

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	9 - Volonteurop
PIC number:	895840688
Project name and acronym:	Youth Shaping Europe's Tomorrow — U4EU 2.0

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	8		
Event name:	Training on Youth Participation, Democracy, and Education (EU Institutions and System)		
Type:	Training		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	Brussels, Belgium		
Date(s):	16-17 September 2025		
Website(s) (if any):			
Participants			
Female:	49		
Male:	28		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 2 [Belgium]:	40		
From country 4 [Germany]:	4		
From country 5 [Greece]:	5		
From country 6 [Hungary]:	5		
From country 7 [Italy]:	6		
From country 9 [Netherlands]:	5		
From country11 [Portugal]:	8		
From country 12 [Spain]:	4		
Total number of participants:	77	From total number of countries:	8
Description			
Provide a short description of the event and its activities.			

Event Overview

As part of the U4EU 2.0 project, a two-day training on Youth Participation, Democracy and Education was organised in Brussels on 16–17 September 2025. The training brought together young participants from across the partnership countries and beyond to explore democratic life in Europe through interactive and experiential methods. The programme combined non-formal education activities, creative group work and a direct visit to the European Parliament which offered participants both reflective and practical insights.

Guided by the concept of futures literacy, the training encouraged participants to examine democracy through the lenses of past, present and future. The training began with exploring personal memories from the past that fostered intergenerational dialogue and transfer of knowledge between generations. This was followed by discussions about current challenges of our democracies and street interviews, in groups with the same nationalities as well as with mixed nationalities in a second step for the plenary part to exchange experiences and talk about the elephants in the room. In the afternoon, the training moved towards speculation and futures. Participants listened to a podcast designed for scenario building, followed by a group work, in which every group designed a collage presenting different futures of democracies based on an everyday life of a young person in 2040 from which participants worked on the socio-economic and political environment. The session ended with policy recommendations formulated by the participants.

After this part, a networking dinner was organised to give young participants the opportunity to learn more about and exchange with 16 professionals working at EU institutions, international organisations, EU-level networks and local NGOs in Brussels. The dinner also included participants of another EU-funded project under the Erasmus+ KA3 programme, called Window Youth. This enriched the dialogue between young people and professionals from diverse European countries. Separate signature lists were used to prevent double counting between the two projects.

On the second day, participants visited the European Parliament, which gave them direct insight into the functioning of the European institutions. Michael Sconlon, Visits Administrator and Lecturer, gave a presentation about the history of the EU, the role of its institutions, in particular the European Parliament, and the ways in which the EU impacts the lives of young people as well as opportunities for their political participation. After the visit, participants once again met with the participants from the Window Youth project as part of the Democracy Castival. Castival stands for International Podcast Festival. As part of the Castival, a fishbowl discussion was held where participants, young people, experts and professionals working on democracy could take the floor and share their thoughts about democracy, the EU and youth participation. Professionals who were part of the networking dinner were also invited to enrich the debate and to provide networking opportunities for young people, especially those looking for job opportunities in Brussels to work at EU level. The training concluded with an informal reception and participants started departing from Brussels in the evening of 17 September.

In total, 77 people attended the training from 8 partner countries representing more than 15 nationalities, which was facilitated by five trainers and supported by 16 professionals who joined the networking dinner on 16 September to share opportunities at EU level. Many of these professionals were young themselves. At the networking dinner, together with participants of the Window Youth project, 130 people were present in total.

Below is the detailed programme of the training and activities, followed by key takeaways based on the collective scenarios and policy recommendations co-created by young people.

Activities

- **Arrival – Opening and team building**

Participants arrive, register and settle in. Space is informal and allows time to get ready for the day. The training started with an overview of the training and some ice breakers to enhance group dynamics.

- **Past of democracies - Memories of Europe**

Participants explore intergenerational perspectives on democracy and the European Union by collecting and sharing personal stories from someone from an older generation, collected in advance of the training. Participants displayed their stories from the past in a “gallery,” and reflected collectively on similarities, contrasts and recurring themes.

- **What’s the EU for us?**

Participants gained a common baseline by learning about the functioning of EU institutions and decision-making processes which allowed them to place their own experiences and reflections in a broader European context. Information was given on the EU policy setting process and information shared on opportunities for young people to get engaged in activities related to the EU, such as the

European Solidarity Corps programme. This activity was complemented by the presentation at the EU Parliament visit.

- **Presents of democracies - elephant in the room, street interviews, what we found on the streets**

Participants first explored local and national democratic challenges in country-based groups by identifying challenges such as polarisation, disinformation and low youth engagement. They then conducted street interviews in front of the EU institutions to gather more insights from people present in the area. Groups were then reshuffled to have a diverse mix of nationalities in one group and insights of the national-based group work and interviews were shared and discussed after lunch before futures..

- **Futures of democracies: Futures Podcast, Futures collage, Futures palmistry**

In the afternoon participants listened to a podcast designed to inspire future scenario-building. In groups, they then created “Futures Collages” imagining the daily life of a young person in 2040 and identifying key drivers of change. They also completed a “Futures Palmistry” by mapping dimensions of democracy onto a hand and collectively creating collective scenarios. Finally, participants translated their creative visions into concrete policy recommendations by using the prompts provided to them. The scenarios and policy recommendations were presented at the plenary.

- **Informal Networking Dinner**

In the evening of the first day, a networking dinner was organised in Brussels. This gave participants the opportunity to meet and exchange with professionals working in EU institutions, international organisations, EU-level networks and local NGOs. The setting was informal and encouraged open conversations about career paths, challenges and opportunities for youth engagement at the European level. 16 professionals took part in the dinner, many of them young experts under the age of 35 who could share their own recent experiences of entering the professional field. The dinner also included participants from the Erasmus+ KA3 project Window Youth. This added a further layer of diversity and gave young people the chance to connect with peers from another European initiative. The event created a lively atmosphere of dialogue, exchange and networking across projects.

- **Visit to the European Parliament**

On the morning of the second day, participants visited the European Parliament. They took part in a guided session hosted by Michael Sconlon, Visits Administrator and lecturer, who introduced the history of the European Union, the role of the EU institutions and the functioning of the Parliament. The session highlighted how EU decisions shape young people’s daily lives and presented opportunities for young people to engage actively in political processes. The visit offered a direct connection between the reflections from the training and the institutional reality of European democracy.

- **Democracy Castival and Fishbowl Discussion**

On the second day, following the visit to the European Parliament, participants joined the Democracy Castival at Atelier29. The event aimed to celebrate participation, creativity and dialogue on democracy. It opened with a welcoming session and moved into a fishbowl discussion format, where seats in the middle of the room were open for anyone to join and share their views. This dynamic format allowed participants, experts and professionals to step in and out of the conversation. Topics discussed included the future of democracy in Europe, the role of young people, and the ways civil society can strengthen participation. The Democracy Castival concluded with informal reception.

Key Takeaways

From the collective work of the participants several key insights and recommendations emerged.

Democratic transitions and memory: Stories from older generations showed how many lived through democratic transitions. Although the contexts differed, many recalled similar experiences of their country joining the European Union. Young participants, especially from Western Europe, reflected that they had grown up taking democracy for granted, but now face diverse challenges that directly affect their lives.

Polycrisis and democracy: Concerns were raised about the concentration of power in the hands of big companies and wealthy actors who can shape political decisions. Participants insisted that the link between money and politics must be broken. They also called for reforms to EU decision-making, including the removal of unanimity, more power for the European Parliament and less dominance from the European Council. Other proposals included introducing EU-level referendums, creating more direct bottom-up voting opportunity and establishing quotas for both youth and older generations in the European Parliament to ensure intergenerational fairness.

Polycrisis and democracy: Technology and AI were seen as both opportunities and risks. While they open up possibilities, they also spread misinformation, propaganda and deepen inequalities of access. Participants highlighted that education is the main tool to respond to these challenges. This means rethinking education to strengthen critical thinking, resilience and civic awareness in the digital age. They also called for coordinated regulation of AI and technology at EU and international level.

Polycrisis and democracy: Loneliness, individualism and social fragmentation were identified as growing threats. Participants underlined the need to strengthen human interaction, communication and community building. Education again was seen as essential. They argued that the EU should put education at the heart of its policies, develop long-term strategies, increase youth mobility and ensure fairness across countries. A further proposal was for the EU to create a framework to prioritise policy issues based on the voices of civil society.

Evaluation and Feedback

At the close of the training, participants shared short reflections. Many described themselves as emotional, tired but also happy and motivated to remain active. The most appreciated activities were the street interviews, the futures podcast and the visit to the European Parliament. Most participants said they would recommend the training or take part again. Suggestions for improvement included adding more outdoor activities, using more screens to support information and allowing for more breaks in the programme.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).