



Empowering
young people



**Key messages for enhancing active
citizenship among vulnerable youth**

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About the YES Forum

Founded in 2002, YES Forum is a European network of organisations working with and for young people facing challenging situations. By promoting their social inclusion and developing their professional skills, we act to improve the life chances of vulnerable young people. YES Forum aims to create an environment where young people and youth professionals can access equal learning and work-related opportunities in Europe and beyond.

Introduction

The YES Forum is a network of organisations from 19 different European countries working with and for young people from vulnerable backgrounds who require additional support related to their education, training or employment. Our mission is for every young person, regardless of their background, to be able to realise their full potential and have the opportunity to make a positive contribution to society. In our work and contribution for strong social, inclusive and fair Europe we are guided by the European Pillar of Social Rights¹.

Young people we work with often face multiple challenges and are confronted with several exclusion factors and barriers to inclusion, which can be of economic, educational or cultural nature. These obstacles often make it difficult – if not impossible – for youngsters to actively exercise their citizenship, leaving them at a disadvantage compared to their peers. At the moment, young people from vulnerable backgrounds are still underrepresented at the European level.

In order to remove barriers of civic and political engagement for vulnerable youth and break the cycle of disengagement, YES Forum advocates for the adoption of its six key messages, which have been designed to enhance the participation and inclusion of vulnerable young. We believe in:

1. Investing in Support System for Youth

Reducing budget allocations in youth services has a direct impact on the well-being and future prospects of young people, as well as on the sustainability of the support systems themselves, which could lead to higher long-term costs such as increased social welfare expenditure and undermining social cohesion. Investment in support systems for vulnerable youth is crucial since these structures provide the stability, guidance, and opportunities young people need to thrive. Prioritising funding for preventive youth social services, which engage early and directly with youth at-risk, helps avert negative outcomes.

2. Role of Youth Work Professionals

Recognising the vital role of youth work professionals in delivering comprehensive pedagogical support is essential for fostering active citizenship among vulnerable young people. Social investment in skills development and capacity building for youth and the professionals who support them, not only provides young people with the necessary tools, but also enhances the quality of services provided by youth work professionals. Adequate funding ensures that vulnerable youth are equipped with the skills, experiences and support needed to actively participate in and contribute to society.

¹ For more details, see <https://www.yes-forum.eu/vision-values/epsr/>

3. Youth as Equal Stakeholders

To build a more inclusive and cohesive Europe, it is imperative to provide a safe environment and ensure that young people are equal stakeholders in policy discussions. Providing participatory platforms for dialogue on equal terms, where both youth and youth work professionals can voice their perspectives, empowers the younger generation to actively shape our society's future and feel represented.

4. Promotion of EU Political Education

To empower young people to become active European citizens, EU political education should be continuously promoted among young people with a focus on inclusive participation, peer learning, self-initiative and experiential learning. Integrating non-formal learning methods into the political education of young generations diversifies their skills and experiences, encouraging holistic development and lifelong learning opportunities for young people.

5. Accessibility of EU Language

By making EU language more accessible to young people, the European Union can bridge the gap between political institutions and its young citizens. Enhanced accessibility through easy-to-understand language allows young people to engage more actively in civic life and politics and enables them to contribute meaningfully to democratic processes and the advancement of inclusive Europe.

6. Implementation of the Youth Test

Implementing the Youth Test² enhances political and public awareness of young people's needs, strengthens youth participation and mainstreams their concerns in EU policymaking. This promotes inclusivity, enhances representation, mainstreams youth concerns, and contributes to the overall well-being of society.

Bibliography

European Economic and Social Committee, 'EU Youth Test' at the EESC ['EU Youth Test' at the EESC | EESC \(europa.eu\)](#)

YES Forum, European Pillar of Social Rights [YES Forum - Empowering young people - EPSR \(yes-forum.eu\)](#)

² For more details on the EU Youth Test see <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/initiatives/eu-youth-test-eesc>