Alternative Forms of Participation



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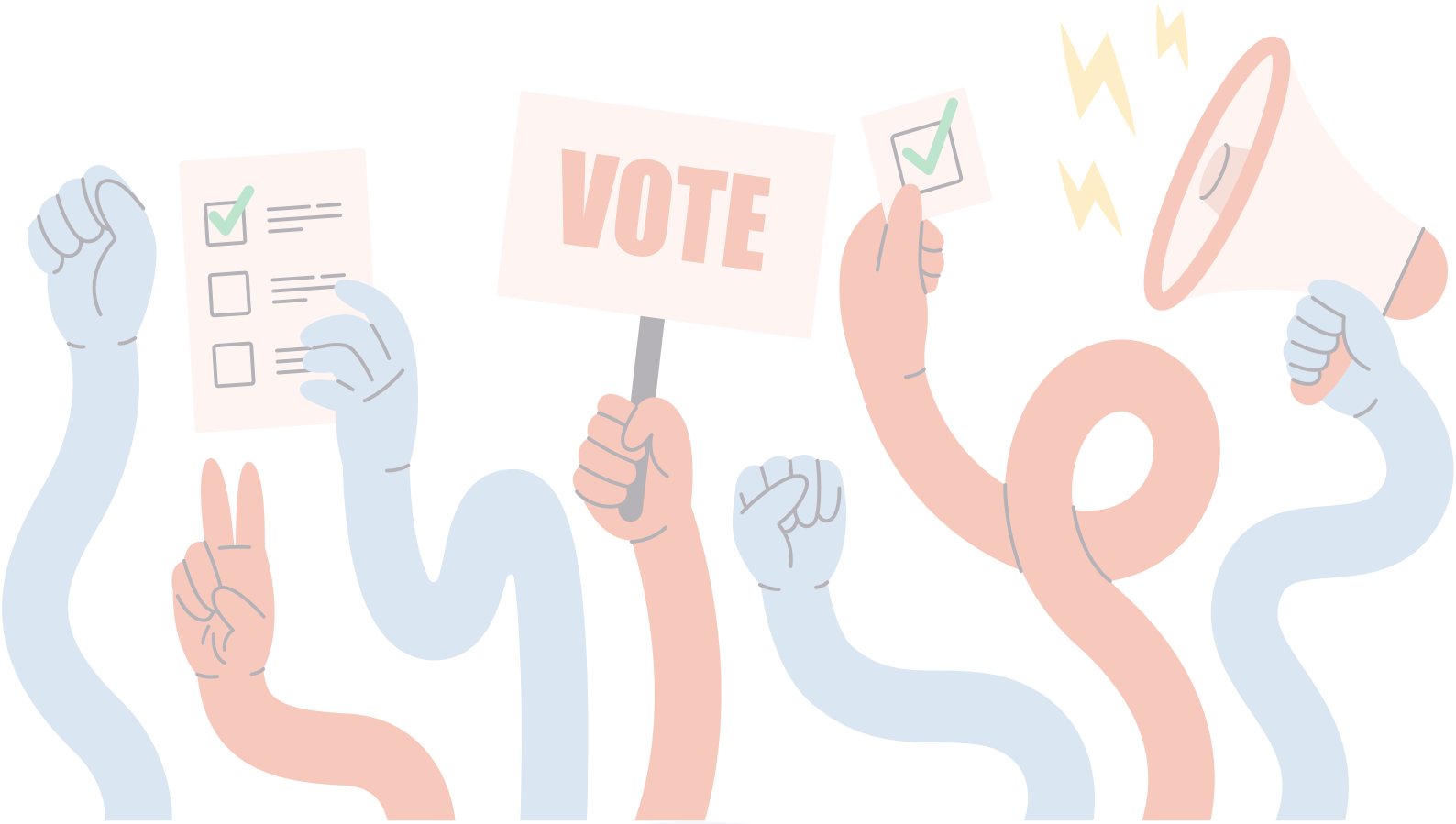
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What about Democracy?



Democracy is a system of government where people have the power to make decisions about how their country or community is run. It's based on values like freedom, equality, and fairness.

In a democracy:

- People vote to choose their leaders.
- Everyone has the right to express their opinion.
- Laws apply equally to all.
- Citizens can take part in shaping decisions that affect them.

But democracy is more than just voting every few years. It's about people being active, informed, and involved in public life every day.

What about Participation?

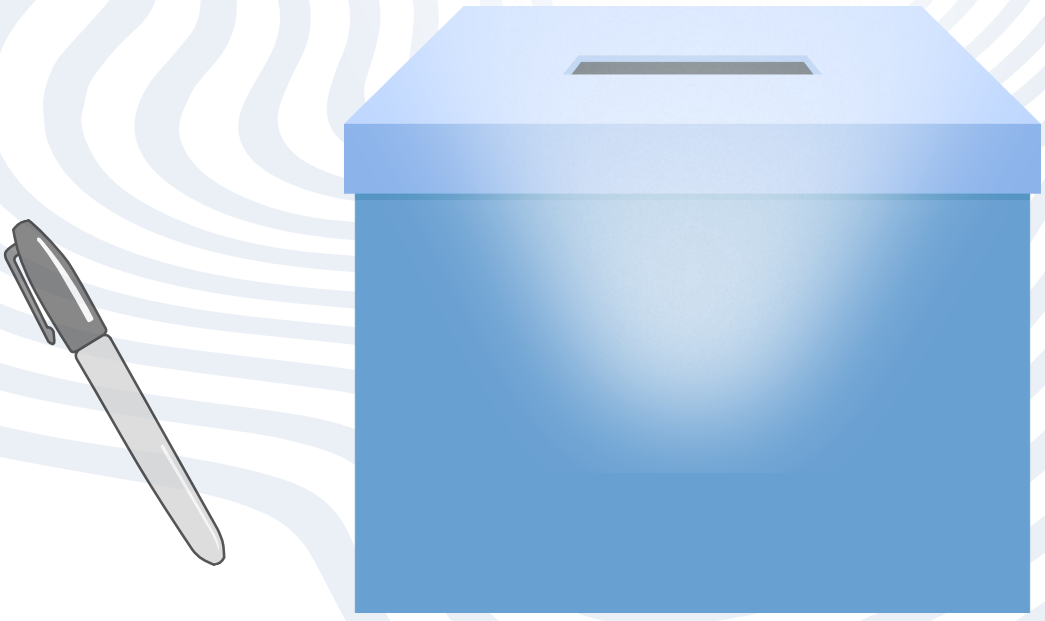


Participation means getting involved in decisions, activities, and actions that affect your life, community, or country.

It can look like:

- Voting in elections
- Joining a student council
- Taking part in public debates or consultations
- Volunteering in your community
- Attending youth council meetings

When young people participate, they bring fresh ideas and make sure their voices are heard in shaping society.



Alternative Participation?

Alternative participation means finding creative, non-traditional ways to engage in society and influence change, especially when formal systems don't work well for young people.

Examples of alternative participation:

- Organizing or joining social media campaigns
- Creating art, music, or videos with a message
- Participating in peaceful protests or public actions
- Building online communities to share ideas and organize activities
- Crowdsourcing solutions to local problems
- Starting youth initiatives or informal groups

These forms of participation often feel more accessible, direct, and relevant to young people. They allow youth to act quickly, be expressive, and build communities around shared causes.





What about young people's role?

Young people have ideas, skills, and energy that can help shape better societies today.

Young people can:

- Be watchdogs for transparency and fairness
- Bring digital tools into activism and awareness campaigns
- Connect with global movements and inspire change locally
- Push for inclusion, climate action, gender equality, and human rights
- Create spaces for others to participate, especially peers from rural or marginalized backgrounds

Even without voting rights (for those under 18), youth still have power — through their actions, voices, networks, and creativity.





Levels of participation

Emerging approaches in youth participation are not only happening on the grassroot level – there are several examples of institutional approaches to participation emerging across the **public and not-for-profit sectors**. For example:

- Lsmart participation/eParticipation;
- deliberative democracy;
- co-management and co-creation.



Video: Emerging Ways in Youth Participation

COUNTRY PRACTICES

Georgia

ShmAXI

The problem?

The Taxi law confirmed by the Georgian government on 2019. According to which all taxis had to be white and drivers had to get a paid license.

Political party “Girchi” has decided to protest taxi regulation with an "educational business." The party has created ShmAXI to "spread the idea of freedom." "Diploma drivers" drive through the streets of Tbilisi and offer passengers a "lecture course." Girchi wants ShmAXI drivers to explain to passengers "what freedom means."

Taxi drivers’ changed their profession as lecturers and were teaching their passengers different topics while taking them from one place to another Because it wasn't a taxi, the car could be any color, so a lot of drivers were able to continue working with the same car.



COUNTRY PRACTICES

Georgia

Borjomi dog case

The problem?

In April 2020, a graphic video surfaced online showing a man brutally killing a stray dog in the town of Borjomi, a well-known tourist destination in central Georgia. The dog, known to locals, was tied and beaten to death with a shovel in front of other animals.



As a response to this case Georgian young people used several non-traditional participation tools, like **petition**, c**ampaigns** like #JusticeForBorjomiDog spread on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, street protests in Borjomi and Tbilisi, Young people created **graffiti**, digital **posters**, and **performances** to keep public attention on the issue.

As a result of which a new article about torturing and killing animals was added to the law.

COUNTRY PRACTICES

Poland

Abotak

The problem?

The abortion in Poland is illegal in most of the cases



AboTak is Poland's first community-based abortion support center, launched on March 8, 2025—International Women's Day—by the activist collective Abortion Dream Team. Situated directly across from the Polish Parliament in Warsaw, AboTak serves as a symbolic and practical response to the country's stringent abortion laws, offering a safe space for individuals seeking information and assistance regarding abortion services.

It is not a medical clinic but a support hub for those seeking abortions. It provides guidance on obtaining abortion pills from trusted sources like Women Help Women and assists individuals in arranging surgical abortions abroad, including help with transportation and financial support. The center also offers educational resources, workshops, and a community space for discussions about reproductive rights.

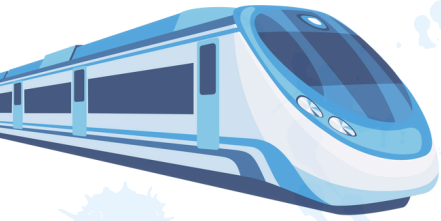
COUNTRY PRACTICES

Poland

Last Generation

The problem?

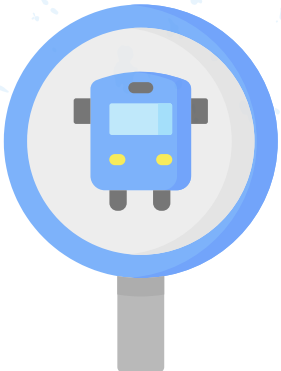
Activits demand from the government to transfer all funds from the construction of expressways to public transportation.





In Poland, the environmental activist group Last Generation (Ostatnie Pokolenie) has been at the forefront of protests demanding the government redirect funds from expressway construction to public transportation initiatives.
Since early 2024, Last Generation activists have organized several high-profile demonstrations: my-impact.org

- Bridge Blockades: In April 2024, they blocked major bridges in Warsaw, including the Poniatowski and Śląsko-Dąbrowski bridges, to protest against transport exclusion and to demand investment in public transit systems. my-impact.org
- Expressway Disruptions: In May 2025, activists disrupted traffic on the S8 expressway near Poznań, continuing their campaign to draw attention to their demands.



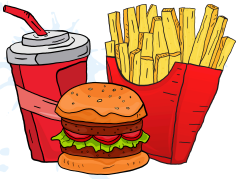
COUNTRY PRACTICES

Poland

Social Media

The problem?

many football players eating “fast food” which destroys their health.



Using social media platforms like Facebook to share messages about healthy eating habits is a frequent strategy. Visual content, such as images or infographics, can be effective in conveying these messages to a younger audience.



To discourage young people from eating unhealthy food, ,,Beniaminek” organisation posted on FB a photo of their football player at McDonald’s, which was crossed.

COUNTRY PRACTICES

Hungary

Joke Party

The problem?



Damaged roads in the streets o Hungary which need repair and taking actions from government.

In 2019, MKKP (Hungarian joke party; 5%) used alternative ways to show the government to repair roads. They painted damaged roads or pavement section where the cracks and potholes in bright, colorful patterns using red, yellow, blue, and green.

These colors transform the broken asphalt into a kind of public artwork that's visually striking—and impossible to ignore.



This is a combination of the methods: Tactical urbanism; visual protest and satirical action.
It's a way to pressure authorities, engage citizens, and reclaim public space—all with a sense of humor.

COUNTRY PRACTICES

Hungary

Illiberal Pride

The problem?

In 2021, the government adopted a repressive law banning the "portrayal" and "promotion" of LGBT content to children.

On April 12, 2025, thousands of participants gathered in Budapest dressed entirely in gray clothing, carrying banners with ironic slogans such as "Being uniform is cool" and "Listen to your heart, death to colours." The demonstration was designed to mock the government's emphasis on uniformity and suppression of diversity.



MKKP made an alternative way to „celebrate" it. The action engaged the public and international observers, demonstrated the power of non-traditional activism in challenging governmental policies and promoting social change.

COUNTRY PRACTICES

Ukraine

On Time Festival

The problem?



Fake news affects and processing the collective trauma inflicted by the ongoing Russian invasion to Ukraine.

The On Time Festival, held in Kyiv in June 2022. Hosted in a repurposed Soviet-era ribbon factory in Kyiv's Podil district, the festival transformed an industrial space into a vibrant hub for creative expression.



It featured a diverse array of performances, including grunge, techno, and metalcore music, alongside exhibitions of paintings, sculptures, and textile art. These artistic works were not only as a form of cultural preservation but also as a means of processing the collective trauma inflicted by the ongoing conflict.

COUNTRY PRACTICES

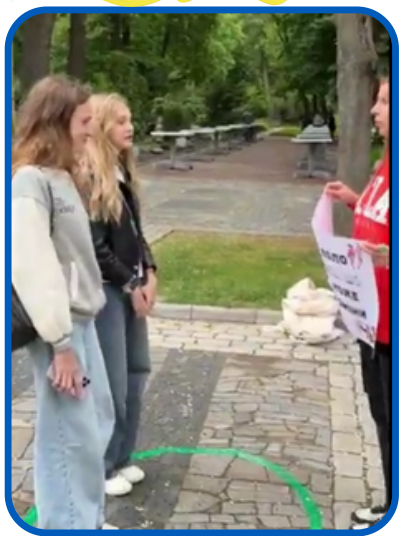
Ukraine

Stand in the Circle

The problem?

Bringing solidarity and empathy to the wider audience.

Standing in the circle is a method that helps you reflect on yourself and become more aware of what's really going on around you. It's about gathering clear information and understanding the reality of a situation. In Ukraine, young people used this approach to draw public attention to important social issues such as blood donation and solidarity.



In one video, for example, youth used a symbolic performance involving young people "stand in the circle if you thinkg young people can cause change". With ithe action they highlighting young people's role in the society and need of their involvment in the civic life. They made their message more understandable and appealing to a broader audience.

OUTCOMES

As a result of the project the young leaders developed video tutorials on the alternative forms of participation.

Change My Mind

Debate performance - is a debate-style format where someone sets up a table in a public space with a sign that says something like:
“I believe [controversial opinion] – Change My Mind”
The whole idea is to have open, face-to-face conversations about difficult or sensitive topics. Instead of arguing online or shouting over each other, it’s about listening, explaining your point of view.
The goal isn’t always to win the argument or actually change someone’s mind. It's more about showing that we can talk about serious issues calmly, ask good questions, and think critically—even when we disagree.



Whether you agree with the opinions being shared or not, the format itself is a reminder that good conversations can still happen—even in today’s noisy world.

OUTCOMES

Blood donation





An awareness-raising campaign is a way for young people to shine a light on an issue that matters to them—something they feel more people should know, care, or act about.
It could be about any topic that affects young people's lives. The goal is to inform, inspire, and sometimes even push for change in society, policies, or attitudes.

Youth participation isn't just about voting or joining a youth council. It's also about using your voice, creativity, and networks to make an impact. That's why Ukrainian team created blood donation campaign scenario in offline format. However, the awareness-raising campaign could be conducted online, via social media platforms, flash mobs, podcasts, exhibitions, etc.

OUTCOMES

Meme Campaign

A meme campaign is a creative and humorous way to spread a message using meme. But instead of just making people laugh, a meme campaign has a purpose: to raise awareness about a topic, share a point of view, or even inspire people to take action.
Think of it as activism with humor and a digital twist.





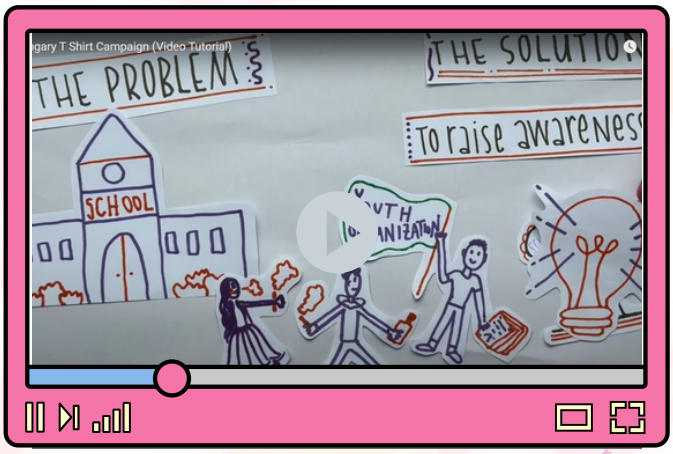
Memes may look simple, but they can be powerful tools in youth participation. When young people use memes to speak out, they turn everyday scrolling into a chance to learn, reflect, and maybe even act.
It's about taking control of the conversation—in your language, your tone, and your way.

OUTCOMES

T-shirt Campaign

The T-shirt campaign is one of the awareness campaigns. This is a great example of youth-led creative participation, specifically a peer-driven awareness campaign.
The method uses design and visuals to share their identity, experiences, or values.

The T-shirts become symbols that unite young people and raising awareness among peers and the public.





If you want to see how you can manage this kind of creative and peer-lead awareness raising campaign watch the video.

Conclusion



During the project, participants had the opportunity to discover creative forms of youth participation, exchange good practices from their communities, and discuss how to encourage active involvement of rural youth in local decision-making processes.

In addition to the workshops, they enjoyed inspiring cultural evenings. Participants also produced videos to raise awareness about the importance of alternative participation methods for rural youth to show how creative ideas can lead to real impact!

