

EXPLORING PRACTICES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN MARGINAL AREAS: STRATEGIC ORIENTATION TOWARDS YOUTH MIGRATION GOVERNANCE MODELS

Baseline report – Deliverable 1.1.1



How to cite: Rapetti, E. Berlanda, S. Veronesi, L. and Nardello, M. (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.

Editors: Elisa Rapetti, Sabrina Berlanda, Maria Nardello, Liria Veronesi (Fondazione Franco Demarchi)

Contributors: Luciano Galetti, Viviana Caldara, Tommaso Pasquini, Luca Bassetti, Marco Milano (Provincia Autonoma di Trento), Hanna Öllös and Laura Haberfellner (CIPRA International Lab GmbH Österreich), Giulia Sostero and Mohammed Mustafa (European Association for Local Democracy), Amna Potocnik and Spela Flegar (Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor) and Loïc Leroy (Vesoul Urban Community)

We acknowledge with appreciation the Scientific Committee's input and feedback – Christian Girardi, Frederic Spagnoli and Maddalena Tirabassi, which have helped refine the analyses and recommendations presented here.

Download: <https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/out4ingov/>

Project partners:

Provincia Autonoma di Trento

Fondazione Franco Demarchi

CIPRA International Lab GmbH Österreich

European Association for Local Democracy

Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor

Vesoul Urban Community

Disclaimer: Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union.

If not otherwise noted below an article or element, the content of this publication is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International Licence. 2

Table of contents

| | |
|--|----|
| EXPLORING PRACTICES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN MARGINAL AREAS: STRATEGIC ORIENTATION TOWARDS YOUTH MIGRATION GOVERNANCE MODELS | 1 |
| 1. Introduction to the Project and Objectives of the Collection | 5 |
| 2. Practices' Collection Process | 11 |
| 3. Analysis of Practices..... | 16 |
| 3.1 YOUTH PARTICIPATION..... | 10 |
| 3.2 MARGINAL AREAS | 23 |
| 3.3 CIRCULATION OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS | 36 |
| 4. Main Takeaways and Strategic Orientations | 53 |
| 5. Bibliography..... | 62 |
| ANNEX 1 - LIST OF THE PRACTICES | 65 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

EU European Union

EUSALP EU strategy for the Alpine region

IOM International Organization for Migration

LAs Local Authorities

MOM Municipality of Maribor

NEETs young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training

NGO Non-governmental organisation

OUT4INGOV New generation alpine OUT - migration Engagement FOR an INclusive GOVernance

ZPM Maribor Association of Friends of Youth Maribor (

1. Introduction to the Project and Objectives of the Collection

Most European countries are experiencing an ageing population. The youth population has decreased consistently across member states over the past decade. This trend affects both urban and rural areas, and is primarily driven by low birth rates and young people migrating away from their home countries. Technological, economic and social transformations have reshaped both urban and rural areas over the past fifty years. Although urbanisation has usually been linked to countries in the Global South, it has also become a key trend in Europe. The vast majority of the EU population now live in cities: indeed, the European Union is one of the most urbanised areas in the world. Out of 447 million European Union inhabitants it is estimated that 75% live in urban areas – cities, towns and suburbs. Predictions show that the share of urban population in Europe will continue to grow, and it is likely to reach more than 80% by 2050¹. The process of European urbanisation gives rise to a particular set of challenges, including issues of air pollution, urban expansion, social segregation, and the decline of biodiversity. At the same time, urbanisation places increased pressure on rural and marginal areas, which are affected by both population loss and the territorial expansion of urban centres. This highlights the need for integrated territorial policies that promote sustainable mobility, balanced demographic development and stronger links between urban centres and their surrounding areas. Rural communities close to cities have often benefited from metropolitan expansion, gaining improved access to employment, services and infrastructure. In contrast, more remote rural and mountainous regions continue to face challenges such as unemployment, service shortages and an ongoing exodus of young people in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Although there are differences among countries in terms of how youth populations are distributed across urban and rural areas, some small towns and suburbs — such as those in Poland and Lithuania — have experienced a slight increase in the number of young people. Nevertheless, the absolute number of young people has declined, as has their proportion within the overall population (Şerban and Brazienė, 2021).

According to Eurostat data, the number of young people aged 15–24 has decreased significantly in most EU countries. Both youth age groups (15–24 and 25–29) have experienced population decline, with the most significant decrease observed in the 15–24 age group. From 2013 to 2019, the EU-28 youth population (aged 15–24) fell from 36.2 million to 18.9 million, while the 25–29 age group declined from 69.5 million to 58.8 million (Şerban and Brazienė, 2021, p. 7).

Moreover Eurostat² reported that in 2023, 14.1% of young people (aged 15–29) in the EU were born outside their country of residence and 11.9% were living in a country other than that of their citizenship. Both figures have increased in recent years, continuing an upward trend that has been observed over the past decade.

The number of young people in rural areas has decreased due to internal and external migration. There are evident gender differences in migration trends. Generally, young women from rural areas achieve better academic results, and consequently leave to study at university and do not return to their places of origin. Over the past five to ten years, significant numbers of young people in European countries have migrated from rural areas to cities and towns, as well as abroad, to live and work (Şerban and Brazienė, 2021).

¹ European Urban Initiative - The European Hub for sustainable urban development
<https://www.urban-initiative.eu/online-guidance-innovative-actions/introduction-background/context>

² EUROSTAT, Migrant integration statistics - socioeconomic situation of young people
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_socioeconomic_situation_of_young_people

Youth migration is one of the Alpine region's key challenges. While urban and tourist areas attract young, educated residents, remote mountain valleys are losing them, creating territorial imbalances. This unequal distribution of human and social resources threatens community cohesion and exacerbates disparities across the region. While some areas benefit from 'brain gain' and improved infrastructure, others face depopulation and a decline in social capital. Addressing these imbalances requires interregional cooperation and shared strategies that reflect the Alpine region's diverse socioeconomic and demographic realities.

Building on this data and framework, the project **New Generation Alpine OUT-migration Engagement FOR an INclusive GOVernance** (OUT4INGOV) aims to modernize and innovate policies related to youth migration—specifically focusing on young people raised in the Alpine region. The project seeks not only to better understand and accompany the migration experiences of these youth, but also to strengthen territorial cohesion and inclusive governance across the Alpine area.

In particular, the OUT4INGOV project is focused on:

- ▲ innovating policies addressing youth emigration issues in Alpine regions;
- ▲ developing multi-level governance tools through co-creation process, involving stakeholders at local level;
- ▲ building capacity among local actors and empowering communities;
- ▲ empowering young people to become active participants in their communities;
- ▲ generating circular processes for knowledge and skills transfer (triple-win).

The OUT4INGOV project aims to promote a new governance approach through the management of spillovers effects, in particular by promoting processes of enhancement and circularity of skills and employment opportunities in the Alpine area communities, focusing on the **EUSALP** cross cutting priorities and on the activities of its **Action Group 3 “Labour Market, Education and Training”**³ to valorize circular processes of competence and learning by youth migrants in the different territories of the Alps.

In particular Action Group 3 aims to align education and training with Alpine labor market demands and green/digital transitions, bridging workforce supply and demand. It seeks to create a common Alpine education and labor market. Among the other objectives, it is relevant to mention the aim of improving the **connection between young people and the Alpine labour market by raising awareness of opportunities in mountain businesses, traditional professions, green jobs, and remote working and training**. These activities aim to reduce depopulation trends in inner Alpine areas, support employers in finding a workforce, and strengthen and promote vocational education in relation to job opportunities in the Alpine region. The Action Group 3 also aims to raise awareness of digital and remote learning, training and working opportunities as a concrete solution to the abandonment of mountain areas, especially rural and internal ones.

The project is framed within the policies and strategies developed by the EUSALP, which serves as the main point of reference. It is also worth mentioning the other strategic and regulatory frameworks that demonstrate the attention and relevance given to this priority in terms of its geographical and generational dimensions. Examples include the **Council of the European Union's conclusions on providing local opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas** (November 2024) and **Goal 6 of the European Youth Strategy 2019–2027, titled #MovingRuralYouthForward**.

³ EUSALP, Action Group 3 https://www.alpine-region.eu/topics-action-groups/detail?tx_eeusalp_pi2%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_eeusalp_pi2%5BactionGroup%5D=4&tx_eeusalp_pi2%5Bcontent%5D=ActionGroup&cHash=d498486b4eaa1e33ea54b1256861e207

As mentioned before, in particular the Council of the European Union recognises that rural and remote areas offer meaningful opportunities—such as strong community ties and close connection to nature—but these are often outweighed by persistent challenge: limited job prospects, weaker infrastructure, and reduced access to quality education, healthcare, social services, and cultural or leisure opportunities. At the same time, global dynamics such as climate change, digitalisation, and rising socio-economic inequalities increasingly shape the realities of rural youth. Moreover, - above after COVID 19 pandemic - mental health is emerging as a particularly critical issue. **These complex and interconnected trends call for “glocal” strategies—approaches that are locally adapted but globally informed—so that young people can remain rooted in their communities while staying connected to wider developments.**

Importantly, the Council highlights that rural areas are not homogeneous. What’s needed are place-based solutions that reflect the unique geographical, social, and economic realities of each territory. Bridging the rural-urban divide means not only improving infrastructure and digital connectivity, but also ensuring that rural youth have a real say in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

A recurring problem is the lack of alignment between youth and rural policies. Youth strategies often neglect the rural dimension, while rural development policies rarely prioritise youth-specific needs. For this reason it would be crucial promoting an inclusive, cross-sectoral approach that promotes youth participation in decision-making, and improves access to essential services such as education, employment, healthcare, transportation, digital tools, and land. Moreover, an intersectional lens is also essential, indeed, many young people in rural areas face multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination—linked to gender, disability, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. In particular, young women and girls often encounter barriers to accessing mental health services, training opportunities, and leadership roles.

Digital inclusion plays a central role in a “glocal” strategy: persistent digital divides exclude many rural NEETs from opportunities for learning, connection, and participation. Ensuring access to digital tools and skills, along with better communication about EU programmes—eliminating language and procedural barriers—is key to making support more effective and accessible.

To make rural areas more attractive and supportive for youth, the document reported a range of concrete measures. These include **strengthening youth participation through youth councils and participatory budgeting; fostering local communities and intergenerational dialogue; improving infrastructure and services; supporting remote work and innovative farming models; and expanding access to mental health care.** Financial incentives and mentoring programmes are also seen as tools to encourage young people to stay, return, or engage locally.

As this report on the analysis of practices will show, several of these measures are being experimented with across EU countries, as is the plan for the OUT4INGOV project. The aim is to develop and consolidate youth participation through youth councils; promote the use of digital tools to bring young people closer to their communities of origin; boost networking and cooperation across communities of residents and migrants; and monitor youth migration and mobility data in Europe through an observatory. These tools can contribute to the direction indicated by the Council of the European Union.

Without intervention, marginal regions risk falling into a ***talent development trap***⁴, marked by outmigration, ageing populations, and low educational outcomes. To prevent this, the EU is working

⁴ *Talent development trap* as described in the [Commission’s Communication on Harnessing Talent in Europe’s Regions](#), refers to a multidimensional challenge faced by some EU regions experiencing a sharp decline in their working-age population, a low and stagnating share of higher education graduates and a negative mobility of their population aged 15-39. These result in inefficiencies in the local economies, labour markets, education, training, and adult learning

to unlock regional talent by investing in education, entrepreneurship, innovation, and youth empowerment. These efforts are not only crucial for territorial cohesion, but also for building resilient and thriving local communities.

Finally, the Council of the European Union emphasises the importance of the Member States in developing these strategies, as well as the need for sustained dialogue and cooperation at all levels — local, national and European — to co-create inclusive, sustainable and forward-looking rural areas where young people are not only included, but empowered.

The **EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027** provides a common framework for European cooperation in youth policy, grounded in three core pillars: **Engage, Connect, Empower**. The strategy emphasizes the importance of youth participation, social inclusion, and equal opportunities for all young people across the EU. It integrates the **11 European Youth Goals**, developed through a broad participatory process involving thousands of young people from across Europe.

The strategy aims to strengthen democratic participation, promote social inclusion, and expand access to opportunities in education, employment, and community life. It supports:

- ▲ cross-sectoral and evidence-based policymaking;
- ▲ non-formal and informal learning through youth work;
- ▲ active youth involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies;
- ▲ improved access to quality youth information and funding;
- ▲ and practical tools such as the EU Youth Dialogue, Youth Wiki, and the Future National Activities Planner.

The **Goal 6 - #Moving Rural Youth Forward** - focuses on creating the conditions for young people to fulfil their potential in rural areas. It plays a central role in bridging the rural-urban divide by addressing both the **material needs** (such as infrastructure, employment, and connectivity) and the **cultural dimensions** (such as participation, identity, and visibility) of rural life. This goal calls for tailored investment and inclusive governance that recognises rural youth not as a marginal group, but as an essential part of Europe's economic, social, and democratic future.

Key Priorities of Goal 6 includes:

1. **Infrastructure & Services**
Guarantee access to quality public services, affordable housing, and reliable digital connectivity to reduce the rural-urban gap.
2. **Employment**
Promote sustainable, high-quality job opportunities in rural areas that are accessible and attractive to young people.
3. **Decentralised Youth Activities**
Support initiatives that are developed *by, for, and with* rural youth, strengthening local communities and civic engagement.
4. **Participation**
Ensure that rural youth have real opportunities to participate in political processes and decision-making that directly affect their lives and communities.
5. **Education**
Secure equal access to quality formal and non-formal education, recognising the importance of learning opportunities tailored to rural realities.

systems, as well as low performance in innovation, governance, business development, and service access (Council of the European Union, *Conclusions on providing glocal opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas*, November 2024, p.26).

6. Image & Identity

Foster a positive image of rural life by promoting rural heritage, traditions, and the potential of rural communities as vibrant places to live, work, and grow.

Youth, their geographical and social mobility, and the dynamics of marginal areas are foundational elements of the **OUT4INGOV** project. At its core, the project seeks to promote and pilot experiences that can lead to a **triple-win scenario**—where the - young - **migrant**, the **country of origin**, and the **host country** all benefit from specific arrangements, policies, or dynamics that support youth mobility and inclusion.

This approach aligns with long-standing EU policy priorities. The EU has played a key role in fostering mobility among young people, most notably through the **Erasmus+ programme**, launched in 1987 as a student exchange initiative. Since its inception, Erasmus+ has expanded to include trainees, youth workers, and sports coaches, engaging over **16 million participants** to date. With a **budget of €26.2 billion** allocated for the 2021–2027 period, the programme continues to promote intercultural exchange, mutual understanding, and the consolidation of a shared European identity⁵. For young Europeans, mobility represents a valuable opportunity to develop their potential across diverse regions and socio-cultural contexts.

Meanwhile, for - young - immigrants from outside the EU, this idea is closely linked to the concept of circular migration—which emphasises how successful migration experiences and continued ties with countries of origin can foster sustainable development, particularly through the transfer of both financial resources and knowledge. **Not to be overlooked, remittances continue to serve as a vital lifeline, providing one of the most significant sources of financial support for countries in Africa, Asia, and South America.**” According to the International Organization for Migration (McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024, p.6), remittance flows have “surpassed foreign direct investment in developing nations for the first time,” underscoring their central role in global economic development.

From a demographic perspective for destination countries, young immigrants—particularly **unaccompanied minors**—represent a crucial group to engage, support, and empower in their host communities. While the challenges they face in reaching Europe cannot be overlooked, it is essential to focus on their **potential** and to invest in their inclusion and active participation in local life. Doing so not only benefits the individuals but also contributes to the **well-being and revitalisation of the receiving territories**, especially in marginal or underpopulated areas.

This report presents the **first phase** of the OUT4INGOV project: the **collection and analysis of existing practices - mechanisms and tools** - to inform the theoretical foundations for designing youth migration governance models. This phase lays the groundwork for the project's piloting activities, which focus on three main areas of prototyping:

1. **Youth consultative body prototype:** a prototype for a Youth Council designed to provide consultation and advice to support decision-making and governance processes.
2. **Cooperation networks schemes:** a framework for cooperation networks aimed at enhancing the capacity for collaboration and decision-making among stakeholders in the Alpine Space regions. This includes capacity building and training related to managing youth migration phenomena involving young people who have grown up in the Alpine region. The overarching goal is to foster a **triple-win situation** — benefiting the regions of origin, the regions of arrival, and the young migrants themselves.

⁵ European NewsRoom (2025), *Young and restless: Where do young people want to live and work in the EU?*, <https://europeannewsroom.com/young-and-restless-where-do-young-people-want-to-live-and-work-in-the-eu/>

3. **Observatory of youth migration:** a prototype observatory for youth migration, focused on defining operational rules, establishing a conceptual framework, and identifying sources of indicators to monitor and analyze migration dynamics.

This report details the process undertaken by the OUT4INGOV partnership to collect and analyse relevant practices. It highlights findings and insights that will inform the design of the above prototypes, and ultimately contribute to more inclusive, informed, and sustainable youth mobility/migration governance.

2. Practices' Collection Process

As part of the OUT4INGOV project, researching and analysing practices that could provide valuable insights for developing the planned pilot activities in the three project territories (Vesoul, Trentino, Maribor) was one of the first phases designed and implemented. The project partners jointly agreed on objectives, methods, and timelines for collecting practices, defining the information needed and choosing the tool for data collection. They also collectively established criteria for searching and selecting practices. The main purpose of this collection was to inform the development of the pilot projects for local experimentation.

The partnership's research focused on governance mechanisms and tools, including (1) policies and policy frameworks, (2) strategies, (3) programmes and implementation plans, and (4) specific instruments aimed at enhancing youth engagement, supporting migration management, and fostering innovation in local communities.

As a first step, the analysis sought to distinguish between **mechanisms** and **tools**, which differ in complexity, scope, and the level at which they can be activated by organisations. This distinction is essential to understand how different actors—local, national, or transnational—can operationalise governance objectives.

- ▲ **Mechanism:** In social planning, a mechanism is a structured set of processes or principles that enable the achievement of specific goals. Mechanisms include the operational strategies, policy frameworks, and governance logics that shape and guide social action.
- ▲ **Tool:** A tool refers to the practical and operational means used to implement mechanisms. Tools are concrete instruments—financial, legal, procedural, or digital—through which social policies and strategies are executed.

For example, a project promoting the return of young people to Alpine regions may adopt an *economic incentive mechanism*.

- ▲ Governance Mechanism: **financial incentive system** (e.g. tax relief, grants for returnees).
- ▲ Tool: **microcredit fund specifically designed for start-ups in Alpine areas.**

In the context of governance, **mechanisms** regulate how decisions are made, implemented, and monitored. They shape the relationships between actors involved in governance processes—whether public institutions, private sector actors, or civil society—and ensure that objectives are pursued in a transparent, coordinated, and accountable manner. These mechanisms can be formal or informal and operate at various levels (local, national, or supranational), adapting to the institutional capacity and policy context of each governance setting.

The collected practices - both mechanisms and tools - included:

- ▲ **Networks of Local Authorities (LAs), organizations, and individuals:** collaborative structures uniting municipalities, NGOs, universities, schools, and individuals to build dynamic support systems for migrants and communities facing demographic changes.
- ▲ **Advisory Bodies and Councils:** formalized structures facilitating dialogue among diverse stakeholders and ensuring that youth voices are integrated into policymaking processes.

- ▲ **Observatories on key topics:** research initiatives and data-driven monitoring systems tracking and analysing migration patterns, youth trends, and regional transformations to inform policy and decision-making.
- ▲ **Capacity Building:** initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resources of public authorities, individuals, organizations, or communities, enabling them to achieve their objectives and adapt to evolving circumstances.

In the framework of the OUT4INGOV initiative, a range of thematic domains were identified as being of particular relevance. These domains will be examined in greater depth in the subsequent analysis. The project under discussion addresses complex, interconnected phenomena that were initially defined using basic terminology to establish a shared understanding among partners. A glossary was developed with the objective of ensuring a common language and clear comprehension of the key concepts essential for the project's implementation. The selection of practices focused especially on those that promote participation, empowerment, and engagement of young people, whether they are experiencing mobility or migration, or residing in marginal areas. **It is particularly relevant to consider practices that aim to create inclusive spaces in which young people can actively contribute to shaping their communities and future opportunities.**

Several key questions guided the partnership during the selection and analysis of practices:

- ▲ **Methodology:** what participatory, democratic, and socially cohesive mechanisms are used in these initiatives? Do they foster meaningful engagement and decision-making power for youth and migrants?
- ▲ **Knowledge & understanding:** how do these practices deepen the understanding of migration, youth mobility, and demographic shifts? Do they generate actionable insights for policymakers and communities?
- ▲ **Digital dimension:** how can digital tools and platforms maintain strong connections between emigrants and their regions of origin? Can digitalization enhance participation, collaboration, and networking across territories?

The selection of practices was carried out by all 6 project partners from February to April 2025. It was mutually agreed upon at the inception of the data collection process that **each partner would be responsible for the identification of five practices in order to ensure diverse perspectives, heterogeneous geographical areas and different working languages.** During the collection and description phase of the practices selected by each partner, it emerged that clearly distinguishing whether a practice refers to a mechanism or a tool is not always straightforward. As will be further illustrated in the following sections, this distinction, while conceptually useful, is not essential for understanding how the practice functions or for drawing meaningful lessons for the purposes of the analysis.

Governance policies do not arise from a pre-established model or from a tool to be applied in the abstract; rather, they are primarily oriented by the phenomenon to be governed or the problem to be addressed. For this reason, our research on practices was not guided by the type of tool employed (whether a consultative body, a network of actors at local or national level, or an observatory), but rather by the **thematic focuses** identified as priorities for the project. As will be shown later, the same logic guided the choice of how to present them in the analysis section.

The definition of thematic focuses and the subsequent distinction between tools and mechanisms, as well as the identification of possible cross-clusters, may appear complex. However, this structure was retained in order to highlight the centrality of the **objectives pursued**: whether promoting youth participation, counteracting depopulation, revitalising territories, or governing migration processes. For this reason, it was decided to start by identifying **three thematic areas of particular relevance for OUT4INGOV**, considered as the main fields of intervention through which the practices analysed

can be better understood and valued, while also distinguishing in parallel between mechanisms and tools.

It is clear that not all experiences fit neatly into a single focus: some practices cut across several areas, giving rise to **cross-cluster** situations. These are not an anomaly but rather a richness, and they confirm the complexity of the phenomenon that the project seeks to observe and govern.

In accordance with the project's purposes, the three main topics/focus areas have been identified are:

- ▲ **Youth participation is understood as empowering young people as active citizens and change-makers.** It involves inclusion in decision-making, fostering advocacy, leadership, and cooperation competences. Participation also builds networks among youth, communities, and policymakers, encouraging collaboration. Through these practices, young people can shape their futures and drive social transformation. The OUT4INGOV project promotes youth participation in local communities, with special attention to Alpine regions. It defines youth as people aged 15–35, acknowledging cultural differences and the complexity of transitions to adulthood. This range reflects key stages of mobility, migration, and professional development relevant to the project's goals. In selecting practices, the focus is on mechanisms of participation and empowerment rather than strict age boundaries. Such an approach ensures adaptability across contexts while addressing diverse youth needs. Clear definitions of policies and processes at EU, national, regional, and local levels are essential for analysis.
- ▲ **Marginal Areas are defined as territories on the periphery of economic, social, and political centres, often lacking services, infrastructure, and opportunities.** They include rural, mountain, peripheral, inner, and remote regions, each with specific conditions but sharing structural disadvantages. Common issues include weak economies, demographic decline, poor service accessibility, climate vulnerability, and limited political influence. These factors especially affect young people, who often migrate to urban centres for education, jobs, and cultural opportunities. OUT4INGOV deliberately chose to broaden its scope beyond Alpine mountain regions, the project's main geographical focus. This decision reflects the recognition that marginal areas, despite their diversity, present similar challenges and dynamics for youth. Employment, education, mobility, and participation opportunities are cross-cutting concerns across all types of marginal territories. By including multiple categories of marginal areas, OUT4INGOV ensures greater comparability and transferability of practices. The project thus highlights both the specificities of Alpine regions and the wider European debate on marginality. This approach strengthens the relevance of practices collected, showing how solutions can respond to shared youth needs across contexts.
- ▲ **Circulation of people and ideas concern experiences related to mobility, migration, and transnational connections.** Human movement is a complex phenomenon, driven by economic, social, and cultural reasons, including work, study, cultural exchanges, and the search for better living conditions. Within OUT4INGOV, the focus on mobility and migration is not aimed at offering an exhaustive theoretical overview. Instead, the project adopts a pragmatic lens, concentrating on how these dynamics shape youth opportunities and governance challenges. The decision to include mobility and transnational connections reflects their central role in Alpine and marginal areas. These practices emphasize building networks and communities, both physical and digital, as resources for personal and collective development. Special

attention is given to inclusion practices that involve migrants, institutions, and civil society in co-creating reception and integration policies. The perspective also extends to diasporas, communities maintaining ties with their countries of origin and contributing to their development. Moreover, migration can also take circular forms, enabling continuous exchanges of skills and opportunities between origin and destination countries. The concept of mobility goes beyond physical movement, encompassing flows of ideas, capital, information, and social relations. For young people, mobility includes temporary experiences of study, work, and volunteering aimed at growth and cultural enrichment. Youth choices to leave, return, or circulate strongly influence local vitality and the sustainability of territories. Practices were therefore selected based on their capacity to empower young people and enhance their agency in these processes. This means looking at how networks, communities, and participatory mechanisms can turn mobility into a resource. Diaspora, circular migration, and temporary mobility are seen as opportunities for mutual learning and development. By framing mobility as both a challenge and a chance, OUT4INGOV bridges local realities with global trends.

The identification of practices was followed a set of shared orientations agreed upon within the partnership. In the initial phase, each partner was asked to select a defined number of case studies showing one or more features of a potential good practice. The orientations guiding this process included the **effectiveness of actions** in achieving their intended objectives. Another key aspect was the **orientation toward innovation**, with attention to the capacity to model solutions that are flexible and replicable across different contexts. The **ability to enhance the role of partners and strengthen the involvement of target groups** was also considered. From the outset, attention was given to **transferability, dissemination, and long-term sustainability**, ensured through the engagement of relevant actors. The **knowledge and professional competences of promoters and implementers** were also taken into account. Importantly, it was agreed to include not only practices directly implemented by the partners but also those promoted by other actors and territories, in a clear perspective of **mutual learning and exchange**. This broader approach allowed the project to capture a richer variety of experiences and models. As a result, the analysis rests on coherent orientations while remaining open to diverse practices capable of informing future policy design.

Limitations of the Collected Practices

From a methodological standpoint, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations that emerged during the process of collecting and analysing practices. Such recognition does not undermine the value of the work carried out; rather, it strengthens the validity of the findings by situating them within their proper context. What has been assembled is not a comprehensive or fully coherent body of practices, but rather a collection reflecting a fragmented landscape. The initiatives examined are often disconnected from one another, limited in scope, and at times insufficient to address the structural challenges at stake. In many cases, their impact remains modest, partly because the most effective levers of change lie beyond the reach of the actors involved. This observation is significant, in regarding the instruments the OUT4INGOV project intends to design: the existing material is scarce, often only partially relevant, and with limited or unmeasured outcomes. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable foundation for advancing one step further and for learning equally from what has not worked as from what has proven more successful.

Additional limitations to practices' collection can be observed. First, no practice specifically or exclusively targets NEETs. Only one case explicitly concerns an observatory with a mandate for systematic data collection. Moreover, very few practices demonstrate transparent evaluation of impact or sustainability. This is partly because many initiatives did not foresee such assessments, and partly because relevant documentation is not easily available through desk research. The culture of impact evaluation remains relatively recent: as a partnership, we often had to choose between

older projects, which included some evidence on outcomes but in very different contexts, and more recent initiatives whose long-term effects are still uncertain or not yet recorded.

Finally, it should be noted that the description of practices was gathered through an online form with predefined variables. As such, it inevitably reflects the subjective perspective of the respondent. While this does not diminish the intrinsic value of the practice itself, it must be considered when analysing the thematic focus and the mechanism or tool identified as central. This subjectivity was later complemented by the interpretative work of those conducting the overall analysis presented here. Beyond descriptive data, therefore, the practices are the product of an analytical lens deliberately shaped to serve the objectives and expected outcomes of the project.

3. Analysis of Practices

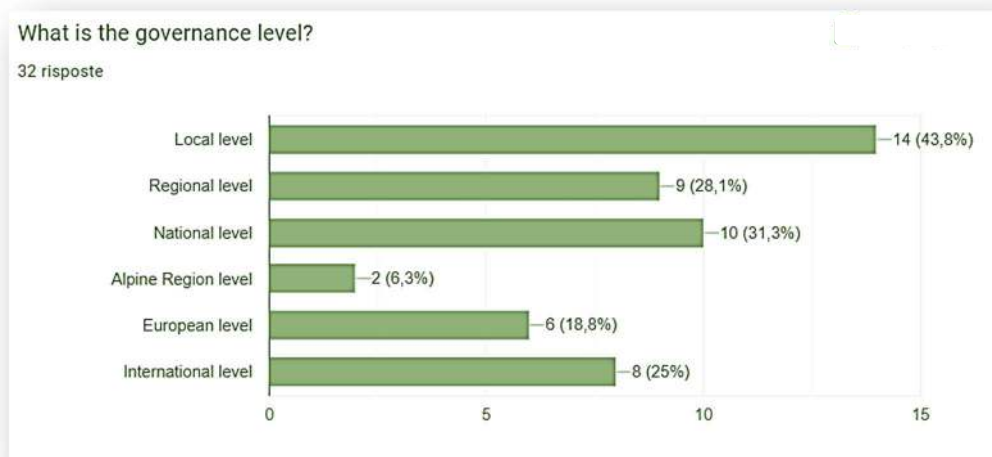
A total of **31 practices** have been collected. Before analyzing these according to the main topics and mechanism types, we provide an overview, specifying the collected data and highlighting key areas of interest.

Among the identified practices, **7 are categorized as mechanisms**, while **24 are classified as tools**. This indicates that it has been more common to identify specific activities and projects rather than structured policies, frameworks, or strategies. All identified mechanisms operate within an **urban context**. These are led by a diverse range of organizations, including Local Authorities (LAs), International Organizations (IOs), Academic Institutions, and Third Sector Organizations. Most mechanisms involve multiple stakeholders, underscoring the importance of promoting dialogue among public institutions, third-sector organizations, and community members.

Regarding the tools, the majority are led by **Third Sector organizations (10)**, followed by **Public Authorities (5)**, **International Organizations (3)**, and **Academic Institutions (3)**. In several instances, tools are managed through partnerships between Local Authorities and Third Sector organizations, companies, or benefit corporations.

Of the 31 practices, **20 are developed in marginal areas (mountainous or rural)**, and **11 in urban areas**. Analyzing the governance levels involved, it becomes clear that most identified practices operate across multiple governance levels, as detailed in Table 1. Specifically, only **4 practices operate exclusively at the local level**, **2 exclusively at the European level**, and **2 exclusively at the international level**, with **1 operating at the national level**, and **3 at the regional (sub-national) level**. This distribution highlights the crucial role of multilevel collaboration and intersectionality for effective implementation of such mechanisms and tools.

Graphic 1 – Governance Level of the practices.



In response to the question, "What kind of mechanism or tool is applied?", respondents were permitted to select multiple options. This flexibility had a significant impact on the subsequent analysis of the practices, as the intricacy of the research questions and their corresponding answers underscored the necessity to ascertain a principal purpose and the predominant mode of operation for each individual practice. This approach was essential to ensure that the lessons learned were captured and capitalised on effectively.

As previously mentioned, the types of practices fall into categories such as consultative mechanisms, networking, information, observatories, and cooperation. It is noteworthy that nearly all practices are characterised by the presence of at least two distinct streams of action. Indeed, it is challenging to envision tools or mechanisms that facilitate consultation without also incorporating elements of information sharing or monitoring, just as networking activities are rarely undertaken without information exchange or collaborative efforts. In detailed the answer to the question are distributed as follow:

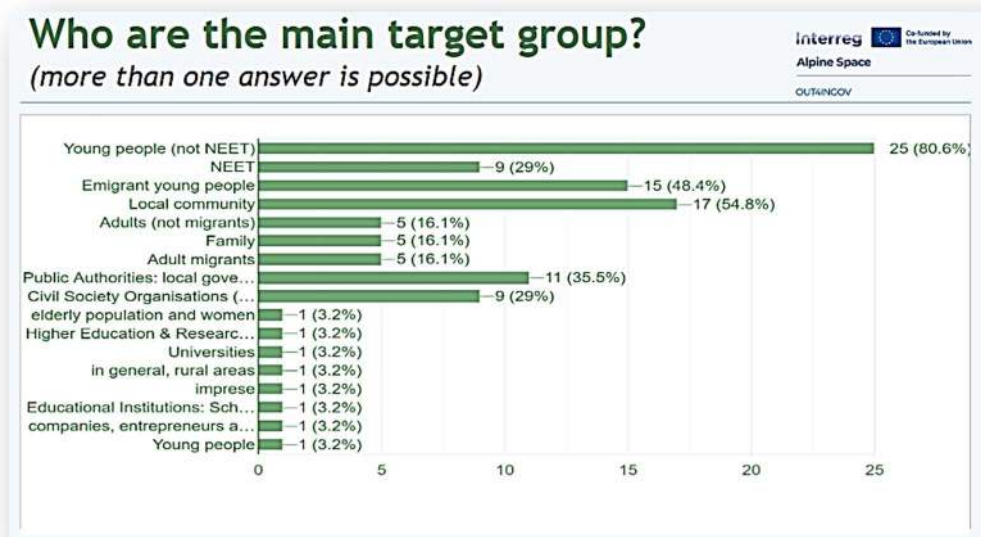
- 25 networking
- 19 information
- 19 consultation
- 16 cooperation
- 5 observation
- 4 monitoring

Other includes:

- 1 financial support
- 1 public call
- 1 capacity building
- 1 awareness raise campaign

Similarly, the question regarding the **target group** of each practice allowed respondents to select multiple options. A **multi-target audience** is understandable, especially for mechanisms and tools aimed at promoting participation, engagement, collaboration, and dialogue among various stakeholders and citizens. In our analysis, as detailed below, particular attention has been given to practices specifically targeting **youth populations**, since young people represent a **priority audience** within the OUT4INGOV project.

Graphic 2 – Target groups of the practices.



For the presentation of the analysis, we chose to include a **brief description of each practice – see Practice box**, providing essential information about its function and offering insights into how it has operated or is currently operating. Naturally, these perspectives are drawn from available documents found online or provided by the organizations leading the practices. In most cases, it was **not possible to base this assessment on formal evaluation reports**, either because such documents were unavailable or because the practice is still in its early stages or ongoing.

PRACTICE BOX

- Name:
- Goals:
- Short Description:
- Leading Organisation and Stakeholders:
- Geographical Area: Urban, Marginal Area (rural, mountain, remote)
- Geographical Scale: Local, National, Regional, European, International (with specification of the country or region, etc.)
- Strengths and Weaknesses:
- Innovative and Interesting Elements:

In the following sections, the practices will be analysed according to the **main topics addressed** and organized into **clusters** based on the types of mechanisms and tools identified. The main topics reflect the specific objectives of the OUT4INGOV project, namely: the **involvement and engagement of young people**, the **development and improvement of marginal areas**, and the **processes of migration and mobility**.

As detailed in **Table 1**, the analysis identified **10 networking practices**, **8 consultative practices**, and a mix of other practices focusing on **brain circulation** and **youth empowerment**. As previously mentioned, this classification serves an **analytical purpose**, helping to highlight the **strengths and innovative elements** of each type of practice, as well as their **weaknesses and challenges**. This approach is essential for capitalizing on lessons learned and for formulating recommendations to guide the development of the pilot experiments planned within the OUT4INGOV project.

Table 1 – Selected practices by topic and cluster.

| Main topic/focus | Total | Consultation | Networking | Others |
|--|-----------|--------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Youth participation | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 information |
| Marginal areas | 4 | - | 3 | 1 observation |
| Circulation of people and ideas | 14 | 4 | 5 | 5 brain circulation |
| Cross topics/focuses | | | | |
| Youth participation and marginal areas | 4 | - | - | 4 youth empowerment |
| Marginal areas and migration | 1 | - | - | 1 solidarity and cooperation |
| Total | 31 | 8 | 10 | 13 |

3.1 YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The OUT4INGOV project prioritizes the active involvement of youth in their local communities, fostering their participation and engagement while also promoting professional development and mobility throughout Europe, particularly in Alpine areas. Acknowledging the variability in definitions of youth across different times and cultures, the project recognizes that the transition from childhood to adulthood is not a uniform process. While puberty marks the beginning of youth, defining when this stage ends is complex and varies contextually (Furlong, 2013). Consequently, "youth" for this project is defined as individuals aged 15 to 35 years: this age range reflects various transitions significant for youth migration and mobility and the path to adulthood (YOUMIG Project, 2019), taking also into consideration the difference among counties included in the OUT4INGOV partnership. In examining existing projects, practices, and mechanisms that focus on youth participation, engagement, and empowerment, it's essential to recognize that some may adopt broader or narrower age ranges. However, for our selection process, we prioritize the types of participation mechanisms or tools utilized to facilitate engagement and empowerment over the specific age range itself. This approach allows us to focus on effective strategies that can be adapted across varying contexts while still addressing the diverse needs of young people in different stages of their development.

Before analysing the various practices that focus on "youth," it is essential to include definitions related to the policies previously mentioned and the processes at European, national, regional, and local levels. These definitions are crucial for recognizing the importance of valuing youth perceptions, competencies, and visions in promoting their ownership of their future—both individually and collectively. By establishing a clear understanding of these concepts, we can better appreciate how policies and practices can empower young people to take an active role in shaping their destinies and contributing to their communities.

Youth Participation encompasses the empowerment of young people as active citizens and change-makers within their communities and beyond. It emphasizes their inclusion in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and valued in shaping policies and initiatives that affect their lives. This approach supports the development of their capacity to engage effectively with various stakeholders, fostering critical skills such as advocacy, negotiation, and leadership. Moreover, youth participation creates essential opportunities for networking, dialogue, and collaborative action. By facilitating connections among youth, community organizations, policymakers, and other relevant actors, it encourages the exchange of ideas and experiences. This collaborative framework not only enhances young people's understanding of civic engagement but also strengthens their ability to influence positive change. Through meaningful participation, young individuals are empowered to contribute to societal transformation, promote social justice, and address pressing local and global issues. Finally, youth participation is about equipping the next generation with the tools they need to take an active role in shaping their futures and driving sustainable progress within their communities.

As summarized in Table 2, three clusters have been identified with a focus on youth participation: consultation, *networking*, and *information, advocacy and awareness raising*.

Table 2 – Practices focused on youth participation by cluster

| Clusters | Practices | Main findings |
|--|---|---|
| <p><i>Consultation.</i> This cluster refers to those practices involving structured mechanisms for young people to express their views and influence decision-making processes, ensuring that youth voices are integrated into policy, program design, and governance.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Local level) Ordinance on Public Interest in the Youth Sector in the Municipality of Maribor - (Local level) Youth for the Progress of Maribor - (Local level) Programma delle Politiche Giovanili della Regione Puglia 2022 - 2025 - Puglia ti vorrei - (Macro regional level) Mediterranean Youth Council | <p>Legal frameworks and structured participation offer space and means for youth voices to be heard and guarantee continuity of the mechanism and recognition of youth perspective.</p> <p>Bottom-up and feedback-oriented processes ensuring young people can influence decisions meaningfully.</p> <p>Long-term planning and diversification of resources are essential to reduce dependence on fluctuating political or economic conditions.</p> |
| <p><i>Networking.</i> This cluster refers to practices that support the creation of connections among youth, organizations, and stakeholders, fostering collaborative learning and action for youth-led initiatives.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Macro regional level) Young Bled Strategic Forum - (Macro regional level) Med Youth Network | <p>Community-building and networking foster strong co-operation and partnership and building trust and shared ownership of policy outcomes.</p> <p>It is essential to integrate an inclusive approach that values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for access, participation, and support for all young people.</p> |
| <p><i>Information, advocacy and awareness raising.</i> This cluster refers to practices aimed at providing young people with trustworthy resources, up-to-date knowledge, and timely information about opportunities for engagement.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (European level) YOUTHopia - (European level) The Future We Want | <p>Innovative and diverse approaches boost engagement and motivation.</p> <p>Avoid isolated actions and promote sustainable engagement processes that foster motivation, including participation through digital platforms.</p> |

Consultation

This cluster refers to those practices involving structured mechanisms for young people to express their views and influence decision-making processes, ensuring that youth voices are integrated into policy, program design, and governance. Across these four diverse practices, some strengths and innovative elements can be identified, highlighting effective strategies for youth empowerment and territorial development. It is evident that all practices establish formal or semi-formal mechanisms for

youth involvement in decision-making and policy shaping. It is evident that, irrespective of the medium through which this is achieved, whether through a dedicated Youth Affairs Commission (Maribor Ordinance), a transnational council (Mediterranean Youth Council), or comprehensive participatory processes (Puglia ti vorrei), legitimate channels are created for the voices of young people to be heard and to influence governance.

A fundamental innovative element is the emphasis on the active involvement of young people from the outset. This encompasses the provision of opportunities for students to propose research topics, as exemplified by the Youth for Progress of Maribor initiative, or to conduct extensive regional surveys and workshops, as demonstrated by the Puglia ti vorrei project. This approach fosters a strong sense of ownership and relevance. The initiatives under discussion are deeply rooted in their specific geographical or thematic contexts (Maribor, Mediterranean, Puglia). The objective of the programme is to address real-life societal, environmental and economic challenges pertinent to the areas in which they operate, ensuring that youth contributions are directly applicable and impactful at a local level. This is an element that is given greater emphasis in the group of practices relating to youth empowerment in marginal areas. In order to promote the development of these territories and their future, it is important to understand the specific conditions of young people in these areas.

A consistent strength is the successful partnership between diverse actors: local governments, public administrations, NGOs, civil society, educational institutions, and youth representative groups. This collaborative ecosystem has been demonstrated to enhance coordination, implementation quality, and long-term support for youth initiatives. These practices offer valuable opportunities for non-formal learning, fostering the development of critical skills such as project management, leadership, critical thinking, research, communication, and civic responsibility. These skills serve to complement formal education systems. It is evident that a considerable number of practices have been developed with a long-term strategic vision, despite encountering challenges in terms of funding. These practices are characterised by their objective to engender a sustained impact on youth policy and community development. Illustrative examples of this include Maribor's 5-year Local Youth Program, Youth for Progress's decades-long history, and Puglia's evolving policy framework.

These practices are characterised by shared challenges that have the potential to hinder their full potential and long-term sustainability. Indeed, the continued financial support of these institutions is often dependent on funding from municipal, regional, or European bodies. This reliance poses challenges for long-term sustainability, limits scalability, and can make it difficult to translate findings or ideas into concrete, large-scale actions if funding streams are not consistently secured. Furthermore, the complexity inherent in the quantification of their direct impact on concrete policy changes and broader societal outcomes is a significant challenge. The demonstration of clear, measurable results is of crucial importance for the justification of continued funding and the validation of their effectiveness. This challenge is particularly evident in "Puglia ti vorrei," where the translation of comprehensive survey findings and policy frameworks into concrete, practical actions and initiatives is problematic. This highlights a potential gap between policy formulation and practical execution.

Maintaining consistent, high levels of engagement and motivation among young participants and diverse stakeholders can be challenging for long-standing or transnational initiatives, particularly when frequent in-person interactions are constrained by limited resources or geographical distance.

Ordinance on Public Interest in the Youth Sector in the Municipality of Maribor [practice 1]

Link. <https://maribor.si/mestna-obcina/mestna-uprava/urad-za-kulturo-in-mladino/>

Goals. The main goal of this mechanism is to ensure structured, participatory, and transparent governance of youth policy in the Municipality of Maribor. In order to achieve youth participation, the Municipality of Maribor has created and aims to create conditions and tools to enable youth organizations and young people to actively participate in shaping decisions that affect them, to support cooperation between the municipality and

youth stakeholders and to enhance the quality, coordination, and visibility of youth policies, programs, and services in the city.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET) between 15 and 29 years old, Local community, Public Authorities, Civil Society Organisations

Starting date. 2013

Leading Organisation Municipality of Maribor (Local Government)

Stakeholders. Public Administration Department, Local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Local (Municipality of Maribor)

Short Description. The ordinance formalizes youth participation in policymaking within the Municipality of Maribor by establishing the Youth Affairs Commission, composed of municipal and youth sector representatives, defining its mandate, and decision-making role, and setting the framework for developing and evaluating the Local Youth Program. This program fosters cooperation between public institutions and youth stakeholders while ensuring transparency and long-term planning.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the main strengths of the mechanism is that it formalized youth participation in local governance through the Youth Affairs Committee, giving youth organizations a legitimate and recognized role in decision-making. This created structured cooperation between civil society and local authorities, improving transparency and responsiveness to youth needs. Additionally, the adoption of a Local Youth Program with a clear 5-year strategy allowed for long-term planning, coordination, and integration of youth issues into broader municipal policies. The ordinance also enabled shared responsibility, where public institutions and youth organizations co-develop and evaluate youth programs. A key highlight is the inclusive process of preparing the local youth program, which involves formal and informal youth groups. This boosted legitimacy, ownership, and policy relevance.

Weaknesses and Challenges. With the amendments and additions to the Ordinance in 2023, a solution was adopted that allows all organizations with public interest status in the youth sector and based in the MOM area to nominate three of the five members of the Commission for Youth Issues. This resolved the matter of nominating Commission members in favour of a broader range of public interest entities in the youth sector, in light of the previously noted lack of responsiveness and inactivity of the existing local youth councils. The Commission for Youth Issues remains a key municipal body through which public interest entities in the youth sector cooperate with the Municipality of Maribor. Additional amendments to the ordinance are planned for the future, with the aim of strengthening structured dialogue between local youth and the Municipality of Maribor.

Youth for the Progress of Maribor [practice 2]

Link. <https://zpm-mb.si/programi/mladi-za-napredek-maribora/>

Goals. The main goal of this mechanism is to promote and support young people's engagement in scientific research and innovative activities. It aims to foster a sense of co-responsibility and critical thinking, encouraging curiosity, creativity, and a commitment to their local environment and society.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET, from 12 to 19), Local community, Public Authorities, Civil Society Organisations, Educational Institutions (primary and secondary schools).

Starting date. 1983

Leading Organisation. Zveza Prijateljjev Mladine Maribor (Third Sector).

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Educational Institutions, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Local Level (Municipality of Maribor)

Short Description. Youth for the Progress of Maribor is a locally coordinated, annually recurring programme launched in the 1983/84 school year. Developed through cooperation between the Municipality of Maribor and the Association of Friends of Youth Maribor (ZPM Maribor), the initiative promotes scientific, technical, social, and creative research among primary and secondary school students in Maribor. It encourages youth participation, mentorship, and community responsibility by engaging young people in research projects that address real-life societal and environmental challenges. The programme supports non-formal education and creativity, while fostering scientific literacy, innovation, and civic responsibility, ultimately strengthening local identity and youth involvement in community development.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. Having run annually since 1983/84, this is one of Slovenia's longest standing and most highly attended local youth research initiatives, demonstrating consistent institutional and community support. A notable strength is the effective public–civil society partnership between the City Municipality of Maribor and Association of Friends of Youth Maribor (ZPM Maribor), which ensures high-quality coordination and implementation. Another innovative element is that students can select or propose research topics linked to their local environment, bridging education with civic responsibility and community engagement.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The programme's sustainability depends on ongoing support from the Municipality of Maribor and ZPM Maribor, posing challenges for changes or expansion beyond the local level. Moreover, while research outcomes have been digitised since 2011, full digital access to the entire archive remains unavailable.

Mediterranean Youth Council [practice 3]

Link. <https://www.medyouthcouncil.com/>

Goals. The main goals of the Mediterranean Youth Council are to establish a transnational platform for young people across the Mediterranean to engage dialogue between young people and local, regional authorities and international bodies, and to detect and make concrete proposals for actions that have an impact on issues common to Inter-mediterranean territories by working in thematic groups. By doing so, the project aims to empower youth to participate actively in decision-making processes and advocate for sustainable development, social inclusion, and intercultural understanding.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants), and public authorities.

Starting date. 2022

Leading Organisation. Les Têtes de L'Art (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Governments, Public Administrations, Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, and Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. International (limited to the Mediterranean Countries)

Short Description. The Mediterranean Youth Council (MYC) is a transnational assembly of young individuals from across the Mediterranean region, including Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey. It serves as a platform for youth to express their perspectives, engage in thematic discussions, and collaborate on initiatives addressing regional challenges. Through structured dialogue with authorities and stakeholders, the MYC seeks to influence policies and promote sustainable development, social cohesion, and intercultural dialogue.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the main strengths of this mechanism is its multilateral engagement, which facilitates meaningful interactions between young people and various levels of governance, thereby enhancing the

influence of youth voices in policymaking processes. An additional innovative and inclusive feature is the co-presidency mechanism, through which the Mediterranean Youth Council annually elects a new board composed of one woman and one man from the northern shore and one woman and one man from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. This structure ensures both gender balance and territorial representativeness, reinforcing the Council's commitment to equity and diversity.

Weaknesses and Challenges. As a broad regional network, the Council faces significant challenges in providing frequent in-person meetings for its young participants, an element that often plays a key role in maintaining engagement and motivation. While individual members are occasionally invited to participate in selected international activities, the Council currently lacks sufficient resources to bring the entire group together on a regular basis. Additionally, looking ahead, one of the key challenges will be to quantify the actual impact of the Council's initiatives on policy changes and broader societal outcomes, in order to better demonstrate its effectiveness and long-term value.

Programma delle Politiche Giovanili della Regione Puglia 2022 - 2025 - Puglia ti vorrei [practice 4]

Link. <https://www.regione.puglia.it/web/programma-politiche-giovanili>

Goals. The goal of this initiative is to recognize young people as active contributors to regional development, by fostering youth participation across various aspects of civic, cultural, and economic life and promoting innovation, creativity, and social engagement among the youth.

Target audience. Young people

Starting date. 2020

Leading Organisation. Regione Puglia - Social Policies and Innovation Department (Regional government)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Informal local community groups & Citizens, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Local and Regional (Puglia, Italy)

Short Description. Since its inception in 2005 with the "Bollenti Spiriti" programme, Puglia's youth policies have progressively evolved to actively engage young people in regional development. The current Youth Policy Programme (2022–2025) builds upon previous initiatives and incorporates feedback from the participatory process "Puglia ti vorrei," which involved thousands of young residents through surveys, regional tours, thematic workshops, and artistic calls. This inclusive process culminated in a comprehensive document outlining the region's youth policy framework. The report summarizing the survey results now serves as a guiding reference for developing new policies and initiatives targeting young people.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The "Puglia ti vorrei" initiative stands out for its bottom-up approach, ensuring that youth voices directly shape policy decisions. The programme covers various thematic areas, all addressing issues relevant to young people, thereby placing their priorities at the core of regional development. One of the programme's key strengths was its ability to engage thousands of young people across Puglia, resulting in a more comprehensive and representative understanding of youth needs and aspirations.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The programme's sustainability is heavily dependent on continuous financial support from regional and European funds, which poses challenges in translating survey findings into concrete policy actions. Moreover, as the programme is still in its early stages, the impact of the newly developed policies is yet to be seen and evaluated.

Networking

This cluster refers to practices that support the creation of connections among youth, organizations, and stakeholders, fostering collaborative learning and action for youth-led initiatives. Despite their differing scales and structures, both practices create platforms for youth voice. Both Young BSF and Med Youth Network offer dedicated spaces where young people can express their ideas, discuss contemporary challenges, and influence political and social dialogue. Young BSF achieves this through an international conference, while Med Youth Network does so via a transnational network. Moreover, both initiatives bring together young individuals from various countries and contexts (Central/South-Eastern Europe for Young BSF, the Mediterranean for Med Youth Network), facilitating intercultural exchange, collaboration on common projects, and the formation of networks among future leaders. These practices encourage young people to think critically and develop innovative solutions for complex problems. Young BSF focuses on high-level discussions about global challenges, while Med Youth Network actively supports the creation of youth-led, cross-border civic projects. Whether through the opportunity to propose topics and contribute to discussions (Young BSF) or by leading projects (Med Youth Network), both practices empower young people with an active and proactive role, recognizing them as agents capable of generating change.

Nevertheless, these practices are confronted with certain challenges that have the potential to limit their long-term impact or full inclusivity. Indeed, these initiatives are often unsuccessful in ensuring frequent, large-scale in-person meetings for all participants. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in the context of the geographically dispersed Med Youth Network. Even Young BSF, as an annual conference, does not facilitate uninterrupted in-person engagement. A paucity of resources for physical gatherings has been demonstrated to have a detrimental effect on sustained involvement and the depth of relationships. With regard to the majority practices analysed in this exploratory investigation, it is challenging to measurably quantify the impact of youth discussions and proposals on concrete policy changes and broader social outcomes. Demonstrating this link is crucial for the justification of the programme and its long-term sustainability.

Finally, although Young BSF has a consolidated organisation, its reliance on external support is evident. The Med Youth Network, being more informal, risks over-reliance on the motivation and coordination capacity of the leading organisation, raising doubts about its long-term structural sustainability without more formalised administrative mechanisms and stable funding.

Young Bled Strategic Forum [practice 5]

Link: <https://www.bledstrategicforum.org/platform/young-bsf>

Goals. Provide a platform for young people to discuss and address contemporary social phenomena, by promoting innovative solutions and strategic thinking among youth and encouraging youth participation in policymaking and international cooperation.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET)

Starting date. 2011

Leading Organisation. Bled Strategic Forum (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Local Businesses, Entrepreneurs.

Geographical Area. Urban and Marginal Areas

Geographical Scale. National (Slovenia) and Central and South-Eastern Europe

Short Description. The Young Bled Strategic Forum is an annual international conference held in Slovenia, serving as a platform for young leaders to discuss contemporary global challenges. Since its inception in 2011, Young BSF has evolved into a leading conference in Central and South-Eastern Europe, facilitating discussions on political, security, and developmental issues.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. This tool provides a platform for diverse perspectives by bringing together young leaders from different regions and creating a space for collaboration and networking. Additionally, it empowers young people to actively participate in global discussions and contribute to the development of solutions through a bottom-up approach, enabling them to voice their needs, ideas, and priorities.

Weaknesses and Challenges. Currently, this tool is limited to a specific age group and geographic scope, which poses a challenge to its inclusivity. Moving forward, a key objective will be to broaden participation by incorporating a wider range of voices, particularly from underrepresented regions and communities.

Med Youth Network [practice 6]

Link. <https://en.jeunessesmed.org/>

Goals. This tool aims to promote equality, solidarity, and social justice across Mediterranean territories by primarily supporting youth engagement in public life at various levels. The network seeks to build bridges between countries in the region to develop common solutions to current challenges, working toward a peaceful and inclusive future in the Mediterranean.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET, NEET, Emigrant), Local community, Civil Society Organisations.

Starting date. 2015

Leading Organisation. REF - Réseau Euromed France (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. EU institutions, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Informal local community groups & Citizens, Migrant Youth, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (mountain, rural)

Geographical Scale. International

Short Description. The Med Youth Network is an independent civil society network that brings together 250 young people from 17 countries (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey). It's a space of inter-knowledge, free speech and construction of projects, based on the experience, creativity and claims of committed young Mediterranean people around the issues of employment and vocational training, civic participation, mobility and migration, freedom of expression and environment. On a daily basis, the network supports the engagement and collaboration of young people across the Mediterranean by providing tools and spaces for learning, networking, and partnership-building. It fosters the development of shared strategies, and the creation of cross-border civic projects initiated and led by youth. Additionally, the network brings together young project leaders and representatives of social organisations around shared values and a common vision of a future where young people have their rightful place.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The network successfully creates a safe and empowering space for its participants, offering a wide range of tools and opportunities for learning, networking, and peer-to-peer exchange. Notably, it is one of the few networks entirely independent from public authorities, which fosters greater freedom of expression and a sense of security. Its strong value charter, rooted in inclusivity and openness to youth from local communities, young emigrants, and NEETs, ensures a diverse and respectful environment that supports meaningful dialogue and decision-making.

Weaknesses and Challenges. As an informally structured network without official administrative mechanisms, it risks depending heavily on the motivation and coordination capacity of the leading organisation, which may affect its long-term sustainability. While the network is highly active online, a key weakness is the difficulty

in providing frequent in-person meetings for its widely dispersed young participants. Although individual members are occasionally invited to selected international activities, the network currently lacks sufficient resources to regularly bring the entire group together, which can be crucial for maintaining strong engagement, building deeper connections, and fostering more intensive collaborative work.

Information, awareness raising and advocacy

This cluster refers to practices aimed at providing young people with trustworthy resources, up-to-date knowledge, and timely information about opportunities for engagement. The goal is to strengthen their civic participation, enhance their awareness of rights and responsibilities, and empower them to take an active and informed role in society. Activities in this area may include awareness campaigns, access to reliable information platforms, civic education, and support for active citizenship and advocacy efforts.

These two practices, while focusing on different themes (Cohesion Policy vs. Agenda 2030), share a common mission: namely, the empowerment of youth as agents of change at the European level** through awareness-raising, dialogue, and advocacy. Both initiatives operate on a European scale, engaging youth and stakeholders from multiple countries. This approach fosters a shared vision and collective action on issues of continental relevance, building networks and a sense of European citizenship.

These practices have been identified as effective in the facilitation of comprehension of complex concepts (e.g. Cohesion Policy, Agenda 2030) among young people. YOUTHopia utilises digital platforms and storytelling techniques, while The Future We Want provides training to campaigners for online and physical campaigns. The objective is to enhance comprehension and participation. The objective of these initiatives is to furnish young individuals with the instruments necessary to engage proactively in public discourse and exert influence over decision-making processes. The Future We Want employs training, street advocacy and advocacy campaigning to achieve this aim, while YOUTHopia facilitates direct dialogue with policymakers. Both initiatives have been designed to achieve a level of engagement which exceeds that which is typical of youth awareness campaigns. They actively seek to initiate dialogue with the authorities and decision-makers at various levels (local, regional and European) in order to ensure that the voices of young people are heard and integrated into policy. In order to maximize reach, YOUTHopia extensively uses digital platforms and media partnerships, while The Future We Want combines an online campaign with a physical "Transnational Caravan" which visits various cities. This hybrid approach enables them to reach a broad audience and generate both virtual and tangible impact.

The challenges that are shared by all are indicative of the complexity of the management of projects at the European level and of the translation of activism into measurable impact. It is imperative that these practices are able to sustain elevated levels of youth participation and motivation throughout complex and extended campaigns, particularly in light of the voluntary nature of youth involvement. As previously mentioned, the process of quantifying the impact of awareness campaigns and youth proposals on the realisation of policy changes or implementation (for example, Sustainable Development Goals, Cohesion Policy) continues to represent a considerable challenge in demonstrating long-term value. Furthermore, the organisation of activities and the coordination of participants and stakeholders across multiple countries – such as the 17 cities involved in "The Future We Want," a pan-European campaign for YOUTHopia – entails considerable logistical challenges and requires the consistent management of financial and human resources.

Finally, 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 across all participating countries.

YOUTHopia [practice 7]

Link. <https://youthopia.aer.eu/>

Goals. The main goal of YOUTHopia is to raise awareness of the concrete benefits offered by Cohesion Policy to boost the economic and social well-being of citizens and regions. It has a focus on empowering youth to actively participate in democratic processes and regional development, by facilitating dialogue between young citizens, stakeholders, and policymakers regarding the future of Cohesion Policy, youth employment and the transition towards a green Europe.

Target audience. Young individuals (not NEET, NEET, Emigrants) in local European communities, Youth organizations, educational and governmental institutions.

Starting date. 2022

Leading Organisation. AER (Assembly of European Regions) and Babel International (CaféBabel) (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Governments; Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Local Businesses, Media & Journalists

Geographical Area. Urban and Marginal Areas

Geographical Scale. European

Short Description. YOUTHopia is a Pan-European communication campaign co-funded by the European Union's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). It aims to bridge the gap between EU Cohesion Policy and young citizens by making the policy's benefits more accessible and relatable. Through various activities, including workshops, forums, and media campaigns, YOUTHopia encourages youth participation in discussions about regional development and the future of EU policies.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the strengths of this project is the effective use of digital platforms, storytelling, real-life examples and media partnerships to make complex European policies understandable for youth and to reach a broad audience. Furthermore, the use of multilingual online magazines (CaféBabel), multiple digital platforms for campaign dissemination and media partnerships that aim to reach direct dialogue between young citizens and policymakers, make the tool very efficient and innovative.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The success of this tool relies on sustained engagement from media outlets and continuous and differentiated content creation, making it a big challenge to keep having an impact across different regions. One of the main challenges of the future of this tool is to measure the long-term impact of awareness campaigns on youth participation in EU policies.

The Future We Want [practise 8]

Link. <https://en.artfusion.ro/portfolio/the-future-we-want/>

Goals. The main goal of this project is to raise awareness among young Europeans about the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to empower youth to advocate for individual and collective actions at both local and European levels concerning the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET)

Starting date. 2024

Leading Organisation Association A.R.T Fusion (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. EU institutions, Local NGOs (ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy, BalkanIDEA Novi Sad, Associazione CReA Onlus, Finnish Peace Committee, Sloga, Eine Welt Netz NRW e.V., Teatro Metaphora, Eclasio)

Geographical Area. Urban and Marginal Areas

Geographical Scale. Local (France, Serbia, Italy, Finland, Slovenia, Germany, Portugal, Belgium) and European

Short Description. The Future We Want is a Pan-European project that aims to bring the 2030 Agenda to the forefront of public and political discourse. The project involves training 45 young individuals to become Street and Advocacy Campaigners on sustainable development and Agenda 2030. These trained youths will develop and implement a large-scale European online campaign and a Transnational Caravan that will visit and conduct campaigns in 17 cities across Europe. The initiative will culminate in a two-day event in Brussels, where young participants will organize street actions and engage with decision-makers to present the Youth Manifesto, a vision of the future developed by collecting information and ideas from youth in the 17 locations.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The main strength of this project lies in its ability to foster transnational collaboration by developing a collective youth vision across 17 different cities, thereby making the Manifesto more representative. Additionally, the project is designed to train young individuals to become advocates and campaigners for sustainable development, equipping them with the skills to mobilize thousands of people and amplify their voices at the European level.

Weaknesses and Challenges. Some of the main challenges of this project include ensuring sustained participation and motivation among youth throughout its entire duration, as well as effectively managing logistical and financial resources across multiple countries and activities. However, the greatest challenge lies in achieving the project's ambitious impact target—reaching over 30,000 young individuals—and in ensuring that their voices are genuinely heard by policymakers, leading to the actual implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at both local and European levels.

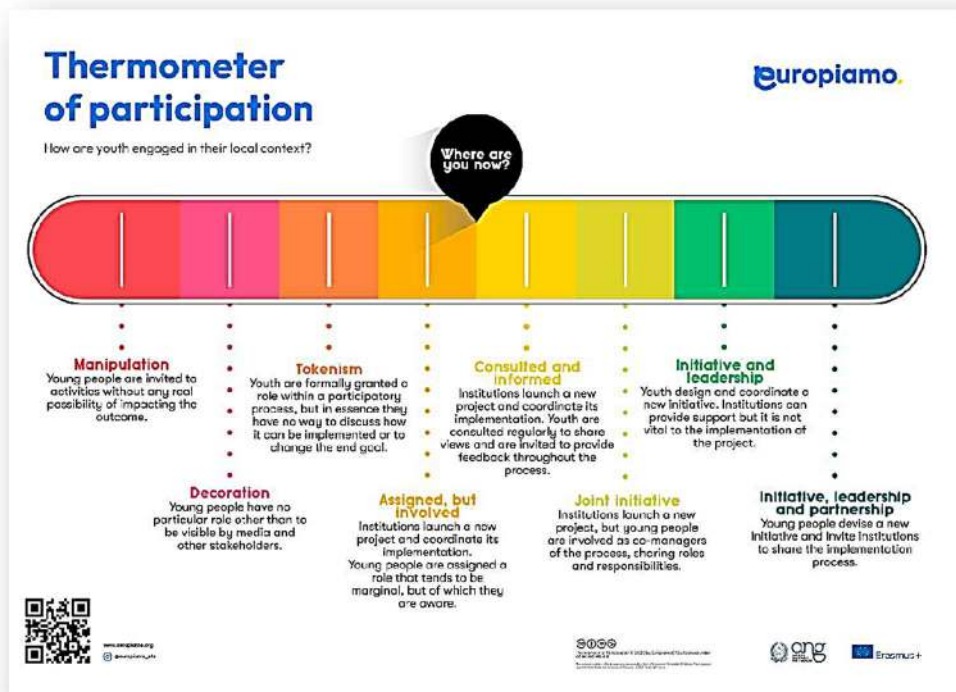
Reflections on youth participation practices

To gain a deeper understanding of this topic, there are two resources - “Have Your Say. Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life” (CoE, 2015) and “Climbing the Ladder” (2024) – that provide valuable insights and methodological perspectives that can significantly enhance our analysis and efforts to capitalize on our findings. Ultimately, these resources will assist us in consolidating the lessons learned.

The analysis presented in the Climbing the Ladder project is particularly relevant for the OUT4INGOV initiative, as it centres on critical reflections regarding youth participation models and mechanisms. Specifically, Europiamo ETS, an Italian youth organization, has reinterpreted Roger Hart's traditional Ladder of Participation (1992), which delineates eight levels ranging from manipulation to full youth-led participation. Practitioners observed that the ladder's vertical metaphor of “climbing” led to unrealistic expectations regarding consistently reaching the highest levels of participation and did not always align with local contexts. In response, they developed a **“thermometer” model**, where each degree represents a specific level of youth influence without suggesting that higher levels are inherently “better” across all situations. The thermometer metaphor reflects the degrees of participation outlined in the Ladder model, but in a more flexible and accessible way. Crucially, it identifies **three forms of non-participation—decoration, manipulation, and tokenism**—which must be clearly defined and recognised. These practices risk resulting in what is often referred to as **“youth washing”**: initiatives that give the appearance of participation but ultimately exclude young people from meaningful influence. Such processes may raise young people's expectations of being heard, only for them to discover—once engaged—that their input has little or no impact. This can lead to **frustration, disillusionment, and a long-term reluctance to participate**. Importantly, this dynamic can occur even when participatory processes are launched with genuine intentions. For this reason, those promoting youth engagement must be fully aware of these potential pitfalls and take proactive steps to ensure authenticity, transparency, and real opportunities for influence throughout the process.

The following image illustrates several types of participatory processes that we can identify within this framework.

Graphic 3 – Thermometer of participation



Source. The Climbing Ladder MODELS AND MECHANISMS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, p.13

The document analyses in a systematic way the model and mechanisms of youth engagement at international, national and local level highlighting the different features, the relevant and specific benefits for each level⁶. This review is interesting for pointing out the lesson learnt and the recommendations for our analysis and pilot development foreseen in OUT4INGOV project.

In particular, it is possible to identify some **key elements promoting youth participation and engagement**:

- formal structures - **legal frameworks and structured participation** - for youth participation (e.g. Youth Affairs Commission in Maribor, Mediterranean Youth Council), reflecting the emphasis on institutionalized mechanisms that offer **space and means** for youth voices to

⁶The *Climbing the Ladder* report, *Models and Mechanisms of Youth Engagement*, presents a comprehensive set of models and mechanisms to promote youth engagement and participation—ranging from advisory boards to local youth councils and youth-led campaigns. To avoid redundancy and to build upon this valuable work, it is recommended to refer directly to pages 75–80 of the report.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1me6FC2yczx3joWPg1xd5HsKEq5ATxrap/view>

As part of the same project, the publication *Good Practices and Case Studies* offers detailed descriptions of 18 practices that are particularly relevant for fostering youth engagement and participation. The recommendations and insights presented in this report are informed by the outcomes and lessons learned throughout the project.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18xAvqdfuTP1DBJDY7wiKVIPyE7LFwzN2/view>

be heard. The clear legal bases (e.g. local youth councils under national laws) help ensure continuity and recognition of youth participation as a democratic right.

- **Innovative and diverse approaches** (e.g. “The Future We Want” and “YOUTHopia”) show how creative tools—digital platforms, interactive campaigns—boost **engagement and motivation**. Different contexts require diverse mechanisms, adapted to youth interests and evolving digital cultures.
- **Community-building and networking** projects (e.g. Young Bled Strategic Forum or the Med Youth Network) foster strong networks between young people and institutions, by stressing on **co-operation and partnership** and building trust and shared ownership of policy outcomes.
- **Bottom-up and feedback-oriented processes** (e.g. the Puglia youth policy) ensuring young people can influence decisions meaningfully.

Moreover, certain critical aspects require attention to prevent obstacles to youth participation and engagement, and at the same time, to foster effective mechanisms. When initiatives rely on continuous institution or NGO funding, this can pose challenges for the sustainability and continuity of the mechanism or tool. **Long-term planning and diversification of resources are essential to reduce dependence on fluctuating political or economic conditions.**

There is a risk that youth participation initiatives mainly involve groups that are already advantaged, such as young people from urban areas or with higher levels of education, without bridging the participation gap for disadvantaged groups. As a result, NEETs, young people from rural areas, migrants, or those belonging to marginalized communities often remain excluded. It is therefore essential to integrate an **inclusive approach that values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for access, participation, and support for all young people**

Avoid isolated actions and **promote sustainable engagement processes** that foster motivation, including participation through digital platforms.

In this perspective, it is essential to design participatory processes that combine **opportunities for consultation and co-decision-making**, for example through **youth councils or advisory boards**, with **broader consultation initiatives** that reach young people beyond formal representation bodies. These initiatives can be structured around **local projects** focused on topics and issues relevant to the specific youth population of a given territory.

Such processes can also foster **peer leadership pathways**, where young people already active in organisations or communities encourage the engagement of their peers, promoting **youth community leadership, peer education** approaches and inspiring career path. Importantly, not all young people are expected to participate with the same intensity or continuity—especially during a phase of life marked by rapid personal and social change. Offering **multiple levels of engagement** can be a successful strategy to ensure continuity and inclusion, while allowing the voices of younger generations to be consistently heard.

Within this framework, it is crucial to work with **local authorities, civil society organisations, and adults more broadly**, to foster a **cultural shift towards listening to and valuing young people's voices**, perceptions, and ideas. This requires recognising their contribution in terms of **perspectives and competencies**, and embracing a truly **intergenerational dialogue** that promotes both continuity and innovation.

This shift in adult attitudes—especially among those in positions of power—also means enabling youth participation and engagement **not only in matters explicitly concerning youth policies**, but across all policy areas. Young people are the adults of tomorrow, and many current policies will profoundly impact their future. Ensuring their meaningful involvement is essential for allowing them to actively shape the communities and futures they envision for their **personal and professional development**.

3.2 MARGINAL AREAS

A marginal area is located on the margins in relation to the main economic, social, and political centres. This area tends to have limited access to resources and services such as education, healthcare, and various social and cultural infrastructures, and often suffer from social marginalization and difficulties in maintaining a stable population. The practices under this classification focus on revitalizing these territories by enhancing access to services, creating local opportunities, and preventing depopulation.

While it is widely recognized that there are distinct characteristics defining the "peripheral lands" in Europe, including rural, mountainous, remote, and inner areas, each of these regions presents unique environmental, economic, political, cultural, and social conditions. For the purposes of this project, despite the fact that mountain territories (of the Alpine region) are at the centre of the intervention, it has been chosen to include practices that address all these different types of marginalized areas. This decision stems from the observation that there are commonalities regarding youth opportunities related to employment, cultural experiences, and the potential for personal and professional development within a global context. These shared challenges and opportunities provide a foundation for fostering meaningful engagement and support for young people in these diverse settings.

Marginal areas in Europe can be understood as belonging to a semantic field that includes concepts like edge, boundary, periphery, and fringe. Analytically, a margin describes an **asymmetrical relation** that stems from a logic of centrality, linked to a system that produces marginality as a measurable negative condition. From a political perspective, the concept of margin is used to establish positions and map out hegemonies within European politics. Margins are typically spatial, placed at the edges of a European centre, but marginality can also be defined temporally, seen as being less developed, modern, or civilized (Ifversen J., 2019).

While the definition of marginal areas in Europe is a subject of ongoing discussion, for our purposes, we focus on territories facing significant demographic, economic, and social challenges (Vendemmia B., 2023). These areas typically include rural, mountain, peripheral, inner, and remote territories. Marginality extends beyond a purely geographical classification, encompassing several interconnected dimensions:

- ▲ **Economic disadvantage:** marginal areas consistently exhibit indicators below average, such as GDP per capita, higher unemployment rates, reduced income levels, limited competitiveness, and restricted opportunities for economic diversification (Vendemmia B., 2023; ESPON, 2018).
- ▲ **Demographic decline:** these areas are characterized by low population density, an aging demographic structure, and significant out-migration, particularly of younger populations (ESPO, 2018; European Commission, 2021).
- ▲ **Service accessibility:** poor access to services of general interest represents a critical challenge, especially in sparsely populated areas. Limitations exist in healthcare, education, transportation, digital connectivity, and public services. Low population density often renders service provision expensive and economically unfeasible (European Commission, 2021; OECD, 2020). Deficits in physical and digital connectivity isolate marginal areas from main economic centres, limiting their development opportunities. Poor transport infrastructure, restricted broadband availability, and high transportation costs create additional development barriers (OECD, 2020).
- ▲ **Climate vulnerability:** marginal areas frequently face heightened vulnerability to climate change. For instance, mountain regions are experiencing rapid temperature increases and changing precipitation patterns, significantly impacting traditional economic activities such as agriculture and tourism (EU, Climate Adapt [website](#), Mountains Areas). Additionally, natural factors including unfavourable terrain (steep slopes, high altitudes) and poor soil quality (low

fertility, poor drainage) complicate agricultural productivity, raising production costs and reducing profitability (EU, Climate Adapt [website](#), Mountains Areas).

- ▲ **Lack of power and socio-political connectivity:** marginal areas often exhibit diminished influence from central governance structures. Some regions are described as "silenced and trapped in negative marginality," unable to effectively challenge dominant centres (Vendemmia B., 2023). Beyond mere physical isolation, socio-economic and political disconnections further exacerbate limited regional influence in policy-making and resource allocation (ESPON, 2018; Vendemmia B., 2023). Moreover, these areas sometimes suffer from a poor public image in public debate and among the general public. This creates a negative narrative that disempowers them and prevents their ability to attract people or encourage young people to stay.

Young people from marginal areas face considerable challenges, strongly influencing their decision to migrate to urban centres within their own countries or abroad. These regions typically suffer from inadequate infrastructure, limited educational facilities, and insufficient employment opportunities, significantly affecting youth mobility patterns. According to OECD (2020), young individuals with higher qualifications, who have experienced more cosmopolitan environments during their university studies, frequently choose to remain in competitive urban areas due to better professional prospects. Similarly, lower-skilled young people also migrate to urban centers or other countries in search of improved economic conditions, broader social interactions, and richer cultural experiences. They often perceive urban areas as offering a "more modern lifestyle," while viewing rural areas as "traditional and backward" (ESPON, 2018; OEGFE, 2019). Although economic factors are predominant in driving migration, these negative perceptions of rural regions significantly influence their decisions.

Moreover, youth migration is not driven solely by economic considerations; social, cultural, and lifestyle factors play crucial roles as well. Young individuals seek dynamic social networks, cultural stimulation, and environments that encourage personal expression and growth (OEGFE, 2019). Consequently, a critical question addressed by the practices discussed in this section is how urban and marginal contexts can be reshaped to better acknowledge and fulfill the needs and aspirations of younger generations. Key strategies include actively involving young people in decision-making processes and fostering environments attractive not only economically but also culturally, socially, and politically (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2021).

As summarized in Table 3, two clusters have been identified with a focus on marginal areas: *networking and local development*, and *observation*. In addition, a cross-cutting cluster linking *youth participation* and *marginal areas* has also emerged.

Table 3 – Practices focused on rural areas by cluster

| Clusters | Practices | Main findings |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Networking and Local Development.</i> This cluster refers to those practices focused on building strong local networks that connect community actors, organizations, and youth to support local development strategies in rural, mountain, or remote areas, often addressing depopulation and revitalization challenges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Local) ESIRA. Enhancing social innovation in rural areas - (Local and National) Rural Move - (Local) AVGG - Alta Via della Grande Guerra, Sentieri e natura sulle tracce della storia | <p>Relevance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration - including local communities, LAs, and NGOs.</p> <p>Empowerment processes of individuals, organisation and community, through training and capacity building</p> |

| <i>Observation.</i> This cluster refers to those practices that involve monitoring trends, challenges, and opportunities in marginal areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (International) GRANULAR. Giving Rural Actors Novel Data and Re-Usable Tools to Lead Public Action in Rural Areas | Promotion of more data-sharing protocol and data oriented processes for policy formulation and decision making. |
|---|---|--|
| YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND MARGINAL AREAS | | |
| Clusters | Practices | Main findings |
| <i>Youth empowerment and territorial revitalisation.</i> This cluster refers to those practices focused on providing tools, training, and economic support for youth to develop entrepreneurial and transversal skills and contribute to the sustainable development of marginal areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Local and National) Ruralthon - (Macro Regional) Pitch your Project - (Local) The Youth Fund – Engaging young people in local development - (Local - Regional) TALENTI FVG Incentivi alle imprese per l'attrazione di giovani professionalità - (Local - Regional) Percorsi spericolati e imprese spericolate | <p>All practices position young people as central agents of change, actively involving them in decision-making and project implementation.</p> <p>Initiatives foster youth creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, transforming aspirations into value creation within the territory to combat "brain drain."</p> <p>Continuous dialogue among youth, experts, local communities, and stakeholders is encouraged, creating an ecosystem for co-created innovation.</p> <p>All practices include financial support or direct incentives to facilitate the realization of project ideas.</p> <p>The lack of dedicated funding for the long-term implementation of generated ideas is a common challenge that limits their impact.</p> |

Networking and Local Development

This cluster refers to those practices focused on building strong local networks that connect community actors, organizations, and youth to support local development strategies in rural, mountain, or remote areas, often addressing depopulation and revitalization challenges. The practices of ESIRA, Rural Move, and AVGG collectively present compelling approaches to the revitalization and sustainable development of rural and marginalized territories. They demonstrate a shared understanding that empowering local communities and leveraging unique regional assets are crucial for fostering resilient and dynamic environments.

A key strength observed across these initiatives is their deep commitment to participatory and co-creation methodologies. A number of projects are underway which actively involve local actors, community members, and even potential new residents in the design and implementation of solutions. This is evident in the use of pilot sites and Living Labs, where solutions are collaboratively developed directly with those they aim to serve. This bottom-up approach is predicated on the premise that interventions are highly relevant, inclusive, and tailored to specific local needs, thereby fostering a strong sense of ownership and agency within the community.

Moreover, the strategic adoption of digital platforms and networking has emerged as a significant innovation. Initiatives have been developed which effectively utilise online tools to bridge geographical distances, thereby creating vital connections not only within local communities but also with external stakeholders, potential new residents and broader networks. These digital hubs facilitate the dissemination of information, enable peer-to-peer support, and serve as platforms for professional and personal exchange, thereby expanding the reach and impact of revitalisation efforts. A significant number of these practices adopt a holistic and integrated approach to development. These initiatives extend beyond single-issue interventions, encompassing multiple aspects of rural vitality. This includes the promotion of socio-economic development, the fostering of strong local social networks, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the encouragement of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The objective of this initiative is to achieve comprehensive regeneration that respects local identity while building economic sustainability, by synergistically combining these elements. The ability to leverage specific local assets, whether historical heritage (such as a First World War hiking route) or unique community characteristics, is also a consistent strength, transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and reconnection, particularly for younger generations.

Notwithstanding the innovative nature of these practices, they are confronted with commonplace and substantial challenges that jeopardise their long-term efficacy and scalability. A critical concern is sustainability, particularly in financial and operational terms. A significant number of initiatives, particularly those in the nascent stages or reliant on specific project-based funding, encounter difficulties in securing consistent long-term resources. This has the potential to compromise their capacity to sustain infrastructure, personnel, and ongoing activities, which are indispensable for maintaining a sustained impact. The challenge of formulating a cohesive strategic roadmap that guarantees long-term viability and continuity also poses a significant obstacle.

Another recurrent challenge pertains to the maintenance of consistent engagement and effective collaboration. It is imperative to acknowledge that, in order to facilitate the full integration of newcomers into rural communities, to adapt to the evolving demands of target audiences (such as tourists) and to ensure the ongoing cooperation of diverse public and private actors, there is a necessity for continuous effort and the implementation of tailored support mechanisms. The presence of varying degrees of interest and participation among the target communities or stakeholders has been demonstrated to have the capacity to impose significant limitations on the extent of an initiative's reach and its subsequent effectiveness.

Finally, the scalability and contextual adaptability of these models present a notable challenge. While these measures have proven to be highly effective in their specific local or regional contexts, adapting successful approaches to different geographical areas with distinct cultural, economic, and administrative landscapes demands significant contextualization and resources. This regional specificity, while a strength for localized impact, can become a limitation for broader replication. In the nascent stage of some projects, tangible, long-term impacts and fully tested, transferable tools are still under development, which makes it difficult to assess their ultimate effectiveness.

ESIRA. Enhancing social innovation in rural areas [practice 9]

Link. <https://www.esira.eu/>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to empower the socio-economic position of rural communities, in order to achieve sustainable economic development that respects and integrates diverse social structures and the practical needs of marginalized groups. The ESIRA project is focused on implementing innovative socio-economic initiatives, with a focus on developing local social networks in rural communities and improving the economic situation of marginalized groups.

Target audience. Young people, Local community, Adults (not migrants), elderly population and women

Starting date. 2022

Leading Organisation. University of Burgos (Academic Institution)

Stakeholders. Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Educational Institutions (Universities), Informal local community groups & Citizens.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area

Geographical Scale. Local Level

Short Description. ESIRA is a development project supported by the European Commission through the Horizon Europe program, aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the population in rural areas and reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion for marginalized groups in rural communities. The ESIRA consortium consists of 15 organizations from 8 European countries, including universities, expert associations, and non-governmental organizations, creating a network of academic knowledge and practical expertise at the local level. Through innovative economic practices, the creation of strong social networks and the enhancement of participatory policies, ESIRA seeks to ensure inclusive development of rural communities, with an emphasis on economic sustainability and the protection of cultural heritage.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. ESIRA is a tool that focuses specifically on social innovation as a lever for rural transformation, by operating through pilot sites and Living Labs to co-create solutions with local actors, making it a very inclusive and participatory tool. Additionally, it seeks to create a supportive ecosystem for rural innovators, including capacity-building and policy support. The diverse consortium brings together academic knowledge and practical expertise from across Europe, fostering a rich exchange of ideas and methodologies for social innovation in rural contexts.

Weaknesses and Challenges. As the project is still in early stages, tangible impacts and tested tools are yet to be seen.

Rural Move. attracting people and building communities in rural Portugal [practice 10]

Link. <https://ruralmove.org/>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to attract workers, companies, entrepreneurs and investors to rural and low-density territories, by promoting population retention in these territories and education and training of the rural population in areas such as innovation, entrepreneurship and digitalisation. It also aims to raise awareness of issues related to investment in and repopulation of rural territories, promoting cooperation and solidarity between local communities, stakeholders and potential visitors and residents of rural territories. Ultimately, the goal is to boost the regeneration of Portuguese rural territories and provide more opportunities to their communities to live in dynamic rural areas.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET), Local community, Public Authorities, Companies, Entrepreneurs and Investors

Starting date. 2020

Leading Organisation. RURAL MOVE (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (Rural)

Geographical Scale. Local and National Level (Portugal)

Short Description. Rural Move is a Portuguese community of change-makers established to revitalize rural territories and support individuals interested in living, working, or investing in them. It operates through a digital and collaborative platform that serves as a bridge between prospective movers and rural communities. The initiative organizes matching events, enables peer-to-peer support, offers capacity-building

programs, monitors movers' experiences, conducts interviews to assess integration processes, and advocates for sustainable rural development through policy papers and public events. Inspired by a broader vision of rural areas, Rural Move promotes opportunities such as remote work, the green and social economy, and new narratives around rural life. Rural Move has strong training and accompanying – of people and territories - actions which consolidate ideas and synergies.

- *Rural Leaders Academy*. Community for training and co-creation of the next rural leaders. Creation of a network of rural leaders who are and will transform the future of the rural world. The Rural Leaders Academy project is a 9-month program in which participants learn, build networks and co-create projects with impact and social, cultural and economic intervention in their rural territories.

- *Rural Impact HUB* is a center for innovation and impact entrepreneurship , based in Miranda do Douro and focusing on all low-density territories. It supports those who believe that it is possible to create, live and innovate outside urban centers, with solutions rooted in the territory, socially useful and economically viable.

- *Rural in Movement* (1st meeting in 2024) is an event that celebrates the network and the 4th anniversary of Rural Move and invites the community to participate, promote new partnerships and think about future actions that continue to dynamize rural territories.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the project's key innovations is the establishment of a non-profit organization that complements—rather than replaces—local actors by serving as a central hub for networking and capacity building. Its online platform promotes rural areas by providing comprehensive information on housing, coworking spaces, employment, and cultural activities. The initiative also offers targeted training through programs like the Rural Leaders' Academy, empowering both local stakeholders and new residents.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The main challenges lie in ensuring long-term financial sustainability and defining a coherent strategic roadmap, which require strong cooperation and shared commitment among all stakeholders. Additionally, scaling the model to different regions or countries may demand significant contextual adaptation. Facilitating the full integration of newcomers into rural communities also requires continuous engagement and tailored support mechanisms.

AVGG - Alta Via della Grande Guerra, Sentieri e natura sulle tracce della storia [practice 11]

Link. <https://www.aldaplus.it/avgg/>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to promote sustainable and integrated tourism in the Vicenza Prealps by enhancing the historical heritage of the First World War through the creation of a Product Club. The aim is to foster local economic development and strengthen territorial identity.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET), Local community, Public Authorities.

Starting date. 2001

Leading Organisation. ALDA + (Benefit Corporation owned by ALDA)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Private Sector.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (Mountain)

Geographical Scale. Local Level (Vicenza, Italy)

Short Description. The Alta Via della Grande Guerra (AVGG) is a hiking route of approximately 200 km that connects the four WWI military memorials located in the Province of Vicenza. Pasubio, Cimone, Asiago, and Grappa. Following CAI (Italian Alpine Club) paths, the trail traverses historically significant areas, blending natural beauty with cultural heritage. Led by ALDA+, the project has initiated a participatory process with local tourism operators to create a Product Club, aimed at developing integrated tourism packages and promoting authentic, sustainable tourism. More than a

nature trail, this route offers a commemorative journey through fortifications, trenches, war cemeteries, and military outposts—where nature bears witness to a history that must be preserved and passed on, encouraging new generations to recognize its value.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The project not only enhances historical and natural heritage but also generates significant economic and social benefits, particularly for local businesses, by fostering a tourism network that offers high-quality, integrated experiences. Moreover, it demonstrates the potential of cultural heritage as a strategic tool to reconnect younger generations with their territories of origin.

Weaknesses and Challenges. One of the main challenges lies in maintaining effective collaboration among diverse public and private actors, while also adapting to evolving tourist demands and ensuring the route is effectively promoted.

Observation

This particular cluster comprises a single practice. As previously stated, the focus of empirical research has been on the observation and monitoring of processes and dynamics to a lesser extent in the research phase.

GRANULAR. Giving Rural Actors Novel Data and Re-Usable Tools to Lead Public Action in Rural Areas [practice 12]

Link. <https://www.ruralgranular.eu/>

Goals. The main goal of the GRANULAR project is to identify, develop and provide novel data and reusable tools to understand the characteristics, dynamics and drivers of rural areas and hence support place and evidence-based policy making.

Target audience. Rural Areas

Starting date. 2022

Leading Organisation. Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier (IAMM) (International Organization)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, EU institutions, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Educational Institutions, rural actors

Geographical Area. Marginal Area

Geographical Scale. International

Short Description. GRANULAR is a four-year multidisciplinary and transnational project aimed at generating new datasets, tools, and methods to improve the understanding of rural areas. Funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and coordinated by CIHEAM Montpellier, the project involves 24 partners across Europe. It seeks to provide new insights into the unique characteristics, dynamics, and drivers of change in rural territories. Through the development of a "Rural Compass," GRANULAR supports rural development stakeholders in designing place-based policies tailored to the specific needs of each area, ultimately promoting sustainable territorial development.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. GRANULAR operates 7 Living Labs and 9 Replication Labs across various European regions, fostering co-creation and multi-actor engagement. These labs bring together stakeholders from science, policy, and civil society to co-design, test, and validate project outcomes, helping to develop policies specifically adapted to local realities. Additionally, the project has launched an online platform that allows stakeholders to visualize and analyse datasets relevant to rural areas, supporting evidence-based decision-making.

Weaknesses and Challenges. As the project is still ongoing, the datasets are not yet fully available, which currently limits some aspects of data-driven analysis and application.

Reflections on marginal areas practices

The practices outlined—ESIRA, Rural Move, AVGG, and GRANULAR—demonstrate diverse methodologies that tackle rural development from various angles such as social innovation, community engagement, cultural heritage tourism, and data-driven policymaking. This diversity can foster resilience in addressing complex challenges faced by marginalized areas. Moreover, all projects emphasize **stakeholder engagement, including local communities, local authorities, and NGOs**. This collaborative approach enhances legitimacy and relevance, aiming at guaranteeing that initiatives align with the actual needs of the populations served.

In particular, according to the practices, **empowerment processes of individuals, organisation and community, through training and capacity building**, are crucial in order to build local competencies for sustainable development. In some cases, sustainability is considered a specific goal which can foster long-term perspective and durable changes.

As highlighted in various projects—such as SEEMIG and YOUMIG—there is a significant gap in the ability to compare local data across different areas and countries within Europe. The GRANULAR project confirms the limited availability and accessibility of datasets, which impedes comprehensive analysis and the development of effective policies. This underscores the urgent need for more immediate data-sharing protocols to facilitate timely decision-making.

Practices covering more than one focus area: Youth Empowerment & Territorial Revitalization

This hybrid cluster explores the intersection of youth participation and marginal areas. It highlights the importance of empowering young people as key actors in rural and remote regions, fostering their involvement in shaping local development strategies, promoting economic empowerment, and ensuring that their voices are heard in decisions affecting their territories.

This cluster could be defined as *Youth Empowerment & Territorial Revitalization*: a group of practices which bring together initiatives that strategically engage young people to breathe new life into communities, with a particular focus on rural, mountain, and internal areas. These practices recognize that empowering youth isn't just about individual growth; it's a vital catalyst for sustainable local development and a bulwark against depopulation and decline in often-marginalized territories. These programs move beyond passive engagement, actively involving young individuals in **decision-making, project design, and implementation**. Whether through hackathons, youth funds, or pitch competitions, young people aren't just beneficiaries—they're architects of change. This direct involvement builds critical skills like leadership, project management, and problem-solving. A central theme is nurturing young people's **creativity and entrepreneurial spirit**. Initiatives provide platforms and support for developing innovative ideas, especially those linked to the unique potential and challenges of rural and mountain areas. The goal is to cultivate a new generation of local innovators who can identify opportunities and translate them into tangible projects that contribute to the regional economy.

The practices aim to **strengthen the connection between young people and their local communities, businesses, and public administrations**. This includes creating dialogue channels, facilitating networking opportunities, and providing financial incentives or training to integrate young talent into existing local structures or to help them establish new ventures. This integration helps retain talent and ensures a generational handover in these territories. Projects are often designed to tackle specific regional issues, such as sustainable mobility, energy transformation, or the revitalization of local heritage. By engaging young people in these challenges, the cluster ensures that solutions are fresh, innovative, and reflective of the future needs and aspirations of the community. Many initiatives within this cluster also play an **advocacy role**, highlighting the structural

barriers young people face (e.g., in accessing the labor market in marginal areas) and pushing for policy changes. Some programs directly provide financial support or incentives, either for youth-led projects or for businesses attracting young talent, demonstrating a commitment to creating an environment where young people can thrive locally.

The practices within this cluster consider young people as not just residents of their territories but **active agents of development**. By investing in their skills, ideas, and engagement, these initiatives aim to counteract the challenges of marginalization and depopulation, ensuring a dynamic and prosperous future for rural and mountainous regions.

RURALTHON [practice 13]

Link. <https://giovaniareeinterne.it/ruralthon/>

Goals. The project aims to promote youth participation and support the development of rural territories by actively involving young people in processes of innovation and local engagement. One of its core objectives is to raise awareness among youth about the resources and opportunities offered by their local environment, as well as about sustainable development strategies rooted in rural heritage. At the same time, it seeks to foster creativity, initiative, and entrepreneurial skills, offering participants concrete support to transform their ideas into actionable projects. By promoting the Erasmus+ program, the initiative broadens horizons and connects young people to European opportunities. It also encourages cooperation and the exchange of best practices among organizations dedicated to promoting and protecting rural heritage. Lastly, the project plays an advocacy role, aiming to make policymakers more aware of the structural challenges youth face in accessing the labour market, especially in marginal areas. The project is initiated by *Give Back – Giovani Aree Interne* (Give Back – Youth Inner Areas), an organization functions as a think tank, comprising students, researchers, and professionals across economic, social, and cultural fields. Established as a non-profit, social-promotion association in 2022, its core mission involves organizing initiatives for dialogue between young people and political decision-makers, and elaborating policy proposals specifically on the theme of Italy's "Inner Areas," drawing inspiration from the values of the European Union.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET)

Starting date. 2024

Leading Organisation. GIVE BACK - GIOVANI AREE INTERNE (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Bank.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (Internal area)

Geographical Scale. Local and National (Italy)

Short Description. RURALTHON is a project that promotes dialogue between young people and policymakers in order to foster full awareness of the economic potential linked to the heritage of rural areas among citizens, public administrations, third-sector organizations, entrepreneurs, and all stakeholders. The revitalization of these territories depends on increasing civic, social, and cultural participation among younger generations, as well as developing civic skills among all actors involved in decision-making processes. This approach ensures that young people who wish to stay can establish stable professional opportunities. The central activity is a week-long hackathon where 50 young participants engage in workshops and collaborative sessions to design entrepreneurial ideas aimed at revitalizing rural areas.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the project's most significant innovations is its hackathon format, which deftly integrates education, creativity and entrepreneurship within a highly collaborative environment. This initiative is not merely concerned with the generation of ideas; rather, it fosters a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including a think tank of

young people, experts, and local communities, in an ongoing dialogue to collectively shape the future of their territories. The RURALTHON hackathon model is a sophisticated mechanism designed to bridge the gap between young people's aspirations, which are often shaped by globalised and cosmopolitan ideals, and the economic realities of rural areas. The phenomenon of youth out-migration is frequently attributed to a general "lack of opportunities" and economic vulnerability. RURALTHON, however, directly tackles this issue by cultivating entrepreneurial skills deeply rooted in local heritage and by actively connecting young people with local decision-makers and businesses. This strategic approach aims to create locally relevant and desirable opportunities that can effectively stem out-migration, moving beyond simply lamenting the absence of jobs to transforming passive job-seeking into active value creation. This model posits a replicable approach for fostering local economic resilience and youth retention by cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset grounded in local assets and facilitated by robust multi-stakeholder collaboration. The study offers a compelling illustration of the potential for active learning, healthy competition, and local co-creation to catalyse community-led change and diversify rural economies.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The main limitation of this project is that it is a one-time event, with no dedicated funding for the further development and implementation of the ideas generated. This absence of a sustained financial pipeline presents a significant challenge, making it difficult to ensure a long-term impact that extends beyond the immediate duration of the event itself. Without follow-up support, the valuable entrepreneurial concepts risk remaining theoretical, potentially hindering the full realization of the project's ambitious goals for territorial revitalization and youth retention.

Pitch your Project [practice 14]

Link. <https://alpine-region.eu/alpine-youth/pitch-your-project>

Goals The overarching goal of "Pitch Your Project" is to empower young individuals to actively participate in shaping the sustainable future of the Alpine Region, under the inspiring motto *shaping.future.together*. This is achieved by encouraging the development of innovative project ideas that directly address key regional challenges and contribute to making the Alpine Region fit for the future. The initiative aims to foster youth engagement in critical areas, promote a sense of ownership over regional development, and connect young minds with European opportunities and expertise.

Target audience. Young people (16-29 years old)

Starting date. 2018

Leading Organisation. EUSALP, supported by the European Commission (International Organization)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Informal local community group & Citizens.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (rural, mountain)

Geographical Scale. Macro Regional (Alpine Region)

Short Description. Pitch Your Project is an annual competition that invites young individuals to propose concrete project ideas aimed at the sustainable development of the Alpine Region. For the year 2025, participants must submit proposals aligned with themes such as mobility transformation, energy transformation, construction industry transformation, and youth involvement. An international jury selects five finalists to present their projects at the EUSALP Annual Forum in Innsbruck, where the audience votes to determine the top three winners, who receive financial support to implement their ideas. The first prize winner receives €5,000, the second €3,000, and the third €2,000, with prize money provided by the Region Bourgogne-Franche-Comté. Crucially,

beyond financial support, the winners benefit from mentorship by EUSALP experts to guide them in the implementation of their project ideas. The "PITCH YOUR PROJECT 2025" initiative is financed and organized by the Support EUSALP project and the Region Bourgogne-Franche-Comté.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. Empowers youth, fosters innovation. Interactive project development process. encouraging innovative ideas among young people, even when they have emigrated - pitching ideas that would benefit their region of origin Empowers young people to take an active role in regional development. One of the strengths of this tool is that it encourages cooperation among youth from different Alpine countries, while addressing pressing issues like sustainable mobility and energy transformation. The tangible financial support combined with expert mentorship provides a strong incentive and practical pathway for project realization, truly enabling young people to take an active, concrete role in regional development.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The competition relies on sustained financial support from EU and regional bodies, which is limited and the amount of money given to the winners cannot support big projects.

The Youth Fund – Engaging young people in local development [practice 15]

Link. <https://www.smartrural21.eu/roadmap-toolbox/creation-of-youth-fund/>

Goals. The project aims to actively engage young people in local development by fostering their entrepreneurial spirit and providing opportunities to directly fund their own initiatives. The goal is twofold: to strengthen young people's connection with the community through active participation in local life, and simultaneously to enhance their capacity to translate innovative ideas into concrete projects. A fundamental aspiration is also to incentivize young people to remain in or return to their hometowns, actively contributing to their revitalization.

Target audience. Young people (from 12 to 26 years old), Local community

Starting date. 2011

Leading Organisation. Tartu County and Youth Council in cooperation with Tartu LAG (Regional Government and Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Informal local community groups & Citizens, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (rural, mountain)

Geographical Scale. Local Level (Tartu, Estonia)

Short Description. The Youth Fund, launched in Tartu County, Estonia, in 2011, is a tool designed to actively involve young people in the development of their rural communities. By providing financial resources and support, it empowers youth to design and implement projects that address local needs, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and enhancing their skills in project management and community engagement. The fund follows a clear, three-phase process: defining conditions (establishing criteria like participant age, activity type, and team requirements), calls and evaluation (with regular open calls, application review by a committee that includes youth, and funding decision notifications), and finally, project implementation (typically within 4-8 months, with simplified reporting procedures). Over more than a decade, the Youth Fund has successfully supported approximately 150 youth-led ideas with a total investment of about €70,000, actively promoting youth entrepreneurship and civic contribution in local communities.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. A significant advantage of this instrument is its capacity to facilitate direct participation by young individuals in the decision-making process and the execution of projects. This engagement has been demonstrated to significantly enhance essential skills such as leadership, planning, and execution. The act of conferring upon young individuals genuine responsibilities, coupled

with the provision of financial resources, has been demonstrated to profoundly fortify the bond between young people and their local communities. This strengthening of ties is achieved through the medium of active participation, thereby engendering a sense of ownership among the young people. The fund's emphasis on supporting small-scale, locally relevant projects with minimal bureaucracy ensures accessibility and encourages innovative thinking at the grassroots level. Its regular call schedule and focus on sustainability for long-term impact are also key strengths.

Weaknesses and Challenges. While this tool is highly effective at a local level, the main challenge for its implementation is its dependence on local funding and intensive community engagement. This can necessitate significant coordination efforts and continuous resource mobilisation, which may limit its scalability or replicability without robust local commitment and consistent financial backing. The relatively modest individual project grants, while suitable for nascent concepts, may prove inadequate for more substantial, intricate initiatives without auxiliary financial resources.

TALENTI FVG Incentivi alle imprese per l'attrazione di giovani professionalità [practice 16]

Link. https://www.regione.fvg.it/rafvq/cms/RAFGV/formazione-lavoro/lavoro/FOGLIA138/?utm_source

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of regional enterprises by facilitating the recruitment of highly specialized young professionals, encouraging at the same time the return or retention of talented individuals within the Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

Target audience. Highly specialized young people in STEM education, Local businesses and enterprises

Starting date. 2021

Leading Organisation. Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Regional Government)

Stakeholders. Regional & National Authorities, Private Sector, Educational Institutions, Migrant Youth.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Regional (sub national) (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy)

Short Description. This initiative provides financial incentives to private employers in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region to attract and hire highly specialized young professionals. The program aims to strengthen the regional labour market by encouraging the integration of skilled individuals into local enterprises, thereby fostering innovation and economic growth.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. This tool supports companies in strengthening their attractiveness to skilled workers by offering financial incentives aimed at bringing back or retaining highly specialized young professionals. In doing so, it contributes to enhancing the region's human capital and fostering economic development.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The maximum annual incentive of €5,000 per company limits the overall impact of the program, as the amount may not be sufficient to drive significant changes in attracting or retaining talent on a larger scale.

PERCORSI SPERICOLATI e IMPRESE SPERICOLATE [practice 17]

Link. <https://www.percorsispericolati.it>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to empower young individuals to become agents of territorial development in Italy's internal and mountainous areas, by economically sustain small enterprises and projects in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

Target audience. Young people, Local community, Public Authorities, Civil Society Organisations

Starting date. 2022

Leading Organisation. Foundation Pietro Pettini (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Private Sector, Educational Institutions, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (rural, mountain, inner areas)

Geographical Scale. Regional (subnational) (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy)

Short Description. "Percorsi Sperimentali" is a dynamic and comprehensive training and activation programme specifically designed to engage young people in the crucial revitalisation of Italy's internal and mountainous territories. The programme entails a rigorous learning journey for participants, involving a combination of residential workshops, deeply immersive experiences, and collaborative remote sessions. During these phases, participants systematically develop and refine essential skills across various domains, including project design, service design, community engagement, and compelling storytelling. The programme's ultimate objective is the dedicated support and development of a single, concrete project, which is awarded a significant economic incentive of €15,000. This incentive is strategically designed to directly enhance local communities and foster the growth of small enterprises within these areas.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. A key strength and innovative aspect of "Percorsi Sperimentali" is its provision of multidisciplinary training in highly relevant areas such as project design, effective communication, captivating storytelling, and crucial social media management. The programme's design is intended to facilitate practical learning experiences by engaging participants directly with local communities and existing enterprises. This approach is said to allow for the application of theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. Furthermore, the initiative has been found to excel at fostering meaningful dialogue and robust networking between emerging young innovators and established local stakeholders, thereby creating a vital ecosystem for collaborative territorial development. The programme's efficacy is attributable to the direct correlation between training, community involvement, and practical project support.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The primary challenge confronting "Percorsi Sperimentali" pertains to its present configuration, wherein the substantial financial incentive of €15,000 is assigned to a solitary project. While this approach provides substantial support to the selected initiative, it also imposes inherent limitations on the broader impact within the region. Furthermore, it may inadvertently preclude the development and pursuit of multiple promising initiatives from other talented participants. The expansion of the scope of direct financial support to a greater number of projects has the potential to significantly amplify the programme's overall reach and contribution to territorial revitalisation.

The examined practices have been shown to share several key strengths and innovative elements. These elements can be identified as effective strategies for promoting youth empowerment and territorial revitalisation. Indeed, all initiatives position **young people as central agents of change, transcending a passive role**. This commitment is further exemplified by the active involvement of young individuals in decision-making processes, as evidenced by initiatives such as RURALTHON, Pitch Your Project, and Percorsi Sperimentali. Additionally, the management of funds by young individuals, as exemplified by The Youth Fund, underscores their direct participation in the implementation stage. It has been posited that this fosters leadership, project management and problem-solving skills (Pitch Your Project, The Youth Fund).

A fundamental objective of the programme is to cultivate creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit among young people. RURALTHON fosters the development of concepts pertaining to rural

heritage. Pitch Your Project centres on the identification of challenges faced by the Alpine region, with examples including sustainable mobility and energy. The Youth Fund promotes the establishment of autonomous local initiatives, while Percorsi Sperimentali provides support for small enterprises operating within internal areas. The objective of these initiatives is to transform youth aspirations into value creation within the territory, thereby combating the phenomenon of "brain drain". This concept is emphasised by both RURALTHON and Talenti FVG, though Talenti FVG's primary focus is on attracting and retaining qualified talent, in contrast to the bottom-up approach adopted by the other three initiatives.

The initiatives under discussion recognise the importance of continuous dialogue among young people, experts, local communities, public administrations, and the private sector. RURALTHON, for instance, involves a "youth think tank" and various stakeholders; Pitch Your Project includes an international jury and mentorship from EUSALP experts; while Percorsi Sperimentali facilitates networking between young innovators and local stakeholders. This dynamic fosters an environment conducive to collaborative innovation. In addition to honing entrepreneurial skills, these programs are designed to cultivate essential competencies such as project design, communication, problem-solving, public speaking, and social media management (Percorsi Sperimentali). The Youth Fund has been demonstrated to enhance leadership skills, facilitate effective planning, and improve execution capabilities. In addition, the Pitch Your Project initiative has been shown to refine presentation skills. It is evident that all practices incorporate a modicum of financial assistance or inducement.

Despite their strengths, the practices highlight recurring challenges and weaknesses that limit their long-term impact and scalability. This is the most significant and cross-cutting challenge. RURALTHON is a one-time event without dedicated funding for the implementation of generated ideas, which limits its long-term impact. Pitch Your Project is dependent on a limited financial support structure that precludes the funding of large-scale projects. Despite its longer history, the Youth Fund is dependent on local funding and necessitates ongoing coordination efforts. Percorsi Sperimentali, while offering a substantial incentive, awards it to only one project. The absence of a sustained financial pipeline is a common denominator that hinders the transition from ideation to large-scale implementation.

3.3 CIRCULATION OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS

The clusters included in this section focus on people's experiences with mobility, migration, and transnational connections. It is evident that phenomena related to the movement of people are inherently complex and manifest in diverse forms, each with its own distinctive dynamics and processes. It is relevant to consider these particularities in order to comprehend the motivations behind individuals' decisions to migrate from their place of origin, select a destination, or opt for temporary relocations to other areas. Such movements are frequently motivated by a desire to seek new experiences, to acquaint oneself with different contexts, to explore new professional opportunities, and to enhance one's family's living conditions. These elements have been extensively studied from a variety of perspectives and across numerous research lines, given their considerable influence. The impact is manifest in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, flows of people between different territories. It is also evident in the cultural, economic, political and social significance of these movements. It is important to note that the intention of this report is not to diminish the inherent complexity or analytical value of the aforementioned differences. It is not possible in this section to provide an exhaustive overview of the myriad phenomena related to the movement of people and ideas across different territories. The existing literature on this subject is vast and complex, covering diverse concepts such as migrations (e.g. including distinctions between forced and non-forced movements, labour migration, and refugees), mobility (e.g. encompassing short-term or temporary stays in foreign countries, as well as participation in programs and projects that foster cultural exchange), and diaspora communities (acknowledging the qualitative and quantitative presence of specific groups of people originating from other countries). Conversely, the objective of this analysis is to examine mobility practices from the perspective of the connections between territories, between people, and between territories and people.

The objective of this exploration is to investigate the manner in which the establishment of communities and networks, encompassing both physical and digital domains, can facilitate the personal and professional advancement of individuals, concurrently nurturing the growth of the communities to which they belong.

Prior to undertaking a detailed analysis of the practice, it is first necessary to establish the fundamental definitions and characteristics of these practices. This is particularly important given the significance of the previous project in the development of OUT4INGOV. These phenomena are inherently interconnected, thereby giving rise to a number of other salient topics, including the transition to adulthood, migrants and local development, and the broader phenomenon of globalization in terms of cosmopolitanism. This latter phenomenon is a significant pattern among both younger and middle-aged generations.

Some practices specifically focus on immigrants arriving in EU member states from Global South countries. In these cases, the primary objective is to enhance inclusion and develop effective welcoming policies. The emphasis lies in fostering dialogue and collaboration on migration and inclusion policies and programs among migrants, NGOs, and public institutions at local, national, European, and international levels. Such practices aim to create more cohesive societies, promote mutual understanding, and ensure migrants' active participation in shaping their new communities. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), **migration refers to the movement of people from their usual place of residence to a new location, either across an international border or within the same country. Although there is no single, universally agreed definition of "migration" or "migrant," several widely accepted definitions exist in different contexts. For instance, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs defines a long-term migrant as someone who resides outside their country of origin for at least 12 months.**

Migration is a cross-cutting issue due to its numerous causes and far-reaching consequences. It impacts almost all major policy areas in both countries of origin and destination.

However, the focus of interest for analysing practices here is not on migration policies *per se*, nor on the broad debates of the past decade concerning forced or voluntary migration dynamics. Instead, the key aspect lies in policies and practices that enable listening to and involving migrants, ensuring that they can express their views and contribute to shaping and improving reception and integration policies. The emphasis is on participatory approaches that allow migrants to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

In the context of youth, **mobility** includes various forms of movement: temporary educational exchanges, cultural programs, internships, and short-term employment abroad. These forms are typically voluntary and often aim for skills development and cultural enrichment, with many young people intending to return to their country of origin. In contrast, youth migration tends to involve more permanent relocation, driven by economic factors, better career prospects, or improved living standards.

The concept of mobility has evolved significantly and is broader than migration alone. According to Sheller and Urry (2006), the so-called **"mobility turn" in social sciences recognizes mobility not just as physical movement but as a fundamental dimension shaping societies, social relations, and identities. Mobility encompasses flows of people, ideas, goods, information, and capital, highlighting how interconnected and dynamic contemporary life has become.**

Mobility also includes concepts such as **brain circulation**, which differs from the simplistic notions of brain drain or brain gain. Rather than viewing skilled migration as a one-way loss or gain, brain circulation emphasizes circular and transnational movements, where migrants maintain connections with their countries of origin, transfer skills and knowledge, and foster development on both sides.

Other nuanced forms include **transnational mobility**, where individuals maintain ties and activities in more than one country simultaneously, enabled by technological advances and more permeable borders.

Moreover, **circular migration** describes the temporary and repeated movement of people between their home country and host country, allowing migrants to sustain social and economic links in both places. It is promoted as a way to maximize benefits for migrants and both sending and receiving countries, while reducing risks like permanent brain drain (IOM, 2018).

Beyond geographic movement, mobility also involves social mobility (changes in social status or class), transport mobility (the ease of moving physically through transport systems), and economic or professional mobility. In Europe, youth mobility is significant both within the EU and towards destinations beyond Europe, reflecting diverse aspirations and opportunities for young people today.

It is also essential to consider the **concept of diaspora**. Originally used to describe religious or national groups living outside their homeland, diaspora today refers to communities abroad who share a common identity and maintain strong emotional, social, and economic ties with their country of origin (Brubaker, 2005). Diaspora communities often engage in cultural preservation—such as maintaining language and traditions—and contribute to development initiatives in their home countries. Governments increasingly recognize diasporas as transnational actors and have established policies to engage them, offering incentives for investment and maintaining connections (Gamlen, 2014).

The project primarily focuses on **intra-Alpine migration**, yet it is equally important to acknowledge its close connections with **internal mobility**, particularly movements from marginal areas to urban centres. OUT4INGOV aims not only to examine the **push and pull factors** shaping migration, but also to explore the **intersections between different policy domains**—including employment and education, youth policies, and local economic development. As noted earlier, many peripheral territories have faced a steady population decline in recent years, driven by the closure of essential services, limited opportunities, and the absence of attractive prospects for young people. This generates a paradox of both **repulsion and attraction**: on the one hand, marginal areas may spark renewed interest in human-scale living and community ties; on the other, they often struggle to retain younger generations, whose temporary relocation to cities or abroad frequently becomes permanent. At the same time, urban centres are not always equipped to fully integrate or retain young talent, as high living costs and competitive pressures may push them further away, including towards international destinations (Licata, 2024).

Understanding these dynamics underscores the importance of addressing migration not simply as a process of **departure and loss**, but as part of a broader cycle of **mobility, return, and contribution**. By framing mobility as an opportunity for growth and revitalisation—both for individuals and for territories—it becomes possible to value return pathways and circular experiences, while also recognising the contributions of those who settle in new places and actively participate in building more inclusive and resilient communities.

It worth to mention another layer to consider, when analysing migration phenomenon, it is important to consider not only individuals and territories but also the **family dimension**. Transnational families are widespread, yet little is known about how the migration of one or more members, and the resulting long-distance care relationships, affect the well-being of all involved. Migration reshapes family ties: while it can generate opportunities and resources for those who remain, it can also create vulnerabilities, particularly in cases of separation between parents and children. These dynamics influence both individual trajectories and community life, with impacts that can be positive—through remittances, educational investment, or new skills—and negative, such as emotional strain or social fragmentation. Family connections also sustain a sense of belonging across borders, keeping alive the possibility of return and reintegration. Observing migration, therefore, requires attention to how families experience and mediate mobility, as they play a crucial role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural outcomes of migration processes.

As summarized in Table 4, three clusters have been identified with a focus on circulation of people and ideas: *consultation*, *networking* and *young brain circulation*. In addition, a cross-cutting cluster linking *marginal areas* and *circulation of people and ideas* has also emerged.

Table 4 – Practices focused on circulation of people and ideas by cluster

| Clusters | Practices | Main findings |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Consultation.</i> This cluster refers to those practices that involve engaging diaspora and mobile people and organisations in policy dialogues, ensuring their perspectives are considered in migration and inclusion strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Local) Agora de Grenoble - (European) Emerging Leaders Consortium – PLACE - (International/global) Migration Youth and Children Platform | <p>Empowerment. These practices empower individuals by giving them a direct voice in policy-making, fostering agency and belonging.</p> <p>Lived experience. They valorise lived experience as expertise, promoting mutual learning and horizontal exchange for effective solutions.</p> <p>Skill development. These initiatives build capacity through training in advocacy and leadership, enhancing participants' engagement in discussions and decision-making processes.</p> <p>Inclusivity. The aim is to promote inclusive solutions, ensuring policies meet real needs by involving diverse voices.</p> |
| <i>Networking.</i> This cluster refers to those practices fostering connections among diaspora communities, local actors, and institutions to support collaborative initiatives, skills transfer, and socio-economic development in both home and host countries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (International/global) Mondo Trentino Village - National FRANCE ALUMNI - Regional (Borgogne) Agitateurs de mobilité - (International/global) Südster – The network of South Tyroleans Abroad - (European) European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) | <p>Bridging Distances. Digital platforms effectively connect individuals and diaspora communities across vast geographical distances.</p> <p>Fostering Exchange. Practices facilitate professional and personal connections, strengthening networks and knowledge sharing.</p> <p>Preserving Culture. Initiatives actively preserve cultural heritage, language, and traditions, reinforcing identity.</p> <p>Providing Peer Support. Peer-to-peer mechanisms offer valuable guidance and real-world insights through shared experiences and mentorship.</p> |
| <i>Young Brain Circulation.</i> This cluster refers to those practices that encourage the return or exchange of skilled youth between countries of origin and destination, promoting knowledge transfer, innovation, and economic development through temporary or circular mobility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Scholarships for studies of Slovenians living abroad in Slovenia - National Ad Futura Study Visits - National Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme - Local and International Attrazione, permanenza e valorizzazione dei talenti | <p>To optimize human capital for national/regional benefit, whether by attracting talent, facilitating return, or fostering mutually beneficial international exchanges.</p> <p>Highly skilled young individuals are consistently at the core, seen as vital assets.</p> |

| | ad elevata specializzazione in Emilia-Romagna (Attracting, retaining and valorising highly specialised talent in Emilia-Romagna) - National FORTHEM Alliance at Université Bourgogne Europe (UBE) | Higher education and research are central to most programs, either as the domain of international experience or the sector for professional contribution. There is a clear, deliberate effort by public bodies to influence the movement and utilization of skilled youth for strategic national or regional advantage. |
|---|---|--|
| MARGINAL AREAS AND CIRCULATION OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS | | |
| Clusters | Practices | Main findings |
| <i>Solidarity and cooperation.</i> This cluster encompasses practices that foster cooperation and solidarity between distant territories by leveraging historical and cultural ties, promoting global citizenship, and driving reciprocal, sustainable development through local actions with a global perspective. | - Local and International Association Haute-Saône Mexique | Facilitating meaningful community interactions, exchange, and solidarity by fostering global citizenship in youth through international cooperation. Support of local needs while simultaneously building global solidarity, resulting in impactful and sustainable collaboration. |

Consultation

This cluster pertains to three practices that are of particular significance in the context of engaging (youth) migrants and organisations in policy dialogues, thereby ensuring that their perspectives are duly considered in migration and inclusion strategies. These initiatives operate at various levels, ranging from local to global. It is noteworthy that all of these initiatives incorporate elements of empowerment and capacity building. The objective of the initiative is to furnish migrants with the means to articulate their concerns and to facilitate the enhancement of policies pertaining to migration and inclusion. Across all practices, a core principle is the recognition and valorisation of lived experience. This commitment is evident in various initiatives, including the co-design of local policies in Grenoble, the fostering of leadership among individuals with migration backgrounds in Europe, and the integration of youth voices into global UN discussions. The direct insights and perspectives of migrants and young people are recognised as being not just valuable but also essential for the promotion of effective and inclusive solutions. A salient strength manifest in these initiatives is the commitment to participatory approaches. Agora focuses on direct, hands-on co-creation at the local level with public administration, whereas PLACE cultivates individual leadership capacity and a network of influence across Europe. Conversely, MYCP aims to empower young people to collectively advocate for international policy changes. Despite the differences in their scales and methodologies, all three underscore the belief that meaningful engagement leads to better, more equitable outcomes. It is evident that true integration and effective governance necessitate the active engagement of those directly impacted, the solicitation of their insights, and the subsequent incorporation of their perspectives into decision-making processes. This paradigm shift represents a departure from conventional top-down approaches, thereby fostering authentic inclusivity and engendering sustainable positive change. The practices also reveal common challenges related to sustainability and inclusivity. Moreover, ensuring diverse and representative participation (as evidenced by Agora's challenge), overcoming digital divides for online programs (PLACE), and securing consistent funding for volunteer-driven global platforms (MYCP) are critical hurdles to overcome. These challenges underscore the ongoing necessity for robust support

systems, flexible approaches, and dedicated resources to maintain the impact and reach of such empowering initiatives.

Agora de Grenoble [practice 18]

Link. <https://www.grenoblealpesmetropole.fr/actualite/220/45-participez-a-l-agera-2024-pour-ameliorer-l-accueil-des-refugies.htm>

Goals. AGORA aims to empower migrants by giving them a voice in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact their lives in Grenoble through a participatory approach.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants), Local community, Families, Adult migrants, Public Authorities, Civil Society Organisations

Starting date. 2021

Leading Organisation. Grenoble Métropole (Local Government)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, EU institutions, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Educational Institutions, Migrant Youth, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Local (Grenoble, France)

Short Description. The AGORA in Grenoble is a platform, created by Grenoble Métropole, where newly arrived migrants can participate in co-designing policies and action plans to improve their reception and integration, focusing on issues like housing, language, employment, and administration. The platform addresses key challenges faced by newly arrived migrants, including housing, language education, employment, and administrative processes. AGORA hosts regular meetings where participants discuss priorities and recommendations, ultimately leading to the development of an action plan with the local government.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the strengths of this project is the participatory approach where young migrants can co-design integration policies and collaborate with different key actors at the local level, promoting mutual understanding and tailored solutions. By involving participants in decision-making, AGORA enhances their sense of agency and belonging within the community.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The main challenge for the future of this tool is to maintain a diverse and representative group of participants to reflect the different experiences of migrants.

Emerging Leaders Consortium – PLACE [practice 19]

Link. <https://place-network.org/emerging-leaders/>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to empower the journeys of individuals with lived experience of migration or displacement, fostering their leadership and their capacity to shape inclusive societies and influence decision-making processes across Europe.

Target audience. Young people, Migrants, Local community, Family, Civil Society Organisations.

Starting date. 2024

Leading Organisation. PLACE (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. EU institutions, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Media & Journalists, Migrant Youth, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. European Level

Short Description. The Emerging Leaders Consortium is a learning and advocacy program that brings together 20+ emerging leaders with migration backgrounds from across Europe. Through a series of co-designed online learning modules, coaching sessions, and collaborative opportunities, participants develop essential skills in leadership, policy engagement, and community building. The program centres lived experience as expertise and promotes peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, with the aim of diversifying leadership and making decision-making spaces more inclusive.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The program validates and puts at the centre the experiences of migrants and refugees as sources of leadership knowledge and expertise, creating a space that fosters mutual learning and horizontal exchange.

Weaknesses and Challenges. Since the consortium is held online, access to stable internet and tech tools can limit full participation for some individuals.

Migration Youth and Children Platform [practise 20]

Link. <https://migrationyouthchildrenplatform.org/youth/>

Goals. The main goal of this platform is to create a space to involve young people under 30 and children to actively participate in international migration policymaking, by facilitating youth-led advocacy, capacity building, and knowledge sharing, and to bridge the gap between youth and the United Nations system, ensuring their meaningful involvement in migration-related discussions and decisions.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants)

Starting date. 2017

Leading Organisation. Migration Youth and Children Platform (International Organization)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, EU institutions, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Migrant Youth, Youth representative groups.

Geographical Area. n.a.

Geographical Scale. International

Short Description. The Migration Youth and Children Platform (MYCP) is a self-organized, youth-led initiative that serves as the official space for young people to engage in international migration policymaking. Operating under the Major Group for Children and Youth (aged below 30) to, MYCP facilitates youth participation in global forums such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), ensuring that youth voices are integral to shaping migration policies

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The platform itself is very innovative because it's a self-organized platform that gives young people the opportunity to discuss politics and take an active part in political processes, welcoming diverse youth voices, including those from marginalized and underrepresented communities. It also provides platforms like the Migration Youth Forum for youth to contribute to high-level international discussions and offers training and resources to enhance youth skills in policy advocacy, public speaking, and leadership.

Weaknesses and Challenges. As a volunteer-driven platform, sustaining long-term initiatives and expanding reach can be challenging without consistent funding.

Networking

This cluster refers to those practices that foster connections among diaspora communities, local actors, and institutions to support collaborative initiatives, skills transfer, and socio-economic development in both home and host countries. The networking practices examined here reveal a multi-dimensional and strategic approach to engaging communities abroad, often referred to as the

diaspora, and young people pursuing international experiences. The concept of diaspora in this context extends beyond the confines of ethnic origin, encompassing networks of graduates, professionals, and youth with experiences abroad. These individuals are regarded as vital resources for their respective home countries or regions. There are initiatives in place to support young people in accessing opportunities abroad for study, work, or volunteering. Such experiences are of crucial importance for their personal and professional growth, which can then be highly valued by their home countries. It is evident that certain practices are explicitly designed to mobilize the expertise of the diaspora to contribute to global sustainable development goals. These practices place significant emphasis on collaboration between diaspora organisations, countries of origin, and international institutions. It is evident that a number of initiatives have been established with the objective of maintaining the connection to the culture, language and traditions of the homeland among communities residing abroad. The practices included in this cluster frequently encompass intergenerational exchange programmes and educational curricula, which are designed to perpetuate cultural heritage and foster a sense of belonging. The utilisation of professional networks, which facilitate connections between individuals from the same country of origin, has been demonstrated to play a pivotal role in the promotion of knowledge exchange and the establishment of mentorship relationships. These networks have been shown to engender synergies of considerable potency, which in turn redound to the benefit of the members of the network and their respective regions of origin.

These initiatives highlight several salient strengths in their approach:

- It is evident that **digital platforms** play a pivotal role in overcoming geographical boundaries, effectively facilitating connections between individuals and communities across vast distances. They establish and sustain crucial connections within diaspora communities and between individuals and their respective homelands or institutional affiliations.
- The facilitation of **professional and personal exchange** is a key strength of many practices, which demonstrate a high level of proficiency in cultivating both professional and personal connections. This phenomenon has been shown to result in the establishment of robust networks, enhanced knowledge dissemination, and the emergence of concrete opportunities, including employment and internship prospects. It is worthy of note that certain networks have witnessed an increase in registered enterprises, a development that has given rise to professional collaboration and the generation of synergies.
- **Cultural preservation and the enhancement of identity** are two key objectives of these initiatives. A significant benefit of these initiatives is their role in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, language, and traditions among diaspora communities. This active engagement has been demonstrated to be an effective method of strengthening a vital sense of identity and belonging.
- The **efficacy of peer-to-peer support mechanisms is a noteworthy strength**. The provision of platforms through which individuals can share first-hand experiences or engage in mentorship programmes is a strategy employed by these initiatives to offer invaluable guidance and real-world insights, rendering the support more authentic and relatable.

Mondo Trentino Village [practice 21]

Link. <https://mondotrentinovillage.it/>

Goals. The main goals of this tool are to create and maintain connections between the Trentino region and its diaspora communities worldwide, to promote cultural exchange and strengthen the sense of identity among Trentino descendants, and to encourage youth participation through educational and cultural initiatives.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants), Local community, Adults, Civil Society Organisations

Starting date. 2023

Leading Organisation. Provincia Autonoma di Trento (Local Government and Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Regional and International (Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Italy)

Short Description. Mondo Trentino Village is a digital community that serves as a virtual meeting place for individuals of Trentino origin across the globe. The platform offers a range of cultural, educational, and social initiatives aimed at strengthening ties between the Trentino region and its diaspora. Programs include youth exchanges, cultural festivals, and opportunities for descendants to explore their heritage and engage with their ancestral homeland.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The platform creates a digital network which bridges geographical distances, allowing for continuous engagement with the global Trentino community. The initiatives aim to preserve and promote Trentino traditions, language, and heritage among diaspora communities.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The different levels of interest and participation among diaspora communities can impact the reach and effectiveness of initiatives.

FRANCE ALUMNI [practice 22]

Link. <https://www.francealumni.fr>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to promote and help French students abroad to create networks.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants)

Starting date. 2014

Leading Organisation. Campus France (Academic Institution)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Educational Institutions, Migrant Youth.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. National (France)

Short Description. France Alumni is a global digital platform designed to connect international graduates of French higher education (530 000 members into 136 counties.). Managed by Campus France, it offers a professional social network where members can access job and internship opportunities, participate in cultural and networking events, and stay informed about developments in France. The platform serves as a bridge between alumni and France, facilitating ongoing engagement and collaboration.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of its strengths is that it works similarly to a professional social network, allowing members to connect with peers, institutions, and employers and offering articles, event information, and thematic groups to keep alumni connected to French culture and society. It's a sustainable tool because it's an "institutionalized" organization,

Weaknesses and Challenges. Alumni participation levels may vary across different regions, potentially limiting the network's effectiveness in certain areas.

Agitateurs de mobilité [practice 23]

Link. <https://www.agitateursdemobilite.fr>

Goals. This mechanism was created to help young people of the region who want to go abroad to study, get a job, practice another language and enhance their return. To inform, guide, and support young people from the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region in France in their international mobility projects, for studies, internships, employment, volunteering, or cultural exchanges. The initiative aims to promote autonomy,

intercultural openness, and personal development among youth through accessible resources and personalized support.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET), NEET, Family, Public Authorities. local, regional and province government

Starting date. 2016

Leading Organisation. Région Bourgogne Franche Comté (Regional Government)

Stakeholders. Regional & National Authorities, EU institutions, Educational Institutions.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Regional (Bourgogne)

Short Description. Agitateurs de Mobilité is a platform dedicated to assisting young people in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté with their aspirations to gain international experience. It offers a wealth of information on various programs, practical advice, testimonials, and connects users with professionals and ambassadors who can provide personalized guidance. The platform covers all stages of the mobility process, from preparation to reintegration.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the strengths of this mechanism is that it features a network of young individuals sharing first-hand experiences abroad, offering peer-to-peer support, providing detailed guides, checklists, and tools to help in preparation. One key highlight is that it ensures that information is accessible to all youth, including those with fewer opportunities, adhering to the principles of the European Youth Information Charter.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The platform is tailored specifically for the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region, which may limit its applicability to youth in other regions.

Südstern – The network of South Tyroleans Abroad [practice 24]

Link. <https://www.suedstern.org/>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to connect South Tyroleans living abroad for professional and personal exchange, in order to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among members and to strengthen the networks between the South Tyrolean diaspora and their homeland.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants), Adults, Public Authorities, Enterprises

Starting date. 2004

Leading Organisation. Südstern (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Educational Institutions, Migrant Youth.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. International

Short Description. Südstern is a global network that unites over 3,100 South Tyroleans from a wide range of industries and fields of activity across nearly 100 countries. Südstern was born out of the idea of connecting South Tyroleans living abroad for professional reasons, with the goal of promoting communication and exchange among them, as well as strengthening contact with their homeland, South Tyrol. It serves as a platform for members to share experiences, support each other, and maintain a connection with South Tyrol. The network offers online resources, organizes events, and provides mentoring opportunities, fostering a sense of community among the South Tyrolean diaspora.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. Over the years this network has increased of enterprises registered to it, creating strong connections between high professional profiles, so that synergies are created for strong and continuous collaborations over time. One of the key elements of this network is the mentoring

program that offers students the opportunity to connect with experienced professionals abroad for guidance and support.

Weaknesses and Challenges. One of its main limitations lies in the dependence on active participation from members to sustain engagement.

European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) [practice 25]

Link. <https://diasporafordevelopment.eu/>

Goals. EUDiF aims to maximize the potential of the diaspora for global sustainable development through research, dialogue, capacity building, and mobilizing diaspora expertise. It aims to support governments of countries of origin and diaspora organizations in Europe to engage and collaborate more effectively with each other and with the EU.

Target audience. Local community, Public Authorities, Civil Society Organisations.

Starting date. 2019

Leading Organisation. International Centre for Migration Policy Development (International Organization)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, EU institutions, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. International

Short Description. The European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) is a pilot project funded by the EU that aims to consolidate knowledge and action to address the fragmentation of diaspora engagement for development. EUDiF assists diaspora organisations in Europe, countries of origin, and the EU to engage and collaborate more effectively on development issues. The project operates through four interlinked strands. knowledge, capacity development, dialogue, and diaspora expertise. Activities include global mapping of diaspora engagement policies, case studies, capacity-building initiatives, diaspora consultations, and government roundtables.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. This mechanism has a comprehensive approach to diaspora engagement, with an inclusive and participatory methodology and an open-access platform providing resources, case studies, and best practices on diaspora engagement. One of its more innovative elements is the global mapping of diaspora engagement policies, priorities, and projects in 120 partner countries.

Weaknesses and Challenges. This mechanism is highly dependent on sustained EU funding, which poses a challenge for its long-term sustainability and continuity beyond the official project phases.

Young brain circulation

This cluster refers to those practices that encourage the return or exchange of skilled youth between countries of origin and destination, promoting knowledge transfer, innovation, and economic development through temporary or circular mobility.

The practices within the *Young brain circulation* cluster collectively highlight a concerted effort by public institutions (at both national/regional and European levels) and higher education institutes to strategically manage human capital flows, specifically targeting youth students and young people in their transition to adulthood. These initiatives aim to foster knowledge transfer, innovation, and economic development through various forms of international experience, whether temporary, circular, or focused on return.

Public authorities emerge as the primary drivers and strategic architects of these brain circulation policies. National and regional governments, such as those in Slovenia (through ARIS and the Public Scholarship Fund) and Emilia-Romagna, directly initiate and fund programs or establish comprehensive legislative frameworks. Their involvement signals a clear strategic interest in preventing brain drain and actively promoting the return or effective utilization of highly skilled youth. At the European level, EU institutions play a pivotal role, particularly exemplified by their support for transnational academic collaborations like the FORTHEM Alliance. Their funding and policy directives are crucial in shaping cross-border educational and research environments that encourage international exchange.

Higher education institutes (HEIs) are indispensable partners in these endeavours, acting as both destinations for incoming talent and platforms for developing outgoing talent. They are the academic homes for returning researchers (e.g., Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme) and international students (e.g., Scholarships for Slovenians living abroad). Conversely, they are the launching pads for students undertaking studies abroad (e.g., Ad Futura). Critically, alliances like FORTHEM demonstrate HEIs' proactive role in directly implementing cross-border programs, joint degrees, and research collaborations, effectively building integrated "European Campuses".

The explicit focus on youth in higher education or in the early stages of their professional careers is a unifying characteristic. These practices recognize this demographic as a critical phase for skill acquisition, international exposure, and the formation of future contributions to the economy and society. By targeting students (undergraduate, master's, doctoral) and young researchers, these programs aim to capture talent at a formative stage, ensuring that their international experiences are strategically aligned with national or regional development priorities.

Despite their diverse operational mechanisms, these practices share fundamental similarities:

- Valorisation of human capital. All aim to optimize human capital for national/regional benefit, whether by attracting talent, facilitating return, or fostering mutually beneficial international exchanges.
- Target audience. Highly skilled young individuals are consistently at the core, seen as vital assets.
- Leveraging education and research. Higher education and research are central to most programs, either as the domain of international experience or the sector for professional contribution.
- Strategic intent. There is a clear, deliberate effort by public bodies to influence the movement and utilization of skilled youth for strategic national or regional advantage.

Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme [practice 26]

Link. <http://www.aris-rs.si/en/index.asp>

Goals. The main goal of the Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme is to address brain drain by reintegrating young Slovenian researchers from abroad into the national academic and research system, strengthening Slovenia's research and innovation capacity by a highly skilled group.

Target audience. Young Slovenian researchers working abroad in higher education and research, specifically those who obtained their first doctoral degree within the past 15 years.

Starting date. 2019

Leading Organisation. The Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS)

Stakeholders. Regional and national authorities; Slovenian academic institutions; diaspora networks.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. National (Slovenia)

Short Description. The Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme is a strategic national initiative launched in 2019 by ARIS to reverse brain drain by attracting young Slovenian researchers back from abroad. It offers project-based funding of up to €150,000 annually for a maximum of three years to support the researchers' employment, research activities, and the establishment of research teams. The programme is inclusive of all scientific disciplines and is integrated into ARIS's regular annual calls, ensuring visibility and institutional embedding. It aligns with national innovation and smart specialisation strategies and has been sustained through public funding since inception.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the key strengths of the Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme is its dedicated reintegration scheme, specifically tailored to support researchers who are up to 15 years post-PhD. The programme offers substantial and stable funding—up to €150,000 per year for a maximum duration of three years—which provides a strong financial foundation for returning scientists. By being embedded in national research funding calls managed by ARIS, the programme ensures long-term continuity and smooth institutional integration. It also guarantees cross-disciplinary access, allowing researchers from all scientific fields to apply, and operates through transparent and structured procedures. Moreover, the programme supports not only individual researchers but also the development of their emerging research teams, contributing to lasting impact within Slovenia's academic and innovation ecosystem.

Weaknesses and Challenges. One of the main weaknesses is that the programme relies heavily on national funding, which may affect its long-term sustainability. Additionally, reaching and effectively engaging highly mobile and diverse diaspora profiles remains a complex task that requires continuous outreach and adaptive strategies.

Scholarships for studies of Slovenians living abroad in Slovenia [practice 27]

Link. <https://www.srips-rs.si/en/scholarships/scholarships-studies-slovenians-living-abroad-slovenia>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to strengthen ties between Slovenia and its global diaspora by supporting young Slovenians living abroad to pursue higher education in Slovenia, thereby promoting cultural re-integration, national identity, and long-term engagement with the country.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants)

Starting date. 2014

Leading Organisation. The Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia (National Fund)

Stakeholders. Regional & National Authorities, Educational Institutions.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. National (Slovenia)

Short Description. Governed by the Scholarship Act (ZŠtip-1) and the Rules on the Allocation of State Scholarships, this tool offers financial support to young Slovenians living abroad who wish to pursue undergraduate or master's studies in Slovenia. The primary aim is to reinforce ties between the Slovenian diaspora and their homeland by facilitating access to higher education within Slovenia. The scholarship includes a monthly stipend and may cover additional benefits such as subsidized accommodation in student dormitories.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The programme effectively targets the problem of the diaspora of young Slovenians, supporting their academic, cultural, and national connection to Slovenia, by removing financial barriers for students.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The monthly fixed scholarship amount may not fully cover the cost of living in Slovenia, potentially posing financial challenges for students from countries with higher living costs. Additionally, the requirement to enrol in specific degree programs may limit accessibility for some interested candidates.

Ad Futura Study Visits [practice 28]

Link. <https://www.srips-rs.si/en/scholarships/ad-futura-scholarships>

Goals. The purpose of the Ad Futura programme is to promote international academic mobility of Slovenian students in strategically important fields, with the aim of enhancing knowledge transfer, closing skills gaps, and aligning education with national and regional development priorities, while ensuring that the benefits of this tool are reinvested in Slovenia's economy and society.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants)

Starting date. 2007

Leading Organisation. Public Scholarship, Development, Disability, and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia (National Fund)

Stakeholders. Regional & National Authorities.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. National and International (Slovenia)

Short Description. the Ad Futura programme is a national scholarship scheme managed by the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia. It promotes international academic mobility by providing scholarships to Slovenian students for full-time studies abroad, including doctoral studies at the European University Institute (EUI). A key feature of the programme is the return obligation. recipients are required to return to Slovenia and work for a period equivalent to the duration of their scholarship, ensuring that the investment benefits the national economy.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. the programme offers Slovenian students the opportunity to study at prestigious international institutions, granting them access to world-class education and expertise without financial burden. Scholarships are often aligned with national or regional strategic priorities, helping to close skill gaps and strengthen economic competitiveness. A particularly innovative aspect is the return obligation clause, which reinforces a "mobility-to-return" model. Rather than promoting permanent emigration, Ad Futura encourages brain circulation, ensuring that the knowledge and experience gained abroad are reinvested in Slovenia, benefiting both individuals and the broader system.

Weaknesses and Challenges. while the return obligation serves national interests, it may restrict flexibility for students seeking international careers or further global opportunities. Revisiting or adapting this requirement could help the programme better accommodate diverse career paths and individual aspirations, while still maintaining its core goal of national benefit.

Attrazione, permanenza e valorizzazione dei talenti ad elevata specializzazione in Emilia-Romagna [practice 29]

Link. <https://demetra.regione.emilia-romagna.it/al/articolo?urn=er:assemblealegislativa:legge:2023:2>

Website for international talents. <https://internationaltalents.art-er.it/>

Goals. The main goal of this law is to enhance the region's attractiveness, innovation, quality, and sustainable development by promoting the attraction, retention, and valorisation of highly specialized talents.

Target audience. Highly specialized young people and adults.

Starting date. 2023

Leading Organisation. Region Emilia-Romagna (Regional Government)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Regional & National Authorities, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Migrant Youth.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. Regional and International (Emilia-Romagna, Italy)

Short Description. This law establishes a comprehensive framework to attract, retain, and valorise highly specialized talents in Emilia-Romagna. It promotes measures that support productive systems in labour, research, higher education, and vocational training, facilitating their participation in regional, national, European, and international programs. The law also promotes the internationalization of educational and cultural services, supports the development of partnerships, and enhances services for the integration of talents and their families into the regional community.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. The key strength of this law is the creation of a cluster at an international level and on different sectors to foster innovation and talent development. Additionally, this tool encourages partnerships with European entities and emphasizes the removal of inequalities to promote gender equality in accessing opportunities. Moreover, establishing a regional law provides a strong and stable legal basis for a long-term, multi-sectorial strategy on talent attraction and retention, giving it significant weight and continuity. It is foreseen an holistic integration support addressing not just the talent but also their families' integration (housing, services) recognizes the personal dimension of talent attraction and retention. The law and the program explicitly promoting gender equality in accessing opportunities is a progressive element for talent management policies.

Weaknesses and Challenges. This strategy is still being implemented, thus evaluating the long-term effectiveness of its initiatives remains a challenge.

FORTHEM Alliance at Université Bourgogne Europe (UBE) [practice 30]

Link. <https://www.ube.fr/international-forthem/>

Goals. the main goals of this mechanism are to foster cross-border cooperation in education, research, and innovation among European universities and to develop a "European Campus" facilitating physical, virtual, and hybrid mobility, that encourages multilingualism and intercultural communication.

Target audience. Young people (not NEET and emigrants), Local community, Universities.

Starting date. 2019

Leading Organisation. Universities of Burgundy (Academic Institution)

Stakeholders. EU institutions, Higher Institutions.

Geographical Area. Urban

Geographical Scale. European

Short Description. The FORTHEM Alliance, hosted by Université Bourgogne Europe (UBE) as one of its nine member universities, is a European Universities initiative designed to create a truly transnational educational and research environment. The website details that this alliance is building a "European Campus" where physical, virtual, and hybrid mobility are key components. This goes beyond simple student exchange; it aims to facilitate integrated curricula, joint degree programs (Master's, PhD), collaborative research projects, and shared courses across borders. The alliance strongly promotes multilingualism and intercultural communication through various activities and resources. It aims to foster a shared European identity among students and staff while strengthening the link between education, research, and society's needs. The alliance's long-term goal is to contribute to a cohesive and inclusive European Education Area, leveraging the diverse strengths of its member institutions.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. This mechanism is well established, and it promotes different tools that focus on students' mobility around Europe. The ambition to create an integrated European Campus with physical, virtual, and hybrid mobility schemes is highly innovative, pushing the boundaries of traditional university cooperation. The alliance promotes deep integration across various university functions, including joint degrees, collaborative research, and shared courses, creating

a truly transnational academic experience. Focusing on multilingualism and intercultural communication is crucial for fostering a cohesive European identity and preparing students for global challenges.

Weaknesses and Challenges. The activities are heavily reliant on sustained EU and other stakeholders funding, posing risks to long-term sustainability.

Reflection on circulation of people and ideas practices

Beyond the shared objectives, these practices exhibit substantial variations in their talent flow direction. Certain initiatives are oriented towards inbound movement, such as the Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme, which facilitates the return of researchers to Slovenia, or scholarships specifically designed for Slovenians abroad to study within Slovenia. Conversely, other programs emphasise outbound movement with an expectation of return, such as Ad Futura's scholarships, which support students studying abroad but with a formal obligation to return. Broader regional strategies, such as the Emilia-Romagna law, aim to attract and retain talent. Concurrently, initiatives such as the FORTHEM Alliance proactively advocate for circular and cross-border movement within a European framework, thereby cultivating continuous exchange rather than a unidirectional flow.

The mechanisms of intervention also differ considerably. Numerous practices depend on direct financial incentives, providing scholarships or grants to encourage participation. However, some operate through broader, systemic approaches, such as legislative frameworks enacted by regional governments (e.g., Emilia-Romagna) or the collaborative structures of inter-university alliances (like FORTHEM).

The geographical scale of these initiatives ranges from national, as evidenced by the various Slovenian programmes and the Emilia-Romagna law, to European, as exemplified by the FORTHEM Alliance. This variation is indicative of differing levels of governance and the extent of regional or international integration that is being pursued.

A fundamental distinction can be observed in the approach to return. Some programmes, such as Ad Futura, enforce a mandatory return obligation, legally binding recipients to work in their home country for a designated period. Conversely, alternative initiatives have been developed that rely on encouraging return through the fostering of strong ties, the provision of ongoing engagement opportunities, and the offering of incentives that aim to naturally draw individuals back or maintain their connection.

A common strategy that values human capital has been identified across all three clusters: "Consultation," "Networking," and "Young Brain Circulation." The core aim of these initiatives is to optimise the potential and contribution of individuals with international experiences. This is achieved through a range of strategies, including empowering migrants to contribute to inclusion policies (Consultation), leveraging diaspora networks for cultural and professional exchange (Networking), or engineering the return or circulation of skilled youth (Young Brain Circulation).

The evolving nature of both migration and international experience is implicitly acknowledged across these practices. This paradigm shift has led to a re-evaluation of the concept, which is now regarded as a dynamic, multifaceted process encompassing temporary stays, circular flows, and the sustained engagement of distinct communities abroad defined by shared origin or professional background. The concept of the diaspora manifests itself as a multifaceted phenomenon, representing a reservoir of expertise, a bastion of cultural continuity, and an active partner in the realm of development.

Public authorities at local, national, and European levels have been shown to act as primary drivers, designers, and funders. Their involvement ranges from establishing legislative frameworks for talent attraction and retention, to initiating specific scholarship programmes, and directly supporting transnational academic alliances. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are equally indispensable,

serving as both destinations for incoming talent and platforms for developing outgoing talent, thereby directly influencing academic and professional pathways.

A significant, cross-cutting strength that has been identified across all practices is the transformative role of digitalization. Digital platforms have been shown to facilitate continuous connection within diaspora communities, between individuals and their respective homelands, and among diverse stakeholders (Panchal and Mago, 2024). These spaces have been shown to function as pivotal nexuses for the dissemination of information, the facilitation of professional and personal interaction, the exchange of knowledge, and the provision of peer-to-peer support. This underscores their critical role in contemporary engagement strategies.

Moreover, it is evident that the concepts of empowerment and participation are not confined to the "Consultation" cluster but are pervasive in all other clusters. While direct co-creation in policy is a hallmark of consultation, brain circulation programs empower individuals through educational and career opportunities, and networking initiatives empower individuals to leverage collective resources and expertise. This consistent focus on empowering individuals as active agents in their own lives is a fundamental aspect of the programme's success.

Notwithstanding the existence of these potent synergies, sustainability and engagement challenges are a recurring theme. All categories of initiative encounter difficulties in securing consistent, long-term funding, ensuring diverse and representative participation, and combating the digital divide that can limit equitable access and engagement.

To this section, it's possible to add a unique practice that focuses simultaneously on the development of marginal areas and the promotion of relationships between communities in different and distant territories.

This practice holds specific relevance in its goal of fostering cooperation between territories, by leveraging a historical migratory process that occurred in the 19th century. In this context, the migratory phenomenon is not just a past event, but the origin upon which the entire project was developed, even though its current characteristics are not the same as in the past. The echo of this historical link between the two territories has been transformed into a valuable opportunity for cooperation and mutual growth.

The initiative aims to solidify a mind-set that moves from the local to the global and vice-versa, creating concrete opportunities for young people. The objective is to develop a profound sense of solidarity and belonging to global citizenship, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. This approach not only strengthens existing ties but also lays the groundwork for new forms of collaboration and intercultural understanding.

Association Haute-Saône Mexique [practices 31]

Link. <https://hautesaonemexique.fr>

Goals. The main goal of this tool is to foster cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the Haute-Saône department in France and communities in Mexico, promoting international solidarity and cooperation through community-based projects.

Target audience. Young people, Local community, Adults, Families

Starting date. 1986

Leading Organisation. Association Haute-Saône Mexique (Third Sector)

Stakeholders. Local Government, Public Administration, Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, Educational Institutions, Media & Journalists, Informal local community groups & Citizens.

Geographical Area. Marginal Area (rural, mountain)

Geographical Scale. Local and International (Mexico and France)

Short Description. Haute-Saône Mexique is an initiative, built after a long migrating history in the 19th century, that aims at building bridges between the Haute-Saône

department in France and communities in Mexico through cultural exchanges, educational programs, and community development projects. The initiative seeks to promote international solidarity, enhance mutual understanding, and engage youth in global citizenship activities.

Strengths and Innovative and Interesting Elements. One of the main strengths of this initiative lies in its ability to facilitate meaningful interactions between French and Mexican communities. It actively encourages young people to participate in international cooperation and cultural exchange programs, fostering a sense of global citizenship from an early age. A particularly innovative aspect is its approach to supporting projects that address specific local needs within the communities while simultaneously fostering broader global solidarity. This dual focus ensures that the cooperative efforts are not just about general goodwill but also about tangible improvements on the ground, creating a more impactful and sustainable form of international collaboration.

Weaknesses and Challenges. One of its main limitations is its strongly localized nature. The initiative is rooted in the Haute-Saône department in France and the Veracruz department in Mexico, which can limit its potential for broader impact. Additionally, navigating cultural differences requires continuous sensitivity and mutual adaptation to ensure respectful and meaningful collaborations.

4. Main Takeaways and Strategic Orientations

As previously mentioned, the analysis presented in this report represents the **initial phase of the OUT4INGOV project**, intended to support the development of the **three prototypes** that will be tested in the three territories involved in the project — **one prototype in each territory**.

The three prototypes include:

- ▲ **Youth consultative body prototype:** a prototype for a Youth Council designed to provide consultation and advice to support decision-making and governance processes.
- ▲ **Cooperation networks Schemes:** a framework for cooperation networks aimed at enhancing the capacity for collaboration and decision-making among stakeholders in the Alpine Space regions. This includes capacity building and training related to managing youth migration phenomena involving young people who have grown up in the Alpine region. The overarching goal is to foster a **triple-win situation** — benefiting the regions of origin, the regions of arrival, and the young migrants themselves.
- ▲ **Observatory of youth migration:** a prototype observatory for youth migration, focused on defining operational rules, establishing a conceptual framework, and identifying sources of indicators to monitor and analyse migration dynamics.

In this concluding section, the objective is to synthesise the salient aspects and recommendations for the conceptualisation of the three prototypes delineated in the project. This synthesis is informed by the observations delineated in the preceding analytical sections.

Taking into consideration the results that emerged from the thematic analysis, and focusing on the development of the **three prototypes**, it is important to note that within our collection, we identified **8 practices featuring examples of consultative bodies**, **10 focused on networks**, and **only 1 related to an observatory**. Other practices, still relevant for the purpose of the project, have been categorized differently, as their main action, tool, or mechanism is more closely related to information, advocacy, awareness-raising, etc

As previously stated, many of the identified practices serve **multiple purposes**, often integrating elements of **networking, cooperation, information-sharing, and observation**. In formulating the concluding remarks, we have aimed to consider these different **components and dimensions** of the practices to ensure a comprehensive and integrated perspective for the next phases of the OUT4INGOV project.

1. *Youth consultative body prototype*: a prototype for a Youth Council designed to provide consultation and advice to support decision-making and governance processes.

To **secure institutional and political support for a consultative body** facilitates the **establishment of permanent structures** - such as Youth Councils - which are endowed with genuine co-decision-making powers. This enables young people to regularly influence local policies. The establishment of a legally structured mechanism, such as Maribor's ordinance-based system, which ensures the ongoing integration of youth consultation into governance, is not yet a universal practice; however, it could be highly impactful.

It is important to avoid the **risk of tokenism**, where youth councils exist only in a superficial consultative capacity without real possibility to influence the decision-making process. Continuous vigilance is required to ensure participation remains **meaningful rather than superficial**. Promoting **bottom-up approaches** that actively involve young people in defining policy priorities is therefore essential.

Training both adults and young people is key to meaningful youth participation. Facilitators and youth workers should be equipped with participatory methods, and young participants should have access to **capacity-building opportunities and non-formal education** to strengthen their skills and confidence (Rural Move, practice 10; RURALTHON, practice 13). It is equally important to support adults in learning how to share power, actively listen, and foster genuinely youth-friendly and inclusive environments.

Maintaining **truly diverse representation** — including marginalized youth and migrants — within the consultative body can be challenging, especially if stakeholder selection processes are not carefully managed. It is crucial to adopt **proactive strategies** to engage underrepresented youth groups, as exemplified by the Puglia ti Vorrei model (practice 4). In considering participation processes, it is imperative to expand the conventional focus on the **inclusion of young people as individuals to encompass their recognition as stakeholders, both in formal and informal groups** (Mediterranean Youth Council, practice 3). This broader perspective is crucial for fostering institutionalised, continuous dialogue through permanent, co-managed spaces, such as youth councils with genuine co-decision-making powers, where young people can regularly influence policy and governance.

Another significant challenge is the potential **over-reliance on fluctuating public or European funding**, which can limit long-term operational stability and threaten sustainable outcomes, as pointed out in the description of the potential weaknesses for several practices included in our analysis resources (Puglia ti Vorrei, practice 4; Pitch you project, practice 14; The Youth Fund, practice 15). It is therefore important to **diversify funding sources**, combining public funds, private partnerships, and European programs to secure the long-term sustainability of the Consultative Body, as demonstrated by the Maribor model. **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, but also enable the exchange of good practices and the development of more inclusive and sustainable strategies.

Introducing **systematic evaluation tools**, such as the “Thermometer of Youth Participation,” is a relatively innovative step that can significantly enhance **legitimacy and accountability**. These tools

help assess not only the scale of participation but also its **depth and quality**, ensuring that youth engagement truly influences governance processes. It would make a difference by **measuring impact and following up** by checking the results of young people's participation. This would make sure their suggestions are actually used and give them clear feedback on how their contributions have been taken into account.

The projects focused on marginal areas illustrate promising pathways for revitalisation through innovative practices, while emphasising the ongoing need for continuous assessment, effective stakeholder engagement, and strategic sustainability planning aligned with the objectives of the OUT4INGOV project.

Youth participation strategies must be context-sensitive, meaning they should be adapted to the specific cultural, political, and social realities of each territory. Projects that prioritise **co-creation with local communities** have been shown to achieve higher levels of engagement and to deliver outcomes that are more relevant and impactful. While it is valuable to draw inspiration from successful models developed in other countries, these approaches should always be tailored to local needs and conditions to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. The capacity to adapt and adjust based on continuous assessments is imperative for addressing the evolving requirements of marginal territories. Moreover, the integration of cultural heritage into economic development strategies has been demonstrated to serve a dual purpose. Firstly, it ensures the preservation of local history, and secondly, it attracts the interest and involvement of younger generations, who are vital to the success of marginal revitalisation efforts. **It is vital to concentrate on the issues that are most important to young people today.** Climate change, mental health, social justice and digital activism are at the heart of young people's concerns and should therefore be central to participatory agendas. Aligning youth engagement processes with current and evolving trends helps to maintain their relevance and encourages sustained involvement.

In order to further advance these goals, it is important to promote stronger connections among all stakeholders through formal agreements or partnerships that encourage shared commitments to common objectives, thereby enhancing collective impact. Furthermore, the establishment of **knowledge-sharing platforms** has the potential to facilitate the dissemination of effective practices from one region to inform and inspire others facing similar challenges across Europe, thereby optimising the utilisation of lessons learned and providing support for broader regional development.

Key Enablers for Meaningful Youth Participation

1. Secure political and institutional support
2. Ensure meaningful participation
3. Promote bottom-up approaches
4. Invest in training
5. Ensure diverse representation
6. Guarantee sustainability of funding
7. Build strong partnerships

8. Evaluate and follow up
9. Adapt to local contexts
10. Align with youth priorities
11. Revitalise marginal areas
12. Encourage knowledge sharing
13. Formalise stakeholder commitments

🔑 Place young people at the centre of decision-making, equip them with the necessary tools and support, ensure that participatory structures are inclusive, flexible, and sustainable, and foster a culture of active listening among adults and institutions to genuinely value youth voices and perspectives.

2. Cooperation Networks Schemes: *cooperation network related to youth mobility and triple-win situations*

Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration networks is crucial in order to create effective tools and mechanisms able to promote a triple win situation: encourage formal agreements and partnerships engaging various local, national, and international stakeholders (e.g., Young Bled Strategic Forum and Med Youth Network models). **Secure long-term sustainability** by diversifying funding sources (e.g., public funding, EU programmes, private partnerships) and formalising coordination and management mechanisms within youth networks: involve universities, businesses, civil society organizations, and public authorities to build resilient and collaborative networks (e.g., Rural Move, practice 10). It would be very important **to ensure continuity beyond occasional events** by establishing follow-up structures and regular opportunities for collaboration, enabling sustained peer exchange and transnational project development. It is necessary to **maintain active engagement** consistently motivating network participants, particularly over digital platforms, is a notable challenge due to the potential drop-off in enthusiasm over time (The Future We Want, practice 8). It could support explicitly leveraging diaspora communities not only for cultural preservation but also as active participants in regional socio-economic development (e.g., EUDiF, practice 25) represents an original and promising approach. **Empower youth through education and autonomy** recognising their agency in shaping transnational spaces and providing tailored support for international experiences in study, work, and volunteering. **Support youth-led advocacy**, providing the tools and training young people need to influence policy agendas and bring their voices into local, national, and European decision-making processes.

Promote intercultural dialogue and inclusive, accessible, and participatory approaches, actively engaging youth from underrepresented groups—including NEETs, migrants, and those living in marginalised areas—to strengthen cohesion and representation. In the context of international networks, such as the Mediterranean Youth Council (practice 6), which span multiple territorial domains, there is an imperative for these entities to exercise caution in navigating the intricate web of cultural sensitivities, linguistic barriers, and divergent institutional frameworks that characterise these environments. The promotion of **intercultural and transnational exchange** is facilitated by events and meetings, which foster cooperation, solidarity, and intercultural understanding (e.g., the Mediterranean Youth Council model, practice 3; EU Global Diaspora Facility, practice 25). At the same time, it is important that international exchanges can rely on **local networks** connecting young people, communities, organisations and public and private stakeholders, in order to co-design development strategies tailored to the specific needs and resources of rural and marginalised areas. Indeed, the promotion of **participatory and co-creation methodologies** necessitates the active involvement of residents, local actors and potential newcomers in the design and implementation of solutions. Such solutions may take the form of Living Labs and projects that strengthen local ownership, with the aim of fostering relevance and sustainability. In particular, it should **facilitate the integration and long-term settlement of newcomers** (AGORA de Grenoble, practice 18), through tailored support, training opportunities, and gradual involvement in community life, considering the diversity of target groups (e.g. remote workers, migrants, young people). **Cross-territorial cooperation should be encouraged by leveraging shared migration histories and local narratives.** These cultural and historical ties can serve as foundations for innovative international partnerships that promote solidarity, mutual understanding, and youth engagement beyond borders. **Support international mobility with a circular logic**, encouraging young people to gain experiences abroad while creating conditions for return, reintegration, or continued collaboration with their home countries through scholarships, career pathways, or mentoring systems. **Leverage diaspora networks as bridges between countries of origin and residence**, recognising their potential to contribute to cultural continuity, knowledge exchange, and socio-economic development through strategic engagement mechanisms. **Promote intergenerational and intercultural exchange**, especially within diaspora

communities, to strengthen cultural identity, preserve heritage, and foster belonging among younger generations through education, storytelling, and community programmes.


Considering marginal areas focus, it would be important to **adopt a holistic approach to local development** that combines socio-economic growth, entrepreneurship, cultural and natural heritage preservation, and the reinforcement of strong, shared territorial identities (TALENTI FVG, practice 16). **Fostering inclusive ecosystems for knowledge transfer and innovation** is essential to skilled youth abroad with academic institutions, enterprises, and public bodies in their countries of origin or interest (Emilia-Romagna Law on attracting/retaining highly specialised talent, practice 29). Such ecosystems facilitate knowledge exchange, collaborative research, entrepreneurial ventures, and expert engagement, contributing to innovation and sustainable development. A flexible, yet strategically aligned approach to youth engagement is necessary (PERCORSI SPERICOLATI e IMPRESE SPERICOLATE, practice 17). By offering diverse pathways—from **voluntary return to long-term remote collaboration**—we can better integrate international experiences into national and regional development strategies, ensuring that young people’s global skills contribute meaningfully at home. **Sustainable talent attraction and retention** require institutionalized support through coherent legal and policy frameworks. These frameworks should ensure continuity, promote cross-sector partnerships, and deliver integrated services that support both returning and engaged diaspora youth. **Support social innovation as a driver of local regeneration**, by creating opportunities for youth-led initiatives, and locally rooted entrepreneurship.

Create dedicated and safe spaces for youth networking, both physical and digital, where young people from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds can meet, share ideas, and co-develop initiatives. It can be posited that a combination of both **digital networking platforms** and **hybrid networking formats** has the capacity to support continuity in network participation and consolidate relations among members (YOUTHopia, practice 7). The implementation of platforms to facilitate professional and personal exchanges is recommended, with a view to enhancing networks and knowledge sharing (for example, the Mondo Trentino Village, practice 21; Südstern, practice 31 and France Alumni models, practice 22). The development of **mentorship mechanisms** between experts and youth, with a focus on mutual learning and skill development (as exemplified by the Südstern model, practice 31) has the potential to enhance professional growth and reinforce identity for individuals and regions.

Key Enablers for strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration networks

1. Build Formal and Inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships
2. Secure Long-Term Sustainability of Youth Networks
3. Maintain Engagement Through Digital and Hybrid Platforms
4. Leverage the Diaspora as Development Partners

5. Empower Youth as Policy Shapers and Community Leaders
6. Foster Intercultural Dialogue and Transnational Solidarity
7. Co>Create Local Development Strategies with Youth
8. Promote Circular Mobility and Mentoring Systems

 **By adopting a comprehensive and participatory approach, collaboration networks can unlock the full potential of youth on the move to deliver economic, social, and cultural benefits for individuals, communities, and regions alike.**

3. Observatory of youth migration: *operational rules, framework, and source of indicators towards a prototype of an observatory.*

As mentioned previously, during the phase of collecting practices, the partnership identified only one specific example of an observatory model. In the previous section, we added references to other projects that focus more strongly on data collection and knowledge consolidation, such as YOUNIG and SEEMIG.

What can be drawn from the analysed practices—particularly those related to observatory, information, and monitoring processes—are the key domains that should be included in both quantitative and qualitative data collection. While it is possible to identify a common set of areas and indicators, it is essential to **clearly define operational rules** for data collection, analysis, and communication. These rules must be tailored to the specific local and regional contexts, as exemplified by the **GRANULAR model**. It is equally important to develop **shared indicators** for measuring youth migration dynamics, including motivations, socio-economic impacts, and inclusion processes, as demonstrated by the YOUNIG and SEEMIG models. However, defining and agreeing on **universally applicable, reliable indicators** across diverse regions and cultural contexts is inherently challenging and may hinder **comparative analysis** and the practical usability of the data. Furthermore, the selected indicators should be used to evaluate **changes over time and inform public policy**.

Engaging **young people and migrants and local communities** in the observatory's design through ongoing consultation platforms is crucial. Nonetheless, balancing participatory co-design with the **technical rigor** required for scientific credibility and policy relevance can be problematic if youth and migrants are not adequately supported or trained for meaningful involvement.

Ensuring that collected data is **accessible and understandable** to non-experts — including policymakers and the broader community — is another critical challenge that risks being overlooked or undervalued in practice. One potential solution is to adopt **interactive platforms** for visualizing data and indicators in user-friendly formats - e.g. storytelling and visual tools. Developing platforms for **open and interactive data visualization** enhances transparency and democratizes access to information, enabling broader and more meaningful engagement from all stakeholders.

Among other various projects and practices reviewed, the **Migration Observatory⁷ at the University of Oxford—based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS)—stands out as a noteworthy example**. The Observatory offers impartial, independent, and evidence-based analysis of migration data in the UK, supporting informed debate across media, public discourse, and policymaking. This case is particularly relevant as it draws attention to a critical issue: the **definition of “migrant”**. Far from being a technical detail, this definition has major implications for how data are collected, interpreted, and used. Different definitions yield different results—affecting how many migrants are counted, who is included, and how mobility patterns are understood. Even within a single national context, **inconsistent definitions are often applied**, undermining the reliability and comparability of data. This highlights the need for **clear and coherent methodological frameworks** when observing migration dynamics. Without a shared understanding of who qualifies as a “migrant,” public discussions can become fragmented or misleading. Moreover, **not all individuals labeled as “migrants” in statistics or public debate are subject to immigration policies**, which adds further complexity to data interpretation and policymaking. In essence, **definitions shape data, and data shape decisions**—making it essential for observatories and institutions to adopt **transparent, consistent, and context-sensitive criteria**.

⁷ <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/>

The *Migration Observatory* at Oxford offers a comprehensive model for observing migration phenomena at the local level. It covers a wide range of **focus areas and indicators**, including:

- ▲ foreign-born population
- ▲ immigration flows
- ▲ asylum seekers and refugees
- ▲ international students
- ▲ children and families
- ▲ language use at home
- ▲ employment by ethnicity
- ▲ EU Settlement Scheme
- ▲ Citizenship acquisition
- ▲ population projections and migration trends

A specific section is dedicated to **EU citizens living in the UK**, offering in-depth analysis of their demographic characteristics, labour market participation, policy changes post-Brexit (e.g., voting rights), and their territorial distribution.

The Observatory goes beyond traditional data monitoring: it provides **multi-perspective analyses**, combines **quantitative and qualitative approaches**, and produces a broad range of publications—reports, articles, and communication tools—tailored to different audiences. Its main contribution lies in offering **evidence-based insights** to inform **public debate, media discourse, and policy development** in areas such as education, labour, services, and community planning.

The **Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe**⁸, based at the **Institute for Social Work and Social Education** and funded by the **German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)**, is a key initiative that monitors, analyses, and supports dialogue on major sociopolitical issues across Europe. Its mission is to strengthen cross-national exchange, foster mutual learning, and provide evidence-based knowledge to inform both policy and public debate. Through the publication of working papers, thematic dossiers, and infographics, as well as the organization of expert meetings, the Observatory explores topics such as *youth and children's rights, gender equality, LGBTIQ inclusion, care systems, and social innovation*^{*}. Its comparative approach, grounded in ongoing EU developments, provides a structured and methodologically sound lens through which national trends are examined in light of wider European challenges.

One of the most relevant aspects of this Observatory is its capacity to connect **local-level needs and innovations** with **EU-wide policy debates**, producing accessible and high-quality knowledge for diverse audiences—practitioners, decision-makers, and civil society actors alike. The project's attention to demographic change, digital transformation, and social justice makes it highly pertinent in today's shifting European landscape.

The experience of this Observatory is especially relevant to the OUT4INGOV project for several reasons:

1. **integrated monitoring model**: It combines policy analysis with participatory dialogue and communication tools—useful for designing observatories that focus on youth and rights;
2. **focus on youth in vulnerable conditions**: the Observatory addresses youth inclusion through a cross-cutting lens, including minority groups and marginalised areas;
3. **evidence-based and comparative approach**: It enables mutual learning among EU countries by collecting and sharing data on social policies;
4. **diverse formats for outreach**: the use of infographics, briefings, and expert publications helps make complex information accessible to foster civic engagement and policy influence;
5. **Support for dialogue across governance levels**: through its expert meetings, the Observatory facilitates structured interaction between local and national actors.

⁸ <https://sociopolitical-observatory.eu/>

This initiative offers a well-established example of how an observatory can serve as both a **knowledge hub** and a **collaborative platform**, providing inspiration for how OUT4INGOV might structure or partner with similar initiatives focused on youth, migration, and territorial development.

For the purposes of OUT4INGOV, it is also valuable to refer to examples of observatories focusing on the condition of youth. In the Italian context, the **Osservatorio Giovani of the Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo**⁹ stands out. The work carried out by the Istituto Toniolo is highly relevant as it offers an evidence-based and longitudinal perspective on youth transitions—from education to employment and family life—issues that are central to understanding youth mobility and migration processes in Alpine and marginal areas. Its capacity to capture young people's motivations, perceptions, and structural challenges makes it an essential reference for understanding mobility trends, evaluating policy effectiveness, and designing governance tools that respond to youth needs. Including this example helps to illustrate how robust observatories can inform youth policy and support the analytical framework of the project. Since 2011, the Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo has promoted the national project *Rapporto Giovani (Youth Report)*, one of the most comprehensive observatories on the condition of young people in Italy. Supported by the Cariplo Foundation and carried out with the operational contribution of IPSOS Srl, it systematically collects longitudinal data on Italian youth, analysing their relationship with the profound transformations of contemporary society. The survey goes beyond static indicators by investigating lifestyles, values, aspirations, and attitudes: who young people are, what they hope for, their trust levels, their views on politics and civic commitment, and their visions of family, profession, and the future. It highlights risks and opportunities faced during education, entry into the labour market, and the broader transition to adulthood. The *Rapporto Giovani* covers a wide range of dimensions, from training and economic independence to relations with parents and institutions, as well as cross-cutting themes such as digital technologies, new languages, sustainable development, participation, and social engagement. Its data can be analysed by qualification, age, and geographical area, offering a dynamic picture of generational changes over time. Recognised as a national reference point, the observatory provides knowledge of great value for institutions, associations, universities, schools, companies, trade unions, educators, families, and young people themselves. Guided by a Scientific Committee and an Advisory Orientation Committee, it ensures high methodological quality, consistent data collection, and reliable dissemination, making it one of the most authoritative sources on Italian youth.

In a similar way to the Istituto Toniolo's initiative, the **Osservatorio Giovani of the University of Salerno**¹⁰ focuses on youth conditions. However, in this case, it shows a much stronger link to the local context, both territorially and institutionally. It represents another valuable example for OUT4INGOV, as it highlights how an observatory can grow through dialogue between public administrations, civil society organisations, and research institutions. This localised, multi-actor approach can provide concrete inputs for the development of an observatory within the project framework, reinforcing the importance of connecting research and governance practices to youth needs. Established in 2010 within the Department of Political and Communication Sciences of the University of Salerno, the *Osservatorio Comunicazione Partecipazione Culture Giovanili (OCPG)* is a research centre dedicated to the study of contemporary youth phenomena. Since its creation, it has been entrusted with research activities on youth and youth policies within the *Osservatorio permanente sulla condizione giovanile* of the Campania Region and, since 2016, as part of the renewed *Osservatorio regionale delle Politiche Giovanili* (art. 13, Regional Law 8 August 2016, n. 26 "Costruire il futuro. Nuove politiche per i giovani"). Its research interests cover a wide range of youth studies, adopting both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, with particular attention to the interconnections between young people's life experiences and the analytical perspectives that can support youth policy development.

Acting as an agent of cultural, social, and economic development, the OCPG serves as a bridge between the academic world and public/private actors involved in youth-related initiatives. It

⁹ <https://www.rapportogiovani.it/osservatorio/>

¹⁰ <https://www.giovani.unisa.it/ocpg>

collaborates with governmental bodies, local administrations, other universities, schools, cultural institutions, youth groups, associations, non-profit organisations, and private stakeholders. The observatory operates through an integrated multi-channel information system, providing knowledge flows targeted at young people, students, researchers, public administrators, and professionals. It disseminates scientific outputs and documentation through traditional publishing, conferences, seminars, and digital platforms (website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube). By fostering inter-institutional agreements and partnerships, OCPG contributes to the development of networks and collaborative projects, particularly in the areas of participation, active citizenship, social innovation, and creativity. This dual role—both as a research hub and as a promoter of initiatives—makes it a key reference point in linking youth research to policy and practice.

Based on these examples, it can be suggested that OUT4INGOV will be structured around three core focus areas: youth, marginalised areas, and migration and mobility. Within this framework, it is essential to identify specific **observation domains** that reflect the local context, particularly in relation to:

1. The **living conditions** of young people and their **social, economic, and civic activation** at the territorial level.
2. The **dynamics of youth migration and mobility**, including both incoming and outgoing flows, returns, and circular migration.
3. The presence and effectiveness of **local development policies** and **youth participation strategies**, which play a key role in shaping opportunities and fostering territorial resilience.

These domains should be explored through both **quantitative and qualitative dimensions**, capturing not only demographic and economic indicators but also perceptions, motivations, and levels of engagement. Moreover, the Observatory should pay particular attention to how **young people—regardless of origin—can contribute to the revitalisation of marginal areas**. By understanding and promoting policies that empower youth and integrate their aspirations into local development, the Observatory can support the creation of inclusive, future-oriented communities that turn mobility into an opportunity for social and territorial innovation.

Key domains which could be explored for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data

1. **Demographic** - e.g. age, gender, socio-economic conditions, etc)
2. **Youth Migration and Mobility Dynamics** - e.g. outflows and inflows of young people (including emigration, immigration, and returns, duration and purpose of mobility (study, work, family, etc.), motivations and push/pull factors, barriers and enablers to mobility
3. **Youth Living Conditions and Territorial Activation** - e.g. NEET rates (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), access to housing, education, health, and digital infrastructure, employment and income levels among youth
4. **Youth Participation and Civic Engagement** - e.g. participation in local governance (e.g. youth councils), involvement in associations, volunteering, or activism, representation in decision-making processes, sense of belonging and agency
5. **Local Development and Territorial Inclusion Policies** - e.g. investment in marginal or rural youth initiatives, funding and resources allocated to youth participation and mobility, policy coherence and coordination at local/regional level, youth perceptions of territorial attractiveness

Q The observatory could be conceived as a dynamic, multi-level platform that monitors youth mobility and territorial disparities, and actively identifies the key drivers of inclusive local development and democratic innovation in marginalised areas

5. Bibliography

Bonatti, V., Tirabassi, M., Rallo, B., & Del Pra, A. (2019). *Famiglie transnazionali dell'Italia che emigra: costi e opportunità*. Celid.

Brubaker, R. (2005). The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(1), 1–19. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997> . Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

Council of Europe. *Have your say! Manual on the revised European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life*. Available at: <https://book.coe.int/en/youth-other-publications/6738-have-your-say-manual-on-the-revised-european-charter-on-the-participation-of-young-people-in-local-and-regional-life.html>. Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

Council of European Union - *Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on providing glocal opportunities for young people living in rural and remote area*, 25-26 November 2024. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16124-2024-INIT/en/pdf>. Accessed on : 11 July 2025.

European Commission. (2021). *Long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040*. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698027/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)698027_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698027/EPRS_BRI(2021)698027_EN.pdf). Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

European Union. *EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)*. Available at: https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en. Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

ESPON. (2018). *Inner Peripheries in Europe*. European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion. Available at: <https://archive.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/ESPON-Policy-Brief-Inner-Peripheries.pdf> . Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

EUROMONTANA. *Mountain Municipality Youth – Our Future: a label to encourage municipalities to act for youth*. Available at: <https://www.euromontana.org/mountain-municipality-youth-our-future-a-label-to-encourage-municipalities-to-act-for-youth/>. Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

EUROSTAT, Migrant integration statistics - socioeconomic situation of young people Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_socioeconomic_situation_of_young_people Accessed on: 29 September 2025.

European Urban Initiative - The European Hub for sustainable urban development Available at: <https://www.urban-initiative.eu/online-guidance-innovative-actions/introduction-background/context> Accessed on: 29 September 2025.

GAYA - Governance and Youth in the Alps, Interreg Alpin Space (2016-2019), <https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/gaya/>

Fassmann, H., Gruber, E., Németh Á. (2018). 'Conceptual overview of youth migration in the Danube region'. YOUNIG Working Papers, No.1. Available at: https://dtp.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/13/85f6d084e0981d440cf80fcd5f551c8b6f97467.pdf . Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

Furlong, A. (2013). *Youth Study. An introduction*. Routledge, New York.

Gamlen, A. (2018). Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance. *International Migration Review*, 48(1_suppl), 180-217. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12136> (Original work published 2014). Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

Ifversen, J. (2019). *Europe and the Concept of Margin*, in Hauswedell, T., Körner, A., Tiedau, U. (eds.), *Re-Mapping Centre and Periphery: Asymmetrical Encounters in European and Global Contexts*. London: UCL Press. doi: 10.14324/111.9781787350991

Licata, D. (2024). Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo 2024. Fondazione Migrantes, Tau Editrice, Todi (PG). Available at: <https://www.migrantes.it/rapporto-italiani-nel-mondo-2024-litalia-delle-migrazioni-plurime-che-cercano-cittadinanza-attiva/> Accessed on: 29 September 2025.

McAuliffe, M. and L.A. Ouchou (eds.), 2024. World Migration Report 2024. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

McAuliffe, M. and M. Ruhs (eds.), 2017. World Migration Report 2018. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

OECD. (2020). *Rural Well-being: Geography of Opportunities*. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2020/10/rural-well-being_8d2d0140/d25cef80-en.pdf . Accessed on: 21 July 2025.

Panchal, P., & Mago, B. (2024). Social Media as a Tool for Cultural Preservation among Diaspora Communities. *International Journal for Global Academic & Scientific Research*, 3(3), 14–20. <https://doi.org/10.55938/ijgasr.v3i3.79>

SEEMIG – Managing Migration and its Effects in SEE – Transnational Actions towards Evidence Based Strategies (2012-2014).

Șerban, A.M. and Braziené Ruta. (2021). *Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled*. Partnership between European Commission and Council of Europe in the field of Youth. Available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/106317733/Rural-youth-study.pdf/1fde9ee6-48ce-a2f7-2985-124b44ae46e7?t=1632419466000> Accessed on: 29 September 2025

YOUTH PARTENERSHIP (Council of Europe and European Union) Șerban A.M., Braziené R. (2019) *Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled*. Available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/106317733/Rural-youth-study.pdf/1fde9ee6-48ce-a2f7-2985-124b44ae46e7?t=1632419466000> . Accessed on: 21 July 2025

UNESCO. *Youth Engagement*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/youth/engagement>. Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

UNESCO. *UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Engagement*. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387755>. Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

UNESCO (2023). *Meaningful Youth Participation*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/youthaffairs/en/meaningful-youth-participation>. Accessed on: 6 July 2025.

Vendemmia, B., Kerucku, A. E., & Vecchio, G. (2023). "Territorial marginality: causes, methods and policies: Introduction to the Special Issue", *REGION*, 10(2), pp. E1-E5. doi: 10.18335/region.v10i2.487.

YOUMIG – Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration (2017-2019), Available at:

https://ispmn.gov.ro/uploads/Youmig_final%20brochure_A5_v16_0617_LINKELT.pdf

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF THE PRACTICES

| Number of the practice | Name of the practice | Link to the website/webpage of the practice |
|------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Ordinance on Public Interest in the Youth Sector in the Municipality of Maribor | https://maribor.si/mestna-obcina/mestna-uprava/urad-za-kulturo-in-mladino/ |
| 2 | Youth for the Progress of Maribor (Mladi za napredek Maribora) | https://zpm-mb.si/programi/mladi-za-napredek-maribora/ |
| 3 | Mediterranean Youth Council | https://www.medyouthcouncil.com/ |
| 4 | Programma delle Politiche Giovanili della Regione Puglia 2022 - 2025 - Puglia ti vorrei. | https://www.regione.puglia.it/web/programma-politiche-giovanili |
| 5 | Young Bled Strategic Forum | https://bledstrategicforum.org/young-bled-strategic-forum-2024/ |
| 6 | Med Youth Network | https://en.jeunessesmed.org/ |
| 7 | YOUTHopia | https://youthopia.aer.eu/ |
| 8 | The Future We Want | https://en.artfusion.ro/portfolio/the-future-we-want/ |
| 9 | ESIRA: Enhancing social innovation in rural areas | https://www.esira.eu/ |
| 10 | Rural Move: attracting people and building communities in rural Portugal | https://ruralmove.org/ |
| 11 | AVGG - Alta Via della Grande Guerra, Sentieri e natura sulle tracce della storia | https://www.aldaplus.it/avgg/ |
| 12 | GRANULAR | https://www.ruralgranular.eu/ |
| 13 | RURALTHON | https://giovaniareeinterne.it/ruralthon/ |
| 14 | Pitch your project | https://aer.eu/the-alpine-regions-model-for-youth-empowerment-cohesion-policy-youthopia/ |
| 15 | The Youth Fund | https://www.smartrural21.eu/roadmap-toolbox/creation-of-youth-fund/ |
| 16 | TALENTI FVG Incentivi alle imprese per l'attrazione di giovani professionalità | https://www.regione.fvg.it/rafvf/cms/RAFVG/formazione-lavoro/lavoro/FOGLIA138/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#id1 |
| 17 | Percorsi spericolati | https://www.percorsispericolati.it/ |

| Number of the practice | Name of the practice | Link to the website/webpage of the practice |
|------------------------|---|---|
| 18 | Agora de Grenoble | https://www.grenoblealpesmetropole.fr/actualite/220/45-participez-a-l-agera-2024-pour-ameliorer-l-accueil-des-refugies.htm |
| 19 | PLACE Public Leadership | https://place-network.org/emerging-leaders/ |
| 20 | Migration Youth and Children Platform | https://migrationyouthchildrenplatform.org/youth/ |
| 21 | Mondotrentino Village | https://mondotrentinovillage.it/ |
| 22 | FRANCE ALUMNI | https://www.francealumni.fr |
| 23 | Agitateurs de mobilité | https://www.agitateursdemobilite.fr |
| 24 | Suedstern | https://www.suedstern.org/ |
| 25 | EU Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) | https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/ |
| 26 | Dr. Aleš Debeljak Programme | http://www.aris-rs.si/en/index.asp |
| 27 | Scholarships for studies of Slovenians living abroad in Slovenia | https://www.srips-rs.si/en/scholarships/scholarships-studies-slovenians-living-abroad-slovenia |
| 28 | Ad Futura Study Visits | https://www.srips-rs.si/en/scholarships/ad-futura-scholarships |
| 29 | ATTRAZIONE, PERMANENZA E VALORIZZAZIONE DEI TALENTI AD ELEVATA SPECIALIZZAZIONE IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA | https://demetra.regione.emilia-romagna.it/al/articolo?urn=er%3Aassemblealegislativa%3Alegge%3A2023%3B2&utm_source=chatgpt.com |
| 30 | International - Forthem | https://www.ube.fr/international-forthem/ |
| 31 | Association Haute-Saone Mexique | https://hautesaonemexique.fr |