



Alternative

FORMS OF PARTICIPATION FOR RURAL YOUTH



2025
Bakuriani, Georgia

Authors

This booklet is created within the scope of the “Alternative Form of the Participation for Rural Youth” project by youth workers and verified by qualified trainers. The project held on 8-16 April 2025 in Bakuriani. 24 youth workers participated in it. The project is funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, implemented by the youth organization [Umbrella](#) with the partnership of 9 organisations from 9 countries.



Table of Content

01	What is Democracy?
01	Why Youth Participation is Vital
02	Why Rural Youth Participation matters
03	What is alternative forms of youth participation?
04	International Legal Mechanisms and Tools
06	Good Practices Ukraine
07	Good Practices Moldova
08	Good Practices Georgia
09	Good Practices Cyprus
10	Good Practices Luxembourg
11	Good Practices Spain
12	Good Practices Portugal
13	Good Practices Armenia
14	Good Practices Turkiye
16	How to Approach Advicosy Council of Youth
17	Conclusion

What is Democracy?

Democracy is a system of governance in which power is vested in the people. It is built on fundamental principles such as political equality, human rights, the rule of law, and the active participation of citizens in public life.

Key pillars of democracy include:

- **Representation:** Citizens elect representatives to make decisions and govern on their behalf.
- **Participation:** Beyond voting, democratic systems encourage individuals to engage in civic life through public debate, advocacy, volunteering, and civil society activities.
- **Accountability:** Elected officials and public institutions are held accountable to the public through legal mechanisms, free media, transparency, and regular elections.

Democracy is not static; it requires continuous involvement from citizens to remain effective, fair, and responsive to societal needs.

Why Youth Participation is Vital

Young people represent a significant portion of the population and have a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing modern societies. Their participation is essential for ensuring that democratic systems are inclusive, forward-looking, and resilient.

Youth involvement promotes intergenerational equity, increases civic engagement and brings innovation and new approaches to problem-solving

What rural youth participation matters?

Young people living in rural areas are often left out of important conversations about their future. But their participation is essential for building a fair, inclusive, and vibrant society. Rural youth know their communities better than anyone—they understand the problems and have creative ideas for solving them. When they get involved, they help shape a better future not just for themselves, but for everyone.

- Their voices deserve to be heard
- They know local problems best
- They bring fresh ideas and local realities
- Their participation strengthens democracy
- They connect their communities to the world



What is alternative forms of youth participation?

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to broaden the concept of youth participation beyond traditional political engagement. While voting, political party membership, and institutional representation remain important, they do not fully capture the diverse ways in which young people express their civic engagement and contribute to democratic life.

Alternative forms of youth participation refer to non-traditional, often informal, methods by which young people engage in social, political, and civic processes. These approaches may occur outside of established institutions and are often issue-based, decentralized, and driven by values such as social justice, sustainability, and human rights.

Institutions such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and various national institutions working with youth increasingly recognize these alternative forms of participation as legitimate and essential to democratic societies. Policy frameworks, such as the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, explicitly encourage public authorities to support and facilitate such diverse forms of youth engagement.



For more information about the alternative forms of youth participation watch the video.

International Legal Mechanisms Supporting Youth Participation

The Council of Europe (CoE) is a leading human rights organization with 46 member states. Its core values include human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. It plays a crucial role in shaping youth policy and promoting youth participation, especially through the Youth Department and the Co-Management System.

Council of Europe Youth Department: Develops youth policies, provides funding (e.g. through the European Youth Foundation), and implements training.

Co-Management System: A unique model where youth representatives share decision-making power with government officials within the Joint Council on Youth.

Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life: A vital policy tool adopted by the Congress, offering principles, measures, and examples of good practice to increase youth participation.

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the CoE

This is a CoE institution representing local and regional governments. It monitors local democracy and promotes youth involvement in local governance.

Key Programs and Tools:

- Youth Delegates Program: Young people (18–30) can

participate as official members of Congress delegations, bringing rural and minority voices to European decision-making.

- European Local Democracy Week: An annual event to promote grassroots democracy; youth groups can organize and take part in local activities.
- Congress Resolutions on Youth Participation: These promote institutional changes to integrate young people into local government processes.

Tools and Resources for Rural Youth Advocacy

Youth Participation Platforms and Networks

- European Youth Foundation (EYF): Provides funding for youth initiatives, including rural and underrepresented groups.
- European Youth Forum (YFJ): Represents youth organizations and advocates at the EU and CoE level.
- Rural Youth Europe: A network focusing on rural youth empowerment, non-formal education, and policy advocacy
- MIJARC Europe: an independent, democratic, youth-led platform for Catholic rural youth, by rural youth which encourages the participation of young people to build the Europe.

Legal Instruments Youth Can Refer To

- European Convention on Human Rights
- European Charter of Local Self-Government
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – especially Article 12 on participation

Ukraine

Standing in the Circle

Issue: Bringing solidarity and empathy to the wider audience.



Standing in the circle is a method for observing yourself, what is actually happening around you. Get the facts about what is being done. The young people in Ukraine used this method to grab wider audience's attention to the socially important topics, like blood donation, solidarity, etc.

In the video there is one example how young people used symbolic performance by incorporating pizza—a universally recognized and relatable item – as a metaphor for larger societal concerns. By using pizza as a stand-in for broader topics, the message becomes more accessible and engaging to a wider audience.

Cyberattack

Issue: after the full invasion in Ukraine began, Ukraine have been doing DDoS attacks on russian websites, TV channels, banks etc. That cyberwar continues till now.



On **July 23, 2024**, a cyberattack organized by the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine paralyzed the work of key banking institutions and payment systems throughout Russia.

The cyberattack also affected mobile operators: Beeline, Megafon, Tele2, and Rostelecom were affected.

Moldova

The Table of Joy

Issue: Showing solidarity and act of charity.



The “Table of Joy” is a national solidarity campaign in the Republic of Moldova, held annually around the **Easter holidays**. Initiated by the Metropolis of Bessarabia, in partnership with various organizations and volunteers, the main goal of the campaign is to collect food items to donate to elderly people living alone, low-income families, and other vulnerable groups



For one day, volunteers young people—actively participate in supermarkets and collection points, encouraging shoppers to donate basic food items.

"Stop the Violence, Start Equality"

Issue - Violence and gender equality



The project began with the creation of an informative video aimed at raising awareness about the forms of violence present in society and how we can respond to them. Through this project, the girls addressed the topic of violence and gender equality in a creative, educational, and meaningful way, carrying out five activities that had a real impact on their community and their peers.

Georgia

მედაქი

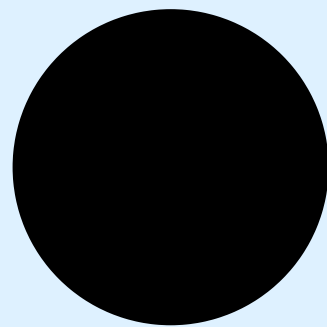
Issue: the Taxi law according to which all taxis had to be white and drivers had to get a paid license



November 2019 Girchi party initiated the way of protesting against the Taxi law. 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.

Black Pictures on Facebook

Issue: prisoners being abused by staff at prisons in the suburbs of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi.



In **2012** we saw some violent moments from Georgian prison through. The explicit videos showed inmates being kicked and beaten by guards, including one man crying out as he was sodomised with a broom. There were thousands of people protesting against it. One of the important and modern way was the black pictures on the Facebook profiles. as a solidarity step.

Cyprus

FIDIAS Phenomenon

Issue: dissatisfaction with the political elite in Cyprus and the broader EU, promote democracy and young peoples voice in EU



In the **2024** European Parliament elections, Fidias Panayiotou, a 24-year-old Cypriot YouTuber with no prior political experience, secured 19.4% of the national vote, earning a seat as an independent Member of the European Parliament (MEP). This unprecedented achievement, dubbed the "Fidias Phenomenon," exemplifies a transformative approach to youth participation in democratic processes.

Hunters' Protest



Issue: Hunters rights and traditions

In recent years, Cypriot hunters have organized to advocate for their rights and traditions, particularly in response to environmental regulations and land development projects. This movement culminated in the formation of the Active Citizens – Movement of Cypriot United Hunters in **2018**, a political party that promotes sustainable hunting practices and environmental conservation

Luxembourg

PowHer



Issue: to equip young women with the essential skills and unwavering confidence needed to drive meaningful change in society.

Be Human Asbl is a Luxembourgish organization championing humanity's potential through inclusive society. On 2024, they created the PowHer program, a 5 month long female empowerment journey. With 15 girls per cohort they work closely with the girls and their families to help them learn the skills that they will need to grow into the female leaders of tomorrow

Shape up

Issue: young people has lack of basic competencies to shape their life.



The "SHAPE UP" project is aimed at people aged 16 to 30 in Luxembourg. This program offers a unique opportunity to integrate into the diverse fabric of our society by actively working on formulating individual life projects. Participants are encouraged to take part in five ideation sessions, during which they can explore their talents and aspirations, strategically plan their future, and improve their employability skills. SHAPE UP aims to empower participants to achieve their ambitions.

Spain

Alternative Protest

Issue: Young farmers in Spain are struggling to survive in the agricultural sector due to Low prices for their products, excessive bureaucracy and lack of generational renewal in the countryside



Young farmers have joined nationwide tractor protests and mobilizations, including in front of the Ministry of Agriculture in Madrid. They carry banners and speak in media to raise awareness (e.g., "We are the next generation of farmers. Don't ignore us"). They participate alongside larger agricultural unions but bring their own specific voice and identity as youth in the sector.

EPA

Issue: young people has less opportunities to participate in democratic processes.



In **October 2023**, the "Rural Laboratory" brought together rural youth from across Spain to co-create innovative solutions to local challenges around democratic participation, access to culture and cultural heritage through collaborative design. This led to three prototypes of youth-led social projects and the creation of the EPA! Rural Youth Network.

Portugal

The Anti-Latada Feminista

Issue: In many Portuguese universities, especially in Coimbra, praxe is seen as a “tradition” to welcome new students. But in reality, it often involves humiliation, power games, and even violence. One of the biggest examples is the Latada – a huge annual parade where first-year students are marched through the streets in costumes after going through praxe. It’s all presented as fun, but a lot of it reinforces outdated ideas of hierarchy, sexism, and forced submission, turning integration into a kind of public humiliation.

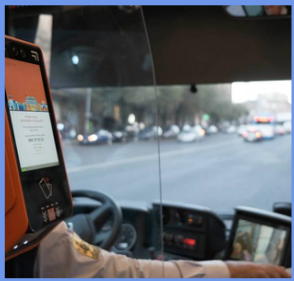


To push back, students in Coimbra created the Anti-Latada Feminista – a party that happens right near the Latada route, but with a totally different vibe. It’s open, safe, and free from praxe or pressure.

There’s music, good energy, and it’s a place where new students can actually relax, have fun, and meet people without being yelled at, forced to do things, or treated like they’re less. It’s not about rejecting fun – it’s about redefining what fun looks like when everyone’s treated with respect.

Armenia

We aren't Going to Pay



Issue: The mayor of Yerevan announced that from 01Feb2025 the price for transport will change from 100 (0.23euro) dram to 300dram(0.71 euro).

Many young people stood up to fight against these changes together with ex mayor of Yerevan and Restart foundation:

- as people earn little wages,
- new transport price packages are too high to afford them,
- elder generation don't know how to use electronic paying system,
- During rush hour you have to wait 40-50 minutes in bus stop for the bus (and maybe there won't be place for you)

What they organised?

- Sticking "we are not going to pay" stickers in the buses and other public places.
 - Raising awareness campaigns directly in the buses.
 - Collection of 50 drams for mayor.
 - Arranging alternative and free transportation during rush hour for people in bus stops.
 - Paying just 100 drams in buses by coin, not using electronic system.
- Walking with posters in the city to inform people about campaign



Alternative Youth Center is branch of "Planet One" initiative in Armenia fighting against environmental issues. It was launched in the end of 2022. This is space, where young people are trying to identify core environmental issues, find ways of solving it, be more eco friendly, identify different types of plants, learn how to grow them, and disseminate information to other young people by organizing workshops, webinars and follow ups. By learning they are teaching to other youth to raise awareness about eco activism.

Turkiye

EVERYTHING WILL BE BEAUTIFUL SLOGAN



Issue: The slogan first appeared by young person on twitter on May 6, 2019, after the Supreme Election Council (YSK) decided to cancel the Istanbul elections won by Ekrem İmamoğlu.

The Slogan Was Embraced by the Public:

“Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak” (“Everything Will Be Great”) quickly became more than just a campaign slogan – it turned into a call for hope and change. It was written on walls, printed on t-shirts, and became the subject of songs.

Support from Celebrities:

Many well-known figures such as Cem Yılmaz, Tarkan, Haluk Levent, and Şahan Gökbağar shared and supported the slogan on social media.

June 23, 2019 Election:

The annulled election was re-held on June 23. This time, İmamoğlu won by a much larger margin – over 800,000 votes.

The Slogan Became Part of Political History

Barınamıyoruz

Issue: housing crisis and dormitory shortages



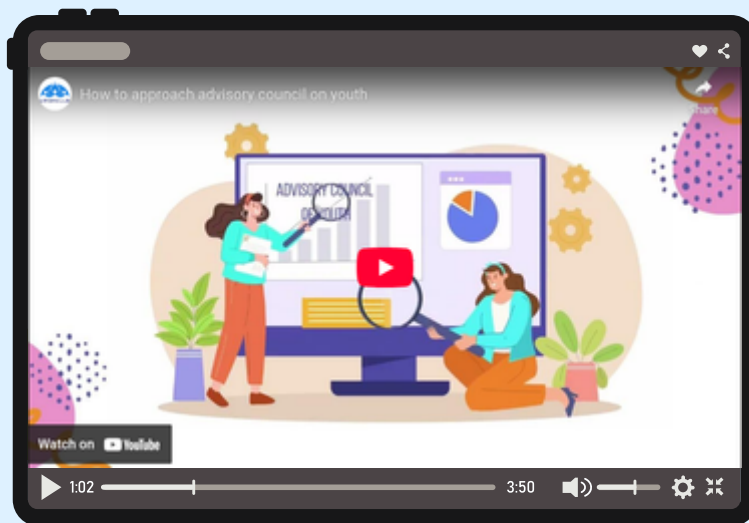
In 2021, university students protested the housing crisis and dormitory shortages by sleeping in public parks. It was youth-led, horizontally organized, and independent from political parties. Organized through social media.

Participated in physical "sleep-out" protests in public spaces.

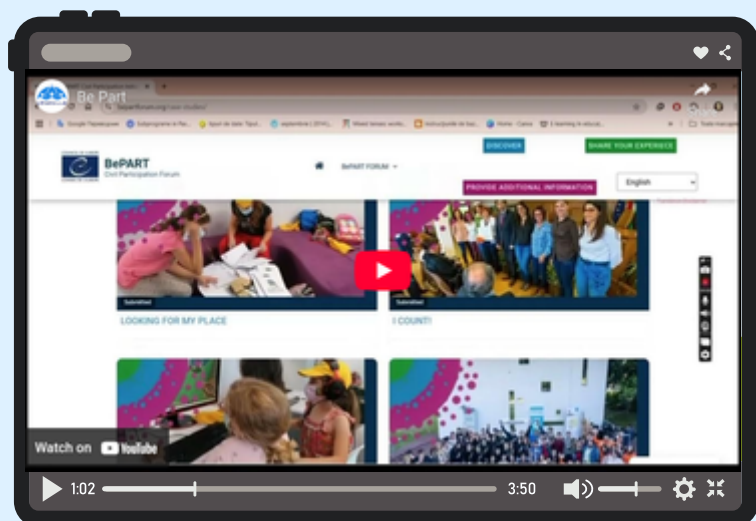
The method gained wide media attention, started public discussions on the housing crisis. Some local governments responded with supportive initiatives.

How to Approach Advisory Council of Youth

As a result of the project developed video tutorials on how to - approach CoE relevant institutions and use the tools, submit petitions, approach local or national government and other tips and hints related to alternative forms of participation.



Be Part is a platform where you can add your youth participation activity and explore other European participation practices.



Conclusion

During the training course "Alternative Forms of Participation For Rural Youth", participants explored alternative ways of participation, shared best practices and promoted active engagement of rural youth at the local level.

