, but their presence serves more as a symbol than as a source of real influence. This practice, often subtle and unintentional, is called tokenism; and it is more common in youth work than many would like to admit.

This toolkit was developed to support youth workers, educators, project leaders, and organisations who are ready to move beyond surface-level participation. It is for those who want to not only involve young people but to truly include them as co-creators, leaders, and changemakers in their communities.

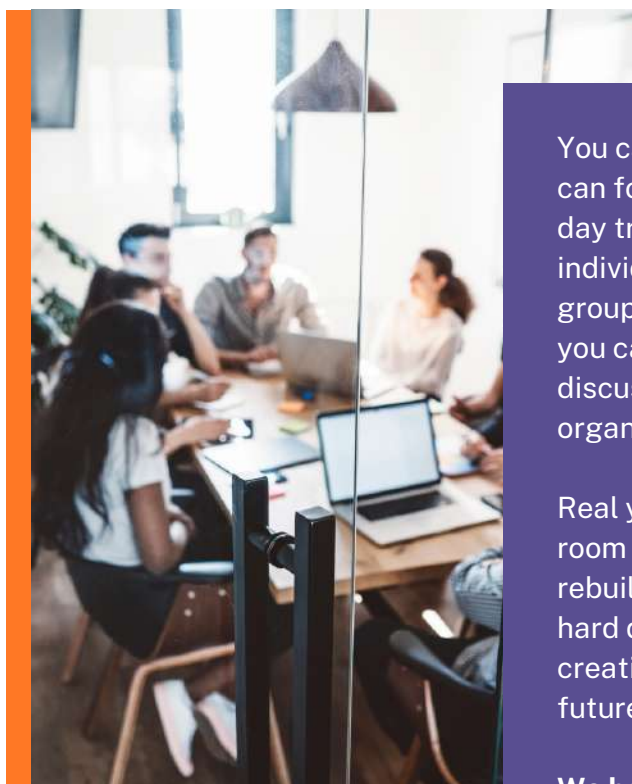


This educational material combines theoretical grounding with practical tools. It includes:

- ◉ Four theoretical introduction chapters that explore what tokenism is, how it shows up, and how to move beyond it toward genuine inclusion.
- ◉ A structured set of interactive workshops, in the form of a 5-day non-formal training program, designed to help participants unpack tokenism, explore power and privilege, and design inclusive, youth-led initiatives.
- ◉ Reflection activities, self-assessment tools, case studies, and participatory methods that can be used outside of the workshops in daily work of youth workers and youth organisations.

This toolkit is for:

- ▶ Youth workers and educators looking to improve participatory practices
- ▶ NGOs and organisations aiming to build more inclusive and youth-led projects
- ▶ Trainers facilitating group learning processes on inclusion, power, and youth participation
- ▶ Young people who want to better understand their own participation and challenge tokenistic practices



You can use this material in different ways. You can follow the full workshop program for a multi-day training experience. Also, you can select individual sessions or chapters based on your group's needs. If you are a small organisation, you can also use the self-assessment tools and discussion prompts to reflect on your own organisational practices.

Real youth participation is not about making room at the table - it's about building and rebuilding the table together. This means asking hard questions, redistributing power, and creating space for diverse voices to shape the future.

We hope this toolkit helps you do just that.



How the St Maarten study visit helped to shape the “Beyond Tokenism” toolkit

The four-day field visit to St Maarten in May 2025, was planned as a live stress-test for our ideas: before a single page of the toolkit was drafted, partners immersed themselves in classrooms, community kitchens, grassroots arts spaces and social enterprises where “inclusion” is negotiated every day.

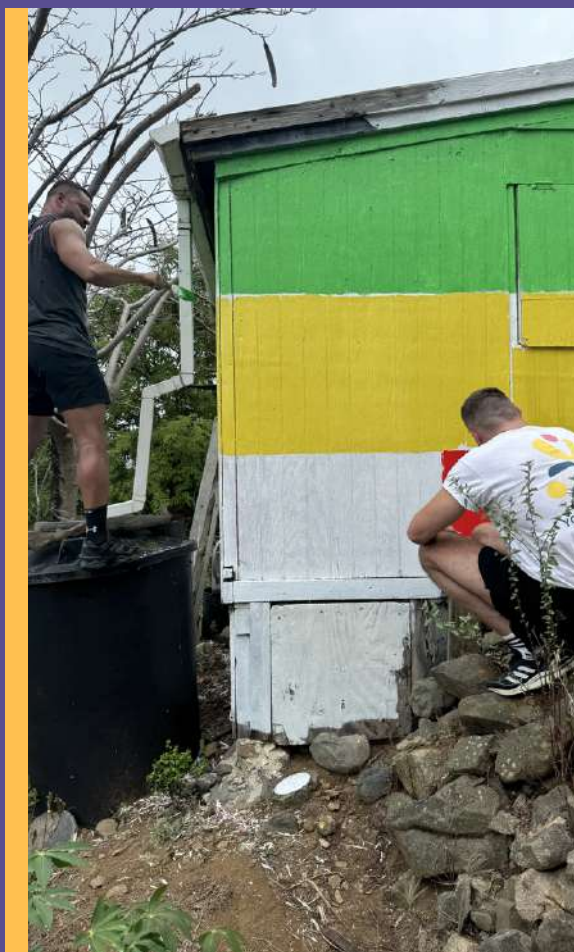
Listening to young islanders describe being invited for photo-ops one week and sidelined from decisions the next revealed the grey zone between symbolic and genuine participation. Those candid conversations and the daily reflection circles that followed became the intellectual spark for the publication you now hold.

Back home, the team reorganised the contents page around the very dilemmas witnessed during the visit. A theoretical spine What is tokenism?, Tokenism vs-genuine participation, Moving toward inclusion mirrors the questions that surfaced in each site visit, while the practical heart of the guide is a five-day training programme that echoes the rhythm of our Caribbean week: opening up trust, unpacking power, co-creating solutions, practising inclusion and setting follow-up commitments.

One recurring provocation during campus dialogues was that “representation without resources is still tokenism.” That insistence on intersectionality and structural support reshaped Chapter 4, where readers map overlapping identities and hidden power ladders rather than treating gender, disability or race in isolation. It also triggered the inclusion of simple budget-check prompts “Who is paid, who is reimbursed, who is volunteering?” throughout the self-assessment tools so that practitioners learn to test the equity of their own projects in real time.

The study visit was equally methodological. Each host relied on embodied learning volunteering side-by-side, dialogue circles, peer-led digital labs to prevent participation from stalling at the consultation level. Those same techniques now frame the workshop design: a gallery-walk of case studies, a role-play on “Tokenism or Not?” and an Inclusion Canvas exercise that moves participants physically through space before they draft an action plan. Even the timing (two three-hour sessions per day) and the sequencing of energisers, story-sharing and hands-on prototyping replicate the flow that proved most engaging on the island.

Field realities also warned us that visibility can harm when safeguards are weak. A shelter supporting undocumented youth explained why it refuses media photographs; a grassroots collective asked us to anonymise beneficiaries in reports. Those reminders translate into the safeguarding checklist and the closing pledge in Session 9, where every participant commits to one concrete organisational reform that protects dignity rather than chasing publicity.



To avoid writing a Euro-centric manual, the toolkit threads Caribbean examples through each chapter not as exotic anecdotes but as analytical anchors. A food-voucher scheme that requires a small co-payment illustrates dignity-based aid in Chapter 2; a student-run renovation festival becomes a case study on youth-led governance in Chapter 5. By grounding abstract concepts in lived practice, the guide encourages readers to translate lessons into their own contexts rather than copy-paste activities that may not fit.

Study visit was more than a preparatory exercise; it served as the crucible in which the toolkit’s concepts, methods and tone were forged. The publication speaks with, not about, the communities that first revealed what “beyond tokenism” must look like in practice, ensuring that every page is accountable to the experiences that inspired it.

01

What is tokenism?

1. What is tokenism?

When we speak about youth work, we as youth organisations have an obligation to ensure that our actions and organisations are representative of the diversity of young people, regardless or because of their reality. However, this growing awareness does not always translate into genuine practices that empower all young people equally. One of the most common challenges in this area is tokenism, which can be defined as a form of superficial inclusion that may appear inclusive on the surface but, in reality, reinforces existing power structures.

Tokenism presents a symbolic act to include members of underrepresented groups to give the appearance of equality or inclusivity. In youth work, this often manifests through the selective involvement of young people from underrepresented backgrounds. Those young people are not included in sharing power or decision-making, but just to demonstrate the appearance of diversity.

In youth work, tokenism can often be unintentional. Youth workers and youth work practitioners may believe they are being inclusive by involving “a diverse young person” in a meeting, project or campaign. However, inclusion becomes tokenistic when it is based on someone’s identity rather than their ability to contribute meaningfully, and when there is no effort to support their full participation or integrate their input.

The term tokenism originated back in the 1960s and 1970s, and particularly in the context of racial and gender discrimination. It was initially used to critique the superficial inclusion of Black Americans in political and corporate spaces, but soon expanded into feminist and disability rights discourse (Eyben, 2004). Nowadays, tokenism is recognised as a form of performative inclusion that involves actions taken to appear inclusive without making structural changes.



Why is tokenism harmful?

At first look, tokenism may seem harmless and even better than no inclusion at all. But in reality and especially for young people from marginalised backgrounds, it can cause lasting damage as being invited into a space where one’s voice is ignored or undervalued can reinforce feelings of powerlessness and mistrust.

Also, tokenism often places undue pressure on individuals to “speak for” their entire group. This can lead to reinforced stereotypes and limit the recognition of the diversity within communities. It can also lead to burnout or disengagement when young people feel their involvement is superficial or instrumentalised. SALTO Inclusion & Diversity (2022) notes that real inclusion takes time and the willingness to share power. When youth participation is reduced to a symbolic gesture, it becomes a barrier rather than a bridge to empowerment.

Tokenism undermines the basic principles of youth work which are based on respect, equity, self-determination and youth empowerment.



How to recognise tokenism in youth work?

Tokenism can be subtle and very hard to discover. As youth workers and youth work practitioners, we should always keep in mind and ask ourselves:

- ◉ Are we involving young people in decision-making processes or simply asking for their approval after decisions have already been made?
- ◉ Are we selecting participants to meet diversity quotas or because they bring unique perspectives and skills?
- ◉ Are marginalised or young people with fewer opportunities who we work with expected to represent their entire community?
- ◉ Do we provide adequate support (in the form of translation, accessibility, mentoring...) to ensure their equal participation?

As the Compass Manual for Human Rights Education emphasises, “genuine participation is not about being there, but it’s about being heard and having influence” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 148). This statement highlights the basics of meaningful inclusion, that it is not enough to simply invite young people into the room, but what matters is whether they are actively shaping what happens within it.

Participation becomes meaningless when young people are present in name only and without the ability to impact decisions or co-create solutions.

02

Examples of tokenism

2. Examples of tokenism

We see tokenism in youth work when young people are included in the activities or decision-making processes primarily for show, rather than for some meaningful participation. This is easily seen in a form of superficial engagement where young people are invited to take part in events or meetings - but they don't have any influence or chance to make some meaningful impact or decisions on those events.

Tokenism doesn't always look like exclusion. Sometimes, it hides behind the appearance of participation. In youth work, this can manifest in many ways — from inviting young people for visibility to giving them a seat at the table but no real influence. Below are common examples that many youth workers, leaders, or young people themselves may have encountered, even in well-intentioned spaces.

Where can you most easily see tokenism examples in youth work activities?

We present you with some examples that we think most of the readers will have no problems remembering when they have seen something similar in their projects or activities they took part in.

01



Superficial representation

We can say there is superficial representation when young people are invited to a meeting or some event, but they do not have a chance to have their voice truly heard or valued. Decisions are made without the input of youth, or even if there is input - it is not considered or integrated in the decision-making process.

02



Diversity quotas

This is an example that maybe it's easiest to see in the companies, but is much present in youth work activities. People are involved in the activities for the main reason of satisfying the diversity requirement, but their voice is actually not heard and they do not have a chance to participate in the decision making. This form of tokenism can especially be seen in international events when we have young people from different backgrounds joining the activities - but without the say in the decision-making process of the activities.

03



Photo opportunities

Have you seen those beautiful photos of young people obviously coming from different ethnicities, promoting some project idea or project outcome? Sometimes it happens that those young people are there on the photos without actually being aware what is the purpose of the photo, and they haven't been consulted on the planning or decision-making processes that led to that photo.

04



One-time things

The organisation includes youth representatives just for the need of having them involved and to be able to say that young people have participated in the process. Believe it or not - this is also a form of tokenism; even though it might seem that one young person had actually their voice heard. Nevertheless, if it's just for one time and to satisfy just the need of having young people presented as someone who made the decision - it is still tokenism.

05



Nepotism and favouritism

Even in the cases where there are actual young people involved in the decision making process and follow throughs of the activities, we can still have tokenism present. If the young people are selected to participate in youth-led initiatives just because they have personal connections with the individuals or group choosing who gets to participate, and not based on their experience/knowledge/skills - sorry, but it is still tokenism.

06



Lack of support

We see this example of tokenism when there are actually young people involved in the process of decision-making, and they are given the full right and responsibility to make choices. But, if those young people are not adequately supported (through training, education, access to needed information, etc.) throughout the process – we can still say it's tokenism. Putting young people in the roles for the first time and not supporting them in an adequate way is still a form of tokenism.

07



Lack of follow-through

If we involve young people actively in the activities of a youth organisation for a purpose of implementing a specific project, but we do not provide them with follow-through once the project is completed – they will feel being used. And they will feel this way for a reason. It's still tokenism, even though it might seem young people were included – but in this case genuine inclusion is lacking.

08



Consultation without accountability

Many organisations run youth consultations to gather feedback or insights. But if there is no mechanism to act on that feedback, or no obligation to report back to young people about what changed as a result – this becomes performative. Consultation is not enough if it's disconnected from actual influence or accountability.

09



Repetitive youth roles without growth

In some projects, the same small group of young people is repeatedly asked to represent the “youth voice” without opportunities for others to step in, grow, or be mentored. When the same faces are used over and over again, it can create a closed circle that reinforces tokenism - even when those youth are actively participating.

To conclude; these examples don't mean that all youth participation is tokenistic - but they remind us how easily it can happen, even with good intentions. Recognising these patterns is the first step in shifting towards more authentic, shared, and empowering models of youth engagement.

03

Tokenism vs genuine participation

3. Tokenism vs genuine participation

In youth work, we often speak about youth participation as a goal of our activity itself, but we have to keep in mind that not all participation is equal. While some forms of youth participation can give young people a real chance for influence, others can only offer the illusion of their involvement. For youth workers and youth work practitioners it is then important to be able to understand the difference between tokenism and genuine participation if we want to build spaces where young people are not just present, but powerful and able to be heard.

Hart's ladder of participation

In 1992, child rights scholar Roger Hart developed a visual model that helps to describe different levels and degrees of children's and young people's involvement in decision-making processes. The model consists of eight levels (rungs), ranging from forms of non-participation to genuine youth engagement. This model has since then become a foundational tool in youth work and civic education as it helps us examine whether participation is meaningful or merely symbolic. Each rung on the ladder represents a step toward increasing empowerment and shared responsibility. While the ladder is not meant to be a strict hierarchy, it offers a valuable framework for reflection on how much influence young people really have in our projects and processes.



Rungs 1-3: non-participation

These bottom three rungs illustrate activities that only look participatory but are actually disempowering. They use young people as props or tokens rather than engaging them meaningfully.

01 Manipulation

Participation as manipulation occurs when children and youth do not understand the issues motivating a participatory process or their role in that process. Their presence is mostly orchestrated to serve adult agendas. The example can include pre-school children carrying political placards concerning the impact of social policies on children when those children do not understand the issues or their role in the political process.

02 Decoration

Participation as decoration occurs when children and youth are put on public display during an event, performance, or other activity organized for a specific purpose, but they do not understand the meaning or intent of their involvement. Their presence is purely meant to make the event look inclusive. The example can include a youth group that is asked to perform a dance at a climate event and they're not told what the event is about or why their performance matters, but it's just for show.

03 Tokenism

As we have already mentioned earlier, participation as tokenism occurs in those instances in which young people are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions. The example can include a young Roma person who is invited to join a diversity panel, but isn't asked what they think, isn't given support to prepare, and feels like they're there just to represent their ethnicity.

Rungs 4-6: adult initiated participation with youth involvement

These middle rungs describe more authentic forms of participation where young people are involved, but adults retain leadership and responsibility.

04 Assigned but informed

Assigned but informed occurs when adults initiate the project, but young people understand the purpose, know their role, and agree to take part. The example can include a youth worker who invites young people to help run a workshop. The adults designed it, but the young people know what's expected, understand the goals, and willingly take part.

05 Consulted and informed

Consulted and informed occurs when young people are asked for their opinions and know their input will be taken seriously. However, final decisions still lie and are the responsibility of adults. One example Hart describes is of an adult-led survey of youth perceptions in which the youth are informed about the purpose of the survey, consulted about appropriate questions before it's developed, and given an opportunity to provide feedback on the final survey before it is administered.

06 Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth

Adult-initiated and shared decisions with youth occur when adults initiate participatory projects, but they share decision-making authority or management with young people. One example Hart describes is a youth newspaper. In this case, the newspaper may be an adult-initiated project, but children can manage every aspect of the operation, from reporting, writing, and editing to advertising, printing, and distribution, with only guidance and technical assistance from adults.

Rungs 7-8: youth-initiated participation

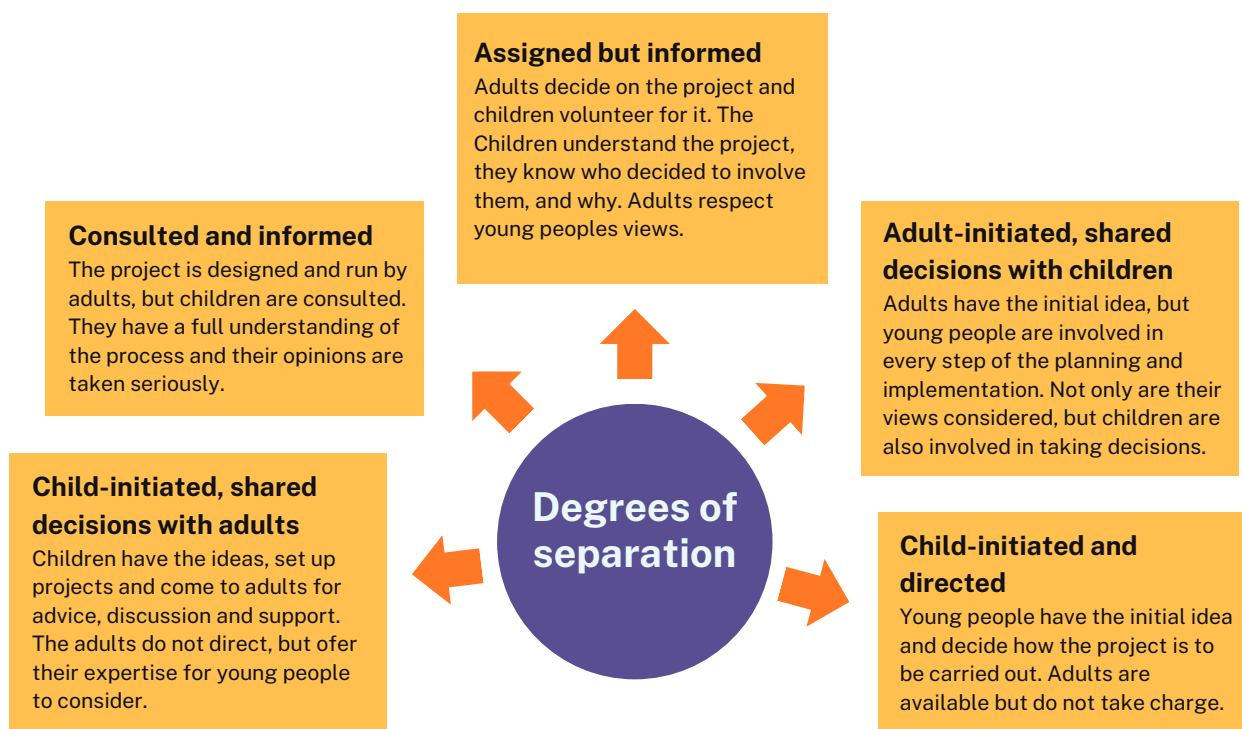
These top rungs represent the most empowering forms of participation, where young people take the lead and adults act as facilitators or allies.

07 Youth-initiated and directed

Youth-initiated and directed occurs when young people conceive and lead a project or initiative independently. Adults may provide support if requested, but youth still retain full control. While adults may observe and assist the young people, they do not interfere with the process or play a directive or managerial role. However, Hart notes that it's difficult to find examples of child-initiated community projects. A primary reason for this is that adults are usually not good at responding to young people's own initiatives. Even in those instances where adults leave children alone to design and paint a wall mural or their own recreation room, it seems hard for them not to play a directing role.

08 Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults

Youth-initiated and shared decisions with adults occur when young people and adults work together as equals to design and lead a project. This is the ideal model for intergenerational cooperation, where power is genuinely shared, and mutual respect guides the process. Examples would include students partnering with adults to raise funding, develop and run a school program, or lead a community campaign. A major advantage of this form of youth participation is that it can empower young people to have a significant impact on policies, decisions, or outcomes that were traditionally under the exclusive control and direction of adults, such as legislative or political processes. At these levels, participation becomes transformative. Young people not only shape their environments but also develop leadership, responsibility, and civic identity. These forms of participation align closely with democratic values and the goals of youth empowerment (Hart, 1992).



(Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation, outlining the eight levels of youth involvement, from manipulation to youth-initiated shared decisions (Hart, 1992).)



Youth empowerment and climbing the ladder

In order to allow young people to climb through different rungs of the ladder, it takes more than the simple inclusion of young people into our decision-making processes, but it demands work on their empowerment. Empowerment refers to the process by which individuals gain the confidence, skills, and opportunities to make decisions and shape their lives.

In the context of youth work, youth empowerment means creating conditions where young people are seen, heard, and trusted. This begins with creation of safe environments where they feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of judgement. It also involves recognising lived experience as a form of expertise.

Too often, young people are expected to adapt to adult-led structures rather than being respected for the knowledge they hold from navigating their real-life challenges. Finally, implementing non-formal and experiential learning methods can be important, as empowerment does not come from being told what to do, but it comes from being given the freedom to try, to fail, and to try again in the safe environment. Youth workers and youth work practitioners here play a key role by acting as mentors and allies of young people, rather than teachers or instructors.

As the Have Your Say! manual (Council of Europe, 2022) concludes on this part, “Participation without empowerment is limited; real influence only happens when young people believe their voice matters and are supported to act on it.” In other words, meaningful participation is inseparable from empowerment. It’s not enough to ask young people what they think, but we must also support them to act on what they believe.

04

Moving toward genuine inclusion

4. Moving toward genuine inclusion

Genuine inclusion in youth work requires moving beyond superficial gestures and creating processes where young people - especially those from marginalized backgrounds - can actively shape and lead initiatives. It is not enough to “invite youth to the table”; instead, youth organisations must co-create the table with them, ensuring that every voice has influence, responsibility, and recognition. This chapter explores principles of co-creation, strategies for building inclusive cultures, and practical tools for setting and tracking inclusion goals.

Principles of co-creation and youth-led design

Co-creation means working alongside young people as equal partners, sharing power in every stage of project design, implementation, and evaluation (Council of Europe, 2021). It challenges traditional top-down structures, replacing them with collaborative approaches that build on the lived experiences and creativity of young people.



Key principles of co-creation include:

- ◉ Shared decision-making: Young people and adults make decisions together, recognizing that youth bring unique perspectives, while adults contribute expertise and structural support.
- ◉ Transparency: All processes, roles, and expectations are openly discussed and agreed upon.
- ◉ Iterative collaboration: Co-creation is ongoing - ideas are tested, reviewed, and adapted with continuous input from youth participants (SALTO Inclusion, 2022).
- ◉ Empowerment: Young people are encouraged to take leadership roles while being supported with mentoring, skills development, and resources.

One useful framework is the Pathways to Participation model, which emphasizes that authentic participation must be both influential and voluntary (Youth Participation Strategy, CoE, 2021). Youth-led design processes should therefore begin with listening to the needs and aspirations of young people, not just inviting them into pre-defined plans.



Building inclusive cultures within youth organisations

An inclusive culture is more than a set of policies - it is a mindset and daily practice that values diversity, equity, and belonging (Youth Partnership, 2020). To create this culture, youth organisations must:

- ❖ **Center marginalised voices:** Activities should be intentionally designed to include those who are often overlooked - for example, youth from rural areas, young people with disabilities, or those from minority ethnic groups.
- ❖ **Adapt facilitation techniques:** Methods like circle discussions, world cafés, or storytelling allow all participants to contribute in ways that feel safe and meaningful (SALTO Inclusion, 2022).
- ❖ **Challenge power dynamics:** Facilitators and staff should regularly reflect on their own biases and ensure that youth feel empowered to challenge decisions or propose alternatives.
- ❖ **Provide structural support:** Inclusion often requires resources - such as transportation, translation, or accessibility tools - to ensure every young person can fully participate.

Fostering an inclusive culture means shifting from a “representation” mindset (having one or two youth present) to a partnership mindset, where youth are co-owners of both the process and outcomes.



Setting and tracking inclusion goals

Moving toward genuine inclusion also means setting clear, measurable goals and monitoring progress. Inclusion cannot be left to chance - it needs to be planned, evaluated, and improved.

How to set inclusion goals:

1. **Identify barriers:** Use feedback tools and consultations with young people to map existing obstacles.
2. **Define priorities:** Decide which areas (e.g., diversity of participants, decision-making power, accessibility) need improvement.
3. **Create measurable indicators:** Examples include the number of youth-led decisions made during a project, or the diversity of youth representatives in leadership roles.

Tracking progress:

- Self-assessment checklists (e.g., SALTO's inclusion scorecards) can help youth workers reflect on whether their activities are genuinely participatory or still tokenistic.
- Feedback loops should be established to collect youth perspectives after every activity and make visible adjustments.

This process is not about ticking boxes but about creating a continuous culture of improvement that aligns with the principles of equity and empowerment.

05

5-days non- formal training program

5. 5-days non-formal training program

In this part of the toolkit we bring you 10 educational sessions, for organising 5-days non-formal training program. Most of the sessions can be used also as stand-alone activities, as well. Each of the sessions is developed in duration of 180 minutes, with 2 sessions planned per each day – resulting in 6 educational hours per day; 30 educational hours in total.



Day 1: Getting to know each other and introduction to tokenism

Session 1 Getting to know each other, Team building

Duration:  180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To build feeling of trust among participants
- To create a safe and inclusive learning space for participants
- To introduce training objectives and methodology

Session flow: (step by step description)

Energiser – Human bingo (30 minutes)

The facilitator prepares bingo cards in advance, each containing diverse traits or experiences (e.g. “Has a pet,” “Can ride a bicycle,” “Speaks more than two languages”). Participants move around the room, interacting with each other to find people who match each square and collecting signatures. The first participants to complete a line (“bingo”) share fun facts they learned. Based on the number of participants, the trainer introduces rules on how many lines of bingo are needed for someone to finish their card, as well as the rule on how many times someone can write the name of other participants as an answer to a specific question on the sheet.

Name games and icebreakers (30 minutes)

For the name games, we propose 2 activities for participants.

First one is speed dating: Participants form two circles, one inside the other, facing each other. The inner circle rotates after each question. Short pair discussions follow each prompt (e.g., “What’s a skill you’re proud of?” or “What do you hope to learn today?”).

The second game is a web of connections: Participants stand in a circle with one person holding a ball of yarn. That person states their name and a training expectation, then throws the yarn to someone across the circle while holding onto the end. The process repeats until everyone is connected to the web.

➤ **How our ideal learning environment should look like (45 minutes)**

The trainer divides participants into small groups. Each group gets a task to create a visual map of their ideal learning environment using flipchart paper and markers.

The trainer asks groups to consider the following when defining the ideal learning environment they want to see in this training: physical setup, emotional atmosphere, interaction styles, supportive resources, etc.

Groups are given up to 30 minutes for discussing and drawing their learning environment, and after that they present their maps to the plenary. Trainer highlights common values and aspirations shared across groups, and concludes this step with joint agreement on how the ideal learning environment can be ensured during this educational event.

➤ **Expectations and contributions (45 minutes)**

Two flipchart papers are posted on the walls with labels “Our expectations” and “Our contributions”. Participants use sticky notes to post:

- What they expect from the training (e.g., “I expect to learn practical tools”)
- What they are ready to contribute (e.g., “I will actively participate”)

The facilitator leads a reflection comparing both sides, and concludes this step with an overview of what has been written on both of the papers.

➤ **Group agreement (30 minutes)**

Continuing from the previous activities, facilitator supports the group in creating a shared agreement outlining how they want to work together.

Suggested themes include:

- Respectful communication
- Timekeeping
- Confidentiality
- Openness and feedback
- Safe space principles

The agreement is written on a large flipchart and all participants sign it as a proof of agreeing.

The facilitator concludes the first session with presenting the main training objectives and methodology.

Materials:

- Bingo cards for the bingo game (need to prepare in advance of the session)
 - Ball of yarn
 - Flipchart papers, markers
 - Post-it notes, pens
 - Projector (optional)
-

Tips for being more inclusive:

🔗 Energiser - Human Bingo:

- Adapt the language on the cards so that it is understandable for people with different language levels or cognitive diversity. Use clear and visual phrases.
- Avoid very personal categories (such as 'has been in a long-term relationship') that may cause discomfort or social pressure.
- Allow the option of playing in pairs or groups of three for those who feel uncomfortable interacting alone.

🔗 How our ideal learning environment should look like:

- Provide cut-out pictures, stickers or magazines to allow people to express themselves without having to draw.

🔗 Expectations and contributions:

- Translate the flipchart headings into several languages if the group is multilingual.
- Also collect expectations verbally or anonymously for those who do not want to write in public.

🔗 Group agreement:

- Show visual examples of inclusive group agreements (pictograms, clear phrases, emojis).
 - Review the agreement during the week and open a 'review window' to include new proposals or adjustments.
-

Outcomes:

- Participants will build trusting relationships within the group.
 - Participants will be able to contribute to the creation of a safe and inclusive learning environment.
 - Participants will be able to express their individual expectations and contributions for the training.
 - Participants will co-create a group agreement that supports respectful and collaborative learning.
 - Participants will understand the training objectives and methodology.
-



Session 2

Introduction to tokenism

Duration:

180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To define tokenism and its forms
- To develop skills of participants for distinguishing between symbolic and genuine inclusion
- To understand the impact of tokenism on individuals and groups

Session flow: (step by step description)

➤ Energiser – True or false (20 minutes)

The facilitator reads statements related to youth participation and inclusion. Participants physically move to either side of the room depending on whether they believe the statement is true or false (one side of the room is false, and the other is true).

After each statement, the facilitator opens a short discussion or clarification.

Examples of statements to be used during this step (facilitator can, depending on the background of the group, prepare different statements from the ones suggested below):

- “Youth participation always leads to real change.” (False)
- “Having one young person on a board guarantees the youth voice is heard.” (False)
- “Tokenism is only about numbers.” (False)
- “Youth workers are always aware when they are practicing tokenism.” (False)

➤ Inputs presentation on tokenism (30 minutes)

Facilitators deliver a dynamic and interactive presentation using slides and visual prompts. Polling tools (e.g., Mentimeter) can be used to engage participants.

Content presented during the inputs presentation should at least include following:

- **What is tokenism? Key definitions and characteristics**

Some of the possible resources to be used for this topic:

Wikipedia – Tokenism

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokenism>

Council of Europe – On the Ladder: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/on-the-ladder> StFX Employment Innovation – YEF Tokenism <https://www.stfxemploymentinnovation.ca/yef-tokenism/> Historical emergence of tokenism (brief overview) Some of the possible resources to be used for this topic: Hart, R. (1992) – Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship <https://participationpool.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hart-R.-1992-Children-Participation-from-Tokenism-to-Citizenship.pdf> Wikipedia – Tokenism <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokenism> Antigua Observer – YouthZone: Tokenism <https://antiguaobserver.com/youthzone-tokenism/>

- **How tokenism appears in youth work settings**

Some of the possible resources to be used for this topic:

YPDE – Study Visit Report: Beyond Tokenism – Youth Lead Inclusion

<https://yp-de.org/news/study-visit-report-beyond-tokenism-youth-lead-inclusion/>

ESDN Policy Brief – Youth Involvement in Europe (2022)

https://www.esdn.eu/fileadmin/Publications/ESDN_Policy_Briefs/2022/ESDN_9_Policy_brief_Youth_Involvement_in_Europe_FINAL.pdf

Fletcher, A. – Are You Tokenizing Youth?

<https://adamfletcher.net/2012/10/31/are-you-tokenizing-youth/>

- **Forms of tokenism (numerical, symbolic, performative)**

Some of the possible resources to be used for this topic:

Council of Europe – On the Ladder: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/on-the-ladder>

ESDN Policy Brief – Youth Involvement in Europe (2022)

https://www.esdn.eu/fileadmin/Publications/ESDN_Policy_Briefs/2022/ESDN_9_Policy_brief_Youth_Involvement_in_Europe_FINAL.pdf

CultureAlly – What Is Tokenism?

<https://www.cultureally.com/blog/what-is-tokenism>

- **Impact on young people and organizations**

Some of the possible resources to be used for this topic:

EDYN – Tokenism in Youth Activism: Are Young Voices Really Being Heard?

<https://edyn.eu/tokenism-in-youth-activism-are-young-voices-really-being-heard/>

LinkedIn Article – Not Just a Seat at the Table: Why Youth Tokenism Fails Us All

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/just-seat-table-why-youth-tokenism-fails-us-all-gevorg-ghazaryan-ir7sf>

PeerTAC – Navigating Tokenism in Youth Peer Advocacy

<https://peertac.org/2024/09/05/navigating-tokenism-in-family-and-youth-peer-advocacy-a-guide-for-genuine-inclusion/>

Participants are encouraged to ask questions, react via polls, or briefly discuss in pairs during breaks in the presentation.

In preparation for this session, trainers/facilitators need to dedicate the time to preparing the visual interactive presentation.

Possible resource links are listed below each topic above.

➤ **Let's analyse the real cases of tokenism (40 minutes)**

Trainer divides participants into 3 small groups and hands each group a short, realistic scenario that illustrates a different form of tokenism:

- Seat at the table – a youth representative is invited to a municipal board meeting only after all decisions have been made.
- Photo-op consultation – young people are gathered for a quick picture to showcase “participation,” but the advertised workshop is suddenly cancelled.
- Lost in translation – an online steering-committee meeting is held entirely in English jargon, leaving a rural youth worker unable to contribute.

Each group receives flip-chart paper and markers, plus a set of guiding questions: Which details reveal tokenism? How might this affect the young person? What changes would create genuine inclusion? What could youth workers do differently?

Groups have 15 minutes to analyse and record their insights, then return to plenary. Each group presents key findings in three minutes, using their flip-chart as a visual aid. The trainer gathers common findings, highlights contrasting forms of tokenism (symbolic seat, performative consultation, structural exclusion), and leads a brief reflection on strategies for authentic youth participation, concluding the step with agreed-upon principles for inclusive practice throughout the training.

➤ **Timeline of tokenism examples we have witnessed (40 minutes)**

Facilitators set up a long horizontal timeline on the wall using masking tape or large paper.

Participants receive sticky notes and are invited to recall real or observed examples of tokenism (from media, school, work, youth initiatives, etc.). Each example is written on a sticky note and placed on the timeline based on when it occurred. At least 2 inputs per participant are asked for by the facilitators/trainers.

After all notes are placed, participants walk along the timeline and read examples. Facilitators then guide a group reflection:

- Are there patterns or themes?
- Have types of tokenism changed over time?
- How have our awareness and understanding of tokenism evolved?

➤ **How we understand and can work on topics of tokenism and inclusion (40 minutes)**

Participants return to smaller groups from previous steps. Each group creates two working definitions: one for "tokenism" and one for "genuine inclusion." They are encouraged to base definitions on insights from the session.

Facilitators give the following instructions for this step:

1. Use your own language and reflections
2. Write definitions on flipchart paper
3. Be ready to present your group's definitions in plenary

Each group presents. Facilitators guide a discussion to compare and highlight key elements from different definitions.

No single definition is imposed - diversity of perspectives is encouraged; while facilitators take care that the definitions are grounded in the inputs provided from the beginning of the session.

Materials:

- Pre-prepared “True or False” statements
- Projector, screen, laptop, and presentation slides
- Optional: interactive polling tools for the inputs presentation step (e.g., Mentimeter, Slido)
- Scenarios prepared and printed for smaller groups
- Flipchart papers, sticky notes, markers

Tips for being more inclusive:

➤ Energiser - True or False:

- Adapt this activity with accessible visual materials (cards, pictograms, easy-to-read text) and culturally diverse examples to fully include young people with functional diversity or migrant experiences.

➤ Let's analyse the real cases of tokenism:

- Read the scenarios aloud before dividing into groups, or provide versions in multiple languages if the group requires it.
- Allow participants to share their findings in writing rather than orally, if they prefer.

➤ Timeline of tokenism examples we have witnessed:

- Make it clear that they can use anonymous or media sources if they do not wish to share personal experiences.

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to define tokenism and make the difference between the tokenism and genuine inclusion
 - Participants will be able to identify different forms of tokenism in youth work and beyond
 - Participants will be able to understand the historical and structural roots of tokenism in participation
 - Participants will be able to analyse the personal and collective impact of tokenistic practices
 - Participants will be able to critically assess real-life scenarios and propose alternative inclusive approaches
 - Participants will be able to develop and articulate working definitions of tokenism and meaningful youth inclusion
-



Day 2: Tokenism in youth work, power, privilege and representation

Session 3 How tokenism manifests in youth work?

Duration:  180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To identify how tokenism manifests in youth work settings
- To analyse and reflect on real and simulated examples of tokenism versus meaningful youth engagement
- To recognize red flags and risk points where tokenism is most likely to occur in participants' own contexts
- To develop a shared set of practical indicators to distinguish genuine inclusion from symbolic participation

Session flow: (step by step description)

Energiser – “Pass the stone” (15 minutes)

Split participants into two lines with an equal number of people. Each line gets a small stone, which is passed – or mimed to be passed – down the line, with hands kept in front. Both lines pass at the same time.

Participants watch the other team to guess where the stone ends up. Once it reaches the end, each team huddles to choose who they think has the stone on the other team. A correct guess earns a point.

After guessing, teams return to their lines. The front person moves to the end, and the process repeats so everyone gets to lead. For large groups, use more lines and rotate after each round..

Gallery walk of case studies – tokenism and youth work (40 minutes)

Facilitators prepare five to six short case studies in advance. Each case should describe a youth participation scenario drawn from real or fictional projects, youth councils, advisory roles, or campaign initiatives. Some cases should clearly demonstrate tokenism, while others may show genuine inclusion or present a grey area open to interpretation.

Each case study is displayed on a flipchart or printed and posted at a “station” around the room. Facilitators divide participants into small groups of 3 to 4 people and assign each group to a different starting point in the gallery. Groups rotate from station to station, spending approximately 6–7 minutes at each.

At every case, they discuss three guiding questions written beside the scenario:

- Is this tokenism?
- What signs tell you that?
- How might this impact the young people involved?

After all groups have visited each station, facilitators gather participants in plenary for a short debrief. They invite groups to share one example that sparked strong discussion, and they encourage reflection on common signs or patterns that emerged across the cases.

Spot the tokenism in our own (youth) work (30 minutes)

Following the gallery walk, facilitators ask participants to return to their original small groups. They guide them in reflecting on their own experiences and settings. Each group is asked to consider:

- Where have we seen tokenism in our own projects or organizations?
- Were there warning signs we ignored or missed?
- What's often hidden behind terms like "youth involvement" or "participation"?

Groups are encouraged to write two specific outputs on flipchart paper:

- **A list of at least three real or potential risk points** where tokenism could occur in their context
- **A list of red flags or signs** that suggest youth participation might be symbolic rather than meaningful.

Facilitators move around the room to support the groups, answer questions, and encourage honest reflection. Groups then post their flipcharts for others to view.

Tokenism or not? (40 minutes)

Next, facilitators introduce an interactive activity using role play to explore how tokenism plays out in live situations. In advance, they prepare three or four short role play scenarios that depict various forms of youth engagement. For example, a youth advisory board meeting, a planning committee, or a conference where young people are asked to speak. Each group selects or is assigned one scenario. Facilitators give them about 10 minutes to read through and prepare a short performance (3–5 minutes). Each group then presents their role play to the rest of the participants.

After each performance, the other groups are invited to reflect using the following questions:

- Was this an example of tokenism?
- What made you think so?
- How could this situation be improved?

Facilitators guide the reflection after each role play, summarizing the group's insights and linking them back to earlier observations from the gallery walk and small group discussions.

Indicators and risk points (30 minutes)

Facilitators now ask participants to mix into new groups. Each newly formed group is given the task of summing up what they have learned throughout the session.

Groups are asked to develop three short lists:

- Indicators of tokenism in youth work settings
- Risk points where tokenism is most likely to appear
- Simple do's and don'ts for ensuring meaningful youth participation

Facilitators provide paper and markers or digital tools if preferred. After 20 minutes of group work, each group presents their results to the whole group

Materials:

- Sticky notes, markers, flipcharts
- Pre-written case studies for gallery walk
- Pre-written role play scenarios

Tips for being more inclusive:

Energiser – “Pass the stone”:

- Allow alternatives to physical participation, such as observing and guessing without moving your arms, or using coloured objects that can be clearly seen.

Gallery walk of case studies – tokenism and youth work:

- Use inclusive images (race, gender, disability); subtitles and descriptions for sensory accessibility; narration for visual impairment.

Spot the tokenism in our own (youth) work:

- Create a climate of non-judgement and confidentiality, remembering that the goal is to learn, not to point out mistakes.
- Provide fictitious or anonymous examples as triggers for those who do not want to share their own cases.

Tokenism or not?:

- Give participants the option of presenting the scenario as a recorded audio, dramatised reading or visual collage if they do not wish to perform.
- Explain beforehand that the focus is not on the performance, but on the reflection afterwards.

Reflection in plenary and conclusion of the session:

- Allow anonymous or silent responses (just stick them on the wall).

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to recognize concrete examples of tokenism in youth work settings
 - Participants will be able to differentiate between symbolic and meaningful participation by analysing behaviours, structures, and decision-making processes
 - Participants will be able to identify risk points and red flags that may lead to tokenistic practices in their own youth work environments
 - Participants will be able to formulate practical indicators and principles to support genuine and inclusive youth participation
-



Session 4

Power, privilege, and representation

Duration:

180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To encourage participants to reflect critically on how power and privilege operate in youth work environments
- To explore the concept of intersectionality and how overlapping identities influence representation and participation
- To help participants identify imbalances in access, voice, and influence within their own projects or organizations
- To foster empathy, awareness, and strategies for more inclusive and equitable youth engagement.

Session flow: (step by step description)

➤ Energiser – “Where does my power come from” (15 minutes)

Facilitators briefly remind participants that this builds on previous work on tokenism and inclusion, deepening the lens through which they analyze participation. Facilitators then invite participants to silently consider: “Where does my power come from in the spaces I work in?” They write or sketch responses individually for 3–5 minutes, then share briefly in pairs.

➤ Privilege ladder activity (35 minutes)

Facilitators introduce the activity as a physical and visual exercise to reflect on how privilege manifests. They prepare a line or ladder on the floor (can be masking tape or rope) with “less privilege” at one end and “more privilege” at the other. Facilitators then read a series of statements aloud and participants step forward, backward, or stay in place accordingly. Participants are encouraged to move based on their current context in youth work, not just personal identity.

Statements that can be used are the following:

- I feel confident speaking up in meetings or group discussions at work
- People in leadership positions in my organization or network often share my background or identity
- I have access to decision-making spaces in youth work without needing a special invitation
- I can express disagreement or criticism in my workplace without fear of negative consequences
- I do not worry about being tokenized or only included to meet diversity quotas

- I have never been judged or underestimated based on my appearance, accent, or name
- I can access youth work events and trainings without needing to worry about cost or accessibility
- My opinions are usually listened to and taken seriously by those in power
- I have role models in youth work who reflect my lived experiences and identity
- I don't feel the need to hide parts of my identity in professional spaces

After the movement phase, facilitators guide a short silent moment to observe the distribution, followed by a debrief:

- What did you notice?
- How does this relate to youth participation?
- In what ways might this ladder exist in your organization or projects?

My personal layers (30 minutes)

Facilitators give each participant a printed “target” or concentric circle diagram (or have them draw one with 3–4 layers):

- Inner circle: core identity (gender, ethnicity, religion, language...)
- Middle circle: social roles (youth worker, parent, migrant, activist...)
- Outer circle: contextual factors (education level, economic status, citizenship...)

Participants fill in the circles with identities or labels that influence their role in youth work and how they are perceived or treated. After, the whole group discuss the following questions:

- Which identities feel empowering in your work?
- Which ones feel invisible or misunderstood?
- How do different layers affect how you relate to young people?

Incidents and examples from our youth work practice (35 minutes)

Facilitators ask participants to think of a critical incident in their work where power or privilege influenced participation (positively or negatively).

This could involve youth feeling excluded, certain voices dominating, or invisible barriers to access. Participants form triads and take turns telling their incident (approx. 5 minutes per person), while the other two ask reflective questions using a protocol such as:

- What power dynamics were present?
- Who benefited or was harmed?
- What alternatives could have been possible?

Facilitators provide guidance for active listening and confidentiality.

Afterward, the triads write 2–3 key insights on post-its to share anonymously for group reflection.

Power mapping (40 minutes)

Facilitators now shift to a group-based analysis tool. Participants are grouped in national groups (or participants coming from the same youth organizations) and asked to select one of their real youth projects, organizations, or spaces they're involved in at the moment.

Using A3 papers, each group creates a power map showing:

- Who holds visible power?
- Who influences decisions behind the scenes?
- Who is affected by the decisions but has little influence?
- Where do youth sit in this structure?

Facilitators circulate to support and prompt deeper thinking. At the end, each group briefly presents their map to others, followed by a short open-floor discussion.

Reflection in plenary and conclusion of the session (25 minutes)

In a circle, each participant says one word that captures what they're taking from the session (for example "awareness," "questioning," "rebalancing"). As they say it, they accompany it with a simple gesture (for example lifting a hand, crossing arms, opening palms).

The group repeats both the word and gesture together, passing around the circle.

Materials:

- Sticky notes, markers, flipcharts
- A3 papers
- Tape or rope for privilege ladder exercise

Tips for being more inclusive:

Privilege ladder activity:

- Offer a seated version: raise coloured cards or numbers instead of moving around.
- Explain in advance that the positions do not define anyone's value, but rather observable social structures.

Incidents and examples from our youth work practice:

- Allow participants to share observed or invented cases if they do not feel comfortable sharing personal experiences.
- Reinforce rules for active listening, respect, and confidentiality.

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to recognize how power dynamics shape relationships and decision-making in youth work
 - Participants will be able to identify how privilege and marginalization appear in everyday practices, including within their own teams or programs
 - Participants will be able to reflect on their own positionality and how it influences their perspective and approach to youth participation
 - Participants will be able to visualize power structures through mapping tools to better understand barriers and opportunities for representation
 - Participants will be able to develop action points or strategies to reduce tokenism and promote meaningful inclusion in their contexts
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Day 3: Ladder of participation and avoiding tokenism

Session 5 Participation ladder and co-creation

Duration:  180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To introduce Hart's Ladder of participation as a framework for analysing youth engagement
- To explore the principles and benefits of co-creation in youth work
- To apply the participation ladder and co-creation principles to real-life scenarios

Session flow: (step by step description)

Energiser – Build a bridge (15 minutes)

Participants are divided into small groups of 4–5 people. Each group receives identical sets of limited materials: paper, tape, straws. Their task is to build the tallest freestanding structure that can support a small object (e.g., marker or coin) for at least 10 seconds.

10 minutes are given for building the bridge, and the last 5 minutes are dedicated to showcasing.

Facilitators debrief by drawing links to teamwork, limited resources, and creativity under constraints - themes that are all linked with youth participation in practice.

Introduction to Hart's ladder of participation (30 minutes)

Facilitator introduces Roger Hart's ladder of participation, a model for understanding different degrees of youth involvement - from non-participation to full partnership. For more inputs on the topic, facilitators are advised to visit the theoretical introductory part of this material.

The 8 levels of participation are presented (via projector or with use of flipchart paper), with brief examples for each. If the working room is big enough, the ladder can be made on the floor of the working room and used throughout this session, but also upcoming sessions of the whole educational program.

1. Manipulation – Youth used to support adult-led causes without understanding
2. Decoration – Youth present for appearance (e.g., singing, photos), no influence

3. Tokenism – Youth asked for input but ignored in real decision-making
4. Assigned but informed – Youth given roles and fully briefed, but adults lead
5. Consulted and informed – Youth consulted, input valued, decisions made by adults
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions – Adults initiate, but youth are partners
7. Youth-initiated and directed – Youth design and lead, adults provide support
8. Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults – Joint initiatives and power-sharing

After the inputs, facilitator asks following questions:

- What level do most of your projects fall on?
- How does it feel to be on the lower level vs. upper level?
- Are there any grey zones in between?

 Analysing real-life examples and where do they stand on the ladder (45 minutes)

Participants are divided into small groups. Each group receives a printed set of six real-life scenarios, and they can use the ladder on the flipchart paper or the one on the floor if it's been made in the previous step.

Scenarios:

- **Youth advisory board**

A youth centre creates a board of 10 young people who meet monthly to give feedback on programs. Staff thank them for input, but all decisions remain with adults.

- **School council elections**

Students elect peers to represent them in weekly meetings with school leadership. Student ideas are discussed, but the school principal decides which are implemented.

- **Climate action campaign**

High school students plan a local protest and awareness campaign. They approach a teacher for support but take the lead on planning and decisions.

- **Youth conference planning committee**

An NGO includes youth in a national conference planning team. Adults and youth share responsibilities and make decisions by consensus.

- **Photo contest for Youth Day**

The municipality launches a photo contest for youth. Youth submit entries, but adult staff select winners and curate the exhibit without youth involvement.

- **Youth voice panel**

A 16-year-old is invited to share their story on a national panel but is not consulted about the session structure or policy discussions. Their role is symbolic.

Groups are given the following tasks by the facilitators:

1. Discuss each scenario in your group
2. Place each one on the appropriate rung of the ladder
3. Be ready to justify your choices to the plenary

Facilitator debriefs with the smaller groups in plenary, noting where disagreements emerge and why.

 Co-creation principles and co-creation canvas (45 minutes)

The facilitator proceeds by introducing participants with the concept of co-creation, framed as going “beyond participation.”

Key principles of co-creation:

- Shared ownership – Everyone involved feels responsible from the beginning
- Mutual respect – All voices are valued, regardless of experience
- Iterative process – Continuous refinement, not one-off consultation
- Diverse perspectives – Intentionally involving marginalized or missing voices
- Transparency – Clear about goals, timelines, and decisions
- Capacity building – Ensuring all contributors are empowered to engage fully
- Power sharing – Decisions are made collaboratively, not by default hierarchies

The facilitator introduces a visual planning tool: the Co-creation canvas.

One example can be found here:

<https://www.citiesoftomorrow.eu/sites/default/files/documents/04%20Co-creation%20canvas.pdf>

The facilitator should prepare the canvas for the session, and adapt it to local language(s) and needs of the specific group they work with.

Basic canvas elements included are (for more advanced groups facilitators can adjust the model presented and used):

- Problem/opportunity: What are we trying to solve or create?
- Key stakeholders: Who must be involved? (young people, community, etc.)
- Shared goal: What unites us in this process?
- Resources needed: Time, space, funding, expertise
- Roles and responsibilities: How is power distributed and who does what?
- Process/activities: Steps of co-creation and engagement
- Desired outcomes: What impact are we aiming for — short- and long-term?

The facilitator concludes this step with a short discussion on how participants might use this tool in future projects.

 Small group reflection and redesign (45 minutes)

Participants are divided into 3 smaller groups, and each group receives one symbolic participation scenario. Their task is to critically analyse the scenario and redesign it as a co-creation process, using the co-creation canvas introduced in the previous step of the session.

Symbolic participation scenarios:

- **Youth visibility at a city forum**

Two young people are invited to open a city consultation meeting with a 2-minute speech. They are seated at the front for photos but have no input or follow-up role.

- **School awareness wall**

Teachers select the theme and design of a mental health awareness wall. Students are invited to color pre-approved posters but had no say in concept or messaging.

- **Youth newsletter**

A “youth corner” is added to the local municipality’s newsletter. Youth are invited to submit content, but adults edit or discard submissions without involving them in editorial choices.

Groups are given following tasks:

1. Identify what makes the scenario symbolic or tokenistic
2. Redesign it using the co-creation canvas
3. Prepare a short (3–4 minute) presentation on your new design

The facilitator supports each group and moderates a plenary sharing. Other participants can ask questions or offer additions.

Session is concluded with a short debriefing in plenary, with use of the following questions:

- What mindset shift is needed to move from tokenism to co-creation?
- What practical barriers do you face in making this shift in your own context?
- What can we do?

Materials:

- Paper, tape, straws
- Projector and slides
- Paper tape
- Printed scenarios
- Symbolic participation scenario cards (3–4 examples)
- Printed or in digital format co-creation canvas templates (**facilitators need to develop it, can use the example linked in the document*)
- Flipchart paper, post-it notes, markers

Tips for being more inclusive:

Introduction to Hart’s ladder of participation:

- Introduce the ladder with simple visuals and everyday examples (school settings, neighbourhood settings, etc.).
- Use visual aids (cards, pictograms, physical examples on the floor ladder) for each step.

Analysing real-life examples and where do they stand on the ladder:

- Offer simplified or visual versions of scenarios (drawings, pictograms, role-playing).
- Allow someone to read aloud or act out cases for better understanding.

Co-creation principles and co-creation canvas:

- Translate the principles into clear, everyday language, with real examples of youth projects.
 - Provide a visual template of the canvas with icons and short phrases for those with language or cognitive barriers.
-

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to identify different levels of youth participation using Hart's ladder of participation
 - Participants will be able to recognise and critically reflect on tokenistic practices in youth work
 - Participants will be able to describe and apply the core principles of co-creation
 - Participants will be able to use the co-creation canvas to redesign symbolic practices into meaningful collaborations
 - Participants will be able to propose inclusive and shared approaches to participation in their own projects
-



Session 6

Practical strategies to avoid tokenism

Duration:

180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To explore concrete strategies for inclusive facilitation and planning in youth work
- To develop critical self-reflection skills to identify and mitigate tokenistic practices
- To collaboratively create a practical guide for ensuring meaningful youth participation

Session flow: (step by step description)

Step forward (15 minutes)

Participants stand in a line across the middle of the room.

The facilitator reads out a series of statements, and participants step forward if the statement applies to them.

Statements:

- Step forward if you have facilitated a workshop for young people.
- Step forward if you have worked with diverse youth groups.
- Step forward if you feel confident promoting inclusion in your work.
- Step forward if you've ever felt your voice wasn't heard in a group.
- Step forward if you actively seek feedback from young people.
- Step forward if you believe all young people in your community have equal access to opportunities.

After each statement, participants take a moment to observe the line. Facilitator concludes this step of the session with use of the following reflection questions:

1. What did you notice about the distribution in the group?
2. How did it feel to step forward — or to stay in place?
3. What do these moments tell us about inclusion in practice?

Rotating tables (75 minutes)

The facilitator sets up 4 thematic tables around the room. Each table contains materials and explanations for the concrete methods or approaches. Ideally – tables are set with digital devices which contain the specific materials for each of the tables. Participants rotate through tables in small groups.

Thematic tables are following:

➤ **Participatory methods and icebreakers**

Includes: World café, fishbowl, open space, diverse icebreakers

Guiding questions:

1. How do these methods ensure all voices are heard?
 2. How can we prevent dominant voices from taking over?
-

➤ **Communication and language**

Includes: guidelines on inclusive language, plain-language summaries, active listening tips

Guiding questions:

1. How can language include or exclude?
 2. What are practical ways to improve accessibility in communication?
-

➤ **Power-sharing and decision-making**

Includes: co-design templates, youth-adult partnership models, case studies

Guiding questions:

1. What does genuine power-sharing look like?
 2. What makes co-decision-making possible?
-

➤ **Accessibility and equity**

Includes: digital accessibility tools, physical access checklists, equity strategies

Guiding questions:

- What barriers do some young people face?
- How can we design projects that are proactively inclusive?

Groups are instructed to spend around 10 minutes at each table.

Every 10 minutes the facilitator announces new rotation, and groups move.

Groups need to explore the tools on each of the tables and discuss the guiding questions.

Answers to the questions are written on pieces of paper left at each of the tables.

At the end of this step, groups return to the starting positions, analyse all of the inputs on the papers left at the tables, and do the short presentations.

The facilitator concludes the step with discussion in plenary.

➤ **Reflection rounds – what I will start, stop, continue (25 minutes)**

After they had a chance to analyse different approaches and tools for more inclusive and less tokenistic approaches to youth engagement, participants are given three post-it notes in different colours, and following instructions:

- Write one thing you will **START** doing to support inclusion
- Write one thing you will **STOP** doing that may contribute to tokenism
- Write one thing you will **CONTINUE** doing that works well

A few minutes are given for participants to think about, and write on the post-it notes. After that, participants share in small groups.

A few volunteers are invited to share reflections in plenary.

The facilitator captures key themes on a flipchart titled: “Our commitments for inclusive practice”.

➤ **Dos and Don'ts mapping – our small guide (50 minutes)**

In new small groups (4–5 people), participants co-create a “DOs and DON'Ts” guide for avoiding tokenism.

Each group receives a flipchart sheet divided into two columns.

Following instructions are given to the groups:

1. Reflect on what's been learned in this session and across the training
2. Write down specific, practical “DOs” and “DON'Ts” for youth participation
3. Use clear, direct, and action-oriented language

Groups have 30 minutes to complete their guides. After that, each group presents their guide to the plenary.

Examples of practical DOs:

- DO involve young people from the start
- DO be transparent about their level of influence
- DO compensate youth for their time if applicable
- DO create space for disagreement and critical feedback

Examples of DON'Ts:

- DON'T invite young people just for show
- DON'T ask for input without planning to use it
- DON'T assume all youth have the same experiences
- DON'T create youth councils with no budget or decision-making power

➤ **Reflection in plenary (15 minutes)**

Facilitator closes the session with guided reflection in plenary, with use of the following questions:

1. What did you know from before, and what was new?
2. What do you want to explore further?
3. How can we practically implement outcomes of these sessions in our day-to-day activities?

Materials:

- Post-it notes (varied colours), pens
 - Flipchart paper, markers
 - Toolkit station resources (can be printed, or best in digital format)
 - Projector (optional)
-

Tips for being more inclusive:

➤ Step forward:

- Offer an alternative to sitting, such as raising coloured cards or responding with fingers or tokens.
- Avoid personal judgements or analysis in the group after each step; focus on structures, not individuals.

➤ Rotating tables:

- Ensure accessible and visual materials are available at all stations (e.g. pictograms, clear language, diagrams).
 - Include audio or recorded text for those who cannot read or have difficulties reading.
-

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to apply inclusive planning and facilitation strategies to their youth work
 - Participants will be able to self-assess and improve inclusion practices in real projects
 - Participants will be able to identify concrete steps to reduce tokenism and increase meaningful participation
 - Participants will co-create a group guide of practical DOs and DON'Ts to support each other's learning and practice
-



Day 4: Ensuring inclusive participation in our projects and activities

Session 7

Inclusive youth project lab

Duration:

 180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To encourage participants to apply concepts of inclusion, participation, and representation in youth project planning
- To introduce the Inclusion Canvas as a practical tool for designing inclusive youth work activities
- To support reflective learning using the Kolb's experiential learning cycle
- To foster collaborative project development and critical feedback exchange among participants

Session flow: (step by step description)

Energiser – “Move to the spot” (10 minutes)

Ask everyone to choose a particular spot in the room. They start the game by standing on their ‘spot’. Instruct people to walk around the room and carry out a particular action, for example, hopping, saying hello to everyone wearing blue or walking backwards, etc. When the facilitator says “Stop”, everyone must run to his or her original spots. The person who reaches their place first is the next leader and can instruct the group to do what they wish.

Kolb's cycle of experiential learning (25 minutes)

Facilitators introduce the model briefly:

- **Concrete experience:** What happened?
- **Reflective observation:** What did I notice or feel?
- **Abstract conceptualization:** What can I learn from this?
- **Active experimentation:** How will I apply this next time?

Participants then individually recall a real experience from youth work that connects to inclusion/exclusion. They answer prompts based on the Kolb model:

- **Experience:** What was the situation? Who was involved?
- **Observation:** How did you or others feel? What dynamics were at play?
- **Conceptualization:** What does this show about inclusion, power, or participation?
- **Experimentation:** What would you do differently next time? What principle will guide you?

At the end, participants share their reflections in pairs or small groups and try to identify one pattern or common learning, and one insight they'll take forward into project planning

➤ **Introduction to “Inclusion Canvas” model (20 minutes)**

Facilitators present the “Inclusion Canvas” – a template that guides inclusive project planning:

- Who is involved (and how)?
- Who might be excluded?
- Power holders / decision-makers?
- Strategies for participation
- Barriers & enablers
- Activities
- Accessibility considerations
- Evaluation: How will we know inclusion is real?

➤ **Inclusive project planning (70 minutes)**

Participants are divided into small groups of 3–5 people, ideally mixing backgrounds and experiences to encourage diverse perspectives. Each group is tasked with designing a local activity or small-scale youth project that meaningfully incorporates the principles of inclusion, participation, and representation explored in previous sessions.

Participants then begin working within their groups, using the canvas as a guide to structure their ideas. Facilitators circulate between groups, offering support, asking critical questions, and encouraging participants to apply insights from earlier sessions on tokenism, power, and intersectionality. Groups are encouraged to be realistic in their planning while also aiming for creativity and meaningful engagement. They may choose to sketch out timelines, stakeholder roles, or outreach plans as they go, provided they stay anchored in inclusion principles.

➤ **Presentations and feedback (35 minutes)**

Once groups have drafted their project ideas, they are invited to present their plans to the wider group. Each group selects one or two members to share their concept in a short presentation of 3–5 minutes. The goal is not to present a polished final product but to explain how inclusion has been considered and embedded in the project design.

After each presentation, facilitators guide a short round of structured peer feedback using the “two stars and a question” method. This approach asks listeners to offer:

- One aspect of the project that clearly supports inclusion
- Another aspect that reflects strong or thoughtful participation
- And one question or constructive suggestion for improvement.

➤ **Closing reflection – what stays with me? (20 minutes)**

To close the workshop, facilitators lead a reflective activity that helps participants consolidate their learning and transition into applying it beyond the training space. Each participant is asked to respond individually to three reflection prompts:

- One thing I will apply in my work moving forward
- One challenge or question I still need to explore
- One insight I'm taking with me from today

These reflections can be written on paper or shared aloud in pairs or small groups. If time allows, facilitators can invite a few volunteers to share key takeaways with the full group. As an optional final round, participants are asked to stand or sit in a closing circle and share one word that captures how they now feel about inclusive youth work or their role in promoting it.

Materials:

- Sticky notes, markers, flipcharts
 - Projector and presentation slides
 - Inclusion Canvas printouts or digital templates
-

Tips for being more inclusive:

➤ Energiser – “Move to the spot”:

- Offer gentle alternatives to movement, such as ‘walk slowly,’ ‘wave with one hand,’ or allow participation from the sidelines.
- Use music or a steady rhythm to mark time, making it easier for people with ADHD or autism to understand

➤ Kolb’s cycle of experiential learningKolb’s cycle of experiential learning:

- Provide a visual outline of Kolb’s model with icons or simple examples.
- Offer neutral and optional examples for those who do not wish to share personal experiences.

➤ Inclusive project planning:

- Facilitators should monitor power dynamics within groups and support those who participate less.
 - Allow participants to use their preferred language in groups and translate at the end, if necessary.
-

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to use the Inclusion Canvas to design inclusive youth work initiatives
 - Participants will be able to apply key principles of participation and representation in project planning
 - Participants will be able to reflect on previous inclusion or exclusion experiences using Kolb’s experiential learning cycle
 - Participants will be able to collaborate with peers to co-develop inclusive and accessible project ideas
 - Participants will be able to provide and receive constructive feedback focused on strengthening inclusion in project design
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Session 8

Peer feedback and good practices

Duration:

➤ 180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To share and improve project ideas through constructive peer learning
- To identify and analyse good practice examples from the field of youth work
- To foster a culture of continuous reflection and inclusive project development

Session flow: (step by step description)



Rotating peer feedback – project idea presentations (120 minutes)

Each participant arrives with a draft idea for an inclusive youth initiative - developed in Session 7 using the Inclusion Canvas. These could be entirely new ideas or enhancements to existing projects. Participants divide into small feedback circles (4–5 people per group). Each person takes a turn to present and receive feedback.



Instructions for groups:

Each presenter has 15–20 minutes total

- 5–7 minutes to explain their project idea: What issue or opportunity are you addressing? Who is involved, and how?

What inclusion strategies are built into your plan?

What outcomes are you aiming for?

- 8–13 minutes to receive peer feedback using the “Two stars and a wish” method:

Star: One thing that clearly supports inclusion

Star: One thing that shows thoughtful youth participation or representation

Wish: One suggestion for improvement or a constructive question

Facilitators circulate to keep groups on time, support clarity and constructive dialogue, and encourage listening and respectful challenge.

Good practice examples from the field (45 minutes)

Facilitators introduce three case studies of inclusive youth work from different contexts, presented through short videos, slides, or printed handouts.

Below are examples of case studies, but in preparation for the session facilitators need to find case studies from the local community or countries where participants are coming from.

Participants are divided into smaller groups. Each group needs to go through the case study, discuss and answer the specific questions, and prepare for presentations.

After 30 minutes, groups are given 5 minutes per group to present the conclusions in the plenary.

Case study 1: Youth-led community garden

A group of young people transformed an abandoned lot into a food-producing garden in their low-income neighbourhood.

They initiated the idea, sought funding, partnered with adults for support, and now lead the ongoing maintenance and community outreach.

Discussion questions:

- What enabled this youth-led process to succeed?
- How did adults support without controlling?
- What co-creation elements are visible?

Case study 2: Inclusive youth policy co-design

A government ministry and a youth organisation collaborated to co-design a national youth policy. A diverse team of young people joined policymakers in drafting, revising, and negotiating content.

Discussion questions:

- How was power shared?
- How were marginalised voices included?
- What structures helped avoid tokenism?

Case study 3: Digital storytelling for social change

An NGO trained refugee youth in filmmaking and storytelling. The youth created short films about their experiences, later used in campaigns, advocacy, and education.

Discussion points:

- What made this process empowering?
- How did storytelling promote visibility and ownership?
- How is this more than symbolic inclusion?

Debriefing in plenary (15 minutes)

Participants gather in a closing circle. Each person shares:

One key insight from today OR one action they commit to take as a result of this session.

Materials:

- Flipchart
- Pens, papers, post-it notes
- Projector/screen (or handouts) for case studies

Tips for being more inclusive:

Rotating peer feedback – project idea presentations:

- Allow different formats: oral, drawings, short videos, collages, digital presentations, etc.
- Use simple cards or rubrics to give feedback in writing, as well as verbally.
- Include sensory breaks or microbreaks between turns to avoid cognitive fatigue.

Good practice examples from the field:

- Select cases in accessible languages or with subtitles in the language of the group.
- Allow participants to choose cases based on affinity, so that each group works with the example that most connects with them.
- Provide guidelines for analysis questions, using icons or pictograms.

Outcomes:

- Participants will further develop their skills to give and receive constructive, inclusion-focused feedback
 - Participants will be able to analyse real-world examples of inclusive youth work
 - Participants will be able to strengthen their own project designs based on peer input and good practice insights
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Day 5: Personal and organisational follow-up plans and conclusion of the training program

Session 9 Personal and organizational action plans

Duration:  180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To encourage participants to critically reflect on their own practices and assumptions related to inclusion and participation
- To support participants in identifying personal and organizational areas for growth
- To guide participants in formulating concrete steps toward more inclusive youth work.
- To empower participants to commit to sustained change through written self-promises.

Session flow: (step by step description)

Energiser – “Robots” (15 minutes)

Divide the participants into groups of three. One person in each group is the robot controller and the other two are the robots. Each controller must manage the movements of their two robots. The controller touches a robot on the right shoulder to move them to the right, and touches them on the left shoulder to move them to the left. The facilitator begins the game by telling the robots to walk in a specific direction. The controller must try to stop the robots from crashing into obstacles such as chairs and tables. Ask participants to swap roles so that everyone has a chance to be the controller and a robot.

Guided individual reflection (40 minutes)

Facilitators provide participants with a self-reflection worksheet or set of journal prompts exploring the following themes:

- What have I learned about tokenism, inclusion, power, and representation?
- In what situations have I unintentionally excluded others?
- Where do I have influence or power in my role?
- What am I already doing well – and what can I do differently?

Facilitators may offer calming music and a quiet atmosphere, allowing participants to write, draw, or mind-map their reflections privately. If the group is more verbal, pairs or triads may briefly share key reflections after writing.

➤ Development of action plan (70 minutes)

Facilitators introduce an action planning template and explain that each participant will outline both:

- Individual actions they will take to enhance inclusion in their own work
- Organizational recommendations or changes they could advocate for or implement

Participants work independently at first, identifying realistic and meaningful steps (such as “create a more accessible recruitment process,” “review how decisions are made in our youth council”). Then, in small groups, they share and discuss their plans, offering supportive feedback and suggestions.

Facilitators circulate and prompt depth with questions like:

- How will you know your actions are making a difference?
- Who else needs to be involved in this change?
- What might get in the way – and how will you address it?

➤ Letter to myself (35 minutes)

Facilitators introduce the final activity: writing a “letter to myself” as a form of personal accountability and inspiration. Participants are encouraged to write a letter from their current self to their future self, six months from now. The letter should include:

- What they’ve learned and why it matters
- A vision for how they will work more inclusively
- Specific actions they hope they’ve taken.
- Encouragement for staying committed during challenges.

Letters can be sealed in envelopes and returned to participants later (via email or post in 3–6 months), or participants may choose to keep them privately.

➤ Reflection in plenary and conclusion of the session (20 minutes)

Facilitators invite participants into a final circle. Each person is invited to share:

- One commitment they are taking with them
- One word that captures their intention going forward.

Materials:

- Sticky notes, markers, flipcharts
- A3 and A4 papers
- Envelopes (one per participant)
- Stickers or stamps (optional, for sealing or decorating envelopes)

Tips for being more inclusive:

➤ Energiser – “Robots”:

- Avoid obstacles that could cause accidents or physical harm.

➤ Guided individual reflection:

- Offer different formats for expression: writing, drawing, mind mapping, visual collage.
- Include visual aids or pictograms for key questions if there are people with reading or comprehension difficulties.

Development of action plan:

- Provide visual examples of inclusive actions at different levels of responsibility.
- Allow verbal sharing for those who have barriers to writing.
- Use a user-friendly visual format (canvas, grid, cards) rather than long text.

Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to reflect critically on their role in fostering or hindering inclusive practices
 - Participants will be able to identify personal biases, power dynamics, and areas for growth in their own youth work
 - Participants will be able to draft a clear action plan for implementing inclusive practices in their professional context
 - Participants will be able to articulate personal commitments to change through written self-reflection
-



Session 10

Evaluation and planning local activities

Duration:



180 minutes

Objectives of session:

- To reflect on the learning process throughout the event and evaluate individual and group learning outcomes
- To close the learning cycle through the official Youthpas certificates ceremony
- To provide space and support for participants to build upon the results of the event by sharing ideas for new projects and cooperation among the participating organisations

Session flow: (step by step description)



Walk through the program (15 minutes)

The session is opened with an interactive walk of participants, together with the trainers' team, around the walking room. During the walk, the group goes visiting each of the flipchart papers developed as part of the sessions – from the first till the last day. As part of the walk, everyone reminds themselves of how the flow of the activities went – from arriving at the venue and meeting each other on the first day, until the current session. Also – fears, expectations and contributions discussed in smaller groups on the second day of the training, are analysed and participants answer the questions: “Did any of these come true? How?”. At the end of the activity, trainers invite participants to take a seat back in the circle.



Dixit cards exercise – How do I feel about the experience of participating in this event (30 minutes)

After participants have a chance to remind themselves of the program and flow of the activities during the training, trainers play some relaxing music in the background. They take Dixit cards and arrange them on the floor. Participants are invited to, in silence, stand up and walk around the room while looking at the different Dixit cards arranged on the floor. The trainer asks participants to each choose one card that reflects their personal experience of the training. After each participant has a card in their hand, they are invited to take a seat in the circle again.

Trainers then ask for participants to, voluntarily, stand up and share with the group the card they have each chosen and share how that card reflects their experience of this event. Activity is concluded once each participant has a chance to share their card.

➤ **Written evaluation in Google forms (30 minutes)**

Participants are invited to fill out an evaluation form, using their devices. They are given space and time to individually reflect on the training course, and fill out the online evaluation form.

➤ **Sinking ship messages (30 minutes)**

Since the training course was opened with a metaphor where the event is presented in the form of a trip in which the boat is our expectations, sails are our contributions, and sea is our fears; the official program is closed with an exercise “Sinking ship”. The name of each participant and organisational team members is written on flipchart paper, in preparation for the session. Everyone is invited to write farewell messages to each other. At the end of the exercise participants cut out parts of the flipchart paper with the messages left for them, as something they can bring back home after leaving the event.

➤ **Youthpass ceremony (30 minutes)**

The last group activity is the Youthpass ceremony. The ceremony is organised in a format where one volunteer starts the ceremony by taking a certificate of any other participant (handed by the trainer). Then the volunteer needs to describe the participant by sharing all information learned about the individual during the training course – without saying the name of the participant; while the group tries to guess who’s certificate that is. After the group has made a right guess, the individual gets the certificate from the volunteer. This procedure is repeated until everyone gets their certificate. Each handover of the certificate from one participant to another is photographed.

➤ **Market of ideas for new projects and cooperation among participating organisations (40 minutes)**

The last 40 minutes are left for participants to discuss the ideas for future projects and cooperation. During these 40 minutes, participants have a chance to group around the different ideas shared on the previous days, and based on their interests and the interests of their organisations discuss possible future cooperation. The process of market of ideas is supported by the trainers, providing advice and information to participants when and where needed – within the smaller groups formed around the specific topics/ideas.

Materials:

- Sticky notes, markers, flipcharts
- A3 and A4 papers
- Flipchart papers
- Dixit cards

Tips for being more inclusive:

➤ **Walk through the program:**

- Allow visitors to take the tour while seated or on a visual timeline accessible from a fixed location.

➤ **Dixit cards exercise – How do I feel about the experience of participating in this event:**

- Reinforce that sharing is 100% voluntary.
- Allow people to choose the card and simply say a word or make a gesture without explanation if they prefer.

➤ **Written evaluation in Google forms:**

- Ensure that the form is written in clear language and adapted to the language of the group.

➤ **Sinking ship messages:**

- Allow anonymous or decorative contributions (drawings, symbols, stickers).

➤ **Market of ideas for new projects and cooperation among participating organisations:**

- Allow contributions in visual or written formats if people do not want to speak.

Outcomes:

- Participants will reflect on and evaluate their personal and group learning experiences throughout the training course
 - Participants will identify and articulate how their expectation, contributions, and fears evolved over the course of the event
 - Participants will provide constructive feedback on the training course through a structured written evaluation process
 - Participants will explore opportunities for follow-up by contributing to and engaging in discussions for future projects and cooperation among participating organisations
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