

CONSULTATIVE BODY PROTOTYPE

A participatory governance model for inclusive youth engagement in local decision-making, with a focus on migration, mobility, and diversity.



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OUT4INGOV CONSULTATIVE BODY PROTOTYPE

1. OBJECTIVES

The **OUT4INGOV project** adopts a structured and collaborative approach to address the phenomenon of youth brain drain. Central to this approach is the recognition of young people's voices, challenges, and aspirations, with the overarching objective of fostering cohesive and inclusive societies through strengthened collective engagement. Within this framework, the project aims to establish a **prototype of a Youth Council**, designed to provide consultation and advice in support of decision-making and governance processes. This prototype will subsequently be piloted by project partners, with the intention of creating and sustaining youth councils capable of advising local authorities on matters related to youth migration, as well as on broader issues of importance to young people and their future—such as healthcare, access to services, housing, sustainable tourism, and mobility. Special emphasis will also be placed on the active contribution of young migrants to these discussions.

Insights derived from the project's Deliverable D1.1.1 "Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas: strategic orientation towards youth migration governance models"¹ underscore the importance of concentrating on the issues that are most relevant to young people today. Climate change, mental health, social justice, and digital activism are among the priorities shaping the concerns of the younger generation, and must therefore remain central to participatory agendas. Aligning youth engagement processes with these evolving trends is essential both to ensure their continued relevance and to encourage sustained involvement.

The activity's core focus is **youth participation**, with particular attention to the specific challenges faced in marginal areas such as rural and mountain regions. To guarantee meaningful participation, the project will integrate the dimensions of consultation, networking, and information-sharing, while ensuring clarity of objectives so as to foster and maintain youth involvement.

As a reference for the functioning of the **Consultative Body (CB) prototype**, ALDA will draw upon:

- The results of the analysis of best practices developed by Fondazione De Marchi within the OUT4INGOV project;
- Its own extensive experience in participatory democracy practices;
- The *Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process* of the Council of Europe.

Furthermore, the project's Deliverable D1.1.1 "Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas: strategic orientation towards youth migration governance models" highlights that youth participation strategies must remain **context-sensitive**, adapted to the specific cultural, political, and social realities of each territory. Projects that prioritise **co-creation with local communities** have demonstrated greater effectiveness, both in achieving higher levels of engagement and in producing outcomes that are more relevant and impactful. While inspiration may be drawn from international good practices, the approaches employed must be tailored to local needs and conditions to ensure

¹ Rapetti, E. Berlanda, S. Nardello, M. Veronesi, L. (Eds.) (2025). *Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas: strategic orientation towards youth migration governance models*, analysis from the OUT4INGOV project. New generation alpine OUT - migration Engagement FOR an INclusive GOVernance, (Fondazione Franco Demarchi), Trento.

both effectiveness and sustainability. Continuous monitoring and the capacity to adjust accordingly are therefore imperative for addressing the evolving requirements of marginal territories.

In conclusion, the project seeks to:

- Place young people at the centre of decision-making;
- Equip them with the necessary tools and support;
- Ensure participatory structures are inclusive, flexible, and sustainable;
- Foster a culture of active listening among adults and institutions, thereby ensuring that youth voices and perspectives are genuinely valued.

2. PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

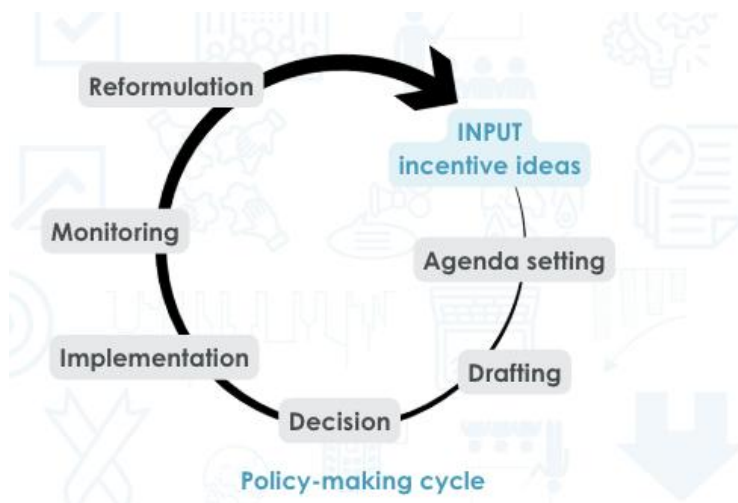
Relation with the administration As elaborated during the Co-creation process of the project, the Consultative Body will be aiming at the “Dialogue” level, entailing a structured form of collaboration with the local authorities, including co-decision, but with clearly separated responsibilities.



Dialogue can be **broad** or **collaborative**:

- ▲ **Broad dialogue** is a two-way communication built on mutual interests and potentially shared objectives, to ensure a regular exchange of views. It ranges from open public hearings to specialised meetings between CSOs and public authorities. The discussion remains wide ranging and is not explicitly linked to a current policy development process.
- ▲ **Collaborative dialogue** is built on mutual interests for a specific policy development, which usually leads to a joint recommendation, strategy or legislation. Collaborative dialogue is more empowered than a broad dialogue as it consists of joint, often frequent and regular, meetings to develop core policy strategies, usually leading to agreed outcomes.

Both approaches, in terms of broad dialogue (wide-ranging, non-policy specific exchange) and collaborative dialogue, (policy-specific leading to joint recommendations) will be adopted within the relation of the Consultative Body and the local authority, according to the specific themes and topics.



While all stages of the policy-making cycle are very significant in terms of potential citizen participation initiatives, the Consultative Body will mostly focus on the following:

- ▲ **Decision** - The forms of political decision-making vary based on national context and legislation (directive by a ministry; parliamentary vote; or public referendum). At this step consultation is central to an informed decision. However, the final power of choice lies with the public authorities, unless the decision is taken by a public vote, referendum, etc.
- ▲ **Ideation** - Civil participation should start in the first stage of any decision-making process, when ideas and incentives for future legislation, developments etc. are gathered. The incentive for such new movements may also come from the civil society which expresses its needs and wishes to the government / administration.
- ▲ **Implementation** - This is the step at which many NGOs are most active, for example in service delivery and project execution. This phase is especially important to ensure that the intended outcome will be fulfilled. Access to clear and transparent information on expectations and opportunities is fundamental at this step, as well as active partnerships.

For example, in pilot areas without participatory democracy experience or previous youth council, the Consultative Body can be involved in the ideation and/or decision of the local youth action plan. Namely in Vesoul (France), municipal elections will take place in March 2026: the Consultative Body could be then involved in drafting the new action plan, and even implement part of it.

However, it is very important to avoid over-planning the work of the Consultative Body before it is created: it will need to decide on its own its concrete action plan, and the Municipality cannot count on it as a tool, but rather as a **partner**.

First steps

🔧 Establish the decision-making procedure in order to give real power to the Consultative Body in influencing the Municipal/Regional policies

3. STRUCTURE (GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING)

(municipal or regional scale)

For the formalisation of the Consultative Body the two main available frameworks are the following:

- ▲ **Municipal youth council:** in this case, the Consultative Body becomes a structural part of the Municipality, ideally with a planned budget directly provided by the Municipality.
- ▲ **Agreement with a local NGO:** the Municipality can sign a collaboration agreement with a specific local NGO that is in charge of the management of the Consultative Body, agreeing on the terms and functioning of the partnership. Such NGOs could be youth NGOs, student NGOs, diaspora organisations, etc. Indeed, as reported in the project's analysis within D1.1.1 "Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas: strategic orientation towards youth migration governance models": *"Successful partnership between diverse actors: local governments, public administrations, NGOs, civil society, educational institutions, and youth representative groups... enhance coordination, implementation quality, and long-term support for youth initiatives."*

Regarding the level of influence that the Consultative Body should have on municipal and regional administrations, ideally, the Consultative Body should have decision-making power able to **reject policies** that are considered against the values of the Body and against the interest of youth.

Roles of the participants and representation

For the constitution of the Consultative Body **10 to 20 participants** are expected **for the initial stage**, aged between 18 and 35 years old. The actors involved should put into place safeguarding measures to guarantee fair representation within the Consultative Body.

In particular, the participation of the following groups should be ensured:

- ▲ **Young emigrants** who were born in the municipality and have moved abroad: this category would be particularly relevant at the initial stage to better understand the current situation and context, but it won't be possible to involve them in the long term since they are no longer residents of the municipality.
- ▲ **Returnees:** young people who were born in the municipality, had an experience abroad and returned.
- ▲ **Local youth/potential emigrants:** young people who were born in the municipality but might be thinking of leaving to live or study somewhere else.
- ▲ **Newcomers:** young people who were born in the municipality with a migratory background.
- ▲ **Young temporary residents** who were born elsewhere and are living in the municipality for a short period of time (included for temporary stays, such as Erasmus+ exchanges).

Ideally, **2 people per category should be included in the initial stage**, to avoid having one participant representing a whole category.

To avoid putting pressure on young individuals to take on leadership roles solely because of their migrant background, it is important to offer **support, mentoring**, or “**job**” **shadowing opportunities**, allowing leadership to develop in a less intimidating and voluntary way. Communication should be inclusive and encouraging, emphasizing that **participation can take many forms** and not all leadership involves political positions.

Creating **networks** of multiple voices ensures that no single individual feels responsible for representing an entire community alone, while **self-identification** allows participants to introduce themselves and explain why engagement is meaningful to them. While some degree of expectation regarding responsibilities and accountabilities may be unavoidable, the potential pressure can be alleviated through discussions, guidance, and support from older peers, spreading leadership responsibilities across the group and fostering an inclusive methodology for participation.

Regarding the role division within the Consultative Body, some key positions that should be ensured are:

- ▲ A **Coordinator/President** (representing the group to the outside). This role can be shared between two people as well (in this case, co-Presidents).
- ▲ A **Facilitator** (managing the group meetings from the inside, ensuring fair space and speaking time to every participant).
- ▲ A **Secretary** (taking notes, organising the material aspects and navigating funding opportunities).

In the long run, the Consultative Body could be organised in **thematic working groups**.

The role of the Consultative Body will be to work with the Municipality and/or Region primarily on topics concerning youth and migration, but also other topics that are affecting the life of young people in the area. They will be involved in the ideation, decision and implementation of policies and activities.

The structure and participatory programming of the Consultative Body will be defined by its members, with the aforementioned possibility of creating thematic sub-groups. Within the first six months of its establishment, the Consultative Body will be invited to develop an **action plan** covering a minimum period of two years.

First steps

👥 **8/10 members** = 2 local young people/potential emigrants + 2 returnees + 2 newcomers + 2 young temporary residents
 + Consultation with at least 2 young emigrants

👥 **1 facilitator** → from the Municipality/Region or an NGO

4. INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

To ensure that youth with **intersecting identities** (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability) are not excluded or further marginalized during public consultations and decision-making, the Consultative Body shall adopt a comprehensive **inclusion strategy**. Members will be accompanied by the Consultative Body facilitator during public events, ensuring they are never required to represent the Body alone, thus distributing responsibility and reducing pressure.

The Consultative Body shall develop and adopt a **Code of Conduct**, which will include:

- ▲ The formalisation of an **Anti-instrumentalisation Policy**, clearly articulating that the Consultative Body is a partner, not a tool, in political processes. This policy shall outline procedures to address interference, including exclusion of members who attempt to instrumentalise the Body.
- ▲ The principle that while members may individually be affiliated with political parties, Consultative Body activities must remain **independent** of party politics, ensuring representation of a variety of political perspectives.
- ▲ The use of **inclusive language** in all discussions, with explicit acknowledgment of intersectionality, so that diverse experiences are valued and respected.
- ▲ A **safeguard framework** to maintain a safe environment, where rules are openly stated and firmly upheld, balancing accountability with trust.

As highlighted in project's Deliverable D1.1.1 "*Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas: strategic orientation towards youth migration governance models*" analysis, the Consultative Body recognises the risk that youth participation initiatives often attract already advantaged groups, while NEETs, young people from rural areas, migrants, or those from marginalized communities remain excluded. It is therefore essential to integrate outreach and flexible participation methods adapted to diverse contexts, including **evolving digital cultures**.

In terms of representation, the Consultative Body will ensure diversity across **age, ethnic background, gender, and disability**. At least 70% of members shall be between 18 and 30 years old; gender balance will be actively pursued, including corrective measures if necessary. Persons with disabilities will be encouraged to join and provided with accessible participation (venues, modalities, language support, etc.). Young people with migratory experience, including second-generation youth, will be especially welcomed to reflect the diversity of the local context.

Key potential risks and mitigation strategies

Participation in public consultations can be highly valuable for young people, but it may also expose them to certain **risks**. To ensure a safe, productive, and empowering environment, it is important to anticipate these risks and adopt appropriate mitigation strategies. These might be among the following:

- ▲ **Risk of not feeling heard or respected**
 - *Mitigation strategy*: skilled facilitation is essential to ensure that all voices are acknowledged. Facilitators should avoid giving disproportionate attention to any single participant, fostering equitable participation.
- ▲ **Risk of political instrumentalisation**
 - There is a risk that municipal or regional authorities may attempt to use the Consultative Body as a tool rather than a partner.
 - *Mitigation strategy*: Clearly define in initial agreements that the Consultative Body functions as a partner and is not bound to adopt the same opinion as the existing political bodies. Raise awareness among municipal council members about the importance of sharing power, actively listening to youth, and fostering genuinely inclusive and youth-friendly environments, emphasising the value of participatory democracy itself.
- ▲ **Risk of reliving traumatic experiences in connection to politics**


→ *Mitigation strategy*: guarantee a safe space for young people, in particular those with migratory experience. If there are no internal resources to provide psychosocial support when needed, redirect them to possible accessible services in this sense.


▲ **Risk of burnout of extremely engaged young people**

In many cases, youth representative bodies are animated by very engaged individuals who end up covering many activities and covering too many responsibilities, putting them at risk of overburdening and eventually burnout.

→ *Mitigation strategy*: facilitation and internal organisation should also be careful in balancing the tasks and avoiding few specific participants taking all the weight of the Consultative Body.

First steps

 Draft and adoption of the **Code of Conduct**

 Ensuring **balance and representation** within the Consultative Body through a careful **distribution of roles**

5. PROCESSES AND TOOLS

The Consultative Body should be able to meet with the municipal councillors, especially the working groups dedicated to the key topics, at **least twice a year**. If relevant, they could seek collaboration with regional bodies (for example, in Vesoul there is no existing municipal youth council, but there is a Regional one they could collaborate with).

It is crucial to establish clear mechanisms for feedback collecting from youth and the local communities, as to make their voices heard and to make the Consultative Body activities really impactful for the surrounding context. These mechanisms should be inclusive, accessible, and structured to capture both individual experiences and collective perspectives.

- ▲ **Information and assessment**: Consultative Body participants can reflect on and assess local civil participation initiatives by sharing experiences from surveys, public meetings, petitions, or other civic engagement activities. Discussions should focus on the effectiveness of these initiatives and identify lessons learned.
- ▲ **Youth council meetings**: These meetings can provide a direct forum for Consultative Body participants to give their feedback about issues of the territories, municipal policies or propose new projects. Meetings could take place both in presence and online in order to guarantee a maximum of participation. In case of need, the development of a digital platform for communication could also be envisioned.




Meetings should occur regularly (**bi-monthly or quarterly**), and ideally coordinated with Municipal Council meetings, when possible, in order to discuss local events and policies in a timely manner.

Various **participatory tools** could be useful for gathering feedbacks during meetings and events:

- ▲ **Open Space Technology (OST)**: it is a practice of dialogue (collective search of solutions for complex topics) which allows us to tackle a large number of the most important and complex issues facing a large group of people, as well as achieve shared ownership of both the process and outcomes.

- ▲ World café: it encourages natural conversations within groups, helping participants generate insights and solutions on decision-making or planning topics..
- ▲ Focus groups: it is a research method, consisting in a group - interview technique, employed in several fields like psychology, political research, marketing, sociology. It is used as a qualitative approach to obtain information about people's attitudes and opinions about a particular topic.
- ▲ Hackathons: intensive collaborative events where participants co-create solutions for defined challenges.
- ▲ Youth council events: thematic events (e.g., on sustainable tourism) provide opportunities for youth to give input on development priorities and sustainability initiatives. See [EUSALP youth council events](#), for reference.

First steps

-  **4** (at least) yearly meetings of the Consultative Body (every 3 months)
-  **2** yearly meetings with the Municipal/Regional Council (every 6 months)
-  **1** public event

6. RESOURCES PLANNING

The Consultative Body can initially be animated by the Youth Department of the Municipality, a partner NGO, or another designated body. The **facilitation** role is key during the first phases to ensure smooth operations, guide discussions, and support the active engagement of all participants. Over time, the Consultative Body should aim to become self-managed, building internal capacity and leadership among its members.

The **local administration** will provide both human and financial resources to support the Consultative Body's activities. Examples of support may include:

- ▲ A **facilitator** for the initial meetings.
- ▲ **Venues** for in-person meetings and events.
- ▲ **Small grants** to fund local initiatives proposed by the CB.
- ▲ **Materials**, equipment, and resources necessary for workshops and participatory activities.
- ▲ **Travel support** for participants when needed (i.e. to attend international conferences and events).

The following section provides an example of a financial plan for the first year of Consultative Body activities, outlining anticipated costs and resource allocation to support meetings, events, and capacity-building initiatives.

Human and financial resources planning

Budget line	Unit	N° of units
Facilitator	days	3 days * 12 months
Venue	day	4 days
Local event	Lump sum	50€ * participant
International event participation	Lump sum	500€ * participant
Material	Lump sum	5€ * participant
Social media advertisement/campaigning	month	10€ * 12 months
Monitoring & evaluation	service	




7. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Participation in the Consultative Body provides young people with a valuable opportunity for personal growth, capacity building, and the development of leadership skills. For example, in Vesoul, **Open Badges** are being considered to formally recognise the skills gained by participants, while also creating a network of young people who can support one another and contribute to their communities. Consultative Body members can benefit from high visibility and the chance to attend networking events with other youth councils or bodies. They may also engage in initiatives such as a “School of Politics,” designed to bring young people closer to local governance, as exemplified by Maribor’s School of Politics for Youth (PIP), and take part in programs like Maribor Municipality’s Career Orientation initiative, which supports participants in exploring future professional pathways.

The impact of participation should be assessed through systematic tools such as the “**Thermometer of Youth Participation**,” which measures both the scale and quality of engagement, ensuring that young people’s contributions meaningfully influence governance processes. **Baseline and post-event surveys** can track knowledge gains and skill development for each activity, while including young people who are not part of the Consultative Body in evaluations helps determine whether the Body’s actions effectively represent the broader youth community.

The influence of the Consultative Body on the Municipality can be monitored through **regular surveys and assessments**, such as bi-annual surveys completed by both Consultative Body members and municipal representatives, or through more frequent analyses documented in annual reports. This approach ensures that youth suggestions are integrated into decision-making, that participants receive clear feedback on how their contributions have been used, and that the Consultative Body’s work strengthens both youth empowerment and local governance.

First steps

-  **1 internal survey** within the Consultative Body (at least 1 in the first year)
-  **1 survey** involving the Municipality/Region (at least 1 in the first year)
-  **1 external survey** with local youth (at least 1 in the first year)

8. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The communication strategy should establish **clear guidelines** for external representation, ensuring that Consultative Body members who may face potential risks, such as those with intersecting identities, are always accompanied by a facilitator during public events and never represent the Consultative Body alone. This approach helps share responsibilities and reduce potential pressure on individual participants.




- ▲ **Before:** **Acquisition** **strategy**
 An **open call**, published by the Municipality or the managing NGO, should be widely disseminated in youth centres, libraries, city centres, public transportation hubs, universities, vocational schools, and through local NGOs and youth groups that can present, nominate, or inform potential participants. The call should clearly convey that participation allows young people to make their voices heard, take a stand, and contribute to local policy, particularly on issues related to youth and migration. Special attention should be given to vulnerable or less trusting groups, including strategies to address language barriers through intermediaries. Recognition mechanisms, such as an Open Badge certification system, can further incentivize participation. Importantly, Consultative Body members should not be recommended directly by Municipal councillors to avoid political interference.
- ▲ **In the beginning:** **Management of expectations**
 Objectives and the realistic level of influence participants will have in decision-making should be clearly communicated during the first Consultative Body meetings, in order to avoid misunderstanding that could lead to frustration and eventually loss of trust in the administration and local authorities.
- ▲ **During and “after”:** **Dissemination efforts**
 As stated in the project’s Deliverable D1.1.1 “Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas”, *“operating on a pan-European scale demands a specific and sensitive focus, necessitating the **adaptation** of content and communication strategies to diverse cultural and linguistic contexts to ensure consistent effectiveness: invest in digital platforms, social media, newsletter and public events to communicate results and impact regularly”*.

One or more **social media accounts** should be activated by the Consultative Body (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook according to the need) to interact with the wider youth of the area. Regular **public events** and thematic working groups should ensure face-to-face engagement between Consultative Body members and the youth they represent, including initiatives like “open days” to showcase how the Body operates.

To maintain genuine representation and engagement, the Municipality or managing NGO should conduct **regular assessments** using anonymous surveys directed at the wider youth population, not just Consultative Body members, to verify whether the Body is known and effectively representing their interests.

Findings from youth-led monitoring should be communicated transparently to stakeholders. The Consultative Body can produce an **annual report** that integrates results from anonymous youth surveys, as well as **bi-annual surveys** completed by both the Municipal Council and Consultative Body members. This report should be shared with external stakeholders and made visible through local media such as newspapers and radio, ensuring that the Consultative Body’s work and impact are widely recognized and understood.

First steps

-  1 call for participants to launch the Consultative Body
-  1 social media channel or platform to be opened in the first months of activity
-  1 annual report after 12 months of activity

9. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN (DURING AND AFTER)

As affirmed in the project's Deliverable D1.1.1 "Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas: strategic orientation towards youth migration governance models", "***Building effective partnerships is essential to expanding the reach and impact of youth engagement initiatives.*** This means **fostering collaboration with a range of stakeholders**, including local governments, NGOs and civil society organisations, schools and universities, the private sector, as well as regional and international bodies. Such partnerships not only help to coordinate efforts and pool resources, but also enable the exchange of good practices and the development of more inclusive and sustainable strategies."

Short term

- ▲ Continuous engagement:**

It requires accommodating participants' schedules and providing clear, manageable structures. Participants could be asked to commit for **one year**, potentially formalised through a symbolic document, while an **annual open call** can welcome new members. Mechanisms such as internal elections can help refresh membership if needed, balancing continuity and inclusion.

Consultative Body meetings should not be too frequent, for instance every two months for internal meetings and every six months in combination with the Municipal Council, and alternate between in-person and virtual formats to increase accessibility and flexibility. Internal procedures should remain simple and transparent to avoid frustration.

Concerning the general public, social media can be used to explain technical terms in accessible language, helping reach youth who might otherwise be excluded.
- ▲ Empowerment and ownership of results**

Annual reports and meeting summaries, complemented by informative newsletters, can help participants track progress. To ensure recognition, every output produced in collaboration with the Consultative Body (e.g., policy documents) should explicitly mention the Consultative Body's contribution, or carry a "stamp of approval" from the Body itself. Induction paths for new members and, if possible, an annual retreat of 3–5 days can foster team cohesion, socialisation, and focused work on the Consultative Body's activities.
- ▲ Risk of political interference**

To mitigate the risk of political interference, municipal councils should be made aware that the Consultative Body is a partner, not a tool. Consultative Body members are tasked with representing youth, particularly young migrants, rather than aligning with the Municipal Council's agenda. Membership changes should not automatically coincide with municipal elections, and the Body should remain politically neutral overall, though individual members may have political affiliations. Early on, the Consultative Body should define in the Code of

Conduct key guidelines for preventing and addressing political interference, including measures to exclude members attempting to exert undue influence.

Medium-term

To ensure participation remains sustained and meaningful beyond short-term goals or funded projects, Consultative Body members must feel **ownership and responsibility** for its continued functioning. Demonstrating that the Consultative Body acts in the best interest of migrant communities, through regular consultations and ensuring representation within the Body, is crucial. Indeed, collaboration with other social groups, such as diaspora associations, strengthens inclusivity. Clear handover procedures should be established if members leave, ensuring that achievements and institutional knowledge are not lost.

- ▲ **Future** **oriented:**
 For long-term sustainability, the Consultative Body's structure must remain flexible, adapting to changing contexts, new members, and evolving community needs. Municipal flexibility will be crucial to ensure the Consultative Body continues to operate effectively over time. Maintaining high levels of engagement and motivation among participants and stakeholders can be challenging, especially in long-standing or transnational initiatives constrained by limited resources or geographic distance. Strategic diversification of resources and long-term planning are essential to ensure continuity, scalability, and adaptability across different contexts.
- ▲ **Funding** **opportunities**
 Medium-term efforts can also include capacity-building programs to address skills gaps, enhance confidence, and facilitate more effective impact measurement. Funding opportunities should be diversified, combining small municipal grants for youth-led projects (e.g., Maribor's youth project funding schemes), dedicated Youth Funds (e.g., Tartu, Estonia), regional calls (e.g., Vesoul's Alpine Youth initiatives), and participatory budgeting proposals facilitated by NGOs. From the project analysis, over-reliance on fluctuating public or European funding threatens long-term operational stability; combining public, private, and European resources is essential for sustainability.

First steps:

-  **1 funding source** (i.e. Municipal or Regional funding)

