



YOUTH WORKSHOP ON DRAFTING IMPACTFUL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

8-9 January 2026
BRUSSELS



@U4EUproj

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Co-funded by
the European Union



CLUBE
INTERCULTURAL
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GROSS
CULTURAL BRIDGES



KMGNE
Kölnig für Management und Gestaltung
nachhaltiger Entwicklung gGmbH



Multicultural
Collective

NOUS

UNITED

volonteuropé



WELCOME



GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

1. Name
2. Age
3. Country
4. Occupation
5. Fun fact





BISTRA IVANOVA

- Volunteer of the Year 2011
- Migration expert
- Project manager
- Researcher
- Cultural manager
- Social entrepreneur
- Project evaluator



Multicultural
Collective

15





THE PROJECT: U4EU 2.0: YOUTH SHAPING EUROPE'S TOMORROW

- EU project
- Financed by the European Commission, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)
- 9 partners
- Greece, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Hungary, Bulgaria
- Empower young people to actively shape the future of Europe
- Youth Workshops in different countries => policy recommendations
- Burning European topics
- May 2024 - April 2026

www.u4euproject.eu

[@u4euproject](https://www.instagram.com/u4euproject)





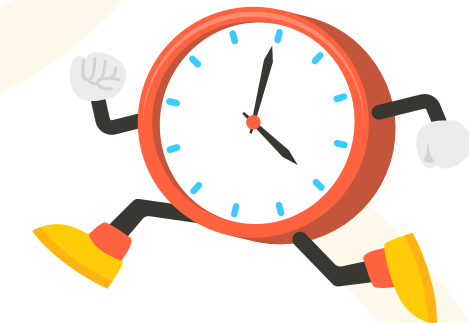
TRAINING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how young people can influence decision-making and policymaking processes.
2. Learn to develop clear, actionable, and evidence-based policy recommendations.
3. Strengthen advocacy and communication skills for creating social change.
4. Exchange experiences and good practices with peers from 9 European countries.
5. Co-create impactful ideas and strategies to make institutions listen.



AGENDA DAY 1

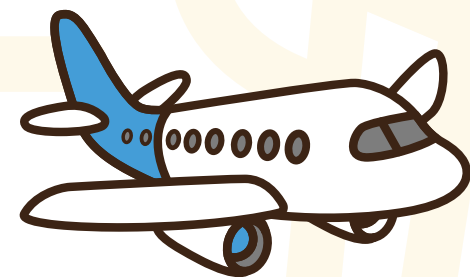
- 09:30 Welcome
- 09:40 Getting to know each other
- 10:10 Project presentation, aims of the training & success criteria
- 10:30 What is Europe for me?
- 10:45 Team topics & roles
- 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:30 Policy cycle + SMART+E
- 12:00 EU participation tools & advocacy channels
- 12:30 Micro-demo: choosing the right EU route
- 13:30 Lunch
- 14:30 Policy analysis lab: problem tree + stakeholder & pressure map
- 15:00 Populism & policy pressure
- 15:30 Coffee break
- 16:00 Drafting recommendations + advocacy targets & tactics
- 16:30 Best practices from the EU
- 17:00 Feedback and closure of the day





AGENDA DAY 2

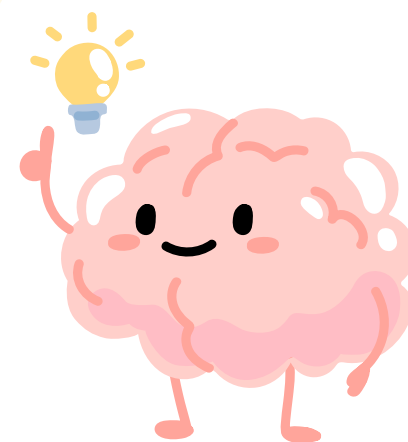
- 09:30 Good morning, feedback from yesterday
- 09:45 Populism Stress-Test Clinic
- 10:00 Advocacy tactics sprint: targets, ladder of engagement, coalition & timeline
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Creative Lab
- 11:45 Evaluation & next steps
- 12:00 Lunch





SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

1. Each team has created one clear, realistic, and evidence-based policy recommendation.
2. Participants can explain the policymaking process and identify entry points for advocacy.
3. Teams have drafted mini advocacy plans with defined targets, messages, and actions.
4. Participants have exchanged experiences and learned from peers across Europe.
5. Everyone leaves inspired and confident to use their voice for change.





LET'S DO THIS!



3 TRUTHS AND 1 LIE

1. Take a piece of paper and a marker.
2. Think of 4 statements about yourself:
 - 3 must be true
 - 1 must be a lie
3. The lie should be realistic and believable.
4. Write all 4 statements clearly on the paper.
5. Stick the paper on your chest so others can read it.
6. Walk around the room and talk to as many people as possible. Try to guess which statement is the lie. When someone guesses yours, don't reveal the answer immediately – let them ask questions!

Goal of the game:

1. Fool as many people as you can
2. Correctly spot the lie in others





TEAM TOPICS & ROLES

- What do you care about?
- Top priorities?
- What do you want to change in Europe?
In your country? In your city/town/village?

- Facilitator
- Note-taker
- Spokesperson
- Timekeeper
- Energy keeper





WHAT IS A POLICY?



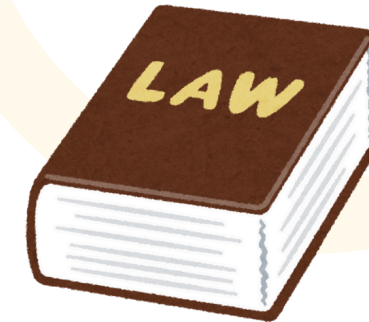
1. A set of rules, principles, or actions adopted by authorities to address a public issue
2. Designed to solve a problem or improve a situation in society
3. Developed and implemented by governments, institutions, or public bodies
4. Guides decision-making and allocation of resources
5. Affects people's rights, responsibilities, and everyday lives



POLICY VS. LAW - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



1. Sets direction, priorities, and goals
2. Flexible and easier to change
3. Explains what should be done



1. Creates binding rules that must be followed
2. Formal, legally binding, and enforceable
3. Defines what must be done and the consequences

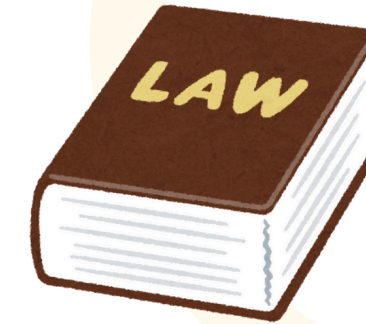


POLICY VS. LAW – EXAMPLES



POLICY (guides & goals)

1. National youth policy
2. National health strategy
3. National education strategy
4. National environmental strategy
5. National migration strategy



LAW (binding rules)

1. Youth Act
2. Health Act
3. Education Law
4. Environmental Protection Act
5. Migration Law



POLICY CYCLE



1. Agenda-setting – the problem gets public attention (media, protests, data).
2. Policy formulation – ideas are developed, experts and NGOs propose solutions.
3. Decision-making – institutions adopt or reject the proposal.
4. Implementation – government applies the decision through actions, funding, etc.
5. Evaluation – we check if it works; if not, the cycle starts again.

Domestic violence rises...





SMART+E FRAMEWORK

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-Bound

Evidence-based

Reduce hate speech in school.
Train 500 teachers on hate speech.
By 2028.
In 3 regions of Italy.

Reports show that 7600 cases of hate speech were reported in schools in the last 1 year.
EU reports show that trained teachers react more adequate in cases of hate in school.

Populism





HOW TO GAIN EVIDENCE FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

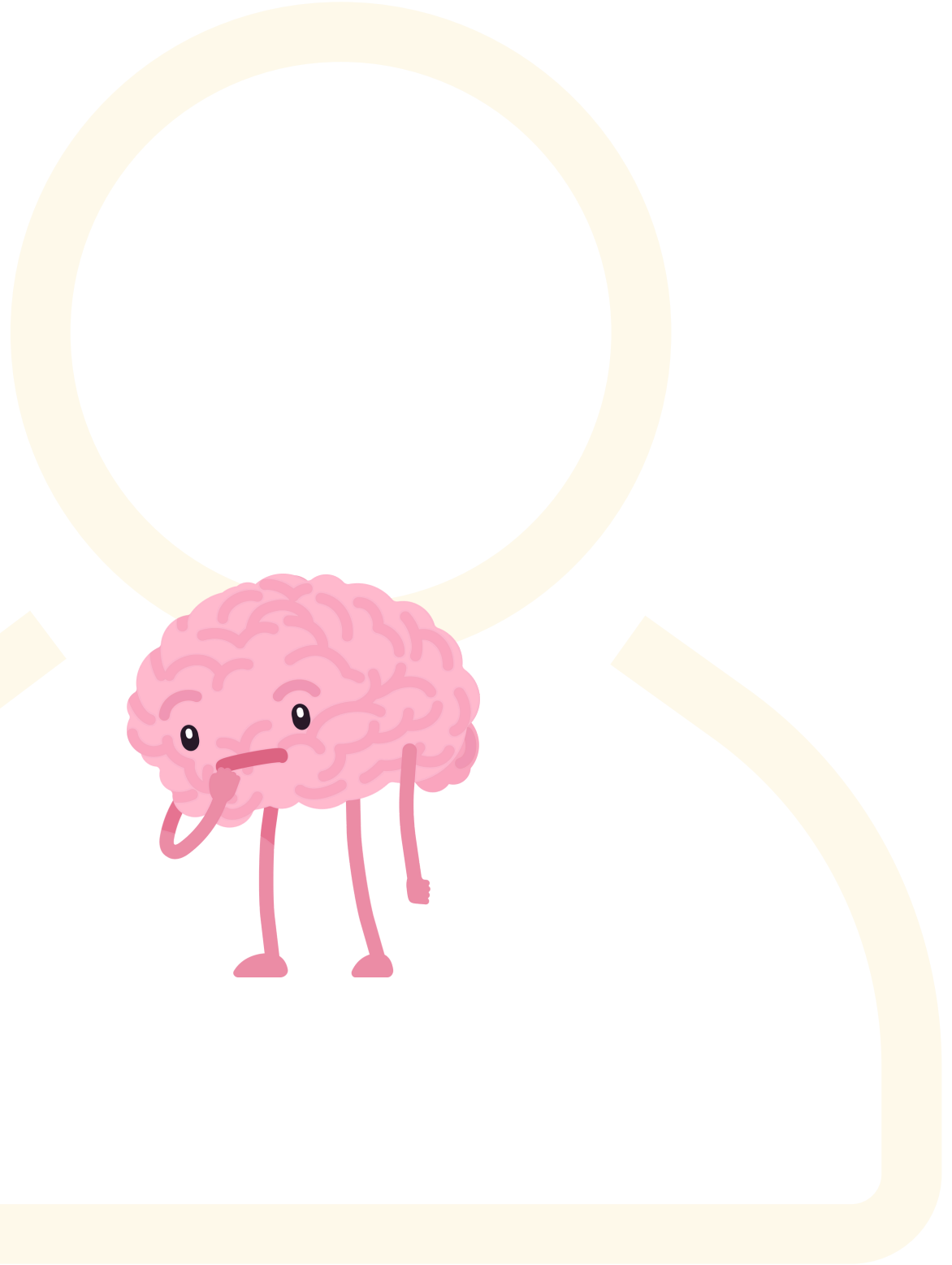
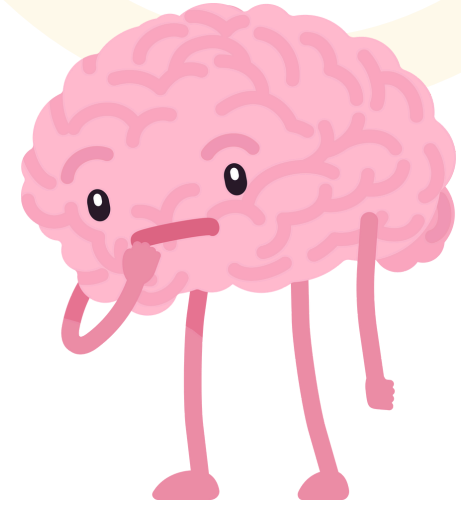


- Use existing data and statistics (EU institutions, national statistical offices, research institutes)
- Review existing research and reports (NGOs, universities, EU agencies, think tanks)
- Collect your own data (surveys, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires)
- Use lived experience and testimonies (stories from affected communities, frontline workers)
- Analyse good practices and case studies (what worked elsewhere, at local, national, or EU level)

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YOU ARE
Smart





EU PARTICIPATION TOOLS & ADVOCACY CHANNELS



1. European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)
2. Petitions to the European Parliament
3. "Have Your Say" public consultations
4. Youth Dialogue / EU Youth Goals
5. European Youth Portal
6. Local councils or municipal youth structures
7. Social media campaigns / digital advocacy



- Do people use this in your country?
- What works? What doesn't?
- Any good example?



EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE (ECI)



European Citizens' Initiative

Home Find initiative ▾ How it works ▾ News ▾ Spread

Start or sign an initiative

- Enables EU citizens to directly propose new legislation to the European Commission.
- Requires 1 million signatures from at least 7 EU member states.
- Topics must fall under areas where the EU has legislative power.
- Even if not successful, ECIs can raise awareness and media attention around key issues.
- In operation since: 1 April 2012
- <https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu>

Any successful ones?



PETITIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



Welcome to the Petitions Web Portal

- Allows EU citizens and residents to raise issues or complaints directly to the European Parliament.
- Used to report breaches of EU law or to call attention to matters of public concern within EU competence.
- Petitions are examined by the Parliament's Committee on Petitions (PETI), which may request an inquiry or a response from the European Commission.
- Provides an accessible, individual channel for democratic participation.
- <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/home>



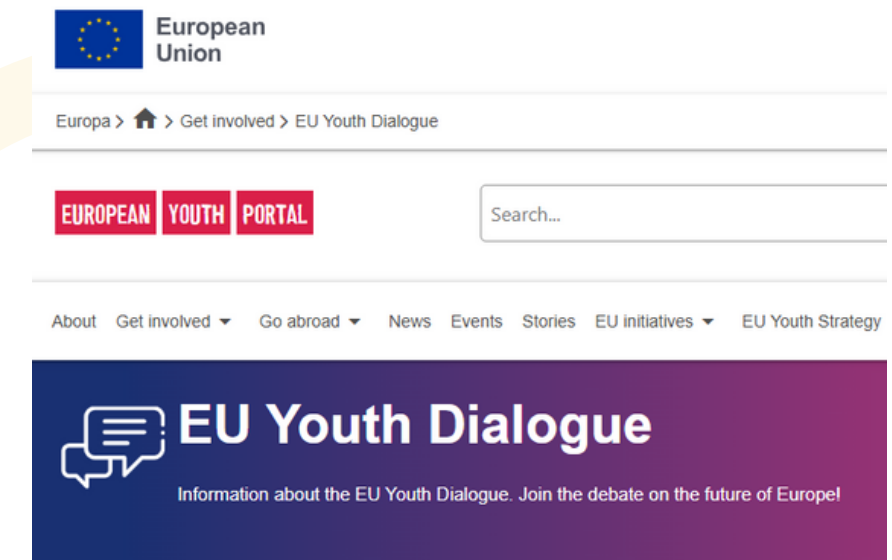
“HAVE YOUR SAY” PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS



- An official European Commission platform where citizens and organisations can comment on upcoming EU policies and laws.
- Allows participation during all stages of the policymaking process – idea, drafting, and evaluation.
- All contributions are published and summarised in public reports to ensure transparency.
- A direct way for NGOs, experts, and citizens to shape EU proposals early.
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say_en



EU YOUTH DIALOGUE / EU YOUTH GOALS



- Structured dialogue between young people and decision-makers at national and European levels.
- Focuses on the 11 EU Youth Goals, reflecting youth priorities such as inclusion, sustainability, and participation.
- Implemented through national working groups, EU Youth Conferences, and the European Youth Forum.
- Ensures youth voices directly influence EU youth policy.
- https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue_en



EUROPEAN YOUTH PORTAL



European
Union

Europa > 

EUROPEAN | YOUTH | PORTAL

- The EU's official information platform for young people and youth organisations.
- Provides news, opportunities, volunteering and mobility programmes (Erasmus+, ESC).
- Hosts information on youth rights, policies, and ways to get involved.
- Managed by the European Commission and available in all EU languages.
- https://youth.europa.eu/home_en



LOCAL COUNCILS OR MUNICIPAL YOUTH STRUCTURES

- Formal or informal youth councils advising mayors, local authorities, or municipal youth departments.
- Offer young people a direct way to influence community-level policies and projects.
- Develop leadership, participation, and civic engagement skills.
- Provide an entry point for youth advocacy before engaging at the national or EU level.
- *(No single EU-wide website; structures vary by country and municipality.)*



SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS / DIGITAL ADVOCACY

- Fast and accessible tools for awareness-raising, mobilising support, and building public pressure.
- Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X allow youth to connect across borders and reach policymakers.
- Email marketing
- Most effective when combined with offline advocacy – petitions, open letters, events.
- Encourage storytelling, creativity, and coalition-building for impact.
- *(Examples and toolkits available via European Youth Portal:
https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved_en)*



CHOOSING THE RIGHT ROUTE

- Local
- Regional
- National
- European
- International



1. Political / Structural
2. Social / Cultural
3. Mixed / Complex

Policy reform, legal change, EU or national action
Awareness, campaigns, dialogue, education
Both – advocacy + community engagement



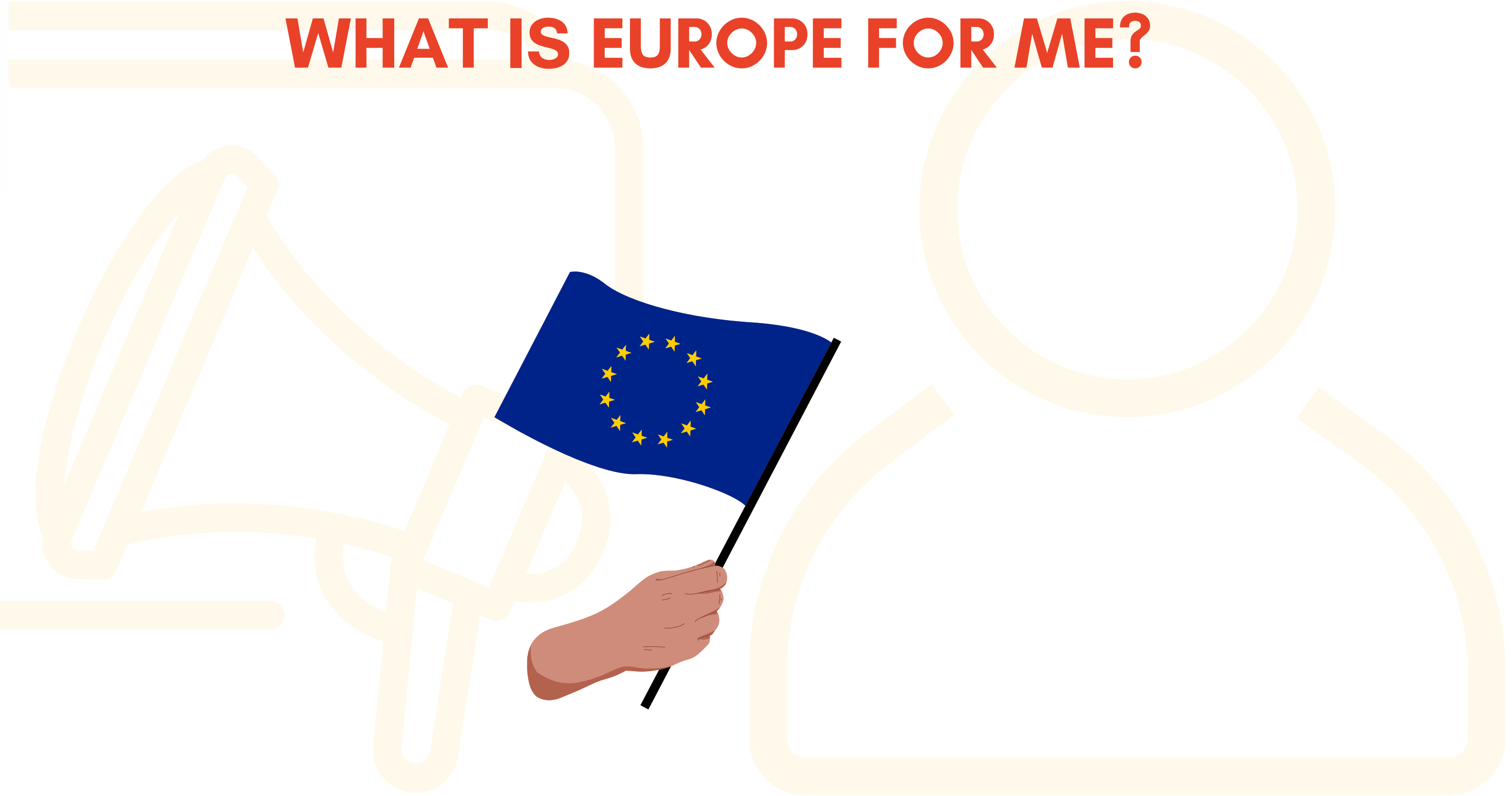
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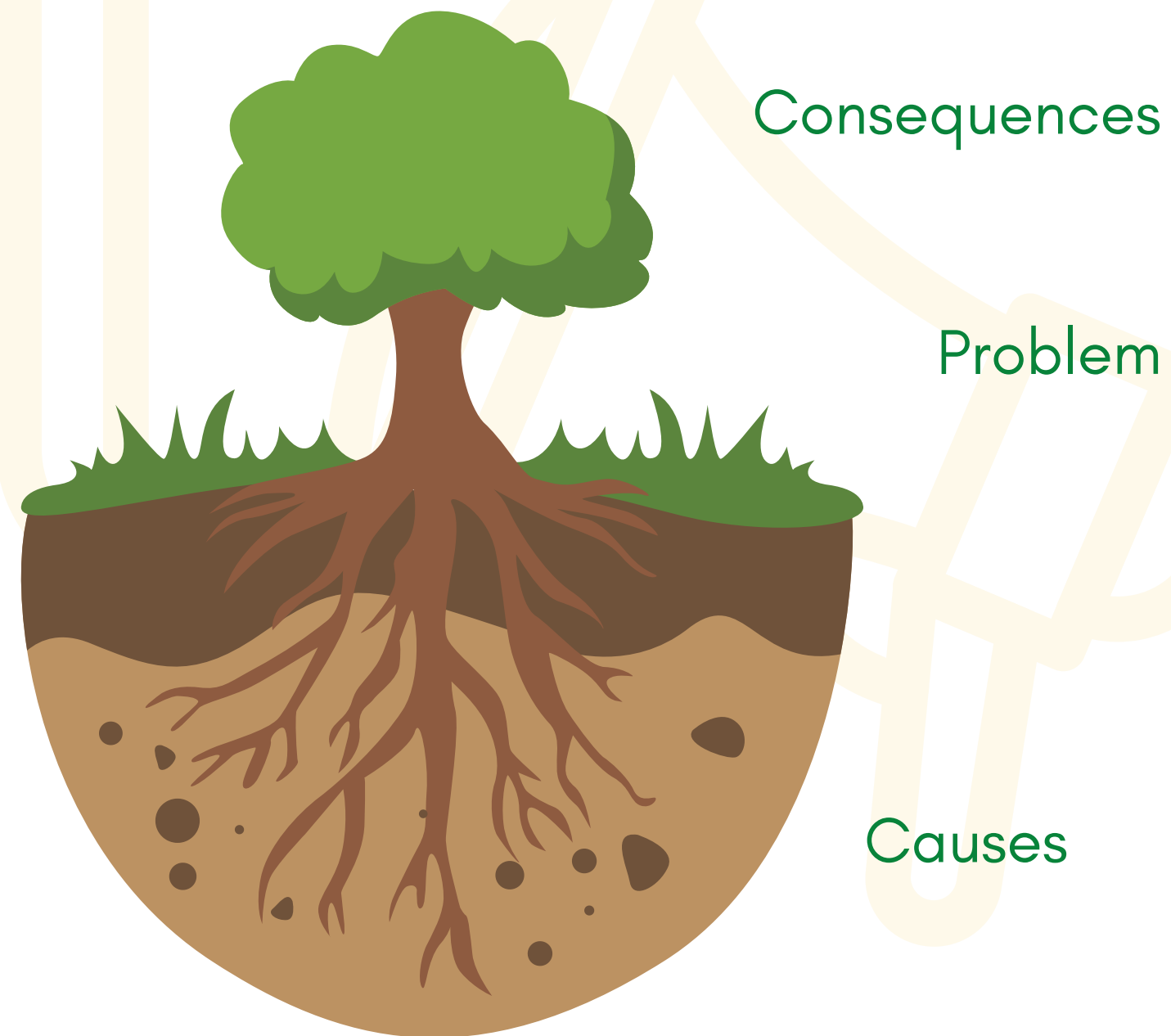


WHAT IS EUROPE FOR ME?





POLICY ANALYSIS LAB: PROBLEM TREE



Example:
High youth unemployment





CASE CLINIC

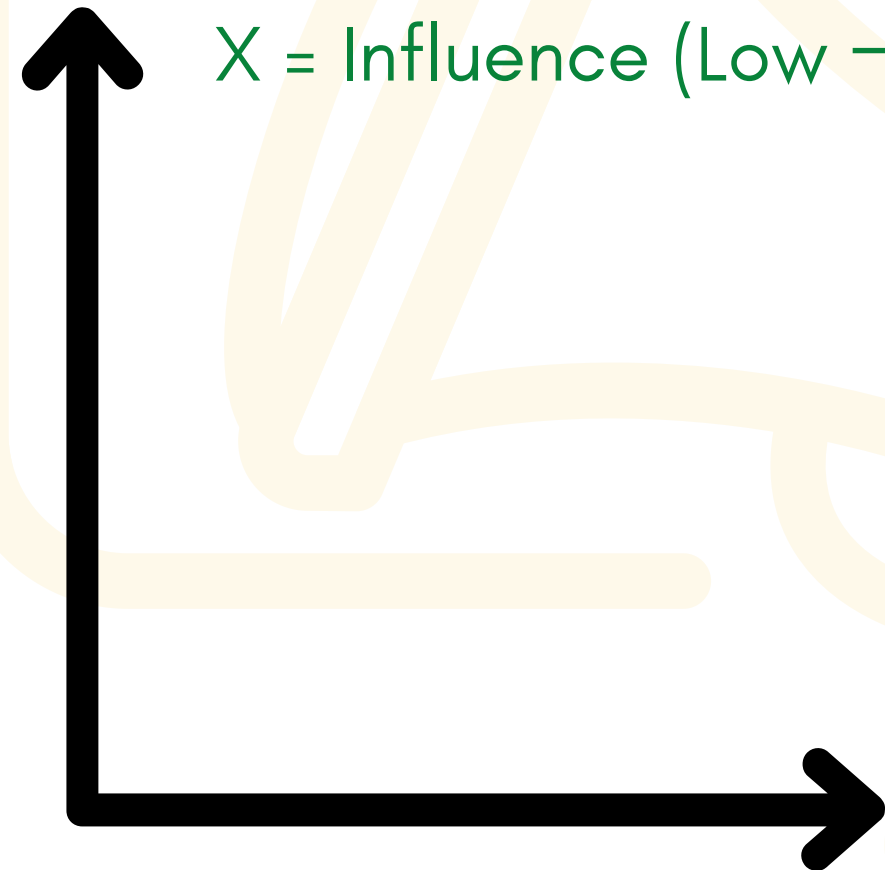
1. Refugee Homelessness in Athens
2. Youth Unemployment in Porto
3. School Segregation and Inequality in Bulgaria
4. Restrictions on Civil Society and Free Expression in Hungary
5. Labour Market Racism in Italy





POLICY ANALYSIS LAB: STAKEHOLDER & PRESSURE MAP

X = Influence (Low → High)



Y = Support (Opposed → Supportive)

- Municipality
- Affectd community
- NGOs
- Local residents
- Ombudsman
- Media
- Reginal Parliament
- National Parliament
- EU institutions
- UN bodies



POPULISM & POLICY PRESSURE



1. Populism frames complex problems as a struggle between “the people” and “the elites”
2. It often uses simple messages, strong emotions, and clear enemies to mobilise support
3. Populist actors can create intense pressure on policymakers, even without detailed policy proposals
4. This pressure can lead to fast policy responses, symbolic actions, or weakened evidence-based policymaking
5. At the same time, populism can bring neglected issues into public debate and force institutions to react



CO-CREATION SPRINT: DRAFTING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Define the problem
2. Develop a policy recommendation – national, EU..., SMART+E
3. Identify targets & allies – primary (power) and secondary target (influence)
4. Present to the group





BEST PRACTICES: RIGHT2WATER – EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE (EU LEVEL)



1. **What was done:** Over 1.8 million EU citizens signed an ECI demanding recognition of water as a human right and exclusion of water services from liberalisation.
2. **What actually happened:** The European Commission did not propose a new law recognising the right to water and did not fully meet the demands. However, the initiative influenced the revision of the EU Drinking Water Directive, improving access to information and water quality standards.
3. **Why it still matters:** It showed that ECIs can shape policy debates and amendments, even if they do not force full legal change.



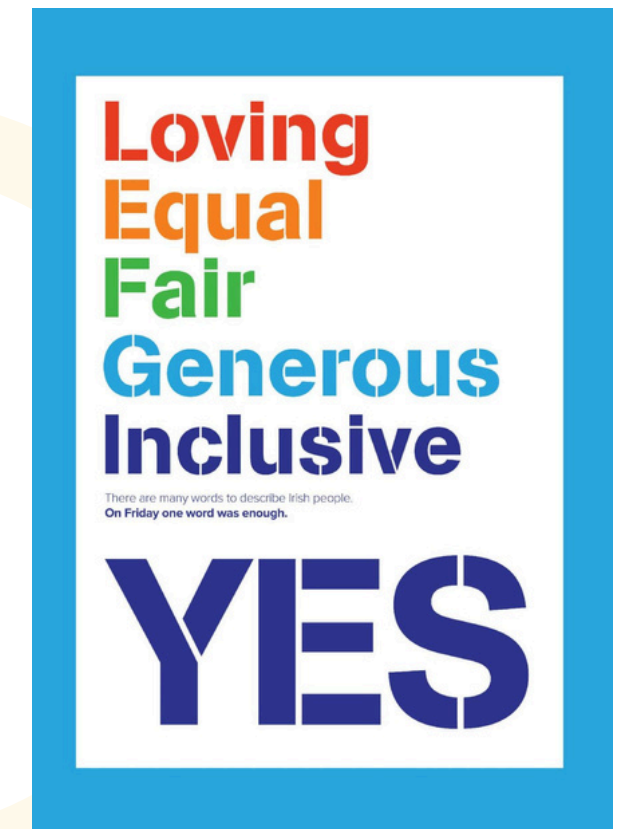
BEST PRACTICES: FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE & YOUTH CLIMATE MOBILISATION (EU + NATIONAL LEVEL)



1. **What was done:** Large-scale youth protests across Europe demanded stronger climate action.
2. **What actually happened:** The movement did not directly write laws, but it strongly influenced political priorities, contributing to the European Green Deal, national climate laws, and higher climate ambition in EU discourse.
3. **Why it matters:** This shows how social movements can change agendas, even without formal decision-making power.



BEST PRACTICES: MARRIAGE EQUALITY CAMPAIGN – IRELAND (NATIONAL LEVEL)



1. **What was done:** A long-term civic campaign combined advocacy, public dialogue, storytelling, and political engagement.
2. **What actually happened:** In 2015, Ireland passed marriage equality through a national referendum, following years of social debate and legal preparation.
3. **Why it matters:** This is a clear example where social change + policy reform + legal change aligned successfully.



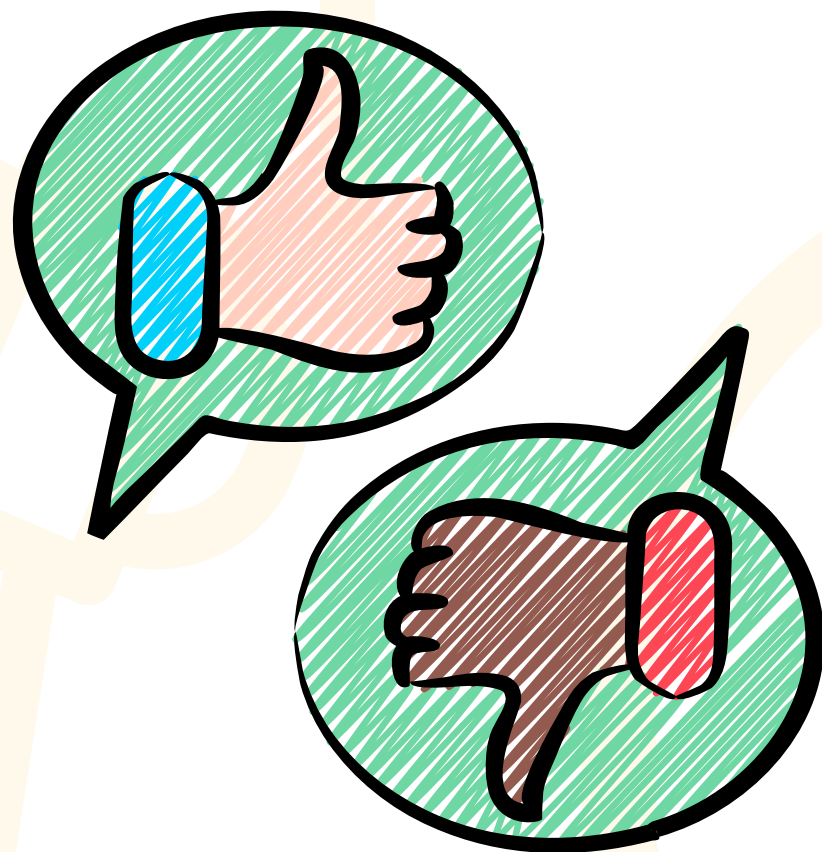
BEST PRACTICES: LOW-EMISSION ZONES IN EUROPEAN CITIES (LOCAL LEVEL)



1. **What was done:** Local governments introduced low-emission zones following pressure from civil society and public health data.
2. **What actually happened:** Policies were adopted and implemented locally, reducing pollution levels, but also facing political backlash and legal challenges. Some measures were adjusted or temporarily reversed.
3. **Why it matters:** It shows that local policy change is possible, but often contested and reversible, requiring long-term engagement.

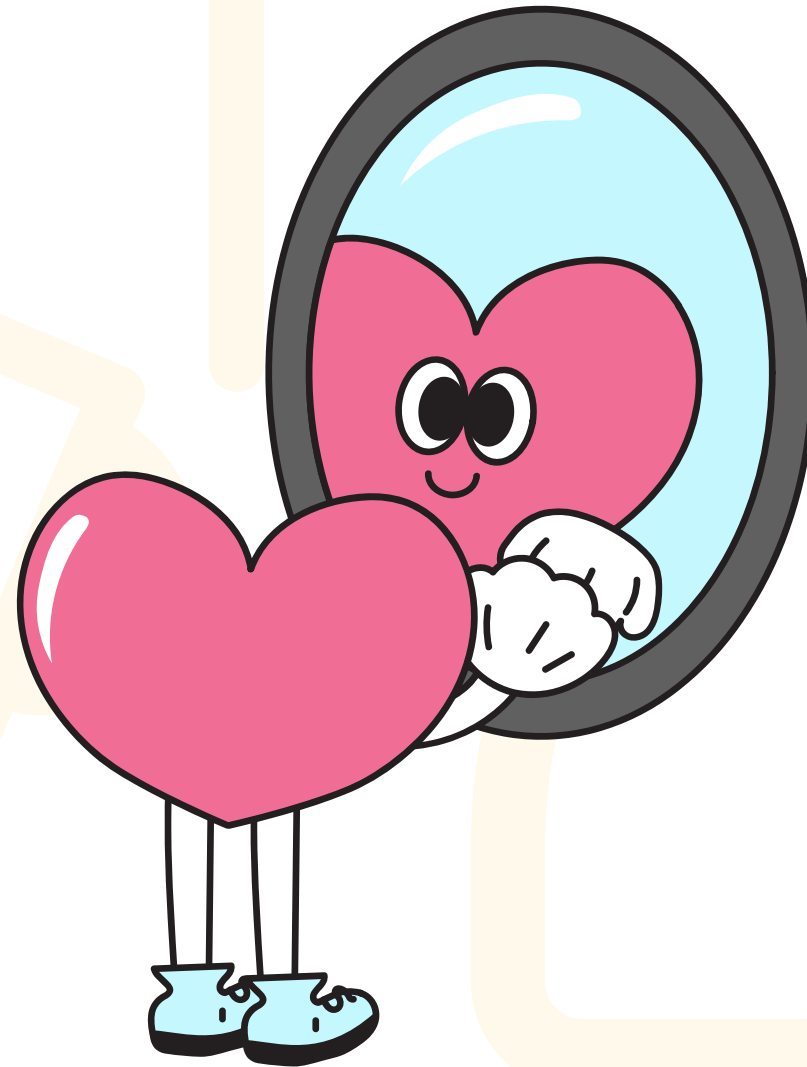


FEEDBACK QUESTIONS





GOOD MORNING, BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE





POPULISM STRESS TEST

Have you ever seen a good policy idea blocked because it was unpopular?
Or a bad idea adopted because it was popular?

*Policymaking is not always rational – pressure and fear matter.
Our job as advocates is to make good ideas popular enough to survive.*





ADVOCACY PLAN

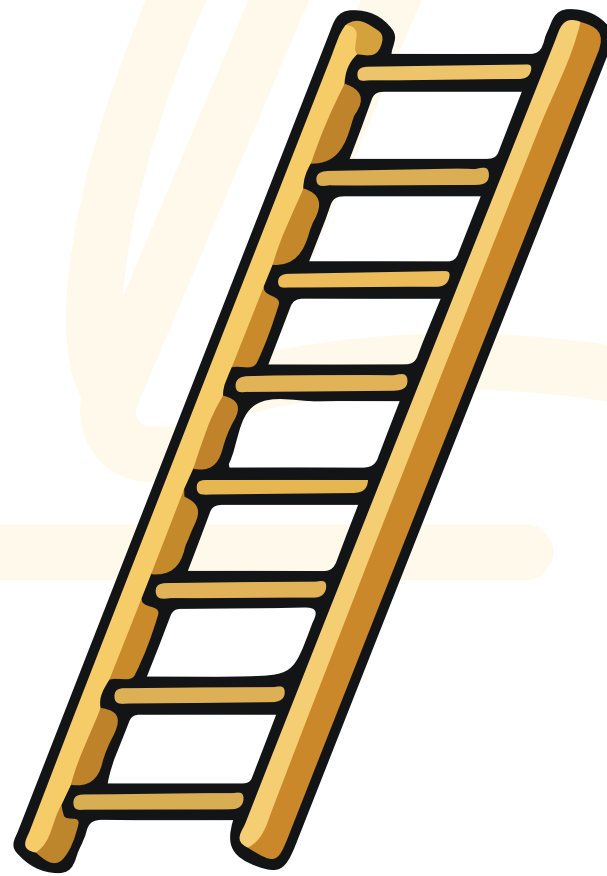


1. **GOAL** - What specific change do you want to achieve? (policy, law, funding, practice)
2. **TARGETS** - Who has the power to make this change? (decision-makers, institutions, authorities)
3. **TACTICS** - What actions will you use? (meetings, campaigns, media, petitions, events)
4. **ALLIES** - Who can support you? (NGOs, movements, experts, media, communities)
5. **TIMELINE** - When will each action happen? (short-term, mid-term, long-term steps)

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LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT



1. Lead
2. Act
3. Support
4. Observe



CREATIVE LAB

Goal: Develop a clear, realistic, and in-depth policy recommendation at EU level, showing an understanding of the complexity of the problem and the policy environment.

1. Define the problem (EU relevance, who is affected)
2. Set the goal (clear policy change)
3. Map targets & allies (power vs. influence)
4. Choose advocacy tactics (campaigns, EU tools, media, NGOs)
5. Plan the timeline (short / mid / long term)
6. Apply SMART+E and write your policy recommendation
7. Prepare a short pitch (2-3 min)



ChatGPT

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FEEDBACK & GOODBYE

