

# LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS

## Analysis of Policy and Mechanisms





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# INTRODUCTION

According to a recent survey on youth participation, there is an increasing political apathy among young people.(1) Their declining interest in representative political processes, reluctance to engage in political and civic matters, and low turnout for political elections demonstrate this alarming trend. Therefore, these challenges should be addressed by increasing the quality of youth participation, the impact of young people on policymaking, and their involvement in decision-making. In this context, youth participation refers to young people having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.(2)

Involving young people in decision-making processes at the local level is particularly important. Their unique perspectives and experiences enrich policies and programs to enhance their well-being and integration into the community. Furthermore, when the voices of young people, including marginalised groups, are heard, they feel valued and empowered, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion. (3)

One special way of increasing youth political participation is by improving the quality of Local Youth Councils (LYCs). Therefore, the publication analyzes the impact of LYCs in decision-making in Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, and Portugal. Comparing examples of LYCs in four municipalities on the local level, the publication aims to give a wholesome perspective on opportunities and challenges offered by LYCs.

The challenges of engaging young people in local governance cannot be overestimated. Obstacles, such as limited resources, tokenisation, and a lack of youth-friendly policies, can significantly reduce the full potential of youth engagement (4). The publication discusses these challenges from the perspective of LYCs members. Furthermore, based on quantitative and qualitative data, the publication recommends overcoming those challenges.

The publication focuses on bridging the gap between young people and local decision-makers. LYCs serve as a platform for youth to express their opinions and as a point of contact between local authorities and young people.

As the publication offers a comparative analysis of different structures in LYCs on the local level and their impact on local governance, it can be useful for policymakers, youth organisations, and LYCs members. By understanding the successes and challenges of LYCs on the national and local levels, the publication aspires to build more inclusive and effective youth participation in local decision-making processes across Europe.

(1) EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. (2023). New forms of youth political participation. Retrieved from

(2) & (3) Council of Europe (2015). Have Your Say! Council of Europe

(4) Congress and Council of Europe (2003). Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. Council of Europe.

# THE PROJECT

The "Youth Council Participation in Europe" project is a collaborative initiative to enhance the functionality and impact of LYCs across Europe. The project shows the importance of LYCs for youth engagement in decision-making processes. Therefore, it serves as one of the examples of the collective commitment of European countries to recognising and amplifying the voice of the youth at the local level.

The key objectives of this project are promoting democratic engagement among young people, evaluating and comparing structures and methods within LYCs, and analyzing the legal frameworks governing these councils. Essential activities comprise conducting study visits to various LYCs, analysing policies and practices, and formulating strategic recommendations for imp legal frameworks governing these councils. Essential activities comprise conducting study visits to various LYCs, analysing policies and practices, and formulating strategic recommendations for improving involvement in LYCs.

The project is expected to positively affect youth participation in decision-making by increasing the skill set of LYCs members, strengthening international collaborations, and more effective youth policies.

The project is coordinated by DYPALL Network in partnership with Kristiansand Kommune, Klaipėda Municipality and Viimsi Municipality, funded by the Erasmus+ programme through Norwegian National Agency.



# ABOUT THE PARTNERS

The project's consortium includes four partners:

**Kristiansand Kommune, Norway:** Kristiansand Kommune plays an active role in guiding and coordinating the project's various activities. The municipality has a dedicated democracy unit collaborates with advisory councils, including youth councils, to foster dialogue between politicians, stakeholders, and council members. Their efforts are focused on implementing youth-inclusive policies and ensuring that young voices are heard in the decision-making processes.



<https://www.kristiansand.kommune.no/>



**Klaipėdos Miesto Savivaldybės Administracija, Lithuania:** Klaipėda, European Youth Capital, in 2021, has demonstrated a strong commitment to youth engagement through initiatives like the Klaipėda Youth Forum. This forum serves as a platform for young people to raise issues, solve problems, and make suggestions, acting as a think tank supporting the city's structures working with young people. The forum consists of an assembly and working groups that identify relevant issues and formulate proposals for the Youth Affairs Council. This experience and approach significantly contribute to the project's objectives of strengthening youth participation in local governance.



<https://www.klaipeda.lt/>



**DYPALL Network, Portugal:** DYPALL Network (Developing Youth Participation at Local Level) is a European platform of over 80 civil society organisations and local authorities from more than 30 countries that aim to involve young people in decision-making processes at the local level, and thus enable municipal and regional authorities to address the needs and interests of youth, engage young people as active actors of problem-solving and increase the level of ownership, commitment and involvement of an important part of our communities.



[www.dypall.com](http://www.dypall.com)



**Viimsi Noortekeskus, Estonia:** With its focus on youth work services, Viimsi Noortekeskus brings its wide experience with LYCs. Their involvement supports the analysis of the impact of youth councils on local governance and community development, contributing to the project's overall goal of strengthening youth participation in decision-making.



<https://www.viimsivald.ee/>



# METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of this project is based on a thorough examination of LYCs in Lithuania, Estonia, Norway, and Portugal. The main goal was to assess and identify the functions, policies, opportunities, and challenges influencing youth participation within these councils. The main part of the research was done on the local level, analysing four municipalities in Klaipėda, Portimão, Kristiansand, and Viimsi. This understanding forms the basis of our recommendations to local authorities, aiming to amplify the impact of LYCs in decision-making and empower young leaders.

## OUR ANALYSIS FOCUSED ON ANSWERING THESE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS:

- **What** is the present state of LYCs in Europe?
- **How** do youth workers and young people perceive the advantages and disadvantages of LYCs?
- **What** aspects of LYCs' structures can be multiplied and applied to different local contexts?

*Each research phase analyses different LYCs characteristics identified in the Quality Charter on Participatory and Inclusive Local Youth Councils (5), which provides a structured framework for assessing LYCs against key indicators.*

## THE RESEARCH WAS ORGANISED INTO THREE INTERCONNECTED PHASES:



### DESK RESEARCH

In the initial phase, the focus was on desk research, specifically targeting LYCs in the participating countries. This stage aimed to collect data about the roles, policies, and best practices, as well as establish the groundwork for the partner survey. The research focused on the **national and local contexts of LYCs**. The collected data not only facilitated a broader understanding of youth councils and served as a foundation for partner survey. Therefore, working mainly with qualitative data, the desk research provides an understanding of participants' countries' backgrounds and current situations, laying the groundwork for further research.



### QUANTITATIVE DATA MAPPING

Following the desk research, quantitative data from the survey was mapped to provide the basis for comparative analysis and recommendations for stakeholders. As well, the data mapping gave an illustration of the methods and structures that are used by LYCs on the local level.



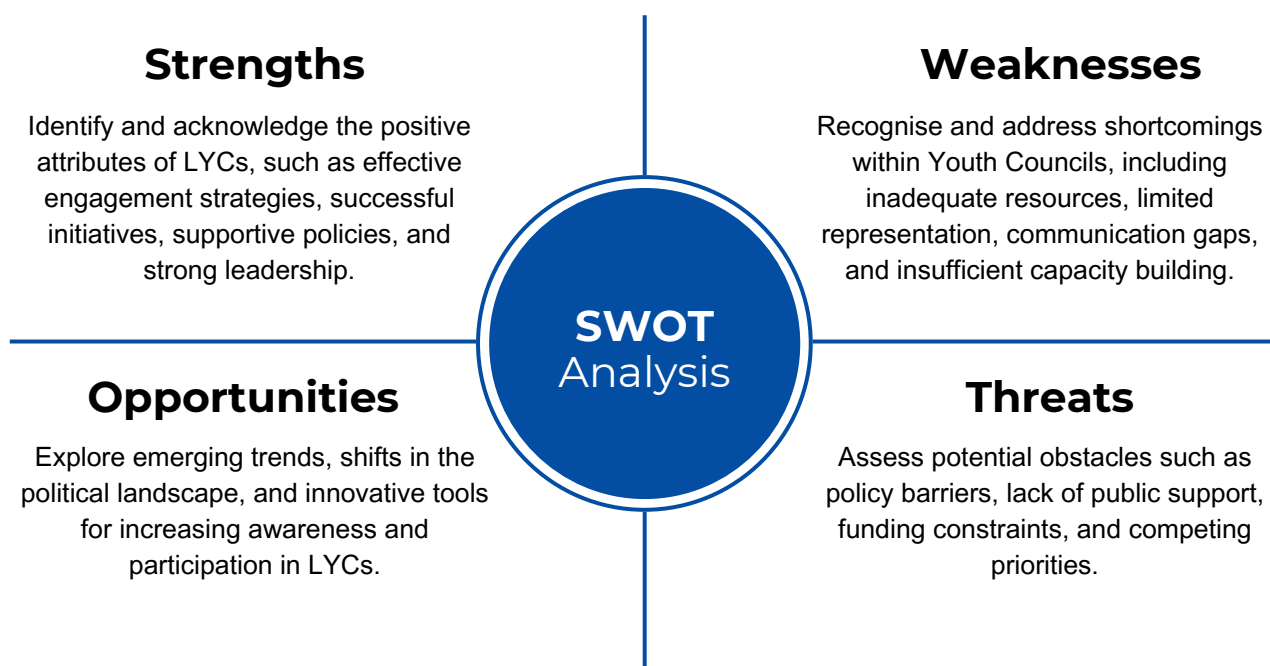
### FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS

The focus group analysis was a crucial aspect of the research methodology, guided by the LYCs Quality Charter (6). These focus groups, consisting of 4-6 participants and lasting 1.5 hours, targeted young people involved in LYCs, youth workers, and decision-makers in each partner municipality. The focus group results were within the SWOT analysis framework.

(5) and (6) Castro de Freitas, J. (n.d.). Quality Charter on participatory and inclusive Local Youth Councils. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wmZgWujqUUvix5NTesulcZt8h4w9IHRY/view>



## Within the SWOT framework, the focus groups explored four key dimensions



Guided by the Quality Charter, the focus group analysis delved into three main dimensions related to LYCs' performance:

- 1. Fair youth participation**
- 2. Meaningful and impactful youth participation**
- 3. Sustainable youth participation**

Incorporating the Quality Charter into the analysis ensured synergy between existing evaluation tools and new recommendations for local authorities. This approach rooted the insights gathered from focus groups on proven theoretical grounds, fostering an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing LYCs. It provided a platform for in-depth discussions on legal frameworks, incorporating diverse perspectives from young individuals, youth workers, and decision-makers. The conclusions drawn from this methodology ensured that the publication offered holistic recommendations, empowering youth councils and inspiring youth workers.

# EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The wide adoption of structures for youth participation, such as LYCs across Europe, shows the evolution and growing commitment towards youth political participation. There has been a notable shift in Europe's approach to youth engagement in recent decades, **moving beyond considering young people merely as policy beneficiaries to recognizing them as active contributors**. This shift is reflected in various European Union policies and frameworks. (7)

For example, following the European Year of Youth in 2022, the EU introduced its first Youth Action Plan in **EU External Action for 2022-2027**. This policy framework prioritizes strengthening engagement with young people globally and introduces initiatives like the **Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative and the Youth Empowerment Fund**.

Europe has a diversity of models for LYCs, mirroring its member countries' varied political, cultural, and social landscapes. This diversity serves as a strength, allowing for the development of LYCs tailored to the specific needs and contexts of different regions. Some countries establish LYCs with formal ties to local government structures, while others opt for more independent or advisory models. Considering this diversity lays the ground for comparing good practices and addressing them to challenges and opportunities of local contexts.

For instance, Nordic countries like Norway integrate LYCs deeply into local governance, incorporating formal mechanisms for youth input into policy decisions. In Portugal, municipalities are legally obligated to have LYCs, showcasing the commitment at a legal level.

The structural setup of LYCs varies significantly across Europe. In some countries, LYCs function independently, while in others, they closely collaborate with local government structures.

In Portugal, LYCs often work closely with municipal authorities, while in Lithuania, they might operate with more autonomy, focusing on grassroots youth initiatives.

Inclusivity and representation in LYCs also vary, with some countries making strides in ensuring diversity, including marginalized groups, while others grapple with achieving inclusivity, often dominated by a particular demographic.

LYCs' impact and recognition also differ across European countries. In some, LYCs significantly influence local policies and are recognized as key decision-making stakeholders. Conversely, in other countries, LYCs are seen more as symbolic entities with limited real-world impact on governance.

Common challenges faced by LYCs across Europe include **maintaining active participation, ensuring sustained funding, and achieving tangible influence on policy decisions**. The extent to which these challenges impact LYCs often reflects the level of support and recognition they receive from local authorities and the broader community.

The diversity in LYCs approaches across Europe offers an excellent opportunity for cross-country learning and collaboration. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different models can contribute to refining and improving the effectiveness of LYCs in fostering youth participation in local governance.

(7) Joerg Forbrig and Council Of Europe (2005).

Revisiting youth political participation: challenges for research and democratic practice in Europe. Strasbourg: Council Of Europe, Cop

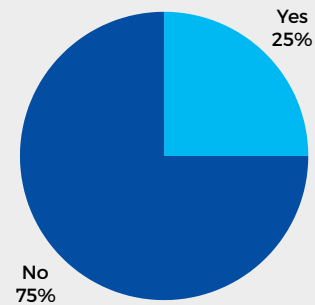
These infographics are based on the quantitative data based on the desk research and survey filled in by youth workers and representatives of four municipalities: Portimão, Klaipėda, Viimsi, and Kristiansand. The representatives of municipalities and youth workers shared the data through a questionnaire and as well answered some questions about aims, opportunities, and aims in the field of LYCs on the national level.

### What is the legal status of LYCs in your country?

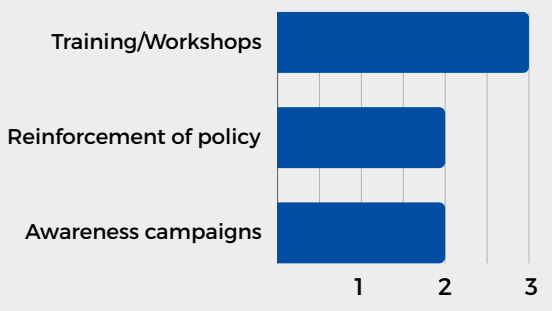
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They have a legal framework and recognized by the government

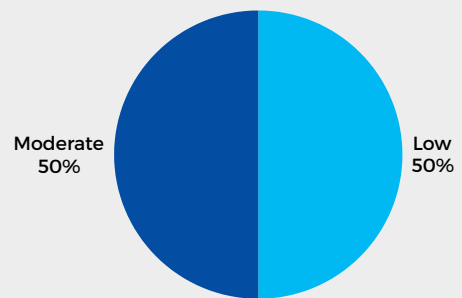
### Are decisions of LYCs legally binding?



### How are LYCs supported on the national level in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Portugal?



### Level of awareness for LYCs among young people in Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, and Portugal?



## Strategic goals of LYCs on national level

- Ensure protection of youth rights in the state is consistent and that active youth participation is supported.
- Ensure youth policies are implemented.
- Safeguard youth mental health.
- Empower local youth organisations' impact on local decision-making.
- Increase the engagement of young people in democratic participation.

## What kind of national support you consider important for the further development of LYCs?

- Recognizing the importance of in-person meetings for individuals facing similar challenges, organizing conferences and gatherings proves invaluable nationally, fostering connections and providing essential support.
- Advocating for the reinforcement of policies and legislation is crucial. A robust legal framework ensures the legitimacy and effectiveness of LYCs in representing the interests of young people.
- Offering targeted training to support LYCs managers is essential. Simultaneously, awareness-raising campaigns contribute to the improved implementation of LYCs structures by fostering understanding and support among stakeholders.

# NATIONAL CONTEXT

## ESTONIA

As of January 1st, 2022, Estonia's population stands at 1,331,796, with approximately 20.6% being young people. The Ministry of Education and Research represents youth affairs in Estonia, where the Department of Youth and Talent Policy (formerly Youth Affairs Department) leads youth policies. Since August 1st, 2020, the Education and Youth Board has implemented education and youth policies. Local governments play a crucial role in organizing youth-related matters, relying heavily on their budgets and independent revenue sources for funding (8).

LYCs in Estonia have evolved from informal initiatives to recognized structures within local governance systems. These councils operate under a legal framework and enjoy national recognition. Their decisions hold legal weight within their councils, enabling them to choose boards and make impactful decisions. The Estonian National Youth Council (ENL) serves as an umbrella organization uniting youth associations and participation groups. ENL aims to provide guardianship to youth associations, shape a social opinion and legislative environment supportive of young people, represent youth political interests nationally and internationally, and encourage lively youth participation in society.

Estonia employs diverse models of youth participation to ensure inclusivity and representation. LYCs operate locally and nationally, fostering a platform for young people to express concerns and contribute to decision-making processes. Collaborating with youth organizations, schools, and local authorities amplifies the impact of these councils, effectively addressing community needs. LYCs align with strategic goals, including protecting youth rights in the state and supporting active youth participation.

### **Nationally, LYCs focus on:**

- Creating trust and commitment among young people towards the state,
- Incorporating youth opinions into all levels of governance,
- Empowering civic participation.

In Estonia, some LYCs follow a representative model, with members elected or appointed to represent young people's interests in their respective regions. Others adopt a participatory model, directly involving young people in policy formulation and implementation.

The legal framework in Estonia actively supports youth participation and recognizes the magistral role of LYCs in decision-making processes. The Youth Work Act, renewed in 2020, serves as a main reference for youth policy, emphasizing the importance of involving young people in decision-making and promoting their active citizenship. The Estonian Youth Strategy 2021-2030 further reinforces the government's commitment to empowering young people and fostering their active participation.

#### **Other Relevant Information and Resources:**

[Estonian Ministry of Education and Research](#) / [Estonian National Youth Council](#) / [Estonian Youth Strategy 2021-2030](#)

(8) [Estonia. YouthWiki. \(2023\)](#)

# LOCAL CONTEXT

## Legal framework to establish a LYCs

National legislation

## LYCs statutes and rules



## Represented

Youth Organizations **Young people (individuals)** Informal groups  
Public entities Private entities Other

## Young people or other representatives take part in the LYCs

Trough elections

## People involved in LYCs and age range

13-26 years old



up to 25 people

## Mandates

1 year

## Main topics addressed in the LYCs

Associativism,  
Civic Participation,  
Environment



## Main goals and objectives of the LYCs

- To issue opinions and recommendations on all youth issues
- To inform the City Council regarding the problems of young people in the municipality who require support or initiatives in the sphere of municipal competencies
- To promote youth initiatives at the local level
- To promote debate and dialogue about the needs and aspirations of youth
- To foster young people's understanding of local democracy

## Who takes the lead and organizes the meeting and joint moments of the LYC



President of LYC

## Facilities and equipment



Meeting room

Access to Youth Center

## Budget



Yes

Municipality budget

## Support from the municipality

Rooms for activities

Budget

Youth workers are required to provide services or help to the youth council

## Specific activity plan



Proposed by Young people

Available and planned in advance

## Actions that are taken in your LYCs

- ✓ Organizes workshops/trainings/events open for young people in the community
- ✓ Organizes activities focusing on the members of the LYC
- ✓ Conducts consultation processes with young people in the community in order to identify their needs

## Main challenges



Lack of skills or interest to raise awareness among young people about the youth council and youth participation

## Have these challenges changed over time?

Yes | No

## Communication channels



Facebook, Instagram, Microsoft Teams

The communication channels are managed by a youth council board that is elected to manage Facebook and Instagram. Teams are managed by the youth council board

## Main opportunities in terms of LYCs future developments

Advocating young people's needs and problems through local government officials and politicians

## What are the main reasons why your municipality supports this body

To ensure that young people have an opportunity to participate in the local level and also to guarantee that the services are based on the interests and needs of young people

# STRENGTHS

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Every year, an event called VIID (Viimsi Innukate Ideede Diskussioon, translation: Viimsi's Lively Discussion of Ideas) takes place. Various topics and statements are open for discussion between young individuals and representatives from local governments. The local government places a high value on the opinions of young people, ensuring that the LYC voice is heard. During VIID, all local youngsters have the opportunity to participate in the event, providing a secure space to express their views.

Within the LYC, members are appointed as youth council representatives to various local council commissions, such as culture, sports, education, etc. They actively engage in commission meetings, offering opinions and suggestions on the topics discussed. This approach guarantees that the perspectives of young individuals are considered across various areas.

Youngsters have space to share their concerns or suggestions with the LYC or their school council, directing problems to the LYC for further consideration. The LYC serves as a valuable channel for the community to understand the needs of young people. Sometimes, topics discussed in youth councils may even find their way into the school curriculum; for instance, discussions on bullying have influenced the inclusion of this issue during school hours.

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The Viimsi Youth Council board holds quarterly meetings with the mayor and vice-mayors of Viimsi Municipality, demonstrating a significant involvement in decision-making on the local level. An illustrative example of this impact is evident in the youngsters' input on issues related to trash bins and public

transport in Viimsi. As a result of these meetings, new trash bins have been installed throughout Viimsi, and improvements have been made to bus schedules. Council members have the opportunity to have a lasting impact by remaining in the LYC for the long term. Some members have been actively involved for 3 or 4 years, gathering expertise in youth work topics over the years.

The municipality has easier access to the youngsters' opinions, and they are directed towards problematic situations/areas they may have yet to notice. It is also good for personal development and learning new skills for future jobs. The LYC is also a safe environment for mastering new skills and sharing opinions without fear of failure or being judged.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

Viimsi Youth Center, in cooperation with the LYC, has recently secured approval for the "Youngsters own budget" ("Noorte oma eelarve"), which provides youngsters with the opportunity to plan their projects and receive event funding. Although led by the Viimsi Youth Center, this fund is based on the ideas of youth workers and youth council representatives.

The local municipality has proven to be exceptionally supportive. The manager of the local youth centre is easily available and always offers assistance. The local government's education and youth work specialist also plays an important role in providing support.

The regional youth councils' (vice-)presidents convene quarterly to discuss the LYC work. Student councils actively contribute to problem-solving within schools. In Viimsi, a monthly round-table brings together youth workers, school activity leaders, youngsters, LYC, and other individuals associated with local youth work.

# WEAKNESSES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Insufficient information is currently available about the youth council, leading to a lack of clarity regarding its specific goals, activities, and purposes. To address this, it is essential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the youth council's objectives and actions, enabling people to fully comprehend its role. A crucial need exists to clarify the fundamental concept of the youth council. There is a misunderstanding among individuals who require assistance in understanding what the youth council truly represents. Instead of recognizing it as a platform for young people to express their concerns and collaborate on initiatives that uplift their community, there is an inaccurate tendency to label it as a "political organization".

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The LYC faces several challenges that hinder the meaningful participation of its members. These challenges include the need for additional human resources. The current membership falls short of adequately representing all youngsters in Viimsi. The LYC faces popularity issues among youngsters, with most members belonging to only one or two friend groups. Furthermore, inadequate time management skills contribute to delays and difficulties in motivating active participation during meetings. The council also grapples with a lack of effective methods to engage other young individuals in its work. These challenges collectively impact the LYC's capacity to fulfil its objectives and effectively engage youth.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

There is a need for increased knowledge on how to promote the LYC. Frequently, the most active youngsters, already engaged in various activities in Viimsi, are also part of the Youth Council. However, many youngsters are apprehensive about the application process, which involves submitting a CV, and a motivation letter and attending an interview with representatives of the youth council, the youth centre, and local government. Additionally, the limited budget poses challenges in organizing substantial events, placing pressure on youngsters to seek sponsors. These processes require high motivation and can potentially hinder the participation of youngsters in the LYC.



# OPPORTUNITIES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Certainly, promoting inclusivity and addressing the rights of the LGBTQ+ community is a valuable and relevant topic for the LYC to discuss further. The LYC can actively contribute by advocating for an environment in schools, youth centres, and other organizations that confirms acceptance and ensures the safety of the LGBTQ+ community. This extends beyond LGBTQ+ issues to include anyone who has experienced discrimination based on their beliefs, race, or other factors.

Moreover, it is essential for municipality workers to consider diverse opinions from young individuals. This can be implemented by providing more voting opportunities in local government commissions and allocating an additional budget not only for activities but also for self-development through training sessions, meet-ups, and other empowering initiatives. This approach ensures that the municipality reflects and respects the diverse perspectives and needs of the youth population.

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

Local elections present an opportunity for the LYC to exert influence. Although the percentage of young voters is increasing annually, many youths are unsure about whom to vote for, often opting for candidates their parents support. To address this, an event was recently organized to facilitate discussions among youngsters about how the political system operates and how they can align their choice of party with their own opinions and beliefs.

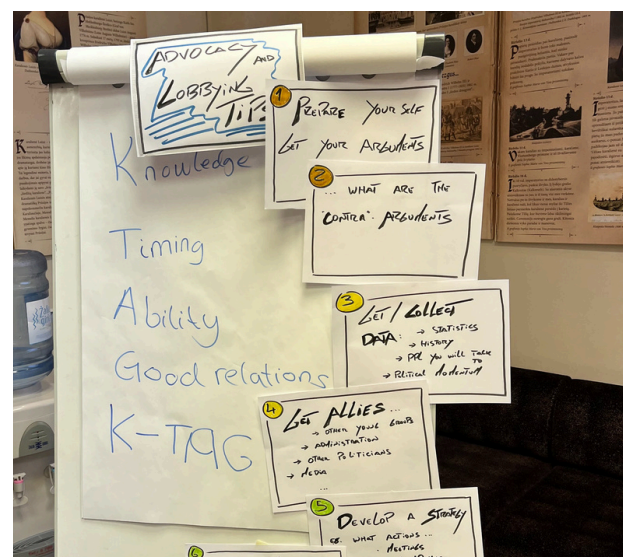
To further empower youth participation, policies and regulations should be made more understandable for youngsters.

This clarity will help reduce confusion in managing LYC work and enhance their ability to navigate and contribute effectively. Additionally, considering a change in the law to mandate the existence of a youth council in every municipality could be a significant step

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

Up until now, awareness about the youth council has primarily been raised through social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. Additionally, visiting local schools as guest speakers has been a strategy to discuss youth council work and the application process. The most effective recruitment tool has proven to be through personal acquaintances.

To expand awareness further, direct contact with other youngsters is a method to consider. This involves meeting up with them in the youth centre, collaborating with school student councils, and influencing their own work on personal social media accounts. This approach leverages both physical and digital platforms to showcase the interesting initiatives and activities undertaken by the LYC.





# THREATS

## LYCs for fair youth participation

A key external factor that could impact the LYC is the time management challenges faced by some youngsters. Juggling LYC responsibilities alongside school, studies, and various after-school activities like music schools or football practices poses a threat. This constraint may result in only a portion of students being able to participate actively in the LYC.



## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

Another external factor is the potential backlash from friend groups. During this age, friends' opinions can significantly influence a youngster's life. If friends disapprove, individuals might hesitate to engage in certain activities. Overcoming this challenge requires strength to stand out and pursue different activities, even in the face of potential peer disapproval.

The primary external factor is the personal challenges faced by youngsters, including household struggles. For those coming from households dealing with financial constraints or individuals experiencing mental health issues, representing other youngsters may be the least of their concerns.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

A significant threat to the LYC is linked to youngsters' engagement in processes. The issue stems from a need for more interest or a fear of involvement in political processes among youngsters. Many perceive being involved in the LYC as synonymous with being involved in politics, and this definition often discourages their participation.

Demonstrating the diverse range of tasks and activities within the LYC proves challenging, as overcoming the perception that it solely involves politics remains a hurdle.

# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## ENHANCING REPRESENTATION AND OUTREACH

Develop targeted outreach strategies to engage youth from diverse backgrounds. Consider implementing interactive workshops in schools and community centres, and launch social media campaigns featuring LYC members from various backgrounds sharing their experiences. Strengthen collaboration with local youth organizations to expand outreach efforts.

**Action example:** Assign a team within the LYC to focus on diversity and inclusion specifically and initiate these outreach activities.

## STREAMLINING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Modernize the application process to be more youth-friendly. Replace traditional CV's and interviews with creative submissions, such as short videos or project ideas, allowing applicants to showcase their enthusiasm and potential contributions.

**Action example:** Promote the updated application process through schools, youth forums, and social media, highlighting its simplicity and inclusiveness.

## IMPROVING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Establish a series of skill development workshops focused on project management, public speaking, and effective communication. These sessions should be interactive and led by experienced facilitators or young multipliers.

**Action example:** Develop a semi-annual training schedule and actively encourage all LYC members to participate. Explore online platforms for wider accessibility.

**Resources to help:** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>



# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS AND POLITICAL LABELING

Launch a public relations campaign to reshape perceptions of the LYC. Incorporate testimonials from the LYC members highlighting their non-political work, success stories, and community impact.

**Action example:** Create promotional materials, including videos and flyers, for distribution across the municipality and online channels.

**Resources to help:** <https://www.euinfluencers.com/>



## ENHANCING BUDGET AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Advocate for a dedicated LYC budget line in the municipal budget. Develop a comprehensive budget proposal outlining planned activities and their anticipated community impact.

**Action example:** Present the budget proposal to the municipal council, highlighting the value LYC brings to the community and the need for adequate resources.



# NATIONAL CONTEXT

## LITHUANIA

In 2021, approximately 17% of Lithuania's population consisted of young people. However, the number of young people and residents in other age groups is declining due to increased emigration among the youth, significantly accelerating population ageing. The youth policy focuses on two main directions: safeguarding youth interests across public policy areas such as education, culture, sports, employment, housing, healthcare, and participation and facilitating youth activities that promote experiential learning and independence.

Over the years, Lithuania has increased youth participation in various initiatives. Lithuania's National Youth Policy was implemented in 2012. Youth organisations councils have been working since 1996 in some cases, and youth affairs councils have been legit since 2003

At the national level, the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations (LiJOT) is an organisational structure for youth NGOs nationwide. LiJOT works on the international, national and regional levels (municipal work takes place in cooperation with municipal youth councils through round tables). 20 municipal youth councils for youth affairs cooperate on national and local levels. LiJOT helps to develop coordination within the municipalities(9). If the municipality doesn't have a round table, they have to organize open elections for youth representatives.

Lithuania is divided into municipalities at the local level, each with its local government structure. LYCs operate within this decentralised system and have a significant presence across various municipalities. The structures and dynamics of LYCs can vary depending on the local context. While some LYCs have strong connections with local authorities, others need help establishing effective collaboration due to differing political priorities or limited resources.

Lithuania has a legal framework that supports and promotes youth participation, providing a basis for establishing and functioning LYCs. The Law on Youth Organizations, enacted in 2003, recognises LYCs as key actors in youth participation and stipulates their rights and responsibilities. This law outlines the principles of LYCs establishment, membership, and functioning, ensuring their independence and democratic decision-making processes. In 2022, the National Youth Policy adopted an action plan for 2022-2024. Key objectives of the plan include enhancing employment opportunities for young people through economic and social entrepreneurship, promoting active participation in public life and civic development, creating favourable spaces for education and employment, providing support to youth and youth organisations, monitoring the youth situation for evidence-based policy, and strengthening youth policy internationally and regionally.

### Other Relevant Information and Resources:

[Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania - Youth Affairs](#)  
[National Youth Policy of Lithuania \(2012-2020\)](#)  
[Law on Youth Organizations \(2003\)](#)

(9) [Lithuania. YouthWiki. \(2023\)](#)

# LOCAL CONTEXT

## Legal framework to establish a LYCs

Local legislation

## LYCs statutes and rules



## Represented

Youth Organizations **Young people (individuals)** Informal groups  
Public entities Private entities Other

## Young people or other representatives take part in the LYCs

Trough elections

## People involved in LYCs and age range

16-25 years old



up to 18 people

## Mandates

—○—○→  
2 - 4 years

## Main topics addressed in the LYCs



Volunteering,  
Civic Participation,  
Youth work implementation

## Main goals and objectives of the LYCs

To collaborate in the definition and implementation of local youth policies according to national and European policies  
To seek an integrated vision and action in the Municipality's youth policy  
To inform the City Council regarding the problems of young people in the municipality who require support or initiatives in the sphere of municipal competencies  
To formulate proposals within the scope of the activities it pursues and submit them to the President or Councilor(s) responsible for the respective areas of interest for youth policies  
To promote debate and dialogue about the needs and aspirations of youth  
To promote young people's active citizenship and participation

## Who takes the lead and organizes the meeting and joint moments of the LYCs



The chairperson of the LYC or the youth coordinator

## Facilities and equipment



## Budget



LYC is supported through providing money for travels, awards, etc

## Support from the municipality

Rooms for activities

Guests for LYC meetings to discuss relevant questions

## Specific activity plan



Proposed by Young people

Available and planned in advance

## Actions that are taken in your LYCs

- ✓ Develops studies/research on relevant topics that support youth work in the municipality

## Governance

- There is a clear definition of roles for each LYC member
- LYC members are responsible for setting or reviewing the agenda for the LYC meetings
- The conclusions and recommendations of the LYC meetings are public and easily accessible to the population in general and to young people in particular
- There are internal procedures to be followed by LYC members during meetings/assemblies/gatherings
- There could be working groups or committees within the working of the LYC. LYC doesn't have them all the time
- LYC members have access to training or moments to understand the function of the LYC

## Main challenges



New LYC members may lack experience in youth policy, affecting confidence in council discussions. Typically, youth issues are raised by the local youth organisations council rather than directly by youth.

## Have these challenges changed over time?

Yes | No

LYC is recognised by the city administration

## Communication channels



Facebook, Instagram

The section on the Klaipėda municipality website

LYC members are responsible for managing these channels

## Main opportunities in terms of LYCs future developments

The impact of the LYC depends on the people who are elected or delegated. If the people have knowledge and skills of advocacy or youth policy, it is a great help to implement youth policy at the local level, but if they don't have experience when the politicians don't see the need to participate, it can be just a check

## What are the main reasons why your municipality supports this body

LYC is mandatory to have in every municipality but also it is a good support instrument for local government

# STRENGTHS

## LYCs for fair youth participation

The LYC in Klaipėda underwent a composition transformation, previously including representatives from diverse youth NGOs, such as the deaf youth organization and young lawyers' representatives. In the current term, newly elected members primarily come from the Red Cross and the school students association. This shift brings a fresh perspective, focusing on community service, humanitarianism, and student-centric issues. By diversifying its membership, the LYC aims to holistically address the needs of Klaipėda's youth, spanning social welfare, education, and personal development

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

Klaipėda LYC has the annual youth awards, where some LYC members who have voting rights can collectively choose the central theme for the event, ranging from ideas like a circus-inspired theme to a skate park motif. However, the youth affairs coordinator manages the practical execution and logistical aspects. This collaborative approach ensures that the LYC contribute creative input while the coordinator organises and implements the event's procedures efficiently.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

LYC is participating in the annual Youth Forum event, where youngsters from schools talk about problems in the city and suggest how to solve these problems.

LYC has active social media accounts (Instagram and Facebook). A youth representative manages accounts.

In 2022, LYC members approved the position of the youth association regarding the youth summer employment program. It was also approved by the city council in previous years.



# WEAKNESSES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Young people do not submit proposals to the LYC, and there is little competition in the selection of its members, both from the youth and the municipal council members.

During the last term, in the run-up to the municipal council elections, political pressure was used on the chairman of the LYC, who is a representative of the youth and was not allowed to express his position in the media.

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The implementation time for LYC member proposals is prolonged, often taking up to a year. Also, these proposals are recommendatory, yet they require official responses from the relevant departments within the municipal administration. Meetings may also involve inviting representatives from institutions associated with the issues under consideration.

LYC experiences a low rate of proposal implementation through council-adopted decisions, typically ranging from 1 to 2 decisions per year. The long bureaucratic procedures and extensive time needed to implement decisions contribute to a sense of disappointment among youth.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

There is an existing expectation for municipality or city council members to complete proposals with budget and implementation plans. Regrettably, not all youth representatives possess the required qualifications to deliver such comprehensive proposals.

Additionally, there is a notable discrepancy in policy literacy, with some municipality and city council representatives displaying low youth policy literacy and youth representatives



having limited general policy literacy. Furthermore, the practice within the LYC involves members primarily considering received positions or suggestions rather than actively creating their own. The responsibility for generating these documents lies with the Youth Organisations Council, which subsequently delegates youth representatives to the LYC.

# OPPORTUNITIES

## **LYCs for fair youth participation**

The LYC can discuss and make suggestions on important themes such as LGBTQ+, mental health, inclusion of disabled people, etc.

It could also have external meetings with other institutions or Youth organisations to address more youth problems such as drug addiction or NEETS.



## **LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation**

To increase the impact and involvement of young people, it could include more new topics that address their needs. Moreover, annual surveys can be launched among young people. Lastly, LYC could have mentors for young representatives to improve their knowledge of policies.

## **LYCs for sustainable youth participation**

Klaipėda city has a digital tool called “Solve the problem in the city”.

One of the opportunities is the creation of a new theme where youngsters can suggest solutions or point out the problems and direct them to the LYC.

The new social media communication strategy can be applied to improve young people's awareness of the LYC.



# THREATS

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Youth organisations and the council often need help with young people's participation, as some adults, particularly teachers, express scepticism about the value of engaging them. This mistrust can create challenges for youths looking to be actively engaged. The lack of trust from the side of adults makes young people concerned about the value of their efforts and their impact.



## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The functioning of the LYC faces challenges due to members' limited resources for attending meetings. This leads to obstacles to coherent decision-making. Additionally, the council's influence over political priorities is limited, with their input often disregarded or not sought in matters of shifting agendas. The slow execution of proposed ideas or decisions further decreases the motivation of youth representatives, decreasing their enthusiasm due to a sense of stagnation in the implementation flow.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

Public perception of the LYC can be distorted because of its purely advisory role, potentially fostering a negative reputation in addressing urgent issues. Meanwhile, the youth's packed schedules discourage their involvement, as they are already engaged in different activities. Additionally, recent studies highlight a trend where youngsters prefer to avoid affiliating with youth organisations or take roles in long-term commitments.

# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## **STRENGTHEN POLICY LITERACY AND PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS**

Enhance the capacity of the LYC members in policy literacy and proposal development through a series of interactive workshops. These sessions, facilitated by experts in policy-making, budget planning, and proposal writing, should incorporate practical exercises, real-world case studies, and feedback sessions.

**Action example:** Collaborate with local universities, think tanks, or experienced NGOs to design and deliver these workshops. Encourage the LYC members to participate actively and apply their acquired skills in crafting proposals.

**Resources to help:** [Toolkit for upgrading local youth councils](#)



## **REDUCE BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS IN IMPLEMENTING PROPOSALS**

Establish a protocol or agreement with municipal departments to decrease bureaucratic delays. This should expedite the review and implementation of the LYC's proposals, incorporate a standard timeline for feedback, and designate a dedicated person within the municipality to oversee the proposals.

**Action example:** Propose the adoption of this protocol at a municipal council meeting, working towards its formal acceptance. Regularly review and adjust the process based on constructive feedback.

## **IMPROVE ADULT AND MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVE ENGAGEMENT**

Foster collaboration and knowledge exchange between the LYC members and municipality representatives through regular forums or workshops. These sessions should concentrate on sharing insights about local governance, youth policy, and community development.

**Action example:** Schedule bi-annual forums, ensuring diverse representation from various municipal departments to encourage a comprehensive understanding and engagement.

# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## **ADDRESS POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND ENSURE INDEPENDENCE**

Draft guidelines or a charter to define the LYC's independent role, particularly during politically sensitive periods like elections. This charter should emphasize nonpartisanship and a focus on community needs.

**Action example:** Collaborate with legal advisors and municipal council members to craft the charter. Once developed, publicly present it to ensure transparency and commitment from all parties.



# NATIONAL CONTEXT

## NORWAY

Youth constitutes approximately 20% of the population, accounting for around 5,500,000 people. The government shapes its youth policy through draft resolutions and bills, providing the foundation for parliamentary deliberations on proposed resolutions, new laws or amendments, the budget, and other decision-making processes. Counties and municipalities, being the primary executors of state policy, hold a pivotal role in implementing youth-oriented initiatives. However, in instances where the central government has designated regional bodies for critical services and institutions, including hospitals, universities, police, prisons, and courts, these entities assume the responsibility for implementation.

To enhance youth participation in democratic processes at the national level, ministries have established specialised youth panels to provide advice and input on various policy matters. In 2022, two panels have been formed:

- The Ministry of Local Development and Modernization has established a panel dedicated to regional policy development. This panel focuses on shaping policies that address regional needs and challenges with the active involvement of young people.
- The Ministry of Children and Families has created a panel concentrating on developing measures to support children and youth from low-income families. This panel aims to identify and address the unique concerns and requirements of young individuals growing up in financially disadvantaged circumstances (10).

LYCs have been integral to the Norwegian political landscape since the 1970s. Currently, the government recognises LYCs' legal status. The inclusion of LYCs in the legal system strengthens people's commitment and guarantees the existence of structures that can not be ignored. The LYCs' purpose is to provide a platform for young people to engage in decision-making processes and to voice their opinions on issues that affect them.

The legal framework in Norway further solidifies the role of LYCs and youth participation in decision-making. The Children and Youth Act (1981) recognises the rights of young people to express their views and be included in matters concerning them. This legislation provides a legal basis for establishing LYCs and outlines their functions and responsibilities.

Implementing the new Local Government Act in 2019 made it mandatory to have formal consultative bodies/youth councils for youth at municipal and county levels. Youth council members are elected to represent youth in their municipality or county. The councils have a term of office of up to two years. Members shall not have reached the age of 19 at the election time (11).

### Other Relevant Information and Resources:

[The Norwegian Youth Council](#)

[Law of municipalities](#)

[Section 5 Government.no Children and young people's participation and influence](#)

(10) and (11) Country sheet on youth policy in Norway. (2023). Retrieved from [https://pjeu.coe.int/documents/42128013/63134234/Norway\\_CountrySheet\\_May-2020.pdf/442b8174-d389-91ae-7bc8-ed63bf5b28e4](https://pjeu.coe.int/documents/42128013/63134234/Norway_CountrySheet_May-2020.pdf/442b8174-d389-91ae-7bc8-ed63bf5b28e4)

# LOCAL CONTEXT

## Legal framework to establish a LYCs

National legislation

## LYCs statutes and rules



## Represented

Youth Organizations    Young people (individuals)    Informal groups  
Public entities    Private entities    Schools/students

## Young people or other representatives take part in the LYCs

Trough elections

## People involved in LYCs and age range

13-19 years old



up to 35 people

## Mandates



1-2 years

## Main topics addressed in the LYCs



Mobility  
(intra-municipal, regional, national and international)  
Education and school dropout,  
Rural development  
Health  
Participation and Policy

## Main goals and objectives of the LYCs

To seek an integrated vision and action in the Municipality's youth policy  
To issue opinions and recommendations on all youth issues;  
To formulate proposals within the scope of the activities it pursues and submit them to the President or Councilor(s) responsible for the respective areas of interest for youth policies  
To promote youth initiatives at the local level  
To foster young people's understanding of local democracy

## Who takes the lead and organizes the meeting and joint moments of the LYCs



The LYC members themselves, helped by the coordinator

## Facilities and equipment



## Budget



The LYC doesn't have its own budget  
It's part of the municipality's budget  
They have access to it through the department of the coordinator

## Support from the municipality

Rooms for activities  
Budget for meetings  
Food and drinks for meetings  
Coordinator and advisor

## Specific activity plan



Partially proposed by the LYC and the municipality  
Available and planned in advance

## Governance

- There is a clear definition of roles for each LYC member
- LYC members are responsible for setting or reviewing the agenda for LYC meetings
- There are specific mechanisms and instruments to organize meetings
- There are facilitators with skills in moderating dialogue during sessions and meetings
- There are internal procedures to be followed by LYC members during meetings/assemblies/gatherings
- LYC members have an active role in creating the strategies and procedures governing the LYC
- The format of meetings encourages and fosters the participation of young people
- There are working groups or committees within the working of the LYC
- The members of the LYC have access to training or moments to understand the function of the LYC

## Actions that are taken in your LYCs

- ✓ Organizes activities focusing on the members of the LYC
- ✓ Conducts consultation processes with young people in the community in order to identify their needs
- ✓ Forms and working on proposals that matter to young people

## Main challenges



Getting the recognition and feedback from municipality officers

## Have these challenges changed over time?

The recognition is increasing from the side of decision makers

## Communication channels



Webpage, Instagram, Messenger  
Managed by coordinator and the members of the LYC

## Main opportunities in terms of LYCs future developments

Better cohesiveness with student councils in the schools

## What are the main reasons why your municipality supports this body

Law and a growing realisation that youth matters and can contribute

# STRENGTHS

### **LYCs for fair youth participation**

The LYC has become more inclusive, providing youth with increased attention and opportunities to participate in decision-making. The LYCs' geographical representation, in collaboration with student councils in all schools, guarantees that relevant matters are taken to schools and student councils, ensuring that young people's voices are heard.

By engaging with politicians and working within the municipality, the LYC uses local perspectives and opinions from various neighbourhoods to help young people achieve what they need for a good life. Therefore, the LYC plays an important role in gathering young people's opinions and addressing their needs.

Overall, diverse young voices are included in decision-making. This leads to services more aligned with the needs of as many young people as possible. Adults' open attitude has increased, and they are more interested in seeking input from young people. The LYC fosters community among members and involves different demographic groups. Therefore, youth from different backgrounds feel included and have space to exchange ideas.

### **LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation**

The LYC has actively contributed to hearings and plans, participating in various platforms such as radio, conferences, and letters to newspapers to ensure its opinions are heard. Collaborating with student councils and visiting schools has connected the LYC to students across Kristiansand municipality, enabling representation of their needs.

The LYC efforts in developing a plan for sex education in schools have been influential, leading to improvements in the curriculum. Additionally, the LYC successfully opposed a

proposal to give prizes to students with the best grades, showcasing its impact on decision-making processes.

The LYC operates with productive leaders and a sustainable administration, providing young people with firsthand experience in decision-making while remaining independent of party politics.

### **LYCs for sustainable youth participation**

The LYC benefits from a range of resources to support its work, leveraging internet coverage through social media and web pages. These platforms provide guides and ideas from government and organizations dedicated to the LYC.

The involvement of various stakeholders contributes to the development of the LYC. Youth workers, including the LYC coordinator, officers, politicians in the municipality, and the mayor, actively participate in shaping the council. The LYC fosters a network that includes politician committees, student councils, and other LYCs.

A legal framework, in the form of existing laws regulating the LYC work, provides a foundation for its activities. Financial support is secured through Erasmus+ projects, ensuring the sustainability of the initiatives.

The LYC offers the municipality new perspectives by engaging young voices early in projects, saving time and resources. This proactive approach helps avoid complaints after project initiation and contributes to cost savings by reducing the need for additional research.

Effective communication among LYC members is well-established, ensuring everyone feels represented within the council.

# WEAKNESSES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

The LYC encounter challenges, including the ongoing struggle to gain full recognition from some adults who may not take young members seriously. Decision-makers frequently misunderstand the necessity for collaboration between adults and young people. Occasionally, the selection of the LYC members is based more on popularity within a school than on their actual skills.

Another issue arises when municipal officers overlook involving the LYC early in decision-making processes, creating a sense that members are limited to providing input only after decisions have been made. This delay affects the LYC members' ability to impact policymaking.

Furthermore, staff members and municipality workers lack awareness about how to effectively support the LYC members in getting their messages across to the right audience.

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The absence of an evaluation mechanism for the LYC impact, despite the existing legal framework, poses a significant challenge. Additionally, the delayed delivery of some cases to the LYC can result in a lack of motivation among politicians to consider youth opinions, especially when it implies potential changes to already established plans.

Navigating through extensive documents to understand the cases, coupled with the time-consuming nature of the processes, affects the knowledge and motivation of the LYC members.

Moreover, some young people may have become accustomed to being consulted only on trivial or inconsequential matters, leading

to a loss of belief in the potential impact of their opinions. The lack of clarity regarding the specific timing in the case process for the LYC involvement, along with uncertainty about who holds the responsibility for evaluating this involvement, further complicates the effectiveness of the LYC in influencing decisions.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

The financial management process within the council lacks a settled structure, and the funds allocated need to be increased.

Furthermore, there is a need for enhanced information dissemination about the LYC. Many individuals, especially those not part of school councils or politically active, are unaware of how to get involved.

Young people's busy schedules, often filled with numerous academic activities, pose a challenge to active participation in the LYC.

While the LYC serves as an advisory board, its lack of obligations from the municipality may impact its influence.

Moreover, the efficiency of the LYC work meets obstacles such as a lack of knowledge about how the municipality functions, the case processes, and local-level democracy.



# OPPORTUNITIES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Improving the promotion and presentation of the LYC is crucial for increasing inclusion and encouraging more individuals to get involved. Additionally, introducing open seats on the LYC that any young person can apply for is a promising idea. This approach broadens the pool of potential members, allowing for the inclusion of engaged individuals who may have yet to be elected by their school. These initiatives contribute to a better understanding of the perspectives and priorities of young people and foster collaboration between various stakeholders. Strengthening cooperation with other councils, groups, and engaged individuals further expands the network and promotes a more inclusive environment for youth participation.



## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

To enhance the impact of youth participation, updating legal regulations to include the right for the LYC to make proposals in the city council and its committees for the entire country of Norway would be a significant step. Increasing the frequency of the LYC meetings could enhance communication and collaboration among its members.

Providing the LYC with tools for evaluating the effectiveness of youth involvement is essential for continuous improvement. Additionally, updating the legal framework to include an obligation for municipal officers to consult the LYC before finalizing a case would strengthen the council's role in decision-making processes.

essential for continuous improvement. Additionally, updating the legal framework to include an obligation for municipal officers to consult the LYC before finalizing a case would strengthen the council's role in decision-making processes.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

Collaboration with other LYCs at the regional level and efforts towards establishing a national youth council can indeed provide valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices.

Panel debates and conferences facilitate open discussions, making communication more sustainable and creating tailored information materials for student councils.



# THREATS

## LYCs for fair youth participation

The challenge of adults having a majority and greater representation in decision-making often results in the LYC being less heard and prioritised. The pressure for the opinion of LYC members to be politically correct can limit its effectiveness, with decision-makers occasionally blocking or not accepting opinions that differ from the mainstream. The term "politics" itself may be intimidating or hinder effective communication. Additionally, the high engagement level of some LYC members might inadvertently exclude others, impacting the inclusivity of voicing opinions.



## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The absence of the right for the LYC to meet in the Committee for Planning and Building, along with the limitation on making proposals for the City Council, poses challenges to its effective engagement. The regulations governing the LYC are determined by the City Council, and potential changes could impact its future effectiveness. The influence of absent parents with no interest in politics and the potential impact of socio-economic backgrounds on youngsters' choices to get involved are additional factors that may affect the LYC's dynamics.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

The imbalance of power between decision-makers' opinions and the LYC, coupled with potential prejudices from adults who may think they know better about young people, hinders effective collaboration. The lengthy intervals between committee meetings create challenges, as individuals may forget the details of cases. Additionally, difficulties in clearly communicating the aims of the LYC to external individuals hold back the broader involvement.

# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## IMPROVING INFORMATION FLOW AND ENGAGEMENT

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Develop informative and engaging materials that clearly outline the LYC's role, achievements, and pathways for involvement. Disseminate these materials through schools, community centres, and local events. Additionally, informational sessions at schools and community gatherings should be organised to enhance engagement and awareness among young people further.

**Action example:** Create a comprehensive information dissemination strategy, including the production of accessible, youth-friendly materials explaining LYC's role and impact. Distribute these materials through school networks and community events and conduct informative sessions to educate and engage the community.

## TACKLING LIMITED DECISION-MAKING POWER

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Launch a structured advocacy campaign to influence policy changes that amplify the significance of the LYC's recommendations in municipal decisions. This may involve garnering support from local youth, engaging with the media, and lobbying with sympathetic local politicians and decision-makers.

**Action example:** Advocate for policy changes that give greater weight to the LYC advisory opinions in decision-making processes. Organize a campaign to lobby for these policy changes, involving local youth, the LYC members, and supportive politicians.

**Resources to help:** [Youth Advocacy Toolkit](#)



## OVERCOMING RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

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Identify potential local business partners or NGOs that align with the LYC's goals and negotiate partnerships or sponsorships. Prepare a detailed proposal outlining LYC's resource needs, intended projects, and the mutual benefits of such partnerships.

# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## ENHANCING NETWORKING BETWEEN LYCS OF DIFFERENT MUNICIPALITIES

Establish a regional or national network of LYCs to facilitate the exchange of best practices, collaborative projects, and mutual learning. This could involve organising annual or biannual conferences, creating an online platform for LYCs to interact, and setting up regular virtual meetings or workshops. Such a network would enable LYCs to learn from each other's experiences, advocate collectively on issues of common interest, and foster a stronger sense of community among young civic leaders.

**Action example:** Initiate discussions among LYCs' coordinators from different municipalities to gauge interest and establish a working group to plan the first networking event or platform development. This initiative should create a sustainable, ongoing framework for collaboration and knowledge exchange.



**Resources to help:** [LYCs mapping good practices publication](#)



# NATIONAL CONTEXT

## PORTUGAL

In 2021, Portugal's total population reached 10,344,802, of which 23.5% are under 25 years old. In terms of residence, a significant number of individuals between 15 and 24 years old reside in small urban centres with less than 2000 inhabitants.

Portugal boasts a multitude of youth participation structures, including youth representation bodies at both local and national levels. These bodies, formed by young people, play a crucial role in representing the interests of the youth. Key entities include the National Youth Council, National Federation for Youth Associations, Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth, Youth Parliament, Advisory Council on Youth, LYCs, Student unions, and Student associations.

In Portugal, young people have various spaces for direct participation in decision-making processes. They can engage through youth representative organizations or in a consultative capacity. Although the contributions of young people are frequently considered and incorporated into decisions, it's important to note that these contributions are not binding.

2006: Introduction of the youth association law, later revised in 2019.

2009: Establishment of a legal framework for local youth councils.

2018: Launch of the 1st National Youth Strategic Plan.

An additional instrumental avenue for youth participation is the Portuguese Youth Participatory Budget (Orçamento Participativo Jovem Portugal). This process involves citizens aged 14 to 30 proposing and deciding on public investment projects through a democratic participation framework.

In the past two decades, especially in the previous decade, there has been a notable increase in the political participation of young people in Portugal. This growth is evident across various forms of political engagement, except for voting, which has experienced a decline. The change is particularly reflected in activities such as signing petitions and establishing direct contacts with political actors.

### Other relevant resources and information

[National Federation of Youth Associations \(FNAJ\)](#)

[National Youth Council \(CNJ\)](#)

[Portuguese Institute for Youth and Sports](#)

[Youth Parliament](#)

# LOCAL CONTEXT

## Legal framework to establish a LYCs

National legislation

## LYCs statutes and rules



## Represented

Youth Organizations

Individuals Informal groups

Public entities

Private entities

Other

## Young people or other representatives take part in the LYCs

Representing organizations that already have a sit

## People involved in LYCs and age range

25-35 years old



up to 25 people

## Mandates



Not limited

## Main topics addressed in the LYCs



Associativism

Culture and leisure

## Main goals and objectives of the LYCs

- To seek an integrated vision and action in the Municipality's youth policy
- To issue opinions and recommendations on all youth issues
- To inform the City Council regarding the problems of young people in the municipality who require support or initiatives in the sphere of municipal competencies
- To formulate proposals within the scope of the activities it pursues and submit them to the President or Councilor(s) responsible for the respective areas of interest for youth policies
- To promote youth initiatives at the local level

## Who takes the lead and organizes the meeting and joint moments of the LYCs



President of the Local Municipality

## Governance

- There are internal procedures to be followed by the LYC members during meetings/assemblies/gatherings
- There are working groups or committees within the working of the LYC

## Facilities and equipment



## Budget



No

If needed it is provided from municipality by request

## Support from the municipality

Rooms for activities

Budget

Logistical support for LYC's activities

## Specific activity plan



Usually, represented organizations already have their own activity plan. However, any member with a seat on the LYC can propose activities.

## Actions that are taken in your LYCs

- Organizes activities focusing on the members of the LYCs.

## Main challenges



Challenges related to youth disinterest, representation, managerial training, political commitment, and policy impact.

## Have these challenges changed over time?

Yes | No

## Communication channels



No

## Main opportunities in terms of LYCs future developments

Enhancing capacity building for managers and youth in such spaces is crucial for better understanding and impact. Guidelines for quality assessment and youth leadership roles are also needed.

## What are the main reasons why your municipality supports this body

It's mandatory by law to create and maintain LYC

# STRENGTHS

### LYCs for fair youth participation

The strength of the LYC in Portimão is rooted in its diverse composition, bringing together different organizations working with and for youth from students' associations, youth parties, and school boards. The structure includes different ages, backgrounds, and organizational structures, fostering a rich and varied representation.

Young people actively participate in the decision-making process, and their opinions are valued. The adults are responsible for the image of the LYC as inclusive and open-minded, encouraging a collaborative and inclusive environment.

Additionally, the involvement of junior youth political parties is a mandatory aspect of the LYC participation.

### LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

The Local Youth Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2030 was collaboratively developed in partnership with DYPALL Network, members of the LYC, and youngsters. Its action plan is reviewed every second year involving the different stakeholders supported by a broader consultation process.

The LYC plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between decision-makers and youth. It serves as a platform that builds a sense of responsibility in young individuals and introduces them to political participation. Additionally, the LYC helps youth workers gather opinions directly from the younger population.

### LYCs for sustainable youth participation

In accordance with regulations, the mayor is mandated to lead the LYC's meetings. Therefore, it guarantees a direct link between the municipality's decision-makers

and the youth representatives.

To effectively address various issues, parallel working groups within the LYC have been established. These working groups play a crucial role in reacting to different challenges and facilitating the division and delegation of tasks among members.

The overall structure of the LYC fosters a space for collaborative decision-making.

Furthermore, the LYC serves as a platform for promoting and organizing youth services in the municipality.



# WEAKNESSES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Youngsters' involvement is noticeably lower in comparison to the higher number of adults involved. Eligibility for participation of student association members begins from the 12th grade onwards, contributing to a demographic imbalance of participants. The potential risk of lobbying and politicized decisions arises due to this imbalance. Given that many young residents leave Portimão after their participation, there is a common challenge of not witnessing the tangible outcomes of their efforts. Confusion persists among young people regarding situations where they have the right to vote and communicate with decision-makers. The short duration of participation further complicates matters, making the overall goal of the LYC vague and unclear, even for its members.

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

Limited prior knowledge of the LYC members negatively affects their active involvement in the decision-making processes. Weak participation is observed due to the complexity of navigating through legislation, which demands considerable professional knowledge. The formal structure of meetings primarily serves to fulfil obligations rather than foster meaningful participation, contributing to a lack of engagement among members. There is a notable absence of space for collaboration and joint projects among the LYC members, and a sustainable communication process is lacking. The delay in project implementation contributes to a sense of general frustration and the perception that progress is not being made.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

Participation is hindered by the lack of technical capacity (skills and competencies) of municipality workers to implement the LYC's projects. Moreover, the LYC experiences low adherence and low levels of publicity. Due to the lack of visibility and transparency, the actual results are not shown properly, so the impact of the LYC is unclear for the people from outside. The structure of the LYC is linked with high member rotation, which affects the delegation of the projects and leads to weak operations and a low level of project implementation.



# OPPORTUNITIES

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Participation in the LYC provides additional opportunities for young individuals to engage in decision-making without the need to participate in other official political structures. Given that many young people are involved and can participate through channels such as a student newspaper and other informal means, the LYC should concentrate on effective onboarding processes. This approach ensures that those already engaged in alternative political activities can seamlessly join the LYC, expanding the network and fostering increased participation.



## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

LYC offers a valuable opportunity to enhance the capacity for training, education, and onboarding of young individuals into youth organizations. To provide more meaningful participation, the role of the LYC as an initial bridge between youngsters and the municipality should be highlighted. This can be done by organising more events with young people to showcase the LYC activity. The LYC plays a crucial role in presenting the ideas and perspectives of youngsters to decision-makers, offering the potential to intervene actively and influence areas related to youth.

## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

Creating specific groups of youngsters for representation within the LYC should be considered to establish a more cohesive structure and ensure sustainable decision-making. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards enhancing and strengthening relationships between young people and the municipality through collaborations with civil society organisations and projects that involve youth in decision-making.



# THREATS

## LYCs for fair youth participation

Due to the low level of awareness, youngsters without a background in political participation may not be aware that the LYC exists or about the opportunities to get involved. This lack of awareness can lead to limited representativeness within the LYC, resulting in unbalanced opinions that may not fully represent diverse youth groups.

## LYCs for meaningful and impactful youth participation

As participants are involved in the LYC for a short term, they may not witness the results of their efforts, which can impact their motivation. Additionally, the absence of evaluation and monitoring tools makes it challenging to evaluate the outcomes. The lack of clarity and low participation in the LYCs contribute to a general perception of politics as an area with limited engagement, leading to disappointment in political participation as a whole. The LYCs serve as an initial step in political involvement, and the absence of a clear accountability process between the LYC and the municipality adds to the challenges. For instance, during the discussion of the second part of the Municipal Youth Plan, youngsters were invited to give their feedback without receiving a report on the implementation of the first part.



## LYCs for sustainable youth participation

The lack of clear functions and goals in the LYC raises questions among the youth regarding its impact and the methods of participation. The agenda for meetings being solely defined by municipality representatives influences the range of topics discussed. The weak structure is resulting in system where youngsters are asked to give their opinions on the proposals that they are not so familiar with or don't have enough of information about them. This leads to the situation when young people abstain from voting pro or against proposals. In this situation, there is a high risk that a proposal may be mistakenly perceived as supported by the youth and passed further.



# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## CLARIFY ROLES OF YOUNGER MEMBERS OF LYC

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During the onboarding phase, explain the processes, structures, and mechanisms inside the LYC in more detail to the new representatives of student and school organisations. Produce educational materials that clearly explain the roles, objectives and how new members can be included in decision-making within the LYC to potential members.

**Action example:** Assign the LYC members to develop these materials and coordinate with local educational and community institutions for distribution and presentation.

## STREAMLINE AND FORMALIZE PARTICIPATION

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Reorganise the LYC meeting structure to be more inclusive and engaging. This might include introducing interactive elements such as roundtable discussions, brainstorming sessions, and workshops within meetings.

**Action example:** Conduct a review of current meeting formats and develop a new framework that encourages active participation.

## IMPROVE SKILLS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

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Plan a series of workshops and training sessions to build the capacity of the LYC members. These sessions should cover topics such as: effective communication, project management, advocacy strategies, and community engagement. Utilize local experts, council members, or external trainers to lead these sessions.

**Action example:** Schedule and promote a calendar of training opportunities for the LYC members and encourage consistent participation.

**Resources to help:** [Toolkit for upgrading local youth councils](#)



# LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOSTER COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS AND NETWORKING

Initiate a program to encourage collaborative projects among the LYC members, focusing on community development and civic engagement. Facilitate regular networking events where the LYC members can interact with other youth groups, council members, and community leaders to share ideas and form partnerships.

**Action example:** Identify potential community projects and organize networking events, providing the necessary support and resources for these initiatives.



# COMPARISON ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

## Legal framework to establish LYCs

### Estonia

- National legislation

### Lithuania

- National legislation

### Norway

- National legislation

### Portugal

- National legislation

## Activity Plan

### Estonia

- Proposed by young people
- Available and planned in advance

### Lithuania

- Proposed by young people
- Available and planned in advance

### Norway

- Partially proposed by the LYCs and the municipality
- Available and planned in advance

### Portugal

- No special activity plan
- Represented organizations already have their own activity plan. However, any member with a seat on the LYCs can propose activities.

## Budget

### Estonia

- Budget is provided by municipality

### Lithuania

- LYCs is supported through providing money for travels, awards, etc.

### Norway

- The LYCs doesn't have its own budget
- It's part of the municipality's budget
- They have access to it through the department of the coordinator

### Portugal

- There is no specific budget. If it's needed the budget can be provided by municipality

## Representation

### Estonia

- 16 - 35 years old, up to 18 people
- Mandate 2 - 4 years

### Lithuania

- 16 - 35 years old, up to 25 people
- Mandate 1 year

### Norway

- 16 - 35 years old, number of people is not limited
- Mandate not limited

### Portugal

- 13 - 19 years old, up to 35 people
- Mandate 1 - 2 years

## Actions

### Estonia

- Organizes workshops/trainings/events open for young people in the community
- Organizes activities focusing on the members of the LYCs
- Conducts consultation processes with young people in the community in order to identify their needs

### Lithuania

- Develops studies/research on relevant topics that support youth work in the municipality

### Norway

- Organizes activities focusing on the members of the LYCs
- Conducts consultation processes with young people in the community in order to identify their needs
- Forms and works on proposals that matter to young people

### Portugal

- Organizes activities focusing on the members of the LYCs.



# OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

## LYCS FOR FAIR YOUTH PARTICIPATION



- Encourage diverse representation in LYCs by actively recruiting members from various social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds.
- Implement transparent decision-making processes within LYCs to ensure fairness and inclusivity.
- Foster open dialogues between LYCs members and local authorities to build mutual understanding and respect.
- Regularly assess and adjust LYCs structures and processes to maintain fairness and adapt to changing youth needs.
- Create awareness campaigns to educate the broader community about LYCs and their role in promoting fair youth participation.
- Facilitate regular dialogue and joint initiatives between LYCs and local governments.
- Monitor and evaluate LYCs activities to ensure fair representation and participation.



## LYCS FOR MEANINGFUL AND IMPACTFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- Conduct training and capacity-building programs for LYCs members to enhance their skills in policy analysis, advocacy, and project management.
- Develop platforms for LYCs to present their initiatives and achievements to local authorities and the public.
- Encourage collaborative projects between LYCs and local organizations to increase the impact of youth initiatives.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of LYCs in influencing local policies and community development.
- Foster mentorship programs linking LYCs members with experienced community leaders and multipliers.
- Support LYCs in conducting research and gathering data to inform their initiatives.

## LYCS FOR SUSTAINABLE YOUTH PARTICIPATION



- Secure long-term funding and resources for LYCs to ensure their sustainability.
- Establish partnerships between LYCs and educational institutions, NGOs, and businesses for continued support and collaboration.
- Create a feedback mechanism to continually assess and improve LYCs activities based on young people's evolving interests and needs.
- Promote succession planning within LYCs to ensure continuous leadership and participation from younger generations.
- Integrate LYCs into local governance structures to ensure their long-term relevance and impact.



# CONCLUSION

LYCs in Europe have notably influenced youth engagement and local governance through various impactful initiatives. In some European countries, LYCs serve as space for young people to express their needs and contribute to municipal policies, leading to more youth-oriented community projects. Whereas in other countries, LYCs play the role of a channel between youth and local authorities in a mostly consultative role. Overall, LYCs empower youth and help to shape policies better to reflect the ideas and needs of young people. The gradual improvement of structures such as LYCs fosters democratic culture and increases capacity, including young people from an early age to decision-making.

However, LYCs face challenges such as limited engagement from a broader youth demographic, resource constraints, low impact on policy making, and mistrust from adults. For instance, in some regions, LYCs need help attracting diverse participation, often representing only a small, more active segment of the youth population. Additionally, limited financial and logistical support negatively affects their ability to implement initiatives effectively.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth and adaptation. They highlight the need for better communication strategies, providing LYCs with a wider spectrum of young voices. Enhancing funding and support structures can empower LYCs to contribute to more ambitious projects, increasing their impact. Moreover, fostering stronger collaborations between LYCs and local authorities can help bridge the policy influence gap, ensuring that youth perspectives are more effectively integrated into decision-making processes.

In conclusion, LYCs work reflects the structure for more inclusive decision-making on the local level. Their work exemplifies how the voices and energies of young people can be channelled into positive change. The involvement of youth in governance is not just beneficial; it is essential for fostering vibrant, inclusive, and forward-looking communities.

A collaborative and comprehensive approach is needed to support and enhance the impact of Local LYCs effectively. Local and national-level policymakers are encouraged to prioritize funding and policy support for LYCs, acknowledging their critical role in civic engagement. Educational institutions should integrate civic education and leadership training into their curricula, fostering an environment that motivates youth to participate actively in governance. Moreover, civil society organisations can contribute by partnering with LYCs and offering mentorship, resources, and platforms for joint initiatives. Additionally, the work of LYCs should be disseminated to increase public awareness and recognition of the value of youth participation in governance. By uniting efforts across these sectors, it is possible to create sustainable structures that support and multiply young people's voices and impact policy-making at the local level.



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# FINAL REMARKS

In conclusion, LYCs play an important role in providing space for the active participation of young people in local communities. They serve as a crucial mechanism for not only listening to but also collaborating with young individuals. Moving forward, municipality workers and civil society organisation representatives should collaborate and support LYCs as this approach leads to more impactful projects. Whilst LYCs are a space for young voices, the role of a local authority representative, youth workers, or the broader community has a great impact on how young people perceive LYCs and their role in decision-making. The collective effort should guarantee that young people's voices are heard, contributing to the creation of a brighter future for all.

Therefore, it's important to address challenges related to the involvement of LYCs in decision-making, develop more resilient and coherent structures for participation, and provide young LYCs members with tools in resources for actions on the local level.

We thank our project partners, municipalities, LYCs, and focus group participants for their invaluable contributions. Their dedication and insightful perspectives have played a pivotal role in empowering young voices and enhancing the fabric of local communities.





# LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS

Analysis of Policy and Mechanisms



**VIIMSI**  
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