



Youth Participation and Civic Engagement in Local Communities

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Introduction

This report presents the results of a comparative youth survey conducted in Cyprus, Norway, and Spain within the framework of the Y-IMPACT – Youth Influencing Meaningful Participation and Civic Transformation project.

The survey aimed to understand:

- Young people's interest in participation and decision-making
- Barriers limiting their engagement
- Their sense of belonging to their community
- Priority topics for youth influence
- Perceptions of adult responsiveness
- Attitudes toward formal participation structures, such as youth councils

The findings are intended to support the design of effective, context-sensitive youth participation strategies.

Methodology and Sample

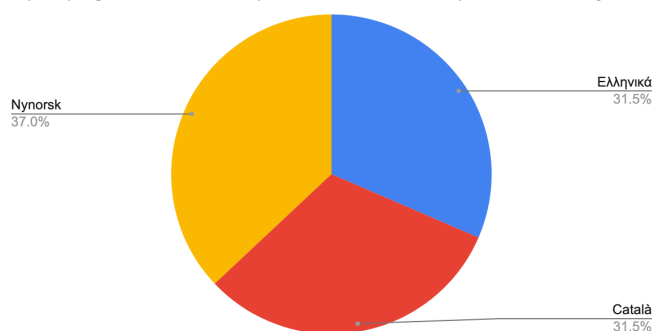
The survey used a structured questionnaire with single-choice and multiple-choice questions. Responses were collected independently in each country during the period 01/12/2015 until 15/01/2026.

Sample size

- Cyprus: 40 respondents
- Norway: 47 respondents
- Spain: 40 respondents
- Total: 127 respondents

Percentages in this report are calculated based on the total number of respondents per country. For multiple-choice questions, percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option.

Count of Which language do you prefer? / Ποια γλώσσα προτιμάς; / Quin idioma prefereixes? / Kva språk føretrekkjer...



Description of Survey Results

Comparative Summary of the Three Countries

The survey results from Cyprus, Norway, and Spain reveal a shared pattern of **high motivation but constrained participation** among young people. In all three countries, a large majority of respondents express a desire to have a say in decisions affecting their school, city, or community, with levels ranging from just over 70% in Norway to nearly 90% in Cyprus. This confirms that young people across contexts are interested in participating and do not lack civic motivation.

Despite this willingness, participation is consistently limited by structural and relational barriers. Lack of time appears as a common constraint in all three countries, reflecting the everyday pressures faced by young people. However, uncertainty about *how* to participate is particularly significant, most notably in Spain, where six out of ten respondents report not knowing how to get involved. This issue is also present, though to a lesser degree, in Cyprus and Norway.

Another shared feature is the perception that adults only **sometimes** listen to young people. In all three countries, more than 70% of respondents choose this option, while only a small minority feel that adults consistently listen to them. Spain stands out for having the highest proportion of respondents who feel that adults do not listen at all, indicating a weaker relationship of trust between young people and decision-makers.

In terms of belonging, the survey shows that young people generally feel **partially** rather than **fully included** in their communities. Norway is the exception, with a strong majority reporting a clear sense of belonging. Across all contexts, belonging is primarily rooted in personal relationships—especially family and friends—rather than in institutional or civic participation structures.

Young people in all three countries express a strong interest in influencing areas closely linked to their everyday lives, particularly education, leisure, sports, and public space. Confidence in the impact of youth ideas remains cautious, with most respondents believing their ideas *sometimes* make a difference, rather than always.

The State of Youth Participation in Cyprus

Cyprus displays a particularly **high level of readiness for youth participation**. Almost nine out of ten respondents state that they want to have a say in decisions, and three-quarters express willingness to participate in a youth council. No respondents explicitly reject the idea of a formal youth council, indicating broad acceptance of institutional participation formats.

At the same time, participation in Cyprus is constrained by practical and relational challenges. Lack of time is the most frequently reported barrier, followed closely by uncertainty about participation

pathways and the feeling that adults do not listen. This suggests that while young people are motivated, participation opportunities may not be sufficiently integrated into their daily realities or clearly structured.

The sense of belonging among young people in Cyprus is generally moderate. Most respondents feel they belong to their community “a little,” rather than strongly. Family and friends are the primary sources of this sense of belonging, while institutional or civic engagement plays a more limited role.

Regarding thematic priorities, sports and leisure activities stand out as the most important areas for participation, followed by education and public space. This indicates that youth participation in Cyprus is most meaningful when it is connected to tangible, everyday activities rather than abstract decision-making processes.

The State of Youth Participation in Norway

Norway presents a context in which young people report a **strong sense of belonging** and comparatively higher exposure to participation opportunities. Nearly **four out of five respondents** state that they feel part of their community, making Norway the country with the strongest community attachment among the three.

Interest in having a say remains high, with over **70%** of respondents expressing willingness to participate. However, attitudes toward formal participation structures are more divided than in Cyprus. While a significant share of young people would like to join the Youth Council, a similarly large proportion state that they would not. This suggests that long-standing participation structures do not automatically appeal to all young people and must remain adaptable.

The main barriers to participation in Norway are **practical rather than relational**. Lack of time and uncertainty about how to participate are the most commonly cited obstacles, while relatively few respondents report that adults do not listen. This points to a participation environment where trust is relatively strong, but accessibility and relevance remain key challenges.

Young people in Norway show strongest interest in influencing **leisure activities, education, and social meeting places**, highlighting the importance of informal and social spaces in shaping civic engagement.

The State of Youth Participation in Spain

Spain shows a combination of **high willingness to participate and significant structural barriers**. Four out of five respondents express interest in having a say, yet Spain records the highest levels of uncertainty and dissatisfaction regarding participation processes.

The most prominent barrier in Spain is the lack of clarity about how to participate, reported by 60% of respondents. Additionally, half of respondents identify the feeling that adults do not listen as a major

obstacle. These findings point to a participation environment where young people are motivated but lack clear entry points and feel insufficiently recognised by decision-makers.

Spain also records the lowest level of confidence in the impact of youth ideas. Only a small minority believe their ideas always make a difference, while most feel that they only sometimes have an effect. This reinforces the perception of limited influence.

Education and public space are the most important areas for participation in Spain, followed by environmental issues, which receive more attention here than in the other two countries. Interest in a youth council is moderate, with respondents evenly split between support, uncertainty, and opposition.

Overall Conclusions

The survey leads to several overarching conclusions. First, young people in all three countries demonstrate **strong willingness to participate**, confirming that lack of interest is not the core issue. Second, participation is primarily constrained by **structural factors**, including lack of time, unclear participation pathways, and inconsistent adult responsiveness. Third, feelings of belonging are present but often fragile, relying more on personal relationships than on civic inclusion.

Across contexts, young people prioritise influencing areas that directly affect their everyday lives, such as education, leisure, and public space. Confidence in participation remains cautious, highlighting the need for clearer feedback mechanisms and visible outcomes.

Finally, the survey confirms that **youth participation cannot rely on a single model**. Formal structures such as youth councils are highly valued in some contexts, particularly Cyprus, but are less universally appealing in others, such as Norway and Spain.

Policy-Oriented Conclusions and Implications

The findings suggest several implications for youth participation strategies:

1. **Improve clarity and accessibility of participation opportunities**
Clear information on how to participate is essential, particularly in Spain, but also relevant across all countries.
2. **Strengthen adult commitment and accountability**
Participation should move beyond occasional consultation toward stable mechanisms that ensure youth voices are systematically considered.
3. **Embed participation in everyday settings**
Schools, leisure spaces, sports, and public spaces are effective entry points for meaningful youth engagement.

4. Offer diverse participation formats

Formal youth councils should be complemented by flexible, informal, and project-based opportunities.

5. Make impact visible

Demonstrating how youth input leads to concrete outcomes is crucial for building trust and sustaining engagement.

The State of Youth Participation in Cyprus

Profile of Participants and Territorial Context

(n = 40; 82.5% from Parekklesia)

The Cypriot sample consists of 40 young participants, with a median age of 15 years, mainly in early to mid-adolescence. A large majority of respondents (82.5%, 33 out of 40) report living in Parekklesia, while the remaining participants live in other municipalities such as Limassol, Nicosia, Dali, and Farmakas. This indicates that the findings are strongly rooted in a village-scale context, with limited dispersion beyond the immediate local area.

Parekklesia represents a small, relatively homogeneous settlement, where daily life is closely structured around family, school, and local leisure activities. Despite this proximity, only 22.5% of respondents report feeling a strong sense of belonging to their community, while 65% feel they belong only “a little.” This suggests that physical closeness and social familiarity do not automatically translate into civic inclusion or influence.

At the same time, willingness to participate is very high (87.5%), and support for a Youth Council is strong (75%), indicating a population that is motivated and open to structured participation, but still seeking clearer roles, recognition, and influence within community decision-making processes in Parekklesia.

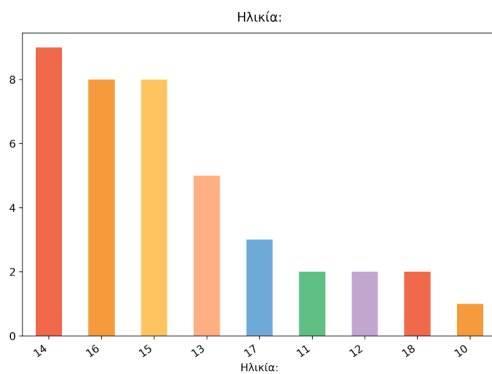


Figure 1. Age

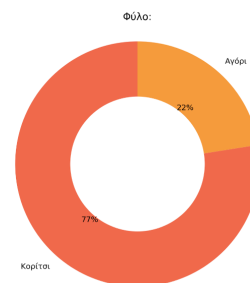


Figure 2. Gender

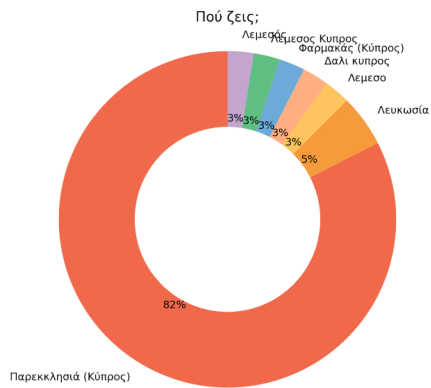


Figure 3. Where do you live?

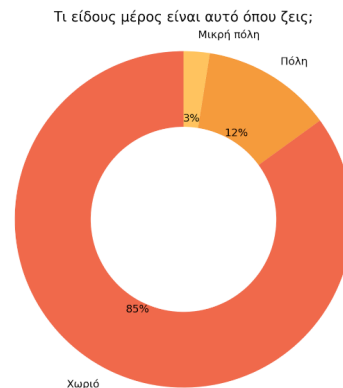


Figure 4. Type of place you live in

Survey results

Openness to Participation

Openness to participation among young people in Cyprus is very high. A large majority (87.5%) state that they want to have a say in decisions that affect their village, town, or school. Notably, no respondents explicitly reject participation, indicating that disengagement is not a defining feature of this group.

Despite this strong willingness, participation is constrained by several barriers. The most frequently reported obstacle is lack of time (33.3%), reflecting competing demands from school, homework, and other activities. In addition, (27.5%) feel that adults do not listen to young people and a 25.5% of respondents state that they do not know how to participate. These barriers point to structural and relational limitations, rather than a lack of interest.

In terms of topics, young people express a strong desire to participate in sports and leisure activities (75%), followed by education (52.5%) and public space (45%). Cultural activities and

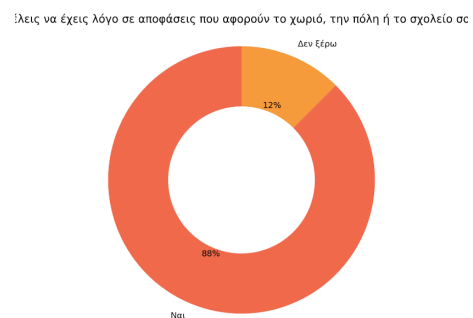


Figure 5. Do you want to have a say in decisions that affect your village or school?

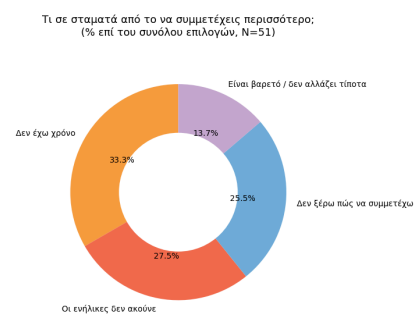


Figure 6. What stops you from participating more?

environmental issues are mentioned less frequently, suggesting that young people prioritise areas that directly shape their everyday experiences. Overall, the findings indicate a high level of openness paired with limited clarity and uneven support structures.

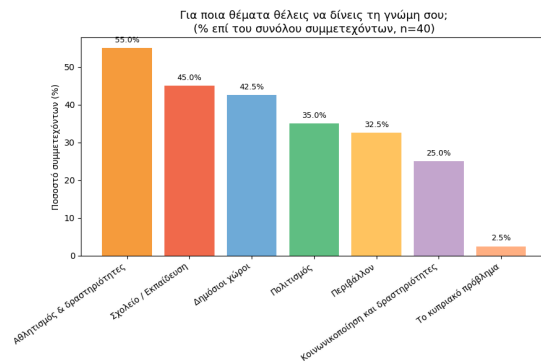


Figure 7. What topics would you like to give your opinion on?

Impact

Perceptions of impact in Cyprus are **moderate but fragile**. While 25% of respondents believe that young people’s ideas *always* make a difference in their community, the majority (67.5%) feel that their ideas *sometimes* do. Only 7.5% feel that youth ideas have little or no impact.

This pattern suggests that young people occasionally experience meaningful influence, but that such experiences are **not consistent or guaranteed**. This interpretation is reinforced by responses to questions about visibility of youth-led initiatives. While many respondents report having seen projects or events where young people helped make decisions (45%), these experiences are described implicitly as **sporadic rather than systematic**.

Taken together, the findings indicate that impact exists, but is **situational**, depending on specific projects, individuals, or moments, rather than embedded in stable participation mechanisms.

Νιώθεις ότι οι ιδέες σου μπορούν να βοηθήσουν την κοινότητά σου;

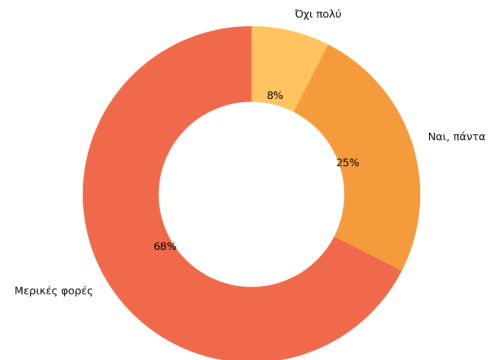


Figure 8. Do you feel that your ideas can make a difference in your community?

Έχεις δει ποτέ ένα πρόγραμμα ή μια δράση όπου νεαρά άτομα πήραν μέρος σε αποφάσεις;

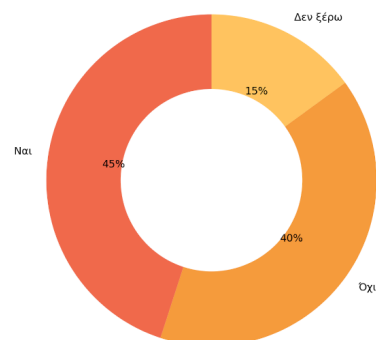


Figure 9. Have you ever seen a project or event where young people helped make decisions?

Sense of Belonging

The sense of belonging among young people in Cyprus is present but relatively weak in intensity. Only 28% of respondents report feeling that they belong “a lot” to their community, while the majority (60%) feel they belong only “a little.” A further 12% report low or no sense of belonging.

Belonging is primarily shaped by family and friendships, which are the most frequently selected factors contributing to feeling part of the village or town. School also plays a role, while participation in community activities or decision-making structures contributes much less.

When asked about leisure time, most respondents (60%) state that they do feel they have meaningful and active free time, though this meaning is largely associated with time with friends, hobbies and sports, rather than community engagement. This reinforces the idea that young people are socially active, but not necessarily civically integrated.

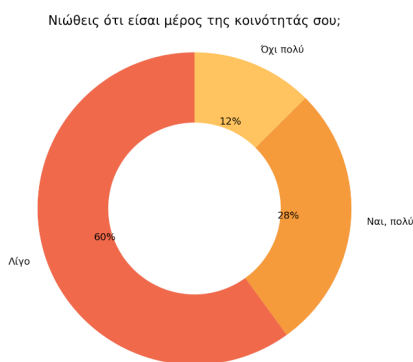


Figure 10. Do you feel you belong to your community?

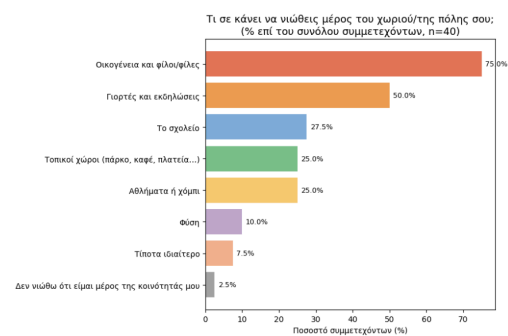


Figure 11. What makes you feel part of your village/town?



Figure 12. Do you feel that you have a meaningful and active leisure time?

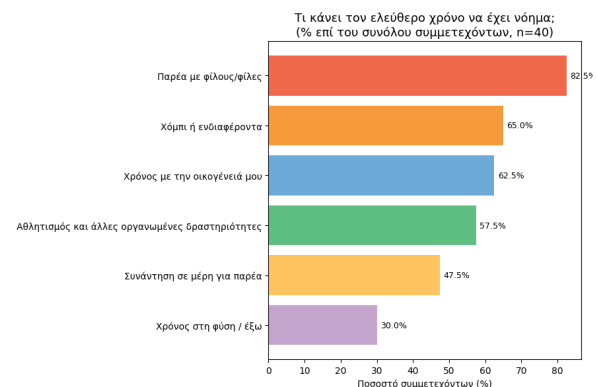


Figure 13. What makes your free time feel meaningful?

Youth Empowerment

Perceptions of youth empowerment reveal a conditional listening environment. A large majority (80%) state that adults *sometimes* listen to young people, while only 12% feel that adults consistently listen. A small but important 8% feel that adults do not listen at all.

In parallel, a significant proportion of respondents report that they do not know who to talk to if they have an idea for their village or town (25%). This lack of clarity directly undermines empowerment, as ideas cannot easily be translated into action.

Together, these findings suggest that empowerment in Cyprus is informal and person-dependent, rather than structurally supported. Young people may be heard occasionally, but they lack clear pathways to express ideas and influence decisions.



Figure 14. Do adults listen to what young people have to say?

Ις σε ποιο ενήλικο άτομο μπορείς να μιλήσεις αν έχεις μια ιδέα για την κοινότητα

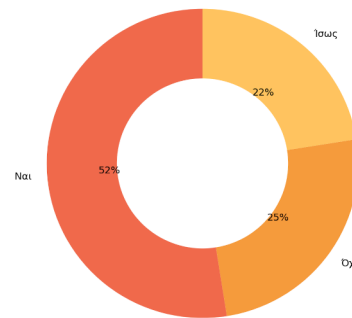


Figure 15. Do you know who to talk to if you have an idea for your village / town?

Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, young people in Cyprus express strong interest in formal participation structures. A clear majority (75%) would like to join a Youth Council, while the remaining respondents are uncertain rather than opposed.

Responses to open questions indicate that participation would become more interesting if it led to real change, involved practical activities, and allowed young people to work on issues they care about. In describing their desired future community, respondents frequently use words related to friendliness, inclusion, safety, and opportunity, suggesting a vision of a community that is supportive and youth-friendly.

Overall, Cyprus shows very high participation potential, limited mainly by unclear structures and inconsistent empowerment.

ε ήθελες να συμμετέχεις σε ένα Συμβούλιο Παιδιών και Εφήβων της Κοινότητας

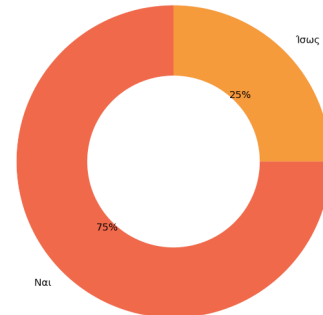


Figure 16. Would you like to join a Youth Council in your area?

Final Conclusions

The survey results from Cyprus indicate a high level of readiness for youth participation in the community of Parekklesia. The vast majority of young respondents express a clear desire to have a say in decisions affecting their village, city, or school, and support for the creation of a Children’s and Youth Council is particularly strong.

However, the data also reveal that motivation alone is not sufficient to ensure effective participation. Young people face practical constraints, such as lack of time, and structural challenges, including unclear participation pathways and uncertainty about whether adults genuinely listen to their ideas. Most respondents experience adult responsiveness as conditional rather than consistent, which may limit trust and long-term engagement.

The sense of belonging among young people in Cyprus is present but generally moderate. Belonging is strongly anchored in personal relationships—especially family and friends—rather than in institutional or civic participation structures. This suggests that the future Youth Council should not be

designed solely as a formal body, but as a space that strengthens social ties and everyday community connections.

Young people's interests are clearly focused on tangible, everyday aspects of community life, particularly sports and leisure activities, education, and public space. These areas represent key entry points for meaningful participation and should form the core thematic focus of any youth participation structure in Parekklesia.

Overall, the survey suggests that the creation of a Youth Council in Parekklesia has strong potential for success, provided that it is designed to be accessible, time-sensitive, responsive, and visibly connected to real outcomes.

Policy-Oriented Conclusions and Strategic Directions for the Youth Council of Parekklesia

Based on the survey findings from Cyprus, the following strategic directions are proposed to support the establishment and sustainability of a Youth Council in Parekklesia. Each strategy title is designed to be clear, communicable, and adaptable for policy or project documentation.

Strategy 1: Clear Paths to Participation

Making participation understandable and accessible

This strategy focuses on addressing the uncertainty many young people express about how to participate. The Youth Council should have clearly defined roles, simple entry points, and transparent processes that explain how ideas are shared, discussed, and transformed into decisions or actions.

Strategy 2: Participation That Fits Young People's Time

Adapting structures to everyday realities

Given that lack of time is the most frequently reported barrier, participation formats should be flexible and compatible with school schedules, leisure activities, and seasonal rhythms of village life. Short-term commitments and project-based involvement can help lower barriers to entry.

Strategy 3: From Listening to Acting

Strengthening trust through visible outcomes

Since most young people feel that adults only sometimes listen, this strategy emphasises the importance of feedback loops. The Youth Council should include mechanisms that clearly show how youth input is considered and what changes result from it, even when ideas cannot be fully implemented.

Strategy 4: Everyday Life as a Starting Point

Grounding participation in what matters to young people

Sports, leisure, education, and public space should be central themes of the Youth Council's work. Starting with these areas aligns participation with young people's lived experiences and increases the perceived relevance of the Council.

Strategy 5: Building Belonging Through Participation

Strengthening community attachment

The Youth Council should function not only as a decision-making body but also as a space for social connection. Activities that encourage collaboration, peer interaction, and visibility within the village can help transform moderate belonging into stronger community attachment.

Strategy 6: A Youth Council That Grows Over Time

Starting simple and evolving

Given the high interest but varying levels of confidence, the Youth Council should be designed as an evolving structure. Beginning with a limited scope and gradually expanding responsibilities can help build confidence, skills, and trust among participants.

Closing Reflection

Overall, the findings from Cyprus reveal a context marked by **high participation potential but low structural consolidation**. Young people in Parekklesia demonstrate strong willingness to engage, clear interest in influencing decisions, and openness to formal participation mechanisms such as a Youth

Council. However, this readiness contrasts with a participation ecosystem that remains informal, **fragmented, and unevenly supportive**. Civic influence is experienced as occasional rather than embedded, adult listening as conditional rather than systematic, and belonging as socially grounded but weakly connected to community decision-making. Participation is therefore perceived less as a continuous right and more as an opportunity that arises sporadically, depending on individual relationships or specific initiatives. The data suggest that the main challenge in Cyprus is not mobilising young people, but **translating motivation into durable, recognisable, and trusted structures** that connect everyday youth experiences—particularly leisure, education, and public space—to visible community outcomes. Strengthening youth participation in Parekklesia thus requires moving from goodwill and openness toward **clear pathways, shared responsibility, and institutional recognition** of young people as legitimate community actors.

The State of Youth Participation in Norway

Profile of Participants and Territorial Context

(n = 47; 100% from Kvam municipality)

The Norwegian sample includes 47 participants, with a median age of 16 years, making it the oldest group among the three countries. All respondents (100%) report living within Kvam municipality, meaning that the survey fully reflects the local context in which the existing Youth Council operates. Kvam is characterised as a small-town and semi-rural municipality, composed of several villages and settlements within a single administrative area.

This relatively contained territorial scale is reflected in the strong sense of belonging reported by respondents, with 78.7% stating that they feel part of their community. Young people appear well integrated into schools, organised leisure activities, and local social meeting places, contributing to a cohesive social environment.

At the same time, the data show that even within a clearly defined and socially cohesive municipal context, young people differ in how they relate to formal participation structures. While 70.2% want to have a say in decisions, attitudes toward participation in the Youth Council are divided, highlighting the importance of flexibility and relevance even in small-scale settings like Kvam.

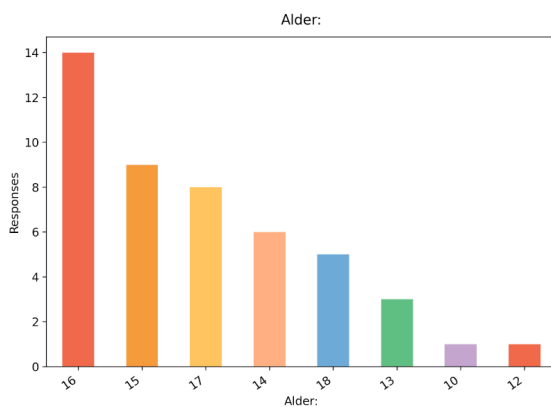


Figure 17. Age

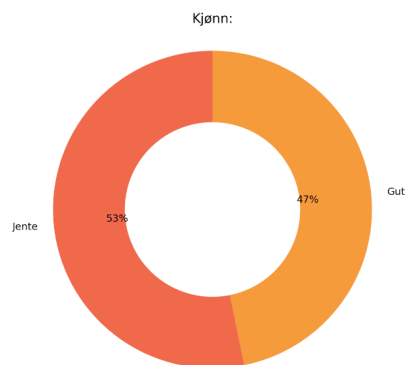


Figure 18. Gender

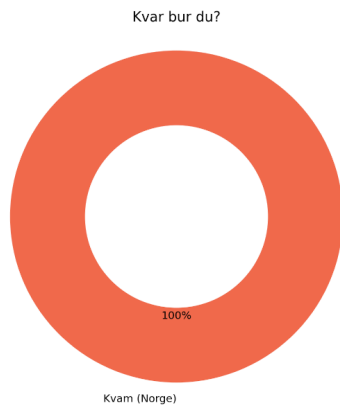


Figure 19. Where do you live?

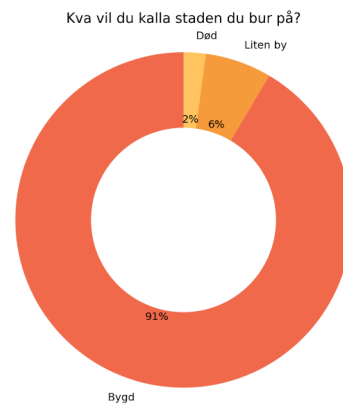


Figure 20. Type of place you live in

Survey results

Openness to Participation

Openness to participation among young people in Norway is generally high, but clearly differentiated. Just over 70% of respondents state that they want to have a say in decisions affecting their village, town, or school. At the same time, 21.3% express uncertainty, and 8.5% state that they do not wish to participate.

This distribution suggests that participation is not rejected, but selectively embraced. Young people in Kvam appear accustomed to the idea of participation and therefore more critical in assessing whether it is meaningful, relevant, or worth their time.

Several barriers to participation help explain this selective engagement. The most frequently cited obstacle is lack of time (around one third of respondents), reflecting competing demands from school, leisure activities, and everyday life. A significant proportion also report not knowing exactly how to participate or where to get involved, despite the existence of formal structures such as the Youth Council. Additionally, a notable share mention that participation

skjer du vera med å sei di meining i saker som gjeld lokalsamfunnet eller skule

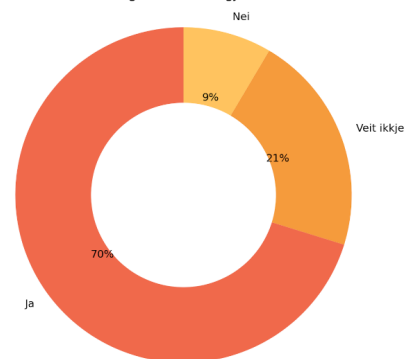


Figure 21. Do you want to have a say in decisions that affect your village or school?

Impact

Perceptions of impact among Norwegian respondents are markedly polarised. A relatively high proportion (32%) believe that young people’s ideas *always* make a difference in their community, the highest share among the three countries. At the same time, 43% feel that youth ideas *sometimes* make a difference, while a substantial 26% believe that they have little or no impact.

This wide distribution indicates **unequal** experiences of participation. Some young people clearly feel empowered and influential, while others remain sceptical. The coexistence of strong confidence and clear doubt within the same municipality suggests variability in how participation processes are implemented, followed up, or communicated.

Most respondents report having seen projects or events where young people were involved in decision-making, which confirms that participation is not purely theoretical in Kvam. However, the mixed perception of impact suggests that visibility does not always translate into felt influence, especially if outcomes are unclear or decisions appear predetermined.

In Norway, therefore, impact exists but is experienced unevenly, depending on the individual’s level of involvement, proximity to decision-making, and perception of outcomes.

Føler du at ideane dine kan gjera ein forskjell i lokalsamfunnet ditt?

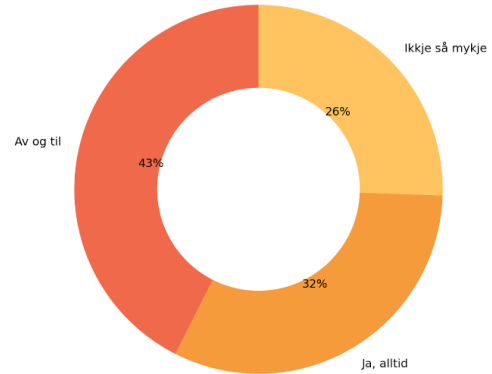


Figure 24. Do you feel that your ideas can make a difference in your community?

· du nokon gong sett eit prosjekt eller ein aktivitet der unge var med på å bestemr

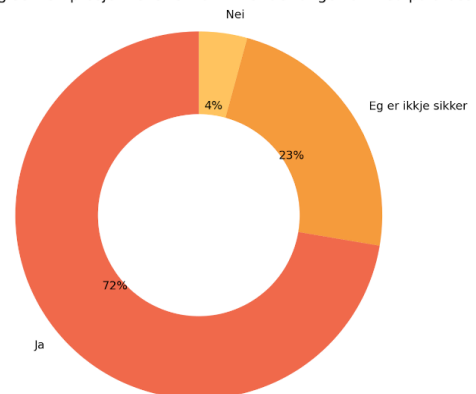


Figure 25. Have you ever seen a project or event where young people helped make decisions?

Sense of Belonging

Norway stands out for its very strong sense of belonging. Nearly 77% of respondents state that they feel they belong to their community, with only a small minority expressing weak attachment. This reflects a socially cohesive local environment, where young people generally feel recognised and included.

When asked what contributes to this sense of belonging, respondents most frequently mention family, friends and peer relationships, followed by school, leisure activities, and local meeting places. Community events and shared spaces also play an important role. These findings indicate that belonging in Kvam is rooted in everyday social interaction and shared environments, rather than formal civic participation.

This is reinforced by responses related to leisure time. The vast majority of respondents state that they have meaningful and active leisure time, largely defined by organised sports, hobbies, and spending time with friends. Leisure is experienced as fulfilling and socially embedded, contributing positively to wellbeing and local attachment.

However, the data also show that strong belonging does not automatically lead to participation. Many young people feel part of the community without feeling the need to engage in formal decision-making, highlighting an important distinction between social inclusion and civic engagement.

Føler du at du høyrer til i bygda di/lokalsamfunnet ditt?

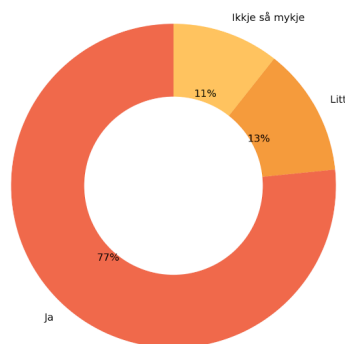


Figure 26. Do you feel you belong to your community?

Kva får deg til å føla at du høyrer til?

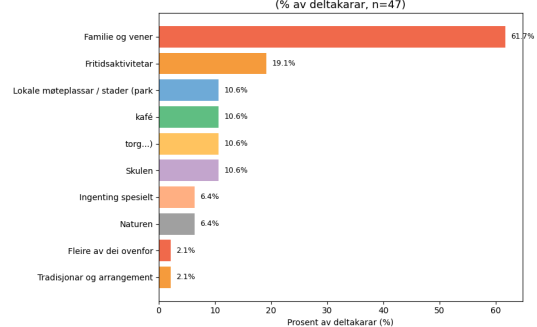


Figure 27. What makes you feel part of your village/town?

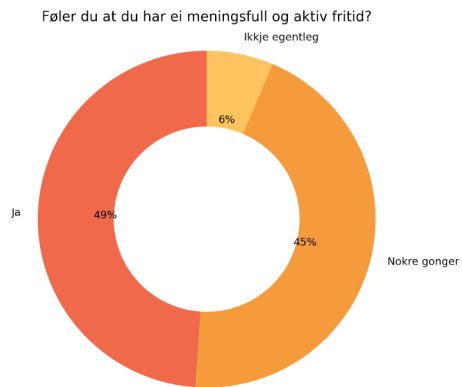


Figure 28. Do you feel that you have a meaningful and active leisure time?

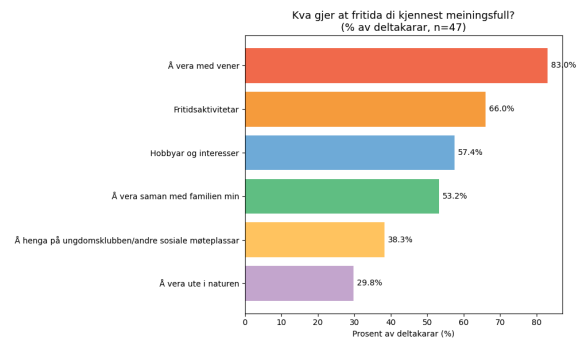


Figure 29. What makes your free time feel meaningful?

Youth Empowerment

Perceptions of youth empowerment in Norway are more positive than in the other countries, but still reveal important limitations. While 72% of respondents state that adults *sometimes* listen to young people, a relatively high 21% feel that adults listen to them *often or always*. Only 6% feel that adults do not listen at all.

This suggests a participation culture where youth voices are generally acknowledged, and where outright dismissal is rare. In addition, most respondents report that they know who to talk to if they have an idea for their village or town, indicating relatively clear participation pathways.

At the same time, the dominance of the “sometimes” response points to context-dependent empowerment. Being listened to does not necessarily mean having influence, and the earlier findings on perceived impact suggest that empowerment is not consistently translated into decision-making power.

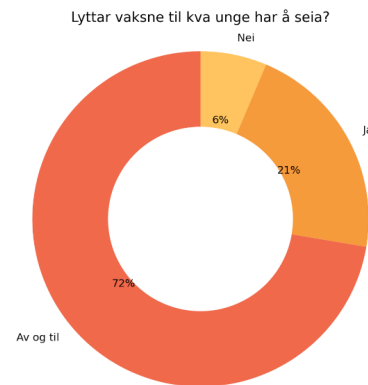


Figure 30. Do adults listen to what young people have to say?

Veit du kven du kan snakka med om du vil gjera staden der du bur betre?

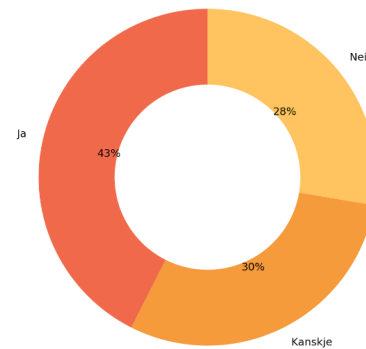


Figure 31. Do you know who to talk to if you have an idea for your village / town?

Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, attitudes toward participation in the existing Youth Council in Kvam are clearly divided. While 40% of respondents would like to join or be involved, 38% state that they would not, and 21% remain unsure.

Open responses shed light on this division. Participation is described as more interesting when it is:

- less formal and more flexible,
- directly connected to concrete actions or projects,
- and clearly impactful, with visible outcomes.

Young people also emphasise the importance of peer involvement, social interaction, and activities that feel relevant to their everyday lives. Rather than calling for entirely new structures, respondents implicitly point to the need for renewal and adaptation of existing participation mechanisms.

In describing their desired future community, respondents frequently use words related to **inclusion, activity, sustainability, safety, and wellbeing**, reflecting a vision of a community that is socially cohesive, youth-friendly, and responsive.

Kunne du tenkja deg å vera med i ungdomsrådet i kommunen din?

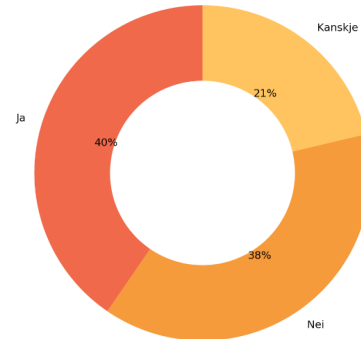


Figure 32. Would you like to join a Youth Council in your area?

Final Conclusions

The survey results from Norway depict a context in which youth participation is relatively established, yet not uniformly embraced. A clear majority of young people express interest in having a say in decisions, and the overall sense of belonging to the community is strong. These factors indicate a favourable environment for youth participation in Kvam.

At the same time, the data show that participation does not resonate equally with all young people. While many feel empowered and recognise the impact of youth input, a substantial minority remain sceptical or disengaged, particularly in relation to formal participation structures. This is reflected in the divided attitudes toward participation in a youth council, despite its existence.

Barriers identified by respondents in Norway are primarily practical and experiential rather than relational. Lack of time, uncertainty about how to participate, and perceptions that participation can be ineffective or uninteresting suggest that participation opportunities may not always align with young people's everyday lives or expectations.

Overall, the findings indicate that the challenge in Kvam is not the absence of participation structures, but rather the need to continuously adapt and renew them so that they remain relevant, inclusive, and meaningful for a diverse group of young people.

Policy-Oriented Conclusions and Strategic Directions for the Youth Council of Kvam

Based on the survey results from Norway, the following strategic directions aim to strengthen and improve the existing Youth Council of Kvam, enhancing its accessibility, relevance, and perceived impact.

Strategy 1: Lowering the Threshold for Participation

Making the Youth Council easier to approach

Given that nearly one third of respondents report uncertainty about how to participate, the Youth Council should strengthen its visibility and clarify how young people can engage, join, or contribute ideas without long-term commitment. Clear communication about roles, expectations, and decision-making power is essential.

Strategy 2: Flexible Participation Models

Recognising different ways of being involved

The strong division between those interested and those not interested in joining a youth council suggests that a single participation format is insufficient. The Youth Council could complement its formal structure with short-term projects, open consultations, or issue-based working groups that allow young people to participate without sustained obligations.

Strategy 3: Connecting Participation to Everyday Social Life

Anchoring youth influence in lived experience

Since young people in Norway express strong interest in leisure activities, education, and social meeting places, the Youth Council should prioritise these themes in its agenda. This can increase relevance and help young people see a direct connection between participation and improvements in their daily environment.

Strategy 4: Strengthening the Sense of Impact

Making outcomes visible and tangible

Although a relatively high proportion of respondents believe their ideas can make a difference, a significant minority remain unconvinced. The Youth Council should reinforce feedback mechanisms that clearly show what happens to proposals, decisions, and recommendations, including when and why ideas cannot be implemented.

Strategy 5: Engaging the Less-Interested Majority

Reaching beyond the already engaged

The existence of a strong sense of belonging alongside moderate participation interest suggests untapped potential. Outreach strategies should aim to involve young people who do not typically see themselves as “participants,” using informal spaces, schools, and leisure environments as entry points.

Strategy 6: Continuous Renewal of the Youth Council

Adapting structures over time

The Youth Council of Kvam should be understood as a dynamic structure that evolves with each generation. Regular reflection on its format, themes, and methods—ideally involving young people themselves—can help ensure long-term relevance and inclusivity.

Closing Reflection

Overall, the Norwegian findings point to a mature but evolving youth participation context. In Kvam, long-standing participation structures such as the Youth Council coexist with a strong sense of community belonging and relatively high levels of youth empowerment. However, the data show that institutionalised participation does not automatically ensure broad or sustained engagement. While many young people feel heard and recognise the potential impact of youth input, others remain uncertain or disengaged, particularly when participation feels time-consuming, formal, or disconnected from everyday life. The challenge in Norway is therefore not to establish participation mechanisms, but to continuously renew them so they remain relevant, flexible, and meaningful across generations. Ensuring visible outcomes and diverse entry points is key to maintaining trust and widening involvement beyond the already engaged.

The State of Youth Participation in Spain

Profile of Participants and Territorial Context

(n = 40; 45% from Rubí municipality)

The Spanish sample consists of 40 young participants, with a median age of 13 years, making it the youngest group in the survey. Less than half of respondents (45%, 18 out of 40) report living in Rubí, while the remaining participants are distributed across a range of other municipalities, including Barcelona, Terrassa, Sabadell, Manresa, Santpedor, Callús, Dosrius, Argentona, La Roca del Vallès, El Papiol, and others.

This dispersion reflects a multi-local and diverse territorial context, typical of urban and peri-urban environments within a metropolitan or regional network. Unlike Parekklisia or Kvam, Rubí functions as part of a wider urban system, where young people's daily lives often extend beyond a single municipality.

This territorial complexity is reflected in the survey results. While willingness to participate is high (80%), a majority of respondents (60%) report not knowing how to participate, and 50% feel that adults do not listen to young people. Only 30% report a strong sense of belonging to their community. These findings suggest that, in larger and more fragmented urban contexts such as Rubí and its surrounding municipalities, participation pathways may be less visible and feelings of influence and belonging more difficult to establish.

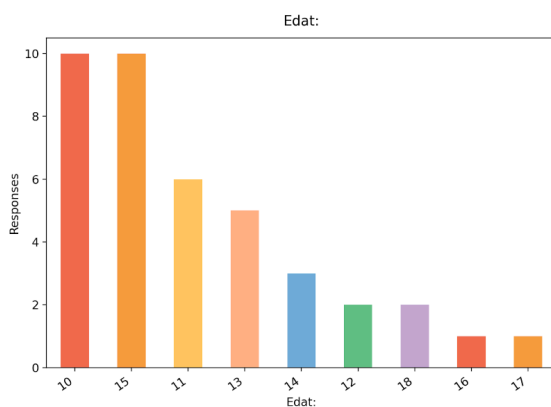


Figure 33. Age

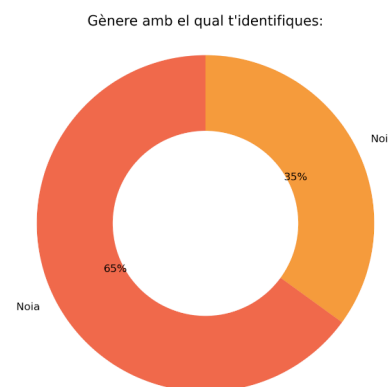


Figure 34. Gender

On vius? (Distribució de participants)

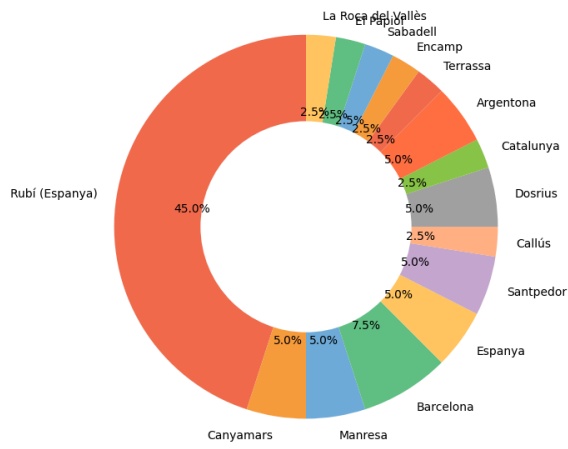


Figure 35. Where do you live?

Quin tipus de lloc és on vius?

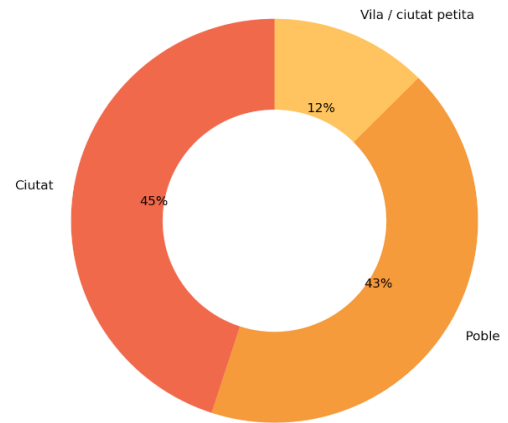


Figure 36. Type of place you live in

Survey results

Openness to Participation

Openness to participation among young people in Spain is high, though marked by strong structural barriers. A large majority (80%) of respondents state that they want to have a say in decisions that affect their village, town, or school. Only a small minority express disinterest, indicating that lack of motivation is not a defining feature of this group.

However, this willingness contrasts sharply with the obstacles young people face. The most frequently reported barrier is **not knowing how to participate (around 37,5%)**, followed closely by the perception that **adults do not listen to young people (around 31,2%)**. Lack of time is also present, though less dominant than in the other countries. These findings point to **systemic barriers related to information, access, and power**, rather than individual disengagement.

In terms of thematic interests, Spanish respondents show a broad and diversified agenda. **Education (65%)** and **public space (62.5%)** emerge as the most prominent topics, followed by **sports and leisure activities (50%)** and **environmental issues (42.5%)**. This distribution reflects a strong concern with both institutional environments (such as schools) and shared urban spaces, which play a central role in young people's everyday lives.

Overall, openness to participation in Spain is high, but is constrained by **unclear pathways** and **limited trust** in adult-led decision-making processes.

vols poder opinar en les decisions que afecten el teu poble, ciutat o la teva escola?

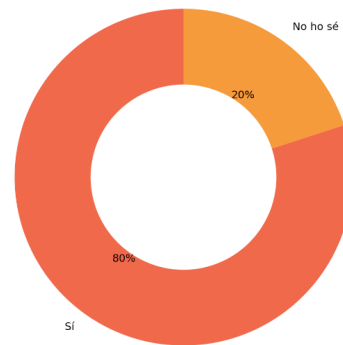


Figure 37. Do you want to have a say in decisions that affect your village or school?

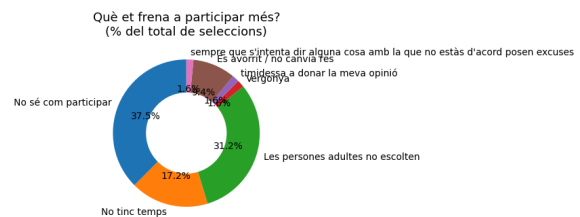


Figure 38. What stops you from participating more?

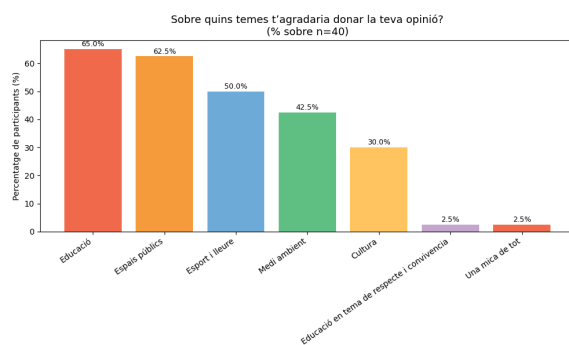


Figure 39. What topics would you like to give your opinion on?

Impact

Perceptions of impact among Spanish respondents are notably weak. Only 10% of young people believe that their ideas *always* make a difference in their community, while a large majority (70%) feel that their ideas *sometimes* do. A significant 20% believe that youth ideas have little or no impact at all.

These perceptions are closely linked to respondents' experiences—or lack thereof—of youth-inclusive decision-making. While some participants report having seen projects or events where young people were involved in decisions, these experiences are neither widespread nor sufficiently visible to generate confidence. Youth participation appears to be perceived as consultative or symbolic, rather than transformative.

The data suggest that, in Spain, young people may be invited to express opinions, but they are uncertain about how those opinions influence outcomes, leading to scepticism and limited expectations of impact.

Sents que les teves idees poden fer alguna diferència a la teva comunitat?

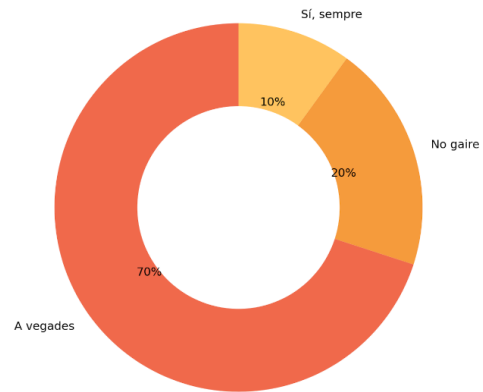


Figure 40. Do you feel that your ideas can make a difference in your community?

¿Vist mai un projecte o activitat on les persones joves han ajudat a prendre decisió?

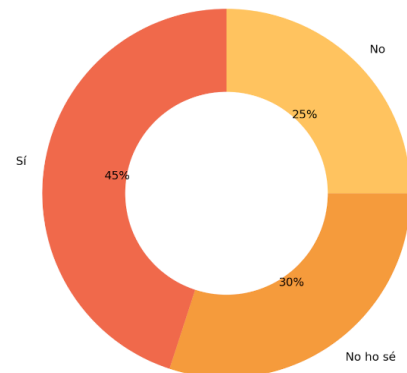


Figure 41. Have you ever seen a project or event where young people helped make decisions?

Sense of Belonging

The sense of belonging among young people in Spain is moderate and uneven. Only around 30% of respondents report feeling a strong sense of belonging to their community, while the majority (52.5%) feel they belong only “a little.” A further 17.5% report weak or no sense of belonging.

Belonging is shaped primarily by family and friendships, which are the most frequently selected factors contributing to feeling part of a village or town. School also plays an important role, particularly given the younger age of respondents. In contrast, community activities, public institutions, and participation structures play a much smaller role in shaping belonging.

When asked about leisure time, most respondents state that they do feel they have meaningful and active free time. Meaningful leisure is associated mainly with time spent with friends, hobbies, sports, and family, rather than with community engagement or collective activities. This indicates that young people in Spain are socially active, but that their social lives remain largely disconnected from civic life.

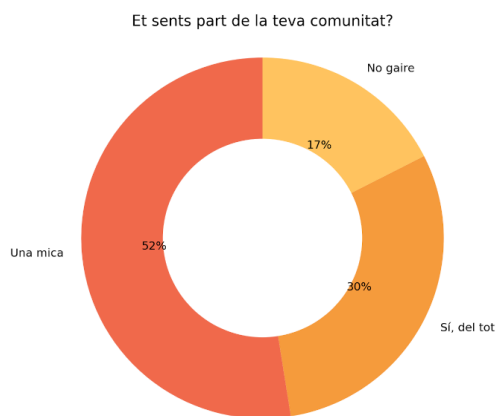


Figure 42. Do you feel you belong to your community?

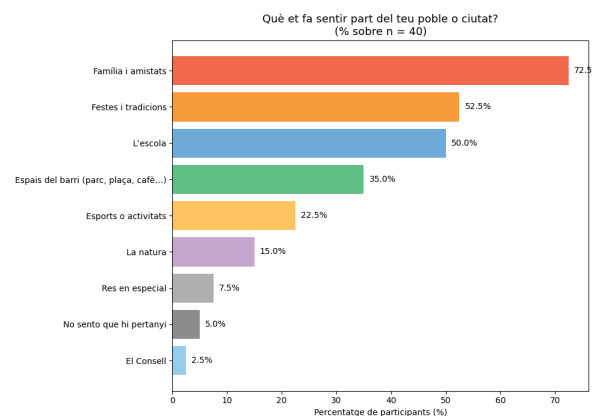


Figure 43. What makes you feel part of your village/town?

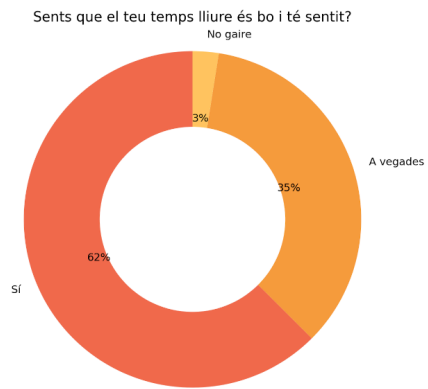


Figure 44. Do you feel that you have a meaningful and active leisure time?

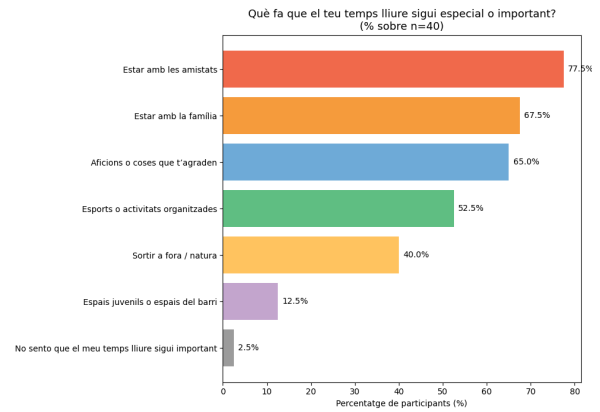


Figure 45. What makes your free time feel meaningful?

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment in Spain emerges as **fragile and weakly structured**, characterised more by conditional listening than by stable channels of influence. A clear majority of respondents (73%) report that adults *sometimes* listen to what young people have to say, while 22% feel that adults do *not* listen at all. Only a very small minority (5%) perceive that adults consistently listen to young people's views. This distribution suggests that youth voices are occasionally acknowledged, but rarely integrated in a systematic or reliable way.

This limited sense of empowerment is further reinforced by the lack of clear access points. A substantial proportion of respondents (43%) state that they do not know who to talk to if they have an idea to improve their village or town. An additional 32% respond “maybe”, indicating uncertainty rather than confidence, while only 25% clearly know who to approach. Together, these findings point to a participation context where listening is informal and person-dependent, and where institutional pathways for youth input remain unclear.

Overall, youth empowerment in Spain appears to be **weakly institutionalised**, with low transparency, inconsistent responsiveness, and few recognisable mechanisms through which young people can transform ideas into dialogue or action.

Les persones adultes escolten el que diuen les persones joves?

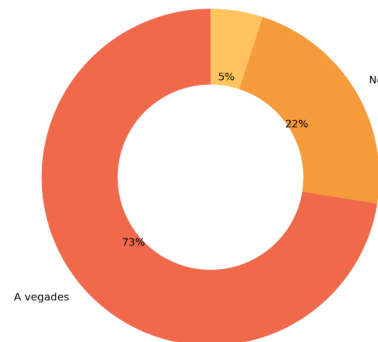


Figure 46. Do adults listen to what young people have to say?

Saps a qui podries explicar una idea que tens per millorar el teu poble?

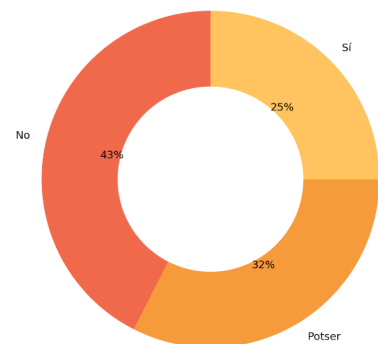


Figure 47. Do you know who to talk to if you have an idea for your village / town?

Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, interest in formal participation structures such as a Youth Council is moderate. Around 50% of respondents state that they would like to join a Youth Council, while the remainder are either unsure or not interested. This ambivalence reflects both **interest and caution**, shaped by previous experiences of limited impact.

Open responses provide important nuance. Participation is described as more interesting when it:

- leads to **real and visible change**,
- allows young people to work on **concrete local issues**, and
- includes **activities and formats that are dynamic and engaging**, rather than purely formal meetings.

When asked to describe their desired future community in one word, respondents frequently mention terms related to **fairness, inclusion, safety, sustainability, and participation**, indicating a normative vision of a community that is more responsive and equitable.

T'agradaria formar part d'un Consell d'infants i adolescents al teu municipi?

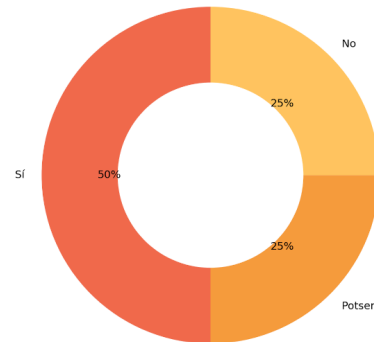


Figure 48. Would you like to join a Youth Council in your area?

Final Conclusions

The survey results from Spain describe a context in which young people are motivated to participate but face significant structural and relational barriers. A large majority express interest in having a say in decisions affecting their community, particularly in areas such as education, public space, and environmental issues. This confirms that youth participation is perceived as relevant and necessary.

At the same time, Spain shows the strongest participation gap among the three countries. The lack of clarity about how to participate is the most prominent barrier, affecting a majority of respondents. This is compounded by a widespread perception that adults do not listen to young people’s opinions, which undermines trust in participation processes and reduces confidence in their impact.

The moderate sense of belonging reported by most respondents, combined with low confidence that youth ideas lead to real change, suggests that existing participation structures—such as youth councils—are not yet fully integrated into young people’s everyday experiences of community life.

Overall, the findings indicate that the challenge in Spain is not the existence of participation structures, but their accessibility, visibility, and perceived effectiveness.

Policy-Oriented Conclusions and Strategic Directions for the Youth Council in Spain

Based on the survey results, the following strategic directions aim to strengthen the existing Youth Council, improving its accessibility, credibility, and impact.

Strategy 1: Making Participation Pathways Visible

Clarifying how young people can get involved

Given that 60% of respondents do not know how to participate, the Youth Council should prioritise clear communication about how to join, contribute ideas, or collaborate. This includes simplifying entry points and ensuring that information reaches young people through channels they already use.

Strategy 2: Strengthening Adult Responsiveness

From consultation to shared responsibility

With half of respondents feeling that adults do not listen, the Youth Council should reinforce mechanisms that ensure youth proposals are formally acknowledged, discussed, and responded to by

decision-makers. Clear feedback, even when proposals cannot be implemented, is essential to rebuilding trust.

Strategy 3: Linking Participation to Everyday Spaces

Grounding the Youth Council in lived experience

The Council's agenda should prioritise education, public space, and environmental issues, as these are the areas where young people most want influence. Working on concrete, local projects in these domains can help demonstrate relevance and impact.

Strategy 4: Improving Perceived Impact

Making change visible

Low confidence in the impact of youth ideas highlights the need to clearly document and communicate outcomes. The Youth Council should track proposals, decisions, and actions, and regularly share what has changed as a result of youth input.

Strategy 5: Diversifying Forms of Engagement

Reaching beyond the formal council

Given the mixed attitudes toward participation in a youth council, the existing structure should be complemented by open consultations, short-term working groups, and project-based initiatives that allow young people to engage without long-term commitment.

Strategy 6: Strengthening Belonging Through Participation

Connecting participation and community identity

Participation should also function as a tool for building belonging. Creating opportunities for collaboration, visibility in public space, and interaction with peers can help strengthen young people's attachment to their community.

Closing Reflection

Overall, the Spanish findings reveal a highly uneven youth participation landscape shaped by territorial diversity. While Rubí benefits from an established Children's and Teenagers' Council, many participants come from small cities or rural villages where no stable participation bodies exist. This asymmetry contributes to widespread uncertainty about how to participate and weak perceptions of impact, even among highly motivated young people. In more fragmented and multi-local contexts, participation structures appear distant, poorly visible, or disconnected from everyday youth experiences. As a result, motivation alone is insufficient to generate sustained engagement or a strong sense of belonging. Strengthening youth participation in Spain therefore requires not only improving existing councils, but also extending accessible, recognisable participation mechanisms to smaller municipalities and rural areas where youth voices currently lack stable channels.

Local Needs Assessment in Cyprus: Qualitative Findings from Parekkklisia

Purpose and Methodology

Alongside the quantitative youth survey, a local needs assessment was carried out in Parekklesia (Cyprus) to gain a deeper, qualitative understanding of youth participation at community level. The objective was to explore perceptions, experiences, and expectations related to youth participation, with a particular focus on the potential creation of a Youth Council.

The needs assessment combined semi-structured interviews and participatory sessions, allowing for the triangulation of perspectives from young people, families, local authorities, and national stakeholders. This approach made it possible to contextualise the survey findings and identify underlying dynamics that cannot be captured through quantitative data alone.

Participants and Scope

The local needs assessment involved:

- 8 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
- 1 participatory group session involving young people and community members

Interviewees included:

- representatives of the Community Council of Parekklesia,
 - young people aged approximately 13–18,
 - parents and community members,
- institutional and expert stakeholders, including:
- the Commissioner for Children’s Rights,
 - a Member of Parliament (Education Committee),
 - an academic specialising in social participation and youth issues.

Interviews lasted approximately one hour each and followed a common guide structured around participation, belonging, empowerment, and impact. As an introductory element, interviewees were presented with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which served as a shared reference point for discussing young people’s right to be heard and its application in practice.



Results

Openness to Participation

The needs assessment confirms a high level of openness to participation among young people in Pareklisia, fully aligned with the survey results. Young participants express a strong interest in being involved in decisions that affect their daily lives, particularly regarding leisure spaces, activities, and issues directly impacting young people.

However, openness is not matched by experience. Most young people report that they have **never** been meaningfully invited to participate in community decision-making. Participation is perceived as something abstract or distant, rather than as a concrete possibility.

Adult stakeholders generally recognise the importance of youth participation and express positive attitudes toward the creation of a Youth Council. At the same time, several acknowledge that participation has not been a priority in the past and that there is limited experience in facilitating youth-inclusive processes.

Perceived Impact

Across interviews and participatory discussions, perceived impact is low. Young people consistently state that they do not expect their opinions to lead to real change, based on previous experiences where their views were ignored or not followed up.

Adult stakeholders also recognise that youth input has rarely influenced decisions in a visible way. While some isolated initiatives involving young people are mentioned, these are described as **sporadic and informal**, rather than systematic.

This lack of impact is closely linked to the absence of clear participation mechanisms. Without defined processes, feedback loops, or responsibilities, both young people and adults struggle to identify how ideas could realistically translate into action.

Sense of Belonging

The needs assessment reveals a **dual sense of belonging**. On a social level, young people feel connected to Parekklesia through **family, friendships, school, and informal meeting places**. These ties create a sense of familiarity and safety.

On a civic level, however, belonging is weak. Young people do not feel recognised as active members of the community with a legitimate voice in shaping its future. This distinction mirrors the survey findings, where belonging is present but rarely strong.

Adult interviewees acknowledge that young people are often perceived primarily as recipients of services or activities, rather than as contributors or partners in community life.

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment emerges as one of the **most fragile dimensions** in the local needs assessment. Young people report uncertainty about:

- who to talk to if they have an idea,
- how decisions are made,
- and whether adults are willing to listen.

Fear of speaking up, lack of confidence, and concern about not being taken seriously are frequently mentioned barriers. These experiences reinforce self-exclusion and discourage sustained engagement.

Adult stakeholders confirm that **no clear institutional pathways** currently exist for youth input. Listening to young people depends largely on personal relationships rather than on formal structures, making empowerment inconsistent and person-dependent.

Looking Ahead

Despite these challenges, the needs assessment identifies **strong potential for future participation**. Young people express interest in a Youth Council as a space to:

- meet peers,
- discuss shared concerns,
- organise activities,

- and communicate with the Community Council.

Adults and families are generally supportive of this idea, provided that the Youth Council is well facilitated, meaningful, and connected to real decision-making. There is broad agreement that such a structure could strengthen young people's sense of belonging, responsibility, and skills.

Participants stress that participation should be practical, visible, and action-oriented, rather than limited to formal meetings or symbolic consultation.

Key Recommendations from the Local Needs Assessment

Based on the qualitative findings, the following recommendations emerge:

- 1. Establish clear and accessible participation structures**
The creation of a Youth Council should include clear mandates, roles, and communication channels.
- 2. Invest in capacity-building**
Both young people and adults need support and training to develop participation skills, including facilitation, dialogue, and shared decision-making.
- 3. Ensure visible impact and feedback**
Young people must see how their ideas are discussed and what outcomes result, even when proposals cannot be implemented.
- 4. Anchor participation in everyday life**
Youth participation should focus on concrete issues such as leisure spaces, activities, and community life.
- 5. Create safe and inclusive spaces**
Participation processes should actively address fear, shyness, and unequal confidence levels.
- 6. Build long-term commitment**
Sustainable youth participation requires ongoing political and institutional support, not one-off initiatives.