

Impact assessment and evaluation report

Conducting Youth Consultations
Representing Youth Project



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Summary

In 2025 and 2026, the Austrian, Finnish and Danish youth delegate programmes have participated in the project Representing Youth, which aims to strengthen the representativity of youth delegates. One aspect of the project has been to conduct youth consultations, where the youth delegates have collected input and shared knowledge with various groups of young people.

This phase of the project followed up on a previous phase, in which various consultation methods were tested and developed, resulting in the guide “Engaging, consulting and informing youth”, which provided tools for five types of consultation. In this phase, the five consultation methods and the tools from the guide were tested and implemented.

Through school visits, workshops, youth organisation meetings, online consultations, public engagement activities and targeted consultations with specific groups of young people, the project enabled youth delegates to gather diverse perspectives and strengthen their representative role.

This evaluation demonstrates the following results:

- Young people who participated in the consultations report increased understanding of the United Nations, the European Union and international decision-making processes
- The consultations were seen as meaningful opportunities for young people to share their views and priorities
- Youth delegates received concrete input for their representation work
- The organisational capacity of participating organisations to conduct youth consultations was strengthened
- The participating organisations gained institutional learning on effective and inclusive participation methods.
- A key finding of the project is that, perhaps not surprisingly, no single consultation model reaches a broad variety of young people. Instead, a

combination of broadreach activities and more targeted consultations is necessary to ensure both diversity and depth of participation.

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Evaluation Methodology

The impact assessment is based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the project period. Data sources include feedback from youth delegates who have reported on the benefits and barriers of the various consultation methods; from both students and teachers after school visits; and from programme coordinators who work on supporting the youth delegates and are often involved in the practical aspects of planning youth consultations.

Reach

The project tested a wide range of consultation models across Denmark, Finland and Austria, including:

- School visits in lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools and vocational schools
- Consultations with youth groups and organisations
- One-on-one meetings with youth representatives
- Workshops ahead of international meetings such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and Y20
- Online input meetings
- Public engagement activities at festivals and community events
- Consultations targeting young people with disabilities

In total, around 1500–1600 young people were consulted in this phase of the project.

The diversity of formats enabled the project to engage both young people who were already interested in international affairs and those with little or no previous experience with civic participation.

The school format proved particularly effective in reaching young people who would not otherwise participate in consultations, while targeted workshops and thematic events allowed for more in-depth discussions with already engaged young people.

Learning outcomes in school visits

While the main purpose of the project was to generate input that could strengthen the mandate of the youth delegates, an important aspect of youth delegates' work is also to spread awareness of international themes and agendas to young people in their home countries. For this purpose, school visits differ from other types of consultations, as the students do not sign up for the consultation themselves, unlike for example an activist group agreeing to a meeting with a youth delegate. In the latter case, both parties expect to gain something from the interaction, whereas in the former case, the students oftentimes do not know what to expect. Since the students rarely show up with an agenda beforehand, school visits tend to lean more towards informing rather than consulting youth. As this phase of the project meant to test all methods introduced in the guide "Engaging, consulting and informing youth", we asked specifically for feedback on the perceived learning outcome of the school visits.

Teacher perspectives

After the Danish school visits, feedback was collected from the teachers of the classes that had participated in the sessions. This feedback indicates that school visits were considered by teachers to be highly relevant and educational. Teachers highlighted that students gained increased knowledge of the UN, the EU, democracy and international cooperation. They particularly appreciated the balance between presentations and interactive dialogue.

Teachers rated the relevance of the activities highly, with an average score of 4 out of 5, and no teacher rating the activity below 3 out of 5

Student perspectives

Student evaluations show more moderate but still positive results. The average relevance score was 3.2 out of 5, with the most common answer being 3 out of 5. We do not have a benchmark that allows us to assess whether this score is higher or lower than students' rating of school classes in general.

The qualitative responses demonstrate that many participants gained concrete knowledge and new perspectives. The most common learning outcome was increased knowledge of the United Nations. Students also highlighted that the activities were engaging, relevant and that youth delegates explained complex

issues in an understandable way, indicating that the goal of informing young people about international agendas was reached.

At the same time, some students requested shorter presentations, more interactive exercises and a greater focus on factual content rather than personal experiences. These comments provided valuable input for the continuous improvement of consultation formats.



Effectiveness of different consultation models

One of the central objectives was to test different consultation models. The project demonstrated that different formats have distinct strengths and limitations.

School visits

School visits proved to be one of the most effective tools for broad outreach. They enabled youth delegates to engage young people from different educational backgrounds and geographical areas, including many who would not normally take part in civic participation activities.

However, school visits also had limitations. The time available often restricted the depth of discussions, and organisers noted that significant staff time was required to identify schools, coordinate schedules and organise logistics. Arranging school visits often required contacting a large number of schools to secure a smaller number of actual consultations.

Input meetings

Workshops organised around international policy processes such as CSW and Y20 were effective in gathering more detailed input and preparing youth delegates for their international mandates. These events attracted participants who already had an interest in international affairs or a specific policy theme and therefore enabled more advanced discussions.

Austria's online input meeting before the Commission on the Status of Women showed that cooperation with existing thematic networks can create valuable synergies between national youth work and international advocacy.

Consultations with youth organisations

Meetings with youth organisations strengthened the relationship between youth delegates and organised youth groups. They allowed for more in-depth dialogue and facilitated long-term cooperation.

However, participation rates were sometimes lower than expected, as many organisations expressed initial interest but later cancelled or did not register after a meeting was announced.

Public and informal consultation formats

The project also experimented with less traditional formats, such as a community-care sauna evening for biodiversity activists and a participatory painting activity at the Helsinki Day City Festival. These formats demonstrated that political participation can be facilitated through informal and creative approaches and helped reach young people in settings outside formal education and organised youth work.

Targeted consultations

Targeted consultations, such as meetings with Austria's Inclusion Advisory Board and visiting a Danish boarding school for students with dyslexia, allowed for deeper discussions and ensured that the perspectives of young people with disabilities were reflected in the consultation process.



Increased understanding of international decision-making

Across all participating countries, youth delegates and secretariat staff observed that many young people initially struggled to see the connection between global processes and their everyday lives.

Interactive methods including role-play, group work, quizzes and discussion exercises proved particularly effective in helping participants connect international issues to local realities. These methods often led to discussions about how young people could contribute to positive change within their communities and increased motivation to engage.

The consultations therefore contributed to increased knowledge as well as a stronger sense of agency among participants.

Inclusion and diversity

The project made conscious efforts to engage a diverse group of young people. Despite these efforts, all three participating organisations identified challenges in reaching young people with typically lower levels of civic participation, including young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

School visits provided broad access to students, but by definition excluded young people outside the education system. Similarly, consultations through youth organisations often attracted participants from relatively highly educated or already engaged backgrounds.

The Finnish secretariat highlighted that reaching NEET youth would require different communication strategies, stronger local partnerships and closer cooperation with youth workers. The project therefore identified an important area for future development.

Participating organisations also identified a need to strengthen their capacity to ensure physical accessibility and inclusive event design in future activities.

Reflections from youth delegates and secretariats

The evaluation highlights several factors that contributed to successful consultations. The youth delegates reported that they were able to generate the highest levels of participation through interactive methods compared to a more traditional classroom setup. They also appreciated the combination of both broad-reach and targeted formats to create both diversity and depth in the consultations.

Although, as described above, many young participants initially struggled with identifying the relevance of global issues to their own lives, this is one area where the youth delegates had great success with engaging the participants, so that by the end of the consultations, more people understood the relevance of these issues in their own lives.

A recurring finding across all three countries was that the division of responsibilities between youth delegates and secretariat staff worked well. Youth delegates took the lead on content and participant engagement, while staff supported with logistics, communication, budgeting, venue arrangements and technical support.

This model recognised the voluntary nature of the youth delegate role, minimizing their administrative and practical tasks, while still allowing delegates to have ownership of their consultations and develop strong competencies in facilitation, representation and project design.

The project also contributed to long-term institutional learning. The guide “Engaging, Consulting and Informing Youth” served as a useful framework and source of inspiration, particularly for secretariat staff and for the orientation of new youth delegates. Although consultation methods were often adapted to local contexts and built on previous experience, the guide provided a shared basis for reflection and future development.

At the same time, the evaluation underlines that meaningful consultations require substantial behind-the-scenes work. Tasks such as contacting schools and organisations, coordinating schedules, arranging travel, managing registrations and ensuring accessibility are essential for success and should be recognised as a core component of youth consultation work.

Conclusion

The work with youth consultations in the project period successfully delivered the expected outputs.

The evaluation shows that this phase of the project has contributed to the overall goals of the project by:

- testing multiple youth consultation models in different settings, drawing on
- the results of the projects' Work Package 2.
- strengthening youth delegates' ability to represent young people
- increasing young people's understanding of international decision-making and youth participation
- generating concrete input for youth delegates' representation work
- producing valuable lessons on inclusion, accessibility and participation
- strengthening the long-term capacity of participating organisations to conduct meaningful youth consultations.

Overall, the evaluation demonstrates that structured youth consultations are an effective tool for both strengthening democratic participation among young people and improving the legitimacy, inclusiveness and quality of youth representation in international decision-making processes.

