

COOPERATION GROUP SCHEME

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.



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OUT4INGOV COOPERATION GROUP SCHEME

1. OBJECTIVES

Through structured engagement and participatory tools, the **OUT4INGOV** project **adopts a collaborative approach, tackling the brain drain of youth by centering young people's voices**, challenges, and strengthening the collective effort to build cohesive and inclusive societies.

In this frame, the project seeks to establish a **prototype of a transnational cooperation network for youth engagement, designed to foster collaboration among young people, local stakeholders, and institutions**. The model aims to address the drivers of youth brain drain by creating inclusive spaces for participation, innovation, and co-creation of community-based solutions by exchange of knowledge and competences.

This prototype will be then piloted by the project partners with the intention of creating and maintaining a sustainable and replicable structure for continuous youth cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building. The pilot phase will test mechanisms for long-term engagement, mutual learning, and institutional collaboration that can be scaled up and adapted across different contexts.

The key focus of this activity is **to strengthen the collective capacity of young people and their communities to counteract the structural factors contributing to youth emigration**, while enhancing social cohesion, inclusiveness, and democratic participation at local, national, and transnational levels.

2. REFERENCES

As a reference for the functioning of the cooperation network prototype, the partnership employs:

1. the results of the best practices analysis drafted in the frame of the OUT4INGOV project (deliverable D1.1.1)
2. the achievements of the co-creation activity held at the local level with a group of young people, connecting the experiences of those who have migrated and those who have remained in their local communities, with the aim of strengthening connections between local

and diaspora youth and co-creating shared solutions to counter brain drain through competences and skills circularity. The activity was carried out by the Autonomous Province of Trento within the timeframe of September-November 2025.

2.1 DELIVERABLE D.1.1.1 TAKEAWAYS AND STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS

The project's Deliverable D1.1.1 "Exploring practices of youth participation in marginal areas" underlines that **multi-stakeholder cooperation networks** represent a strategic tool to generate mutual benefits for young people, local communities, and territories (both sending and receiving). These networks, involving public authorities, universities, businesses, and civil society organizations, foster active youth participation, co-creation of local solutions, and sustainable community development.

Key elements of effective youth cooperation networks should include:

- **Comprehensive and structured partnerships** supported by diverse funding sources and clear coordination mechanisms, ensuring continuity and resilience.
- **Engagement of diaspora communities** as active partners in socio-economic development and intercultural dialogue.
- **Youth empowerment** through education, autonomy, and active participation in decision-making processes.
- **Inclusive approaches** targeting underrepresented groups, including NEETs, migrants, and youth in marginalized areas.
- **International and circular mobility**, mentorship programs, and safe networking spaces (physical and digital) to strengthen skills, identity, and belonging.
- **Integrated local development strategies** combining socio-economic growth, entrepreneurship, heritage preservation, and social innovation.
- **Participatory co-creation** of solutions with youth to ensure relevance, sustainability, and long-term impact.

By leveraging these principles, youth networks can build resilient, transnational, and inclusive communities, fostering solidarity, knowledge exchange, and innovative solutions to address local and global challenges.

2.2 PARTICIPATORY CO-CREATION OF TOOLS WITH YOUTH

Considering that **participatory co-creation of tools** with youth is essential already at the prototype development stage, the idea was to establish a **co-creation group composed of young people who have left their region of origin and those who have chosen to remain**.

The Autonomous Province of Trento selected a specific reference territory where to activate the group: the Cembra Valley (Val di Cembra). There, the activation process was specifically designed to address the phenomenon of youth mobility and the qualitative impact of outmigration. The Cembra Valley comprises seven municipalities established in 2015, encompassing around 20 villages with populations ranging from approximately 100 to 2.500 inhabitants. Historically, the valley has experienced significant outmigration since the 1800s, primarily to other parts of Europe and the Americas. Migration remained strong until the 1980s and has since stabilized. Although the overall population has decreased only slightly, smaller and more remote villages have been more affected, whereas larger settlements and those closer to Trento and Bolzano have seen population growth. The focus of the project is thus on qualitative aspects, particularly the experiences and perspectives of young people leaving or staying in the valley.

The project was presented to local municipalities, awareness-raising activities were conducted among stakeholders and a community worker¹ was recruited. Contacts of potential youth participants were collected: the municipalities provided a list of young people to contact, and the community worker took action to identify other youth within the local networks known to them.

A group of young people was established for the co-design of the cooperation scheme, including both youth who have left the Valley and those who remained, with the aim of promoting an exchange valorising different experiences and perspectives. The group consists of approximately 23 participants aged 16–35, with medium to high skill levels, most of them are graduates and work with a

¹ A community worker is a facilitation and support figure who acts as a bridge between young people living in the territory and those with mobility experiences, with the aim of activating, nurturing, and ensuring the sustainability of a translocal network focused on competence exchange, mutual support, and civic participation. The role combines community animation, coordination of participatory processes, and the management of digital and relational spaces, fostering continuity of participation, knowledge circulation, and the connection between individual needs and collective opportunities.

high-profile level. Those living abroad are currently in Austria, Switzerland, France, and Germany. In the group 13 young are abroad and 10 live in Cembra Valley.

The co-creation activities implemented at local level were also complemented by OUT4INGOV partners meetings. Specific co-creation group meetings were held with project partners to present and share the working methods to be adopted with the local group of young people, to provide feedback from the local co-design process and to adopt together a model designed to integrate, in a coherent and comprehensive manner, the outcomes of the work carried out with young people, the findings of the report, and the insights and observations contributed by all project partners based on their diverse experiences.

At local level, three online workshops with the group of young people were conducted to identify **thematic axes and to define operational guidelines.**

First workshop: Presentation of the young people of the working group and of the OUT4INGOV project and definition of the needs that a territorial youth network should address.

The first workshop, held online on September 11th, 2025, involved 13 participants. Four were residents of the Valley, while nine were abroad. The workshop employed interactive activities such as games and word associations to encourage reflection on personal identity, the meaning of staying or leaving the valley, and the factors influencing their life choices. Participants shared insights on opportunities, challenges, and future aspirations. For most of the youth living abroad, returning permanently was no longer an option, whereas those who stayed prioritized social engagement and local commitment over career opportunities.

The need to create a **local youth network** emerged as the strongest input of the meeting. Participants identified the following key requirements for such a network:

- **Creating and sharing opportunities**, including jobs, professional growth, targeted advice, continuous training, and knowledge exchange. Some suggested the network could also function as a consultative body for the reference territory while remaining connected to the local territory.
- **Supporting local policies** by leveraging skills and knowledge acquired abroad to contribute to community development.

- **Providing practical solutions** to local challenges while introducing new perspectives and innovative approaches.
- **Enhancing the social environment** by connecting youth, providing contacts and information, and encouraging creative projects.

A notable challenge identified was the transfer of specialized skills acquired abroad, due to limited local demand for highly technical expertise. As a result, the network's initial focus emphasizes **civic engagement**, allowing participants to maintain ties with the Valley through responsibility and community involvement rather than only through professional contributions.

Second workshop: a Safari (benchmark) of youth networks: Digital Network – Structure and Organisation

The second online workshop engaged the same youth group, with 13 participants attending. Three were residents of the Valley, while ten were abroad in European cities including Aalborg, Lugano, Graz, Karlsruhe, Zurich, Copenhagen, Innsbruck, Paris, and Kuenzelsau.

The workshop consisted of four main steps:

→ Step 1 – Benchmarking (“Safari”) of Youth Networks

Participants examined several online examples of youth networks to draw inspiration:

- **Suedstern (www.suedstern.org)**: Connecting South Tyroleans abroad, fostering professional and civic engagement.
- **Giovaniareeinterne (www.giovaniareeinterne.it)**: A think tank for internal areas in Italy, combining digital and real-life initiatives such as the “Ruralthon.”
- **ValdiCembra2030 (www.valdicembra2030.it)**: Local youth platform promoting civic engagement and structured participation.
- **ReteGiovani2030 (www.rete.giovani2030.it)**: National youth network offering hubs, online tutoring, and support for professional and entrepreneurial development.
- **Mondo Trentino Village (www.mondotrentinovillage.it)**: Platform connecting Trentino residents worldwide, supporting discussion, events, and cultural engagement.

→ Step 2 – Ideas and Inspirations

Participants reflected on the cases and identified elements useful for the network. Mentimeter was used to collect immediate impressions on what could be adapted.

→ Step 3 – Mapping Local Stakeholders

Key stakeholders were mapped and categorized based on their level of interest and level of influence:

- **Activators (primary):** Local youth associations, students, municipal authorities, and foundations.
- **Followers (secondary):** Schools, universities, and local businesses.
- **Peripheral/Skeptics:** Small enterprises, due to project complexity and potential misalignment of interests.

→ Step 4 – Discussion Rooms: Digital Network, Structure, and Operational Agenda

Participants joined breakout discussions on three themes:

- **Scope and Structure:** Emphasis on identifying local needs and aligning competencies accordingly. The network should be horizontal and participatory.
- **Operational Agenda:** The network should facilitate both professional exchange (skills and career opportunities) and civic engagement (interaction with local authorities)
- **Digital Network:** The platform should support communication, knowledge exchange, and practical services, acting as a tool to animate interactions between local and international youth.

From the second workshop, **two types of functions** became more clearly defined. These represent the two ends of a spectrum within which the characteristics of the local youth network are taking shape:

- **The “competence incubator” function:** focused on the growth and sharing of both professional and non-professional skills.

- **The consultative function:** oriented towards civic participation and local decision-making processes, both public and non-public.

Ideally, the network is expected to integrate both dimensions, balancing professional development with social, civic, and/or consultative engagement.

Third workshop: Definition of the youth network model

The third online workshop engaged the same youth group, with 11 participants attending. Two were residents of the Valley, while 9 were abroad in European cities.

→ **Step 1** – Definition of the youth network model

The community worker reviewed the previous discussions and introduced the youth group to the concept of “competence” as adopted by the project partners. This concept bridges two vital dimensions: **explicit skills**, which are formalized through education and training, and **tacit skills**, which are acquired organically through experience. When combined, these dimensions serve as a powerful catalyst for both personal and community transformation.

The community worker also framed the concept of competence as an experiential process linked to social integration rather than merely to professional opportunities. What the network can offer its participants, through its participants, is a sort of '**social competence**,' understood as the experience acquired by expats within a new social context (as well as a professional and work-related one). This 'social competence' may include: the functioning of informal work relationships; knowing how to navigate local services; building support networks; and participating in local social life (such as community groups or associations).

In the light of above, the group agreed on the purposes of the “network tool”:

- as a means of accompanying local young people who are preparing to leave;
- and, at the same time, as an informational/knowledge-sharing/relational bridge for those who have already left but wish to maintain a connection with their territory.

The group also expressed its willingness to make itself available to the community and, when necessary, to play an active role in facilitating dialogue among local stakeholders.

→ **Step 2** The experiential network model: why and for what use?

The network model based on experiential skills therefore seems to be a third viable option:

- Because it is "freer," in the sense that it has fewer constraints and direct connections compared to local public bodies, while still being available to interact and dialogue with them.
- Because it is more agile and flexible, and less subject to rigid convocation/function/question mechanisms.

This relational network is designed not only to facilitate communication among its members, keep interest and attention connected to the home territory, and encourage active exchange, but also to support professional development (suedsterne.org model) and to function as a practical, service-oriented tool (iamexpat.de model). The network also aims to serve as a "vademecum" for people from the Cembra Valley who are about to start an integration process in a new territorial context, or who simply want to understand how work, social life, and professional life function in that context.

3. MODEL: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OPERATIONAL RULES

This operational model represents the strategic synthesis of a methodical and consultative development process. It is the direct and tangible result of an analytical effort that has systematically integrated the **considerations emerging from the technical report**, the **in-depth discussions conducted at the institutional partnership level**, and the **operational outcomes of the youth group**.

Based on these solid foundations, the following model is proposed for adoption. This approach is intrinsically designed to be **structured**, combining methodologies of **participatory co-creation**, the essential involvement of **both youth segments (local and diaspora)**, and a **clearly defined implementation timeline**. The ultimate goal is to establish a robust and durable foundation for a cooperation network model that is simultaneously **sustainable over time**, **inclusive in its dynamics**, and **resilient** in the face of future challenges.

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION AND CORE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Cooperation Group has been conceptualized and will be built upon an ethical and operational set of fundamental concepts and principles. These principles are geared towards fostering a fertile environment for development and growth.

3.1.1 METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION: CIRCULARITY OF SKILLS AND HUMAN CAPITAL APPROACH

The success of a replicable territorial model depends on its ability to value the people it serves and the knowledge they carry. To achieve this, the framework adopts a human-centric strategy that focuses on the continuous exchange of expertise between diverse communities. By prioritizing the growth of individual competencies and their movement across borders, the model transforms traditional migration patterns into a dynamic engine for local development.

The network's activity actively focuses on the balanced engagement of both **youth who have left the territory of origin (the “diaspora”)** and **those who have remained (the “local community”)**. This balanced representation is fundamental to ensuring the **"circularity of skills"** and the generation of **"positive spillover effects"**, which constitute the two driving ideas and key anticipated outputs of the project. Circularity is not merely a transfer, but a continuous bidirectional flow of knowledge and opportunities.

This bidirectional flow serves as the essential infrastructure for mobilizing the intangible wealth of a territory, shifting the focus toward a development model rooted in the quality and exchange of its human capital.

Any significant development of an economic, social, and cultural system is in fact intrinsically linked to the **quality of its human capital**. This is understood as the collective sum of **knowledge, practical abilities, behavioural attitudes, and operational competencies** held by its people.

The approach is thus founded on the following guiding concepts related to human capital:

1. Integration of Explicit and Tacit Skills

Skills are not to be intended as a monolithic construct, but possess distinct dimensions:

- **Explicit Skills:** These are the competencies acquired and transmitted through **intentional and formalized processes**, such as attending educational institutions, structured training pathways, and accumulating recognized professional experience.
- **Tacit Skills:** These emerge more organically through **direct interaction, observation, and shared experience**. This learning process is often non-formalizable and unconscious, but

frequently proves to be the **most powerful leverage for transformation** for individual and collective development.

2. Recognition of the Value of the Tacit Dimension

Tacit knowledge goes beyond mere operational ability: it **encompasses values, emotional intelligence, personal motivations, and collective attitudes**. These intangible elements are essential for shaping **trust**, facilitating **effective collaboration**, and cementing **social cohesion**. The emphasis on these factors is indispensable for significantly enhancing productivity, competitiveness, and overall well-being within any territorial system.

3. Network-Based Exchange and Learning

The group is designed to catalyze and nurture multidimensional relationships, both through **online** interactions (digital platforms and webinars) and **in-person** interactions (workshops and local gatherings). These relational environments are considered the true engines for the transfer and accumulation of knowledge and competence. This network structure specifically enables the circulation of **tacit competences, accumulated experiences, and values** that traditional, top-down training pathways cannot effectively convey.

4. Sustainable Growth of Local Human Capital

By encouraging and facilitating the expansion and deepening of these professional and social relationships, the group directly contributes to the **sustainable accumulation of human capital**. This process benefits both individual participants and their communities of origin. There is a particularly critical factor for areas suffering from high youth emigration, where strengthening social and professional connections helps to regenerate and retain collective value in the long term.

3.1.2 CORE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The principles upon which the network is built are:

Participatory Co-creation: The model is based on building solutions and initiatives *with* members rather than *for* them. This ensures that youth needs and perspectives are incorporated from the initial stages of ideation and design.

Radical Inclusivity: Implementation requires a commitment to overcoming geographical, social, and economic barriers. The objective is to ensure that all interested youth, including those in diaspora communities, have equal access and a direct voice.

Operational Transparency: To strengthen mutual trust, every decision-making process—from activity planning to resource allocation—must be managed in a clear, verifiable, and accessible manner.

Long-Term Sustainability: Strategies are designed for lasting impact, prioritizing resource efficiency and the development of local capacity that continues to thrive beyond the initial funding period.

Strategic Dialogue: The framework prioritizes intergenerational and intercultural exchange. This is essential for fostering collaboration that transcends differences in age and professional experience, effectively unifying diverse areas of expertise.

Structural Flexibility: The model is conceived to be dynamic and highly adaptive. This intrinsic flexibility allows for prompt responses to emerging local and global challenges through the continuous evolution of operational rules based on participant feedback.

Transnational Connectivity: Beyond professional exchange, the model connects local youth with diaspora communities. By valuing shared cultural ties, it optimizes knowledge transfer and mobilizes qualified human resources for local development.

Values-Driven Action: Implementation places primary emphasis on inclusivity, solidarity, and civic responsibility. The dual goal is to strengthen social cohesion while actively integrating youth at risk of marginalization into the future of their territories.

3.2 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK

The network is intentionally designed to adopt a model of **horizontal and sociocratic structure**, avoiding the rigidity of traditional hierarchies while ensuring efficient, flexible, and accountable coordination.

The key operational roles are defined as follows:

- **Core Coordinators:** Responsible for the overall supervision of all network activities and ensuring strategic alignment with the project's overarching objectives. They act as the central point for high-level external communication.

- **Working Groups (WGs):** Operational nuclei focused on distinct and specific strategic areas, such as continuous professional development, local civic engagement, or digital networking. These groups are the engines for the co-creation of concrete initiatives.
- **Youth Representatives:** Function as active and permanent liaisons between the local communities and the diaspora. Their role is fundamental in ensuring a continuous, bidirectional flow of communication, the incorporation of bottom-up feedback, and the authentic representation of members' interests.

3.2.1 MULTI-LEVEL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The network aims to interact constructively with a broad range of stakeholders. These stakeholders were identified and mapped through a dedicated exercise conducted during the second workshop, focusing on the points where dialogue and collaboration are deemed most feasible and effective.

The stakeholder segmentation is as follows:

- **Primary Activators:** These are the essential partners with the highest capacity for mobilization and co-creation, including **local youth associations, students, municipal authorities, and foundations** active in the territory.
- **Secondary Followers:** Crucial institutions for systemic impact and validation, such as **schools, universities, and local enterprises**.
- **Peripheral/Skeptics Stakeholders:** Actors such as **smaller businesses and smaller civil society actors**, who will be strategically included based on their specific capacity and alignment with the thematic objectives of the working groups, but who are considered "skeptical or peripheral" due to the complexity of the project and the potential misalignment of their interest in being part of the network.

3.2.2 OPERATING MODALITIES AND RULES

Operational Modalities

The network operates through a hybrid strategy that combines the effectiveness of physical interaction with the reach of the digital space:

- **Physical Meetings:** Essential for building trust and relationships, these will include intensive workshops, local networking events, and co-creation sessions.

- **Digital Platform:** Serves as a central virtual ecosystem to facilitate daily communication, **asynchronous knowledge sharing**, and remote collaboration between diaspora and local members.

The core activities will include structured **mentorship programs**, **peer-to-peer exchanges**, targeted **capacity building sessions**, and the co-design and co-development of local initiatives with real impact.

Operational Rules

The network's functioning is governed by a clear set of rules, designed to ensure effectiveness, fairness, and inclusivity:

- **Decision-Making:** Key decisions will be made **collaboratively** through structured discussions aiming for consensus. Voting will only be used when strictly necessary to overcome impasses.
- **Participation and Commitment:** Participation is formally **voluntary** but requires a **proactive and sustained commitment**. Members are expected to actively contribute to projects, discussions, and community maintenance.
- **Transparency:** This will be rigorously maintained in all phases of planning, reporting, and resource allocation, in line with the guiding principles.

3.2.3 STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION AND CONSULTATIVE FUNCTION

Provision is made for the possibility that, during the network's activities—and presumably after a sufficient initial period of operation and skills exchange consolidation—a clear intention may emerge to **integrate consultative functions** within the existing exchange network. In this scenario, the existing organizational structure will undergo a **strategic review** aimed at incorporating some of the functional features already outlined in *Deliverable D1.2.1* (“*Consultative body prototype*”).

These features must be carefully **adapted** to the context of an already fully operational network, which must nevertheless continue to **prioritize its fundamental role as an experiential and relational network**, maintaining the consultative function as support and integration.

3.3 STRATEGIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The network will leverage a variety of tools and resources to sustain its mission:

- **Advanced Digital Platforms:** Used not only for coordination but also as knowledge repositories and professional networking tools.
- **Training and Mentorship Programs:** Structured to support the continuous development of skills for both professional growth and civic engagement.
- **Consolidated Local and Regional Partnerships:** Active engagement with municipalities, associations, universities, and enterprises to provide access to expertise, concrete opportunities, and financial resources.
- **Diversified Funding Mechanisms:** A strategy combining public funds, private contributions, and EU funding to ensure the stability and long-term economic sustainability of the model.

3.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A structured and continuous Monitoring and Evaluation system will be implemented to rigorously measure the network's actual impact and assess its long-term sustainability.

The key elements of this system include:

- **Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Defining clear metrics to measure actual participation, engagement levels, acquired skill enhancement, and completed project outputs (e.g., number of co-created projects, activated mentoring matches).
- **Feedback Loops:** Implementing regular surveys, debriefings, and guided reflection sessions to incorporate participants' feedback promptly and ensure continuous operational improvement.
- **Periodic Reporting:** Systematic documentation of progress achieved, lessons learned, and specific recommendations for the ongoing optimization of strategies and operations.
- **External Evaluation (Optional):** Assessments conducted by partners or independent external experts may be utilized to validate the overall effectiveness of the model and provide objective strategic guidance for the future.