

Erasmus+ You(th)&Dem Programme

A youth programme implemented by the Forum 2000 Foundation in cooperation with Democracy International, EDYN, YIHR, and the Youth Democracy Network.

The You(th)&Dem programme, funded by the European Union, brought together twenty active young people (aged 17-27) based in Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Germany and Serbia to work on developing policy solutions for improving youth engagement in politics and civic life. The project began in September 2025 and concluded in March of 2026, with two in-person meetings in October 2025 (Prague) and March 2026 (Brussels).

Project Summary

Many young people care about societal challenges but often feel too powerless or unqualified to drive change, partly due to a lack of structured opportunities for civic participation. Existing channels for youth political engagement beyond voting—such as youth councils or party-affiliated groups—are frequently inaccessible, exclusive, or distrusted, limiting their impact. This project created an inclusive space where young Europeans could exchange ideas and experiences, develop civic skills, and explore new or reformed ways of addressing youth topics. Through dialogue, collaboration, and direct interaction with public figures, participants gained hands-on experience in active citizenship and policymaking. Ultimately, the project aimed to empower young people to play an active role in decision-making at the local, national, and EU levels, and to develop the skills necessary for such an engagement in an effective manner.

The project offered a tangible experience of working with like-minded young people from neighbouring European countries and of meeting face-to-face with public figures and other young politicians who could answer their questions, give feedback, and help develop the youngsters' ideas. The programme resulted in a set of 20 individual policy proposals aimed at the local/community level and 6 group proposals focusing on the national/European Union level.

On the other side, participating decision makers gained a better understanding of the opinions and struggles youth face and had the opportunity to discuss fresh ideas for instilling change.

SEGMENT I - Local/Regional Level (September - December 2025)

Prague Meeting, October 12-13, 2025 + Forum 2000 Conference

In the first segment, participants developed policy proposals through a series of workshops and meetings with youth leaders and decision-makers and also attended the Forum 2000 Conference for further discussion and networking. On Sunday, participants began with a discussion of the youth political landscapes in their respective countries, followed by a "Foresight Workshop" encouraging them to think about what their ideal systems might look like instead. Guided by a facilitator and policy expert, participants then drafted their own policy proposals based on these discussions and debated them in a simulation as if decision-makers in a negotiation. On Monday, the participants met first with youth leaders and then decision makers from various countries to present their proposals. Through these sessions, the participants received feedback and guidance on how to better develop their ideas and advocacy strategies.

After the in-person meeting, participants brought their proposals back home and continued to refine their ideas, receive mentorship, and take steps to try implementing their proposals in their local communities.

SEGMENT II - National/European Union Level (January - March 2026)

Brussels Meeting, March 16-17, 2026

At the second event in Brussels, participants formed groups and developed policy proposals aimed at the National or EU level. To prepare for the meeting, they began working on their projects in January, following four phases: problem definition, policy formation, advocacy and discussion, and implementation and evaluation planning. Arriving in Brussels with their ideas already clearly defined and ready for discussion/feedback, participants attended a series of workshops and practical sessions to further refine their proposals.

On Monday, the group met with decision makers and a representative of the European Youth Forum to receive guidance on their projects and hear about opportunities for youth participation in European politics, followed by a simulation as members of the European Parliament. The programme concluded on Tuesday, with a session on incorporating feedback and revisions, an interactive workshop on the European Citizens Initiative, and a visit to the European Parliament building (Hemicycle). Ultimately, participants gained practical experience advocating for their ideas and learned about EU institutions and opportunities for youth to effectively engage with them.



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You(th)&Dem Group Project Summaries



Intercultural School Workshops Project

Geographic Focus: Poland, with international participants
Maya Browarna, Secondary School Student in Wroclaw, Poland
Ghulam Zahra, Student at Dortmund University, Pakistan/Germany

The first step in transforming an idea into real action is to bring together a group of people willing to engage in the implementation of this initiative. We plan to create a team of two to ten individuals from different regions of Poland—people who are energetic and ready to act. Motivation is far more important to us than prior experience in social activism or membership in well-known youth organizations, although such experience will certainly be welcomed. Each person assigned to a specific region will then contact several schools in their area in order to identify local needs and explore possible solutions together with school communities.

Our focus will be on immigrant communities. We will examine which national or ethnic groups are most represented in different schools and ask students about their experiences related to integration and assimilation. The necessary information will be collected through interviews and online surveys conducted via Google Forms. In these surveys, students will be able to share their experiences—anononymously if they prefer—regarding contact with immigrant communities and intercultural interactions within their schools. Based on the collected data, we will work together with Ghulam, who has experience in responding to the needs of immigrant communities, to develop a workshop program tailored to the needs of each school. We will prepare a set of thematic lessons focused on different cultures. These lessons will be conducted by members of our team in schools located in the regions assigned to them. The workshop topics will be adjusted depending on the specific needs of each school. The classes will be organized for both immigrant students and Polish students and will be conducted jointly for all participants, which will serve as an additional incentive for integration and dialogue. Before and after the workshops, we will ask students about common stereotypes related to foreigners and about prejudices toward groups such as Roma people, individuals from the Middle East, or people of different skin colors. After the workshops, students will again be asked to reflect on these topics and share whether their perspectives have changed after participating in the lessons.

A few weeks after the workshops, we plan to distribute evaluation surveys to both students and teachers to assess the effectiveness of the activities. After analyzing the responses and improving the educational model, we will conduct another round of workshops in additional schools. In this way, we aim to gradually dismantle stereotypes, challenge myths, and respond to the evolving social reality in Poland.

Guaranteed Income for EU Youths

Geographic Focus: European Union, pilot sites TBD
Irina Haliuk, Student at University of Warsaw, Poland/Ukraine
Alina Trzebiatowska, Student at University of Gdańsk, Poland
Michał Poprawski, Student at University of Warsaw, Poland
Hannah Steinberg, Student at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany
Vuk Radišić Višnjic, Student at University of Belgrade, Serbia

Our project advocates for the implementation of three EU multiyear flagship projects whose main purpose would be to provide insight into what the benefits and unforeseen consequences of guaranteed income programmes would be within the European Union. Guaranteed or basic income here means unconditional, regular, cash payments made to individuals. Inspired by universal basic income (UBI), the group named the proposed programmes targeted basic income (TBI), as they would be specifically aimed at EU citizens aged between 18 and 25 and residing within one of three selected EU member states. This group was chosen based on the significant risk of poverty and social exclusion its members face, as well as issues relevant to them, such as cost of living and unemployment.



Strengthening Waste Management Infrastructure in Serbia

Geographic Focus: Serbia

Ivana Milićević, Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), Serbia

Jovana Radinović, Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), Serbia

Anja Vlačić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), Serbia

Muzhda Ahmadi, Democracy International and WILPF International, Afghanistan/Germany

Hendrik Menker, Student and Intern at Mehr Demokratie, Germany

While Serbia has made significant steps in improving its environmental policies and aligning them with EU standards, these efforts have primarily focused on institutional and legislative reforms rather than everyday practices and implementations.

Major issues have been mapped in this field, above all landfill dependence and low recycling rates, placing Serbia way behind countries in the European Union. While policy discussions focus on these major issues, smaller but essentially important gaps in waste management infrastructure receive considerably less attention and remain largely overlooked. One of them is the gap in waste management infrastructure between the capital and smaller cities, and especially rural areas.

Access to waste disposal sites in suburban neighborhoods and areas outside city centers remains limited or non-existent. This contributes to increased littering and declining standards of hygiene in residential and everyday public spaces. This policy paper therefore aims at improving waste management infrastructure through strengthening the network of public waste bins and communal containers as a practical step toward better environmental protection which would furthermore support Serbia's transition toward circular economy practices.

Rural Youth Voice Pipeline: Institutionalising the Participation of Rural Youth in Decision-Making

Geographic Focus: Eastern Slovakia

Michael Blaško, Member of the EDYN Slovak Chapter, Slovakia

The Rural Youth Voice Pipeline addresses a critical European democratic challenge: the profound sense of political exclusion experienced by young people in peripheral regions, and the brain drain that follows. In Eastern Slovakia, up to 60% of students studying abroad do not plan to return - driven by a persistent disconnect between national policy agendas and local realities.

Rather than relying on formal, one-off consultations that rarely reach youth in their everyday environments, this project establishes a systematic pipeline for civic participation. Building on successful grassroots workshops in secondary schools, it creates a year-round network of school ambassadors - engaged teachers and students who champion local involvement. This approach makes full use of the four-year high school window, demonstrating to young people that they can shape policy without leaving their home region.

The project connects local youth directly with strategic decision-makers to ensure that regional development, housing and education respond to actual youth needs. Central to the Pipeline is a strict feedback loop: institutions are required to respond in a timely manner to youth recommendations gathered through local assemblies and high-level roundtables.

By transforming youth participation from symbolic gestures into institutionalised dialogue with visible outcomes, the project counters democratic distrust and strengthens territorial cohesion. A more engaged Eastern Slovakia contributes to the democratic resilience of the European Union as a whole. Following the pilot phase, the goal is to present a scalable model to national institutions - ensuring that rural youth across the country gain a permanent, impactful voice in the policies that shape their futures.



Reducing unemployment through CV Support: A nonprofit initiative improving employment readiness

Geographic Focus: Czechia and Slovakia pilot, European Union
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Samuel Jancík, Economic University in Bratislava, Slovakia
Aurel Surovy, Data Analyst at Synpulse Slovakia s.r.o., Slovakia

This project addresses unemployment, which often affects disadvantaged groups such as long-term unemployed individuals, young people without work experience, migrants, and people returning to the labour market. One of the common barriers these groups face is not only a lack of opportunities, but also insufficient job-application skills, such as writing a CV, preparing a motivation letter, or succeeding in a job interview.

The project proposes a low-cost, nonprofit-based initiative focused on improving employment readiness through practical support. The main activities include free CV consultations, help with motivation letters, job-application assistance, and interview preparation. These services would be provided through workshops or one-on-one consultations, delivered by trained volunteers in cooperation with nonprofit organisations, schools, employment services, and HR professionals.

The initiative is designed to be simple, scalable, and easy to implement at local, national, or even European level. It does not replace existing labour-market policies, but complements them by helping job seekers make better use of existing opportunities. The project relies on volunteers, existing community spaces, and partnerships with institutions, which keeps costs low while allowing for fast and measurable results.

The expected impact of the project includes increased employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups, reduced unemployment, lower public spending on unemployment benefits, and stronger social cohesion. At the same time, employers benefit from better prepared candidates and communities benefit from higher employment and social inclusion. Overall, the project demonstrates that even small, targeted interventions can have a meaningful impact on employment and society.

Strengthening Civic Awareness through Integrated EU Educational Modules

Geographic Focus: Czechia and Slovakia pilot, European Union
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Marika Mlčková, Student at Nový PORG, Czechia
Jakub Trulík, Human Resources Specialist at ALO Diamonds, Slovakia

This project addresses the lack of unified and engaging education regarding the European Union and democratic values across Member States. While approximately 63% of EU students reach an adequate level of civic knowledge, significant disparities exist between countries. In regions like Czechia and Slovakia, EU education is often fragmented, depending heavily on individual teacher initiative or relegated to the end of the school year where it is frequently omitted due to time constraints.

Our initiative proposes the creation of a classroom-ready, 90-minute educational module designed for middle and high school students. The project avoids the bureaucratic hurdles of mandatory curriculum reform by offering a voluntary, “plug-and-play” resource that integrates interactive multimedia, class activities, and real-world examples of democratic practice. By condensing existing high-quality information from EU institutions and expert sources into one accessible format, we aim to make democratic principles tangible and relevant to young people’s lives.

The implementation strategy focuses on a grassroots start, utilizing partnerships with DG EAC, UNICEF CZ, and regional educational authorities to distribute materials. Key components include multilingual lesson plans, teacher support materials, and public-facing social media content. Ultimately, the project seeks to move beyond isolated interventions to become structurally embedded in diverse education systems, fostering a more resilient and inclusive European democracy by empowering the next generation of informed, active participants.