

**THE GAYA**  
**PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

You have the ambition to involve young citizens in local decision-making?

You're thinking of using a participatory process to involve youth in adopting a specific decision?

Engage in a hike through the different stages of youth participation and follow the advice to reach the summit.

**YOUR**  
**HIKING**  
**ROUTE**  
**TO**  
**YOUTH**  
**PARTICIPATION**



## 1. STARTING THE HIKE

It all starts from an idea. **Motivation** and an **open mind** are the basis of a successful participatory process.

- **Be inspired and get more insights about youth participation.** Do other neighbouring municipalities practice it? Imagine and discuss ideas for your municipality or region.
- Youth mobilization works best if it starts from the everyday reality of young people. **Try to convince** local key players to engage and share the idea, ideally from all groups: politicians, administration, youth work and young people. Altogether, encourage all the interested parties to see that youth participation is important.
- Youth participation needs **time and commitment, but also financial resources:** for the working time of staff, trainers, communication, events and tools, and finally evaluation. If you lack financial means, think about cooperation strategies, e.g. with external local sponsors, potentially interested neighboring municipalities or through subsidies of other levels of government. Invest in youth participation, it will pay!

## 2. GETTING PREPARED

- **Analyze the current situation and set an appropriate framework:** define roles, tasks and responsibilities, plan accurately but leave enough space for young people and their ideas. Consider also potential risks.
- **Define a specific and reachable goal** and develop a clear decision-making procedure. Make sure that there is a link between your participation process and the final decision. Be clear about the framework - make the rules within this framework together with the young people.
- **Choose your target group:** either a specific one (young people of a certain age, immigrants, women) or all young people. Take care that everyone has the chance to make his/her voice heard and that nobody is excluded. The process should be as open as possible. Everyone involved must be treated equally.

- **A participatory process needs a lot of expertise:** Provide your administrative staff with time and training to start and accompany the process. If needed, involve independent experts or trainers. Be careful to ensure that the external experts have experiences in participatory processes and/or work with young people.

- **Participatory processes must be co-designed.** Try to involve people with experience in the youth sector too: they can be an asset with their knowledge and existing network.

## 3. DURING THE HIKE

- **Be clear from the beginning** regarding what can be influenced and what not - this avoids disappointments. Communicate the rules and results not only on the political level but also to the young people. Do not promise too much and make them aware of your constraints.
- To get in touch and mobilize young people, **meet them where they are and adjust to their schedule:** go to their places and use communication methods that suit them, e.g. social media or flyers at their youth center. Don't forget, young people participate only if the conditions are favourable to them. Many details must be kept in mind: a suitable location, timing, food, social events (e.g. a concert).
- **Promote your process:** try to work in collaboration with youth organisations, they will help you to create a **stable link** with young people. You and the young people should work together in interactive groups to create a common vision of public decisions and action.
- **Develop your own toolkit on the way.** Look at good practices which have worked well in other areas and adapt them to your needs. The "World Café" is only one method to gather more ideas and to bring different points of view together.
- **Enjoy the shared moments of participation.** Keep in mind your target group and the amount of time you have at your disposal.

## 4. REACHING THE SUMMIT

- **Implement fast.** When the decision is taken, try to implement at least parts of it quickly so as not to disappoint the youngsters. Young people need swift results.
- **Do what you say.** Try to stick to your promises as far as possible. This is crucial for your credibility and the young people's trust.
- **Communicate the results** among the population and in the media in a clear and disinterested way. Be careful **not to instrumentalise youth**, or you put their trust at risk.
- **Be open and engaged in youth events.** Try to involve politicians closely with young people to ensure that their voice will be heard.

## 5. COMING BACK

- **Look back and evaluate your process.** What turned out well, where were there problems, what can be improved next time? Ask all the participants too and gather their opinions.
  - **Learn from your experiences** in order to create a specific know-how within your administration. This will guarantee continuity.
  - **Integrate youth participation in the institutional framework** of a municipality or a region. It should not rely only on the will of one political actor.
- Continue your work.** Youth participation does not end with the ending of one specific process. It takes time to make youth participation an integral and permanent part of the ordinary decision-making process.

"Be aware that you are one of the key actors"

## GaYA

Governance and Youth in the Alps

In the project GaYA, eight partners from five different Alpine countries have worked together for two years to increase the quality of democratic processes in the Alpine space. They collected new democratic methods, tested them in 15 pilot sites and made them available in order to overcome the challenges of territorial cohesion and participatory involvement of young people in political decision-making. The implementation of youth participation in today's governance forms has great potential and is an urgent need for increasing sustainable and fair decision making.

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**GaYA practical recommendations**

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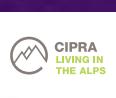
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