

A stylized orange logo resembling a person with arms raised, forming the letter 'Y'.

YOUTH FOR CHANGE

A stylized white logo resembling a speech bubble or a keyhole, forming the letter 'C'.

Using Youth Participatory Action Research to investigate
multidimensional challenges of youth

TOOLKIT

INDEX

01 INTRODUCTION

02 WHAT IS YPARC?

03 HUMAN RIGHTS TO YOUTH RIGHTS

04 IMPLEMENTING YPAR AS A YOUTH ORGANIZATION

05 METHODOLOGY

06 ADVOCACY

07 EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS

Introduction



What is the YPARC project?

Youth-led Participatory Action Research for Change (YPARC) is an Erasmus+ project that aims to empower young people in 6 European countries to become agents of change and advocate for their rights in their local communities and beyond.

By conducting youth-led participatory action research (YPARC) young people will be investigating challenges affecting their everyday lives, analysing their lived-realities, exchanging experiences and co-creating policy-recommendations that push forward their perspectives.

YPARC project challenges traditional power hierarchies that sees adults as the

only knowledge and expertise holders, while children and young people are often pushed at the margins of decision-making chains and thought of as recipients. YPARC project challenges traditional power. Through the project we aim at restoring equitable relationships between young people, adults and educators, and decision-makers, towards higher degrees of co-creation.

YPARC sees young people as experts of their lived realities, capable of understanding and analysing complexity and of re-imagining actionable and sustainable change.

THE YPARC PROJECT IS COMPOSED BY 4 KEY PHASES



Training on how to Conduct YPAR & ADVOCACY

Joining 24 young researchers from 6 countries.



Research Phase

investigating 6 research questions in the local realities.



Action-Plans & Policy Recommendations creation

Where young people will elaborate their research findings and existing policy-gaps, designing possible responses and action to be taken.



YOUTH SUMMIT

Where young people from the 6 countries will gather, exchange on their journeys and present their recommendations to EU Youth Policy-Makers in the fields of their researches.



Meet YPARC Partners

QUEST



Quality Education for Sustainable Social Transformation (QUEST) is an educational network based in Brussels (with more than 100 members in Europe and beyond) that has the objective to foster access to more democratic, inclusive and sustainable education in Europe through action-research, policy-advocacy and networking. QUEST as an European Network has strong expertise advocating for more participatory practices in education, encouraging the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes that concern them and supporting their autonomy. QUEST advocates for equity in education, posing particular emphasis on the importance of promoting intersectional approaches to inclusion, and advancing the perspectives of historically discriminate and marginalized communities. QUEST will support young women living in Belgium.

Association FOR YOU

is a youth association based in Bulgaria striving to promote youth well being, autonomy and participation. Association FOR YOU actively works with youth at local and international levels by empowering them to achieve their goals, be autonomous, continue their education, and find their career path. In the last 16 years they have established an extensive experience in youth exchanges and mobilities through European programmes, as well as cooperation partnership. FOR YOU places particular attention to the needs of people with physical and intellectual disabilities, advocating for safe spaces where young people can build their confidence and become more autonomous and proactive. FOR YOU will support young people, especially those with physical or intellectual disabilities, living in Bulgaria.



Meet YPARC Partners



Inovatyvi KARTA (INKA)

is youth organization based in Lithuania that strives to engage people in improving their choices in life. Instead of a passive lifestyle, it empowers youth to choose daily activities able to motivate them to reach their full physical, intellectual and social potential.

Their work is based on non-formal education, cognitive behavioral coaching, arts, outdoor education, inclusion and equality, as well as learning by experience. INKA aim to engage youth and adults while giving them the space to bloom. INKA also works closely with municipalities, embassies, and international NGO's outside of the European Union. INKA will support young people at risk of social exclusion – in particular those coming from low-socio-economical incomes, living in Lithuania.

VILNOSVITA (VIL)

is a Ukrainian non-governmental organization dedicated to fostering a culture of mutual support and civic activism as integral parts of society's democratization. Before the Russian war against Ukraine, VIL was a Democratic School, a place where children and young people were recognized as autonomous in their learning, and engaged at multiple stages of decision making. In 2022, the educational initiatives evolved into an official organization that now implements dozens of projects aimed at strengthening the self-reliance and civic engagement of Ukrainians. These initiatives include a partnership with the University of Arizona to provide free English language learning opportunities, youth leadership development programs in collaboration with UNICEF, and personal development programs implemented together with our Indian colleagues from the Oasis Movement.



Despite the war, Vilnsovita continue to organize large self-directed festivals in both summer and winter, creating spaces where people can learn, connect, and strengthen their sense of community and belonging. The organization is also currently working on the rehabilitation and support of veterans and their families. the school converted in a shelter, becoming a space where people of all age could seek refuge and support. VIL will represent young people living in conflict areas and affected by systemic violences in Ukraine.

Meet YPARC Partners

ARCIGAY (AG)



Arcigay is the leading Italian LGBTQIA+ not-for-profit organization and is the largest and longest-running LGBTQIA+ association in Italy.

It was founded in 1985, and since then it has been operating as a nation-wide membership-based federation currently comprising 75 local chapters across Italy. At the national level, Arcigay primarily engages in political and institutional advocacy and public awareness activities, but it also plays a pivotal role in supporting its local chapters in implementing advocacy-focused, educational and training local projects, as well as in providing community services.

Arcigay promotes and protects equal rights, upholds principles and relationships of solidarity, and fights against all forms of violence, discrimination, and violation of the human and civil rights of LGBTQIA+ people. It advocates for political, legislative, cultural, and social change through lobbying activities, advocacy, awareness and information campaigns, contributions to sector-specific public policies, initiatives, programs, projects, presence in public debate, and its capacity for aggregation and mobilization. ARCI will support young people from the LGBTQIA+ community in Italy.

Love & Care for People (LCP)

Love and Care for People (LCP) is a youth-led Irish charity (CHY: 20204558), fully compliant with Irish Charity Regulations and the Children First Act (2015). Founded in 2013, LCP promotes integration and social inclusion, especially for ethnic minorities (asylum seekers, refugees & migrants) in disadvantaged rural communities in Ireland through educational programs and community engagement. It is grounded in EU integration, youth, and anti-racism plans, and is a member of the Irish Network Against Racism and National Youth Council of Ireland. LCP emphasized the importance of providing safe and supportive environments for young people, especially those experiencing social exclusion and discrimination. LCP will represent the experiences of young people coming from racialized communities in Ireland.



How to use this toolkit?

Young people have the right to be heard, to take part in decisions that affect their lives, and to shape the communities they belong to. Meaningful youth participation needs safe-brave spaces, practical tools, trust and opportunities for young people to explore the issues that matter to them.

This toolkit is the result of a 4-day training joining together youth workers and young people, learning and putting in practice YPAR methodologies. Here, you will find clear information and tools to learn about youth rights and Youth-Led Participatory Action Research, how to put this methodology in practice through step-by-step instructions, tips and feedback from the young people who already took the training.

Whether you are supporting a group of young people or starting your own youth-led research journey, this toolkit will help you move from questions to action.

It is built to be accessible, encouraging and practical. You do not need to be an expert in research or advocacy to begin. What matters is curiosity, commitment, and the belief that young people's voices are essential in building fairer, more inclusive and democratic societies.



For Youth Workers

Dear Youth worker, Educator, Facilitator, adult in the room,

This toolkit is here to support you in creating meaningful, safe and empowering spaces for young people to explore the issues that affect them. We know that as a youth worker, educator, facilitator or community organiser, you play an important role in making youth participation real. You can help young people feel confident, respected and supported. You can create the conditions for them to ask questions, share experiences, analyse problems and imagine solutions.

We ask you to reflect on your role and positionality: in YPAR you are not leading the process for young people, but you are walking alongside with them.

Your role is to support, guide and protect the process, while making sure that young people have real ownership over the questions, decisions and outcomes.

Through this toolkit, you will find practical tools to guide young people through a **Youth Participatory Action Research process**, from identifying a topic to designing research questions, choosing appropriate research methods, collecting and analysing information, and planning advocacy actions.



The toolkit can help you:

- introduce young people to **youth rights and participation**
- facilitate discussions on inclusion, equality and social justice
- support young people in developing research skills
- guide youth-led data collection and analysis
- transform research findings into advocacy campaigns or community actions
- encourage young people to speak with confidence to decision-makers

This toolkit will help you turn participation into practice: co-creating knowledge, challenging inequalities and taking action.

For Young People

Dear Young Person,

this toolkit (and this project more in general) is for you! Maybe you have noticed something unfair in your school, neighborhood, community or country. Maybe you are feeling that young people are almost never taken seriously. Maybe you want to learn how to ask key questions, collect information, speak up and make your voice heard. We hope that this toolkit can support you to do that.

YPAR can empower you with tools to become a young researcher and a change-maker. It can help you look at real-life problems, understand why they happen, and how to listen to the voices of other young people, gather information and use what you discover to push for change.

In this toolkit you will find step-by-step guidance on how to:



- understand your **youth rights**
- choose a topic that matters to you
- create strong research questions
- use youth-friendly research methods
- collect stories, opinions and data
- analyse what you find
- turn your research into advocacy
- plan actions that can influence your community or decision-makers

You don't need to have research experience to use this toolkit. You only need your ideas, your questions and your willingness to take part. Your experiences are important. Your voice matters. Your knowledge can help create change.

This toolkit is an invite to start from what you see, feel and know and turn it into action. It is a guide to help you move from "this is a problem" to "we can do something about it."

What is YPAR?

Youth-led Participatory Action Research, or YPAR, is a collaborative, transformative and **empowering approach*** to research where young people explore the issues that affect their lives and take an active role in creating change. It recognises young people as experts in their own experiences and supports them to become researchers, advocates and changemakers in their communities.

***Approach** means that this is not a defined, rigid set of methods to do research.

Through YPAR, young people identify the challenges they want to investigate, develop research questions, collect and analyse information, and use their findings to propose solutions. This approach is especially meaningful when working with young people who experience multiple forms of marginalisation, discrimination or/and exclusion, because it creates space for their knowledge, needs and perspectives to shape the research process and its outcomes.



Did you know that...?

Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches developed during civil rights and rural and urban independence struggle in the USA, Canada and it became central to anti-colonial movements in Latin America, Africa, Australia and South-Asia, challenging territorial and economic dominations as well as Western-centric authority of knowledge.

PAR focuses on inequities of power, and dominance in research and creates spaces for people affected by structural inequities to move to the center, raise the issues, speak their truth and advocate for the change.

YPAR STARTER PACK

Core principles of how YPAR should look like

EMANCIPATORY

it challenges traditional power-hierarchies in research and it puts into discussion systemic oppressions, offering tools to name barriers, understand how they are connected, dismantle and promote collective positive change.

INQUISITORY

Young researchers are encouraged to ask questions about complex topics, and challenge representations, narrations fostering critical consciousness towards realities around them and creating shared understanding of complexity.

YOUTH AS EXPERTS

young people are seen as experts in their fields and in matters that concern them. They are recognized as capable to generate valid knowledge, plan and act for changes relevant to them.

LIVED EXPERIENCES

the lived experiences of those affected by the issue are an essential source to generate the knowledge on the issue.

COLLABORATIVE

genuine collaboration and cooperation among all participants (youth and adults) is key, combining different skills and experiences to re-imagine solutions, and genuinely engage. We move from tokenistic and performative youth participation towards co-creation and co-agency.

TRANSFORMATIVE

research is not reduced to knowledge production, but moves towards taking actions and recommending changes in areas relevant to the challenges investigated. The ultimate goal of YPAR is to drive meaningful change.

Human Rights to Youth Rights

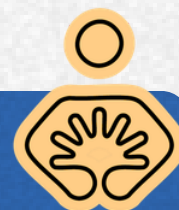
DEFINITION:

Human Rights are a set of freedoms and protections that each human being is entitled to, simply for the fact of being human. They belong to everyone, everywhere, you don't need to earn them, they are not prizes for good behaviour. And you never lose them, they do not depend on your age, identity, background, income or beliefs.

Human Rights are like ground rules for living freely and safely. They exist to protect something we all share: Human Dignity → the idea that every life has value and every person deserves respect.



HUMAN RIGHTS ARE:



UNIVERSAL

they belong to everyone everywhere.

INALIENABLE

they can't be taken away, or given up.

INTERDEPENDENT AND INDIVISIBLE

each right depends on the others to be truly fully realized.

FREEDOMs & ENTITLEMENT



What does it mean to see Human Rights as Freedoms & Entitlements?

Freedoms: create a space for you to think, speak choose and take part in society, without being forced or controlled. Freedoms require authorities to step back and not interfere. For example:

- **Freedom of Expression** → You must not be Censored
- **Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion** → You must not be imposed thoughts, and beliefs
- **Freedom of Association** → You can't be denied to meet for a cause
- **Right to Privacy** → You can't be spied on and invaded.



ATTENTION → freedom does not mean **“anything goes”**. Some freedoms can be limited to protect other people's rights, safety or public order. Any restriction should have a legal basis, pursue a legitimate purpose and be genuinely necessary.

Entitlement: concern what people should be able to access, receive or benefit from. These rights often require public authorities to take action

- **Right to Education** → The authorities must provide schools
- **Right to Decent and Safe Work** → Regulate the workplaces
- **Right to Food and Adequate Standard of Living** → Create social-protection systems

Freedom opens the door. Entitlements help make sure everyone can reach it.

DUTIES OF GOVERNMENTS:

- **RESPECT:** Do not interfere unjustifiably with people rights
- **PROTECT:** Stop other people, companies or organizations from abusing
- **FULFILL:** Take practical steps to make rights accessible in real life

> HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

> KEY CONVENTIONS IN EUROPE

YOUTH RIGHTS

What is youth?

Youth is a transitory period between childhood and adulthood that faces unique challenges and developmental milestones. There is no universal definition of “youth” based on age - the variety of definitions and approaches based on national policies reflect the unique character of the youth period.

A young person faces many unique challenges - from personal development and maturity, through learning about their role in society, to making decisions about their life. The youth period is often associated with navigating change, discovery, adventure, and facing reality.

The United Nations Convention of the Child defines anyone under 18 years of age to be a child.

This toolkit is aimed at people over the age of 18, although it might be relevant to younger adolescents.

What rights do young people have?

The universality of human rights also applies to young people. However, this toolkit focuses on the rights that are especially relevant to the transition from childhood to adulthood. All definitions are borrowed from the [Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit](#), authored by the United Nations Human Rights Office, Education Above All Foundation and Silatech. For more in depth information about youth rights, we encourage you to refer to the Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit.



YOUTH RIGHTS

1. Right to education
2. Right to decent work
3. Right to participate in public affairs
4. The right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion
5. The right to freedom of opinion or expression
6. Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association
7. The right to social security
8. The right to health
9. The right to adequate housing
10. The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment
11. Human rights in the digital space and right to privacy

1. The right to education



Education is both a human right in itself and an **'empowerment right'** or stepping stone to realizing other human rights. Education is the primary vehicle to lift economically and socially marginalized people out of poverty, to obtain the means to fully participate in their communities.

As such, education serves to level inequalities and ensure sustainable development. The right to education includes:

- Free education, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages
- Compulsory elementary education
- Free, or progressive introduction of free secondary education
- Equal access to higher education, with progressive introduction of free education
- Human rights education
- Right of the parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children
- Access to education as well as vocational guidance for young women, youth with disabilities and young refugees

Education is directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It should enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or religious groups.

2. The right to decent work



The realization of the right to decent work fosters autonomy and independence in young people, which can pave the way for the realization of other fundamental human rights. Work is not purely a means of generating income. The right to decent work implies just and favorable work conditions, and full and productive work should be promoted while respecting the fundamental political and economic freedoms of the individual.

The right to decent work is closely intertwined with realizing the right to an adequate standard of living, and is an inseparable and inherent part of human dignity.

The right to decent work includes:

- Prohibition of forced labor; right to freely choose or accept work
- Safe and healthy working conditions
- Minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment
- Equality of opportunity and treatment; non-discrimination in accessing and maintaining employment
- Fair remuneration to achieve a decent standard of living
- Equal pay for work of equal value
- Reasonable working hours and holiday with pay
- Forming trade unions, and joining the trade union of one's choice

Access to a first job constitutes an opportunity for economic self-reliance and in many cases a means to escape poverty. **States have an obligation to** adopt policy, legislative and budgetary measures aimed at **attaining full employment to the maximum of their available resources**. In addressing widespread unemployment among young people, and young women in particular, the right to work requires that States create favorable macroeconomic conditions for the realization of the right and adopt specific job promotion policies targeted at youth, particularly young women as well as youth in vulnerable situations.

3. The right to participate in public affairs

Participation enables the advancement of all human rights. It plays a crucial role in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion and economic development. It is essential for reducing inequalities and social conflict. It is also important for empowering individuals and groups, and is one of the core elements of human rights-based approaches aimed at eliminating marginalization and discrimination. Moreover, decision-making is more informed, legitimate and sustainable when young people are at the table as it will respond to and address the real needs of youth. Youth-led and youth-focused organizations play an important role in public life.

The right to participation includes:

- Voting and being elected at genuine periodic elections held by secret ballot, affording universal and equal suffrage
- Taking part in the conduct of public affairs, either directly or through freely chosen representatives
- Equal access to public services
- Being consulted and given opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes on all matters of public concern

Additionally, the right to enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life should be guaranteed, to ensure everyone including young people with disabilities can exercise their right to participation.

To avoid tokenism, youth participation must be meaningful. Efforts to increase young people's participation must go alongside more gender equality in representative bodies as well as intergenerational dialogue, to ensure youth participation does not happen in isolation.



4. The right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought on all matters, to their personal conviction as well as to adopt a religion or belief of their choice and to manifest such religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching either individually or with others, in public or in private. The present right extends to conscientious objection to military service. Conscientious objection to military service concerns young people more than any other group as young people are drafted into compulsory military service or receive their call-up papers around the age of 18 in many States.

5. The right to freedom of opinion or expression



The right to freedom of opinion or expression includes a number of elements. These include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds without interference, as well as media freedom, which requires safety of journalists and other media workers. This right also includes the right to freedom of speech; however, promoting national, racial or religious hatred through incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence should be forbidden by law.

6. Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

The right of freedom of peaceful assembly includes the right to hold meetings, sit-ins, strikes, rallies, events or other forms of protests, both offline and online. Expressing grievances or concerns freely, through peaceful protest, also forms an integral part of the right to participation.

The right to freedom of association involves the right of individuals or any legal entities to interact and organize among themselves to collectively express, promote, pursue and defend common interests. This includes the right to form and run non-governmental organizations, trade unions, foundations, political parties and religious associations. Freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association serve as a vehicle for the exercise of many other rights and are essential components of democracy.

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7. The right to social security

Social security, which is usually government-provided financial assistance, is widely recognized as an essential tool for reducing and alleviating poverty and promoting social inclusion. Social security guarantees dignity for all persons when they are faced with circumstances that deprive them of their capacity to fully realize their human rights.

The right to social security encompasses the right to access and maintain benefits without discrimination in order to secure protection from:



- a lack of work-related income caused by sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, old age, or death of a family member
- unaffordable health care
- insufficient family support, particularly for children and adult dependent

The right to social security and the right to decent work are two sides of the same coin. While youth unemployment and underemployment rates could be the result of a variety of factors and may not be only or directly attributable to the State, the failure to fulfill the right to work requires States to take prompt action in ensuring the right to social security, without discrimination and regardless of the form of employment.

8. The right to health

The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health includes a wide range of factors that can help us lead a healthy life.

It extends not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, such as:

- access to safe and potable water and adequate sanitation
- an adequate supply of safe food, nutrition and housing;
- healthy occupational and environmental conditions; and
- access to health-related education and information.



The right to health also contains certain freedoms and entitlements. These include:

- The right to be free from non-consensual medical treatment, such as medical experiments and research or forced sterilization;
- The right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- The right to a system of health protection providing equality of opportunity for everyone to enjoy the highest attainable level of health;
- The right to prevention, treatment and control of diseases;
- Access to essential medicines
- Maternal, child and reproductive health
- Equal and timely access to basic health services
- The provision of health-related education and information
- Participation of the population in health-related decision making at the national and community levels.

9. The right to adequate housing

The right to adequate housing forms part of the right to an adequate standard of living; it means that everyone has the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.

- Protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one's home
- The right to be free from arbitrary interference with one's home, privacy and family
- The right to choose one's residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement
- Equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing
- Participation in decision-making related to housing at the national and community levels
- Safe housing that is free of domestic or sexual violence.

Despite the centrality of the right to adequate housing, millions around the world live in conditions that are threatening to their life or to their health, for example in overcrowded slums and informal settlements, or in other conditions which do not uphold their human rights and their dignity.

Adequate housing must provide more than just protection from the natural elements. A number of conditions must be met before particular forms of shelter can be considered to constitute “adequate housing”; at a minimum, housing must meet the following criteria:

- Protecting against forced eviction: everyone should have a degree of security that guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats.
- Affordability: the cost of housing should not threaten the ability to enjoy other rights such as food, education, healthcare, etc.
- Habitability: adequate housing should provide adequate space, protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and diseases.
- Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure: adequate housing requires access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, etc.
- Accessibility: housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account (such as the poor, people facing discrimination; persons with disabilities, victims of natural disasters).
- Location: adequate housing must allow access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centers and other social facilities and should not be built on polluted sites nor close to pollution sources.
- Cultural adequacy: Adequate housing should respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity and ways of life.

10. The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment

A clean, healthy and sustainable environment is key to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. Recognized by the United Nations Human Rights Council as a right in 2021 and by the General Assembly in 2022, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment directly links environmental protection with human rights, providing an important basis for the protection of environmental human rights defenders. Climate change and environmental degradation also raise issues of intergenerational justice and equity – the idea that present generations have certain duties towards future generations.

Key elements of the right to a healthy environment include:



- **A safe and stable climate:** Ambitious climate action is needed to protect the rights of those who are the most affected by climate change, often while having contributed the least to its occurrence.
- **Healthy ecosystems:** Protecting the lands and waters around us is in the best interest of current and future generations.
- **Non-toxic environments:** Pollution is the largest source of premature death in the developing world and it disproportionately affects children and young persons, and particularly those in situations of vulnerability. All people are entitled to clean air to breathe, clean water to drink and safe food to eat.
- **Justice and inclusion:** All people have the right to access environmental information, to be meaningfully included in environmental policymaking and to have access to justice if affected by environmental harms in the short, medium or long-term.

11. Human rights in the digital space and right to privacy



Digital technologies provide new means to advocate for, defend, and exercise human rights and affect all types of rights. They shape how people access and share information, form their opinions, debate, and mobilize – they have deeply transformed the “public square”. But they are equally used to suppress, limit and violate rights, for instance through surveillance, censorship, online harassment, algorithmic bias and automated decision-making systems.

The misuse of digital technologies also disproportionately affects marginalized individuals and groups, leading to inequality and discrimination – both online and offline. As our world unfolds increasingly in the digital space, the need for our rights to be respected both online and offline becomes even greater, something which is particularly true for young people who are among the primary users of digital and online technologies. At the same time, closing the digital divide to ensure internet connectivity for all is a prerequisite for the exercise of human rights online.

The knowledge of the existence of the aforementioned rights is where we depart from in the discussion of the challenges that young people face in their daily lives.

YOUTH MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES

A multidimensional challenge involves acknowledging interconnected aspects that compose a barrier. Multidimensional challenges are complex, hard to pinpoint the exact cause, and have a layered influence over a person. YPAR is a method that can help to identify root causes and effects of multidimensional challenges.

Youth multidimensional challenges take into account a person’s position in societal hierarchy, their access to power and privilege. Often when we talk about multidimensional challenges in youth, we refer to how these factors influence a young person’s development and introduction into adulthood, as well as their freedom to exercise their rights.

This toolkit is an introduction to how to understand and explore youth multidimensional challenges using the YPAR methodology.

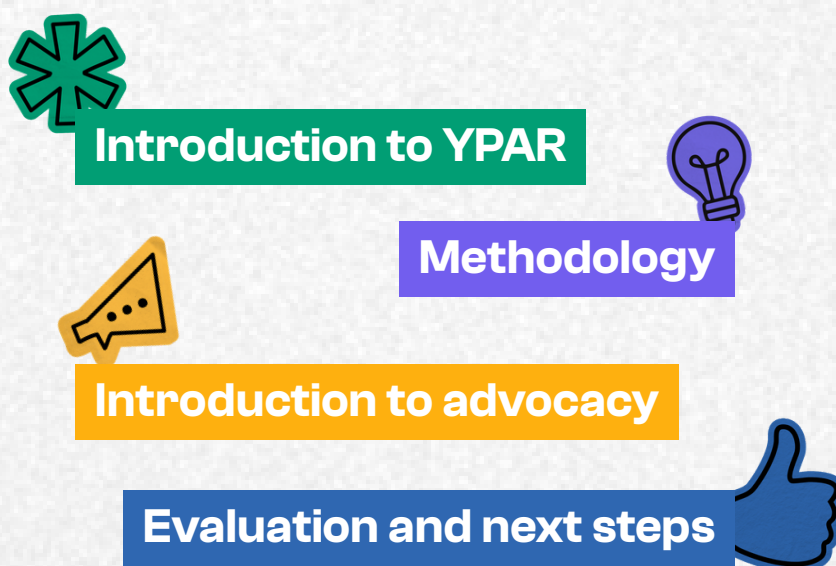
Implementing

as a Youth Organization YPAR

In May 2026, the YPARC team invited youth from 6 European countries and implemented an introductory training course on YPAR and Advocacy. Although the training material walks the participant through YPAR phases, understanding youth rights and challenges, research methodologies, designing and evaluating research – this training is still a starting point, and the attending youth still have to implement the actual research.

The training participants ranged from 13 to 28 years of age, and included youth with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, young women, youth from low socio-economic backgrounds, rural youth, racialised youth, and youth impacted by war. That being said, the content of this training can be easily adjusted to any other target groups within the youth field.

The training consisted of 15 sessions that were divided into 4 main themes:



The YPAR and Advocacy training was designed by QUEST (BE), and hosted by Association For You (BG). Thank you to the partners for additional support during the sessions!



Introduction to YPAR

Understanding YPAR

Session Outline

The first step to understanding Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is understanding its phases. The following session is divided into two parts: a short theoretical introduction to YPAR, and a practical exercise that allows participants to analyse actions that might be taken in the YPAR process.

Setting the ground: Understanding YPAR

Objective

Understanding what are the elements of YPAR (Youth Participatory Action) and its phases

Materials



YPAR Cycle Phases Game



YPAR Scenarios Games

Phase 1. Introduction “What is YPAR”

5 min



YPAR is an equity-based framework where young people, in particular those from non-dominant communities, act as co-researchers to identify, study, and tackle social justice issues affecting their lives.



Scan the QR
code for the
presentation



Phase 1. Introduction "What is YPAR"

YPAR is based on the following pillars

- **Critical Consciousness** It helps youth understand the root causes of injustice, such as systemic racism, school inequality, and safety concerns.
- **Research to Action** It follows a 4-step process:
 - identifying problems
 - collecting data (to ensure solutions are grounded in evidence.)
 - analyzing data
 - taking action
- **Empowerment** YPAR as social justice, giving youth the power to challenge systemic inequities rather than just fixing individual issues.

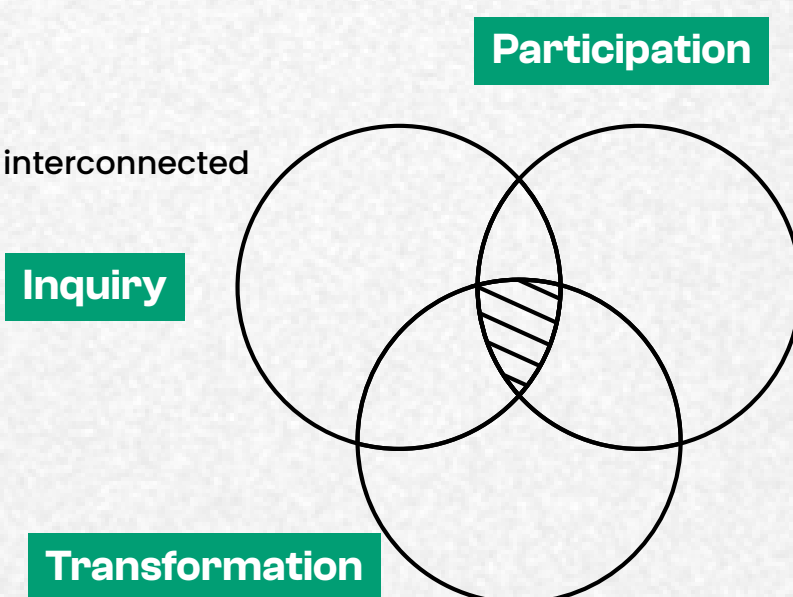
YPAR is based on the value of young people being agents of change and producers of knowledge, not just passive subjects of research.

It is based on the following pillars

Its three key elements are

- **Inquiry**
- **Participation**
- **Transformation**

And they are heavily interconnected



Phase 2. The YPAR phases

30 min



1. **Identifying the issue:** young people explore their community and decide what problem or topic matters most to them.
2. **Choosing the best research technique:** The group decides how they will collect information (e.g., surveys, interviews, observations)
3. **Collecting the data:** Young people gather information from others or their environment to better understand the issue.
4. **Analyzing the data:** The group reviews and interprets the information to find patterns, key findings, and insights
5. **Planning for change:** Participants decide what actions they want to take to address the issue based on their findings.
6. **Acting for change:** The group implements their plan (e.g., campaigns, events, presentations, advocacy).
7. **Reflection & evaluation:** Young people reflect on what worked, what didn't, and what they learned during the process.
8. **Sharing the results:** The group communicates their findings and actions to others (community, stakeholders, decision-makers).

Phase 2. The YPAR phases

YPAR Cycle Phases Game



Scan the QR
code for the
game cards



Cut out each action card from
the sheet and distribute one to
each participant.



Divide the participants into small
groups and give them 10 minutes to
reflect on where their assigned actions
belong within the YPAR phases.



Start with Phase 1 and ask,
"Who has a card that
matches this phase?"



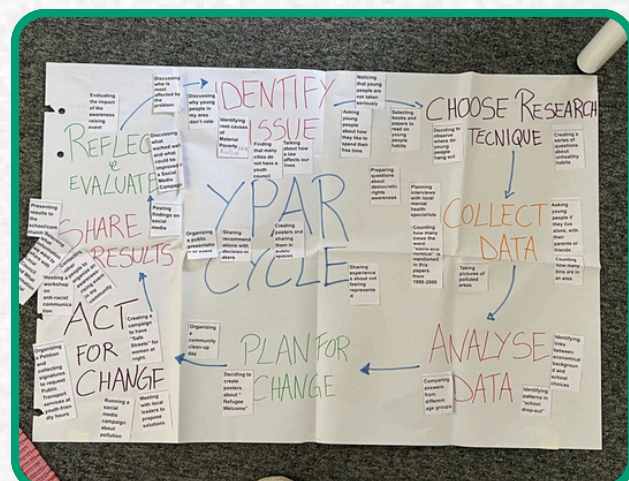
After the group
discussion, gather
everyone back
together.



Have those participants explain why
they think it fits, and then invite them
to glue their card onto the Phase 1
section of the board.



Repeat this process
sequentially for the
remaining phases.



Phase 3. "Is it YPAR or not?"

20 min



What is YPAR Scenarios Game



Scan the QR
code for the
scenarios



1. **Hand out the printed situation cards.** Give each participant a couple of minutes of silent, individual time to read their scenario and decide: Is this YPAR or NOT? Why?
2. **Have participants pair up with a neighbor.** Together, they compare their situations, share their initial thoughts, and see if they agree on their classifications.
3. **Combine two pairs to form groups of 4.** The group must discuss the situations collectively and try to reach a definitive group consensus: YPAR or NOT?
4. **Bring the whole room back together.** Go through the situations one by one. Have a representative from a few groups share their scenario, their final verdict, and the reasoning behind it.

Phase 4. Debriefing

5 min



Sum up of key points



Introduction to YPAR

What are your rights?

Session Outline

This session focuses on assessing participants' interest and introducing them to youth rights. It grounds the identification of multidimensional youth challenges in reality by starting a discussion on the violation or respect of these rights.

The definitions of rights in the visual aid (Youth Rights Cards) are taken from the Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit authored by the United Nations Human Rights Office, Education Above All Foundation and Silatech.

What are your rights?

Objective

- Start a discussion on youth rights to assess participants' knowledge
- Assess participants' interest

Materials



Scan the QR code for the Youth Rights Cards



Total time

65 min



Phase 1. During the break

1 min



Trainers set up the room by putting out printed Youth Rights Cards on the floor. There are 11 youth rights = 11 cards.
On the front of the card will be an image related to the right, and on the back will be a definition.

Phase 2.

20-25 min



Participants enter the room in silence, and walk around the room.
They are asked to stand next to an image that sparks their curiosity.
5 mins

The participants and facilitator sit down in clusters around the images. In groups around the topics, the participants read the definition in the back and have a discussion on how they understand this specific right, and how they connect it to their reality (is this right respected in your reality? How or how not?). *15-20 mins*

Phase 3

30 min



We come back to the plenary and the groups are asked to read the definitions of rights and summarise their discussions (if possible, give 1-2 examples of how this right is respected or not). 25 mins

[Perhaps we can introduce the EU Youth Strategy here to connect it with youth rights]

Phase 4. Debriefing

10 min



Recap questions:

- Can you name the 11 youth rights?
- What emotions came up for you in the discussion about whether these rights are respected? Did you hear anything from others that sparked something in you?
- Knowing the youth rights, does this change how you view your experiences in your context? What kind of questions do these rights/Youth Strategy create for you?



Introduction to YPAR

What is your problem?

Session Outline

Identifying youth multidimensional challenges are fundamental to the YPAR process. The challenges must be identified by youth who are a part of the target group facing this issue. For example, an able-bodied man is not going to have the same lived experience as a disabled woman when researching the level of accessibility to women's bathrooms. By investigating challenges that the youth are facing themselves, we upkeep the grassroots approach that characterises the YPAR methodology.

The following session is a continuation of the What are your rights? workshop. If you are not facilitating an international group, feel free to skip the mixing of national groups in the previous workshop.

What is your problem?

Objective

Participants choose a right they want to investigate

Materials

- A4 papers
- Pens and markers

Total time

60-65 min



Phase 1. The challenge we want to investigate

25 min



Participants go back to their national teams and agree on which right they want to investigate the most, and discuss how they perceive this right. The participants will discuss the challenges they face in relation to this right and identify a common challenge.

Each group will write their challenge on a piece of paper.

Phase 2. Group restitution

30 min



Going back into plenary, each national team shares the right they want to investigate and (voluntarily) share experiences with this right and the challenge they identified.

5 minutes per group

Phase 3 - Debriefing (if the same right is chosen in multiple groups)

5-10 min



- Having chosen the same right to investigate, what kind of differences and similarities do you see between the groups?
- How can these different perspectives feed each other?



Examples

of challenges that we have extracted from the YPARC training:

- Street harassment of women
- The housing crisis
- The pressure of high academic achievement
- The impact of war on mental health
- Inaccessibility of human rights
- Hypersexual behaviour as a way to cope with trauma



Introduction to YPAR

Justice Tree

Session Outline

After understanding their rights, how they are connected to their challenges, and having identified a common challenge your group faces – it's time to understand where the roots of this challenge stem from, what upholds this challenge, how it manifests itself and what is already being done in response to this challenge.

Justice Tree

Objective

- Understand the root causes and systemic aspects of youth rights violations.
- Ensure every voice is included (not just loudest)

Materials

- paper
- post-its
- pens
- glue
- scissors
- tape

Total time

2 h 30 min



Phase 1. Body as a system

35 min



[If possible, do the activity outdoor]

Stand next to a tree. Place your hand on its bark. Close your eyes. Feel your feet on the ground (that's your roots). Feel your spine (that's your trunk). Feel your arms stretching (those are your branches). Now breathe together. On 'in' raise your branches. On 'out' lower them.

Phase 1. Body as a system

Introduce justice tree

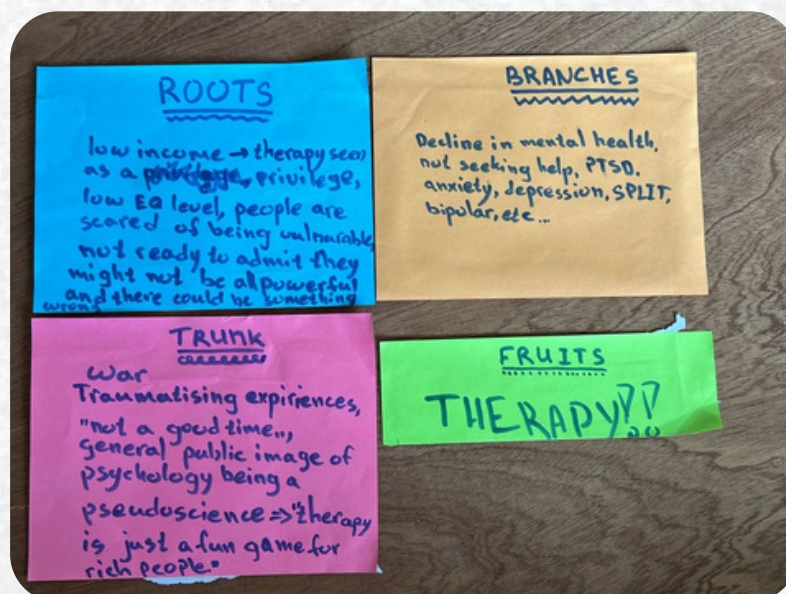
- **ROOTS** (visible or imagined underground, hidden causes): historical policies, colonial extraction, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, classism, laws, corporate power
- **TRUNK** (visible, structural, the current systems holding everything up): current institutions, media narratives, economic systems, advertising, subsidies, infrastructure.
- **BRANCHES** (symptoms we see): racism, inequalities, accessibility problems, structural barriers, ecc.
- **FRUITS** (emerging solutions, what the tree produces).

Individual silent mapping (15 min)

- Each person writes down 3-5 ideas for each category related to their team's issue.

The facilitator can play music softly and give the following guiding prompts:

- "Think about who benefits from this issue staying the same",
- "think about things that might surprise you..."
- "Think about a law, a subsidy, a school curriculum.. Where does this issue live?"



Phase 2

1h 45 min



Group tree construction :

Divide the participants into national groups, each group will:

- Draw the tree (on a piece of paper)
- Place all post-its. Silently at the beginning.

Next 30 min: Discuss, cluster, move, add. Use markers or other things to draw connections, and ask things like "What's missing? What root connects these two branches?" "Is there a 'taproot' (one deep cause that feeds everything else?)" "Where do you see power? Who holds it?"

Next 10 min: Add some possible FRUITS (solutions, actions, research questions) these can be drawn, written, or glued as images

Gallery walk (20 min)

Participants walk silently with post-its of a new colour for instance,

On each post-it, they write:

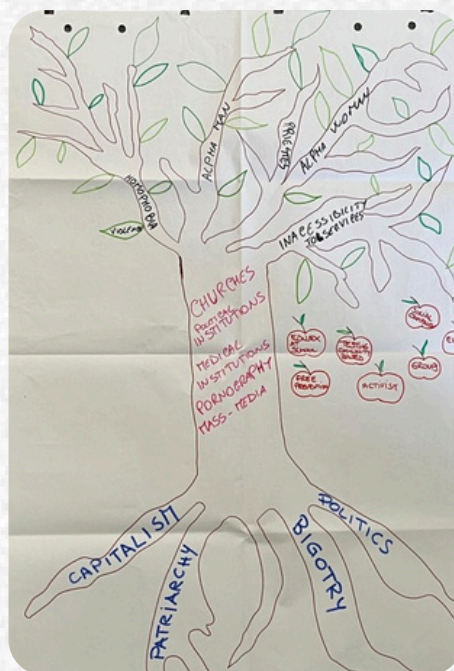
"I SEE..." (something

powerful or surprising)

"I WONDER..." (a question

about a missing connection)

"WHAT IF..." (a radical possibility)



Phase 3. Debriefing

5 min





Methodology

What is research?

Session Outline

Once the participants have identified the challenge they want to investigate, and its causes, they are ready to move on to formulating a research question. It is important to carefully pick the right question, as it will be the driving force of the research.

This session is split in two: the first session is dedicated to a presentation on what is a research question and how to formulate it (see the presentation attached), whereas the second session dedicates time to the groups to put this knowledge into practice and formulate a question.

What is research?

Objective

Understanding what is research, how to do it and how to create the perfect research question

Materials



Scan the QR code for the Presentation on the Research Question





Phase 1: What is a meaningful question to you?

7 min



Work in pairs: Reflection

Divide the participants in pairs and give them 3 minutes to answer these questions:

“Where in my life do I have space to ask meaningful questions? And with whom?”

Then have some of them share their thoughts

Phase 2: Why do questions matter?

15 min



Education system involved from **open inquiry** to **repetition** and **acceptance**

Education needs to be **DIALOGICAL** and rooted in **critical engagement**

- **wonder** opens curiosity
- **learning** to stay with uncertainty
- **critical dialogue** turn questions into social learning and actions

Activity in pairs: Reflection (*one question at the time*)

Divide the participants in pairs and give them a few minutes to discuss each question:

- In your education do you have the space to ask questions?
- In your life experience who gets interrupted less or taken more seriously when asking questions?
- What are the qualities of a good listener?



Phase 3. The research question

10 min



Questions vs Research Question

QUESTIONS:

- Emotional
- Existential
- Political
- Moral
- Personal

Examples...

- Why are there inequalities? •
- Why are people discriminating against others? •
- What kind of future do I want? •

A research question is...

The main question your research tries to answer

CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESEARCH QUESTION

ALIGNED

Does it match what we really want to understand?

FOCUSED

- 1 main question
- 1 clear subject (not multidimensional)
- can a 10y.o understand it?

FEASIBLE

Can we really research this?
Do we have the time, people, resources and data?
Check constraints!

ROOTED

What gap or problem are we addressing?
What already exists on this issue?
What change could this research support?
Be mindful of power disruptions!



Phase 3. The research question

COMMON MISTAKES

TOO BROAD

"How can we change the world"

FIX IT: add group, place, timeframe, aspects

TOO NORMATIVE

"Is it wrong that poor neighbourhoods have less green spaces?"

FIX IT: move from judgement to inquiry

CLOSED QUESTION

"Is social media helpful"

FIX IT: use how/what/to what extent...

VAGUE CONCEPTS

"How does society treat nature?"

FIX IT: define the concepts concretely

HOW TO FORMULATE A RESEARCH QUESTION



Examples

- How do young people experience Eco-anxiety in Varna?
- What factors encourage fast fashion consumption among 12-18 in Barcelona?



Phase 3. The research question

THE QUESTION WORD

To build your research question it is really important for you to select your question work thoroughly

HOW

Process, experiences, mechanisms

"how do young people of colour experience racism in Varna?"

WHAT

Map factors, barriers, describe patterns

"What factors shape recycling practices among students of X school?"

TO WHAT EXTENT

Degree of influence

"To what extent access to public transport influences school attendance in X neighbourhood?"

IN WHAT WAYS

Useful for complexity/ multiple decisions

"In what ways does climate disinformation affect young people's activism in Rome?"

WHY

Useful for casual claims

"Why don't students in Sofia recycle?" (it is better to use it with facts)



Methodology

GROUP WORK - FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Session Outline

This session dedicates an hour for the group(s) to formulate their research questions based on the guidance from the previous session. Make sure to check in on the groups' progress throughout the session - some groups might need more guidance.

GROUP WORK - FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Objective

The groups will gather according to their challenge and sending NGO
They will start working on formulating the research question based on the youth challenge they will address

Materials

Participants





Methodology

Phase 1.

5 min



Divide the groups in the room
(possibly use outdoor space too)

Phase 2.

45 min



One or two of the facilitators should go around to check if the groups need support if needed

Phase 3. Debriefing

5 min





Methodology

HOW TO COLLECT DATA

Session Outline

In this session, the participants will familiarise themselves with methods of collecting data. The research methods mentioned in this workshop are split into 5 categories:

- **Literature Review**
- **Quantitative research** (surveys)
- **Qualitative research** (focus groups/interviews)
- **Observation** (including analysis of images and art)
- **Ethics** (how to collect data ethically – the basis of all research methods)

To create the Research Methodology Carousel, each research methodology is set up in different areas of the training venue. The group(s) move from one method to another every 15 minutes – at each station, they receive a quick introduction to the methodology and its advantages and disadvantages. Depending on the length of the presentation of the methodology, participants also receive guidance on how each methodology can be applied to each groups' research question.

HOW CAN YOU COLLECT DATA?

Objective

Give an overview of the different methodologies of research participants can use to develop their research

Materials



Scan the QR code for the Presentations on the Research Methods Carousel





Methodology

Phase 1.

30 min



The activity will start with a 30 minutes presentation of the research questions formulated during the previous activity

Then a quick introduction to the activity of Research Methodologies:

1. You identified a (youth-challenge) issue of your interest
2. You narrowed it down and you formulated a research question to investigate the issue of interest
3. How to answer the research question? → You need a methodology

Phase 2.

10 min



Set up different tables (one for each methodology) and the chairs for the groups to be able to rotate from one to one

Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

1 h 40 min



ETHICS



Scan the QR code for the Presentations on ETHICS



The word ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, meaning "custom or convention", and can refer to the spirit of community.



ETHICS

IS ETHICS UNIVERSAL OR RELATIVE?

Research has been used to exploit, extract, and misrepresent.
Ethics can help ensure the protection of human participants, animal subjects, and society.

Knowledge is not Neutral

- Who decides the questions?
- Whose voice is not represented?
- Who benefits from this research?
- Who is being used?

ETHICAL RESEARCH STARTER PACK

- **POSITIONALITY & REFLEXIVITY:** Are you aware of who you are, your power, privilege and context?
- **RELATIONSHIPS & TRUST:** Build relationships, don't just take information and disappear. Connect, do not extract.
- **EPISTEMIC JUSTICE** → All Knowledge Matters, and must be valued.
- **Co-Creation:** Include people in designing the research, understanding the results and sharing the benefits.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH

- **Consent** : Free, Reversible Informed Enthusiastic, Specific (FRIES)
- **Do No Harm:** emotional, social, political harm must be prevented.
- **Justice:** Benefits should go back to participants. No exploitation.
- **Accountability:** Transparency (sources, methods, results) and biases.
- **Respect:** Cultures, identities, and lived experiences matter.



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

ETHICS

ETHICAL RESEARCH

LITERATURE REVIEW

Whose knowledge am I using?
Who is missing?

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

I am aware of my own lenses?
What is the impact of my presence?

INTERVIEWS VOICES

Do people know that I will be using their words?
Do people feel safe to speak?

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

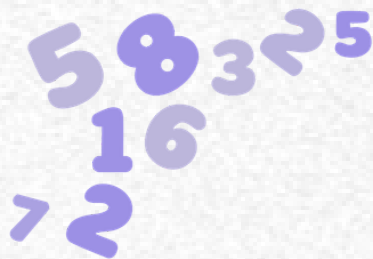
What are these numbers hiding?
Are categories imposed or meaningful?

The knowledge you are exposed to has a power and a source. Always make sure that:

- **Fact Checking:** Is this information real and truthful? Are there other perspectives on the story?
 - Consent – inform participants
 - Cite
 - BENEFIT > HARM, favour non-harmful representation
 - Acknowledge yourself & others: Copyright & Citation, you can use the work of others, just refer to it.
- **Mind the Bubble:** the information you have might be tailored to who you are, what you like, what you believe. They reinforce what you already know. Look for challenges



SURVEYS (numbers)



Scan the QR code for
the Presentations on
Surveys and
Numbers



Explore Numbers as Research Methodology

Essentially,

1. You collect data in a numerical form

- Survey

Example: how many times per week do you use your car to go to work?

- Observations

Example: Number of trees planted in your town this year

- Secondary data (existing dataset)

Example: Average temperature during the month of August in the last 20 years in Belgium
ISTAT, Eurostat





SURVEYS (numbers)

2. You conduct a “mathematical” analysis of the collected data
 - a. Counting how many times something has occurred
 - b. Look for patterns and connections among things we notice
- **Descriptive purpose** → a method used to describe data and their characteristics
 - Percentage
Example: Calculate the percentage of energy coming from renewables in your country
 - Mean, Mode and Median
Example: Calculate the average daily meat consumption per household in your town
 - Visualization (Tables, Graphs, Plots)
Example: Bar chart comparing CO2 emissions of Italy with Spain; Table displaying temperatures during August in Belgium
- **Inferential purpose** → a model used to make inferences (predictions) about what we don't know
 - Given X what is the probability that Y happens
 - Difficult!
 - SPSS, Python...
 - Example: Based on past temperatures during August in Belgium, predict the temperature of this August





Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

SURVEYS (numbers)

Advantages of using Numbers as the research methodology

- Clear to understand
- Simplify comparisons
- Governments and organisations are quite responsive to numbers
- Replicable
- Objective?

Disadvantages

- Numbers can be misinterpreted, distorted or selected to serve particular ends
- Oversimplification of reality
- Reasons and alternative explanations are often overlooked
- You need a large sample for good results

LITERATURE REVIEW



Scan the QR code for
the Presentations on
Literature Review



How do we know what is already known? And how do we not repeat the same ideas?

Literature review is a process of

- Finding relevant research
- Selecting what matters
- Reading & analyzing
- Connecting ideas (synthesising)

It can be articles, books, reports, and (sometimes) policy documents, media, etc.



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

LITERATURE REVIEW

We use it to understand a topic, see what others have already found, identify gaps, and build your own ideas.

Literature review can be

- **Systematic** (very strict), step-by-step process that uses strict rules to find, evaluate, and synthesize all relevant data to answer a specific question without bias
- **Semi-systematic** (flexible), approach that maps out a broad topic across different fields to track themes, see how ideas have evolved, and identify research gaps
- **Integrative** (combines ideas), A creative synthesis that combines completely different types of information (like data, theories, and case studies) to build an entirely new framework or perspective

You can find sources in

- Google scholar
- Academic databases
- References from other papers

Here KEYWORDS are KEY.

There is no need to read everything, at first you can focus on

- Abstract
- Key arguments
- Conclusions

Make sure you are not just robotically reporting what each author/article is saying, but that you are synthesising and collecting ideas!

DON'T FORGET TO CITE!

Remember to always give credit to the authors. There are different types of citations:

- APA
- Chicago
- MLA



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

VOICES (FOCUS GROUPS/ INTERVIEWS)



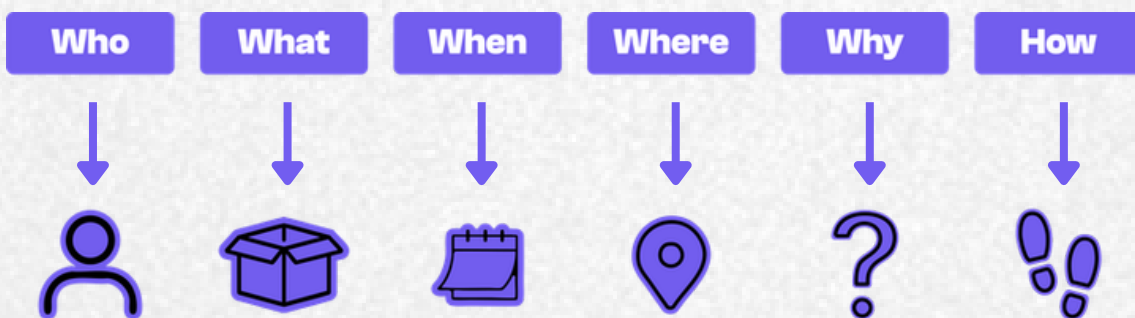
Scan the QR code for
the Presentations on
Interviews and Focus
Groups



Petite Exercise: Rank these steps based on how important you think they are:

1. Define the research question
2. Obtain informed consent
3. Build rapport with interviewee
4. The research question can change
5. Hypotheses emerge during the research process
6. Theoretical sampling develops during the research process
7. The researcher must immerse themselves
8. Suspend prior knowledge
8. Tolerate uncertainty
9. Clarify the purpose of your study!
10. Plan enough time!

Interviewing is not as simple as it sounds, but it is not difficult either if you apply an active listening approach. Overall, it is not only about asking questions.





VOICES (FOCUS GROUPS/ INTERVIEWS)

General advices

- Investigate your interviewee & the topic: anticipate possible answers.
- Active listening: pay attention to the interviewee.
- Interviewing is not a dialogue.
- Don't try to transcribe in real time and don't obsess with taking notes, especially if you are recording. Important: ask your interviewees if they are ok with recording.
- Why should you take notes then?
 - to remember key ideas
 - to reformulate questions

Types of Interviews

While designing your questionnaire, some previous decisions must be made. Depending on your topic and how you want to tackle it, you can opt for different approaches:

Interview type	What?	What for?	Why?
STRUCTURED	One same questionnaire with standardized questions for all your interviewees.	To collect descriptive and perfectly comparable data, mostly quantifiable.	You want to measure the same dimensions across your interviewees.
SEMI-STRUCTURED	Questionnaires are similarly designed, but adapted to each respondent in order to get more new insights.	To collect descriptive and comparable data, but also personal anecdotes.	You need to measure your dimensions, but also unexpected themes that may enrich your research will arise.
NARRATIVE	More open questions to obtain personal experiences and identities.	The interviewees open up and take the lead of their own story.	You need to collect meaningful and personal stories for your research.
FOCUS GROUPS	A questionnaire meant to interview an entire group at the same time.	To understand group dynamic, shared norms or collective views on your topic.	You want to see how opinions form, shift and interact in a conversation, not just individuals' private opinions.



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

VOICES (FOCUS GROUPS/ INTERVIEWS)

How to conduct the interview

It is up to the interviewer to make the introduction by remembering the research topic and the importance of collecting interviewees' responses, and by asking their permission to record. You may also request them to sign a consent form.

The interviewer alternates between the roles of:

- An interested but relatively silent listener
- An involved, engaged conversation partner
- An annoying follow-up and back-questioner



Definition Personal Data

(General Data Protection Regulation "GDP")

- Art 4.1 '**personal data**' means any **information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person** ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a **name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier** or to one **or more factors specific** to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person."
- In addition to general personal data, the special categories of personal data are particularly relevant as they enjoy a higher level of protection. These include genetic, biometric, and health data, as well as personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership of the data subject."



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

VOICES (FOCUS GROUPS/ INTERVIEWS)

- **GDPR Scope:**
 - The GDPR applies to all EU citizens (even outside the EU) and to the processing of non-EU citizens' data within the EU. Key Terms:
 - Special categories of personal data: Sensitive data requiring stricter safeguards (GDPR Article 9).
 - Processing: Includes collection, storage, analysis, or sharing of data.
- Legal Measures of **GDPR**
 - Informed Consent (Article 4 GDPR)
 - Data Minimization (Article 5) (only strictly necessary data is collected); Mention of Third Parties)
 - Purpose Limitation of Data (e.g., thesis, project seminar, teaching, etc.; timeframe must be specified)
 - 4. Encryption of Personal Data (restrict data access)
 - Documentation of Accountability (Art. 30 GDPR)
 - Directory of Responsibilities
 - Pseudonymization/Anonymization of Personal Data (Section 27 BDSG, Article 89 GDPR)



Active listening

It is the ability to **leave your own perspective** and concentrate on what the interviewee wants to say.

Be prepared to modify your questionnaire, if needed, to **adapt** it as the narration goes.

Don't hesitate to **reformulate** your questions or ask for clarification

BUT: if the respondents are silent, **give them some time** to think before the answer instead of immediately rephrasing the question. Sometimes, silence is also an answer in itself.

CAUTION WITH LEADING QUESTIONS

Backchanneling and probing (questions) – **BE AWARE OF THE POWER DYNAMICS!**



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

IMAGES & OBSERVATIONS



Scan the QR code for
the Presentations on
Observations



Observation is a data collection method used to understand and interpret human behavior and interactions with others and with their environment

- **Participatory observation** → researched joins the group
- **Non-participatory observation** → researched stays separate

How do we use Observations?

- It is important to **set your research question and define** what you observe
- Choose the **type of observation** that serves the purpose of your research.
- Decide **how** you will record your data (i.e notes, video recording, checklist)
- Set a realistic **time frame**
- Only **analyze data** related to your question



Phase 3. The Methodology Carousel

IMAGES & OBSERVATIONS

Advantages

- Rich and detailed data
- We observe real behavior → We can crosscheck with interviews
- Useful in socio-environmental research, as it helps analyze how humans interact with and impact their environment

Disadvantages

- Time-consuming
- Large amounts of data make it difficult to stay focused on your research questions
- Obtaining informed consent can be challenging at times

Phase 4. Debriefing

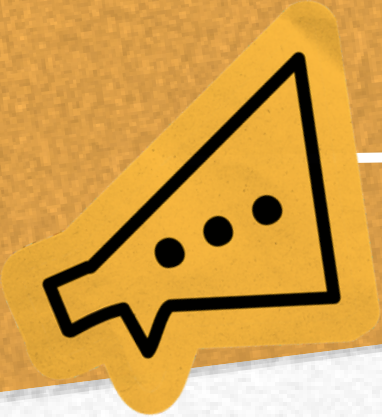
10 min



Share and discuss

The facilitator can use the following prompts:

- what did you learn?
- what stuck with you?
- Was there something that surprised you?



Advocacy

How can I advocate for myself?

Session Outline

An introduction to advocacy actions is fundamental to the YPAR process, as the methodology strives to create tangible change with the findings of the conducted research. The YPARC project foresees a separate training on advocacy after the implementation of research by participating youth. However, an introduction to advocacy sets the tone of the steps taken after the research, shifting the conversation from immediate next steps and putting them into greater context.

This session is split into two parts:

- an introduction to advocacy actions,
- and contextualising everyday actions of participants.

The overarching aim of this session is to show that advocating for yourself and others can be accessible to anyone.

The second part of the session involves physical movement. The participants will hear examples of everyday advocacy actions and position themselves accordingly to the question raised by the facilitator. This activity aims to contextualise everyday actions that can be considered advocacy, and seek our participants' understanding of them.

The first part aims to introduce participants to different forms of advocacy through a guessing game. The following presentation shows everyday objects and connects them to advocacy actions that happened in the past.

How can I advocate for myself?



1 hour



Scan the QR code for the Slideshow



Objective

- Define advocacy in its many forms
- Identify at least 5 different advocacy methods used by young people on socio-environmental issues
- Understand the EU policy cycle and identify at least 3 entry points for youth influence
- Connect their own research to possible advocacy actions and targets

Phase 1.

25 min



Start with preparing a slideshow/video with powerful images and key moments in history, and narrate them

Ask participants what stayed with them, if they want to comment anything they saw

"Advocacy is not one thing, it's many things!"

Let's unpack what is advocacy.

ACTIVITY OUTSIDE WITH ROPE

- make a line
- On one end: "Quiet, behind-the-scenes" and on the other: "Loud, public, disruptive."



Phase 1.

Read some actions. The participants will stand where they think they belong on the spectrum. There's no right answer, it's about what they feel.

- Writing a letter to your mayor.
- Organising a school assembly about something that didn't sit right with you.
- Chaining yourself to a tree to stop deforestation
- Creating an Instagram infographic about one of the youth right violations we have discussed
- Meeting with an EU official to present research.
- Joining a strike with 10,000 people.
- Create a piece of art with a political message

Then ask the participants why did they stand where they did (2-3 responses max)

Advocacy is not one thing. It's a whole ecosystem of actions. Some are loud, some are quiet. Some target individuals, some target systems. All are valid as long as they strategically aim at leading you to a direction, to a positive change you wanna see in the world. Today, we'll give you some ideas to create yours based on the research you did.

Phase 2.

25 min



Create 6 groups to discuss the following actions, and discuss what makes this method powerful and what are its challenges and positive points (so we create 6 stations with a card describing the action and a description behind)



Phase 2.

PETITION AND MOBILISATION



17-year-old Tabby from the Isle of Jura (population 200) started a petition calling on the Scottish government to ban all single-use plastics after seeing dead birds entangled in plastic and a goat with its head stuck in a fishing net on her local beach. Her petition gained over **26,000 signatures** and won backing from MSPs in the Highlands and Islands.

DIRECT ACTION AND PROTEST

Young climate activists superglue themselves to streets in Germany, blocking traffic to demand government action on climate. Hannah Wolf, 19, glued her hand to a Dresden intersection – police used olive oil to free her. The group invokes Article 20a of the German Constitution (guaranteeing conservation for future generations).



Founded by two Antwerp secondary school students, this movement grew from 3,000 to 35,000 marchers in just three weeks. Students marched from Central Station to the EU district, skipping school every Thursday. Greta Thunberg called them "Heroes!"

Phase 2.

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC ADVOCACY

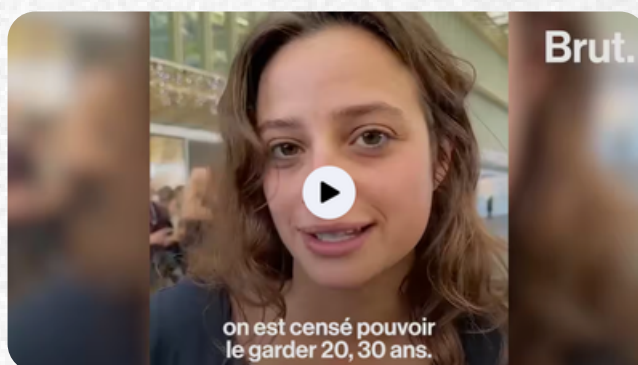


Planète BoumBoum:

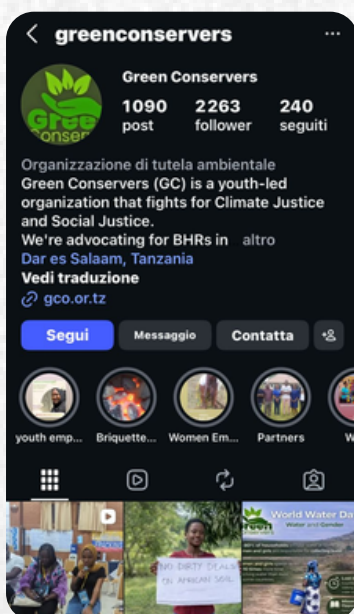
Created a viral parody of Britney Spears' Toxic to lobby against a French law on PFAS (toxic "forever chemicals"). The video was viewed over a million times and is widely credited with helping to pass the ban. See the story [here](#).

Le Bruit qui Court:

Held a performance in front of a major Paris shopping centre, where activists danced and violently tossed around 1,000 kg of clothes to expose the wastefulness of fast fashion and the Black Friday sales event



DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA



A youth-led campaign that used digital advocacy, social media, and protests to build a resistance movement, in particular against EACOP

Phase 2.

COMMUNITY BASED ACTIONS



Young "Youth Illustrators" produce radio programs and an educational board game, and create conservation murals to protect a key wetland.

Student led repair cafes!

POLOCY AND INSTITUTIONAL ADVOCACY



100 young people aged 18–29 from across Europe were randomly selected (postcode-based, ensuring diversity) to meet over three weekends in Brussels. They developed 34 policy proposals to reverse pollinator decline – 32 were adopted. They presented their final opinion to the European Commission. Their proposals included phasing out pesticides

by 50% by 2030, redirecting CAP subsidies, and creating a permanent fund financed by a tax on pesticide producers.

Seven students in a dormitory dreamed up a European Citizens' Initiative to end the tax exemption on aviation fuel (kerosene). They collected only 75,000 signatures (far below the 1 million needed), but their lobbying campaign was so effective that the European Commission included their proposal in the 'Fit For 55' legislative package – a major pillar of the European Green Deal. They met Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and presented to the European Parliament.





Phase 3. Debriefing

10 min



Tomorrow, you will build your actual action plan, and you will choose:

- What is your advocacy goal? (What change do you want?)
- Who is your target? (Who has the power to give you that change?)
- What might your tactic be? (Petition? Video? Meeting? Campaign?)
- What is your timeline? (What happens after this exchange?)

You will present your plan to the whole group. You will get feedback. And you will leave with a portfolio of real, ready-to-implement advocacy.

WHO ARE MY ALLIES?



2 hour

Objective

- Identifying what is an ally and how to be one
- trace an alliance map around you and your community

Materials

- paper
- pencils
- post-its
- scissors
- glue
- tape

Phase 1. GAME - What is an ally?

30 min



Explain alliances through a story and the rope.

- Position the participants in a circle, then assign them the roles of the story (**list the roles**)
- Start reading the story and when these roles appear pass them the rope
- As the roles are called in the story the participants will pass to the next a piece of rope, creating an intertwined net in the middle of the circle (to show them the support of creating alliances)
- Continue the story disrupting the net of alliances that has just been created (slowly some of the roles will be called out and have to leave their piece of rope, this will cause the net to fall)



Phase 2. THE ALLIANCE MAP

1 hour



Group participants per challenge and start a group work to create a physical Alliances Map using materials like string, paper, and scissors to visually represent realistic alliances that could support their actions

To help create their map, participants will first write out a list based on the provided reflective prompts as well as noting down the following:

- What could the different actors bring to the table in regards to your challenge? (for example schools, the county cancelors, ngos, the community, ecc)
- Are there already existing connections in your communities that you could draw upon or strengthen?
- How can they connect the many different dots to form alliances that can help them address your challenge?
- What kind of strategies can they use to make connections with each actor?

Deliverable: A creative, visual map of possible alliances in their actual school context, showing who connects to whom, how, and why, grounded in both personal experience and institutional reality

Phase 3. Group restitution

30 min



Mini-presentations: each group gives a 5-minute presentation of their Alliances Map, explaining their intention and design, and answering potential questions

- What are the following steps you will undertake to form these alliances?
- Who will you start contacting to form these alliances?



Evaluation and next steps

Group work: Theory of Change

Session Outline

This session dedicates time for the group(s) to plan the milestones of their research and put them on a timeline. This session aims to develop planning and project management skills in participants.

In order to design their research, participants are introduced to the Theory of Change, which helps to set a vision for their YPAR. This vision becomes an ultimate goal which drives the subsequent steps of the research.

You can find an explanation and steps of the Theory of Change in the attached slides. The timeline used in this session followed the progress of the YPARC project – please adjust it to your context!

Group work: Designing and researching using the theory of change



1 hour 15 min

Objective

- Understanding the theory of change and how to identify Goals with a big picture
- designing research steps

Materials

YPAR phases handout (could also be avoided by showing the one we made from the first day)

Phase 1.

15 min



Short presentation on the theory of change with examples



Evaluation and next steps

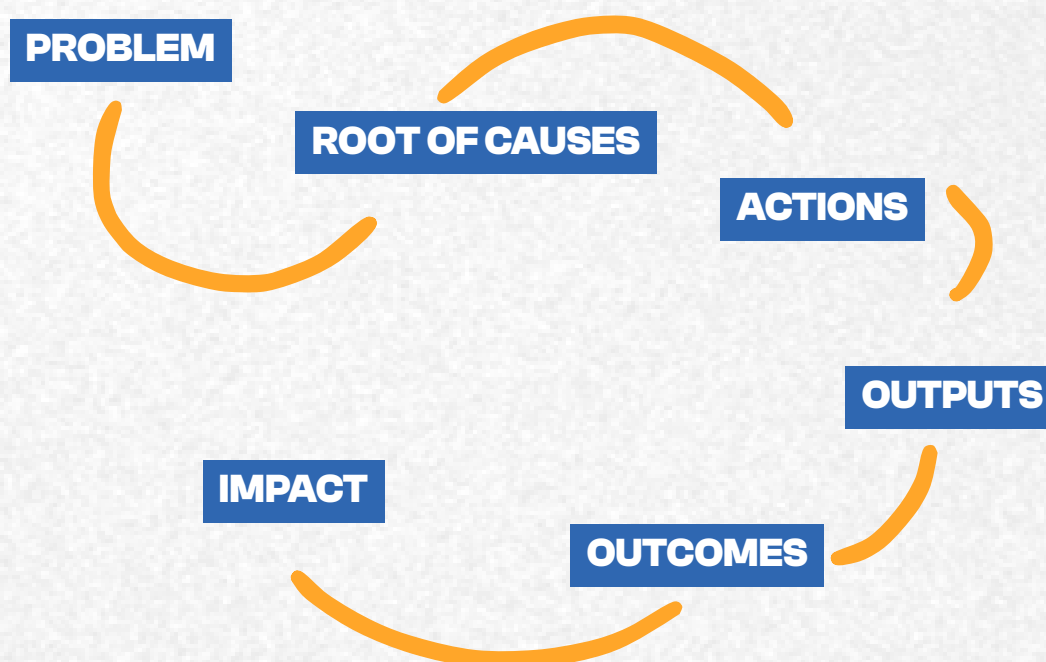
Phase 1.

A Theory of Change is essentially a map that connects **where you are now to where you want to be**, how you will get there.

- This is the **problem** we see in our community
- These are the **root causes** behind it
- These are the **actions** we believe will address those causes
- This is the **change** we expect to see, and why*

The why part is what makes it a theory, and what helps to choose the most meaningful actions

The logic flows like this:



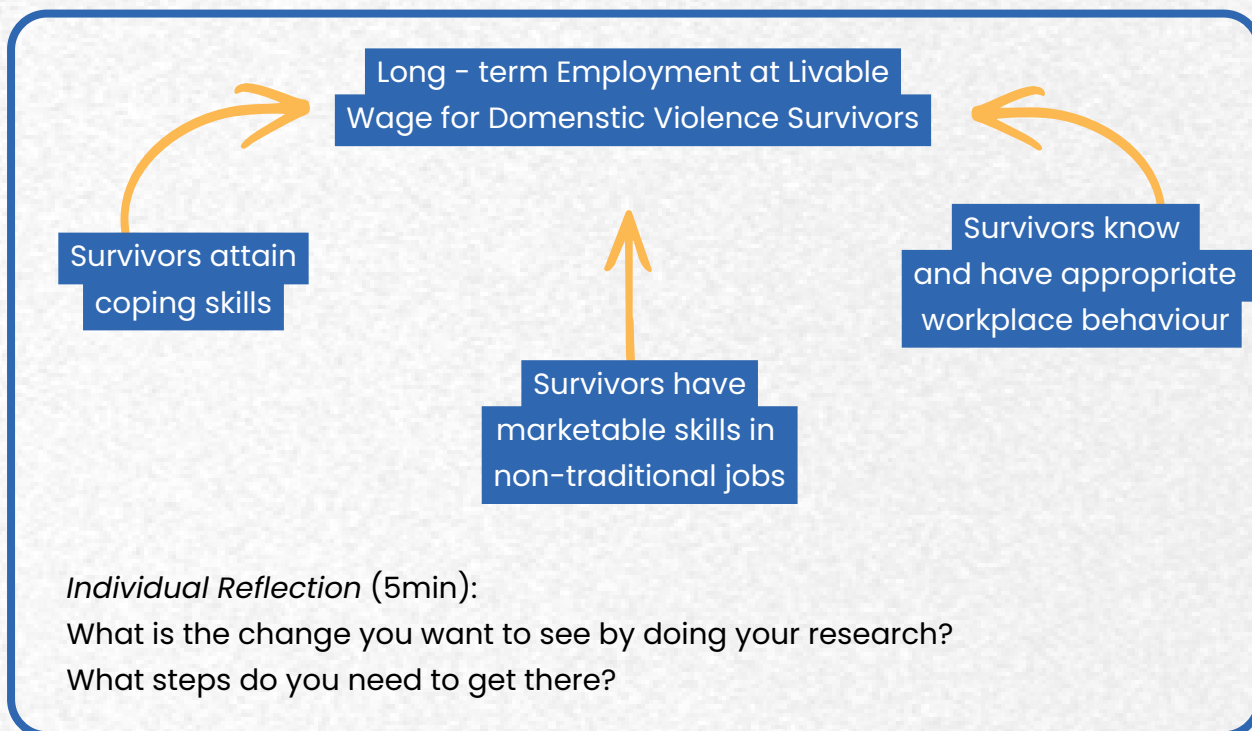
In YPAR, it's often more useful to work it backwards, starting from the change you want to see:

- What change do we ultimately want? (the vision/impact)
- What would we need for that to happen? (outcomes)
- What would we need to do to acquire these outcomes? (actions)
- What do we need to understand first? (this is where your research questions come from)



Evaluation and next steps

Phase 1.



Phase 2.

30 min



In national groups, participants identify the ultimate change that they want to bring with their research. They work backwards to understand what they need in order to bring this change until they get to the first steps that they can take, as per example from Phase 1.

Phase 3.

30 min



The facilitators bring a template of YPAR phases to each group. The participants will connect their research steps to the phases of YPAR.



Evaluation and next steps

Milestones

Session Outline

MILESTONES



20 min

Objective

- ground the research plan into reality
- foster project management skills

Materials

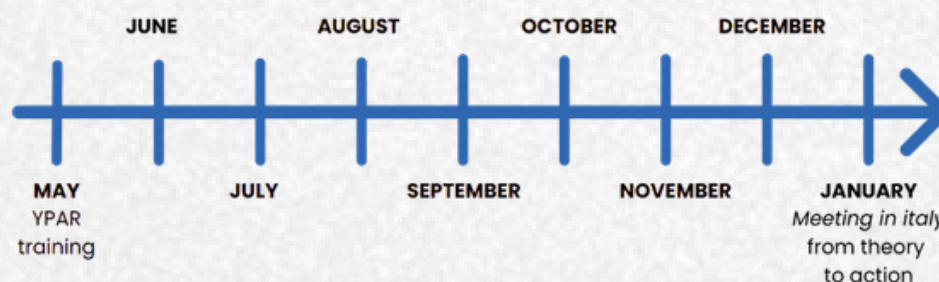
Timeline of the research phase of YPARC

Phase 1.

20 min



Each national group receives a timeline of the research phase of YPARC (from now until January 2027 – this is specifically in the case of this project, but you can adapt it to your specific timeline). Their task is to put their research plans on the timeline, setting specific milestones and agreeing how they will continuously evaluate (could be a meeting at every milestone, it could be written information, it could be updating each other via chat, etc)





Evaluation and next steps

How do I evaluate the success of my research?

Session Outline

Once the participants have knowledge on how to formulate design research, collect and analyse data, they are introduced to the evaluation process of YPAR. Evaluation in YPAR is not traditionally focused on the outcome of the research, but rather on the process.

The evaluation happens through 3 lenses:

- Lens 1: Process ('Did we do what we planned, and was it fair and safe?')
- Lens 2: Learning ('Did we grow as researchers and as people?')
- Lens 3: Impact ('Did something shift for our community?')

How do I evaluate the success of my research?



1 hour

Objective

- Understand WHY evaluation matters in a YPAR research project — for themselves, their group, and their community
- Distinguish between evaluating the process, the learning, and the impact of research
- Begin to think about what success could look like for their own research journey

Materials

- papers
- bit post-its
- markers and pens
- 3 images for the opening activity to be printed or presented



Evaluation and next steps

Phase 1.

10 min

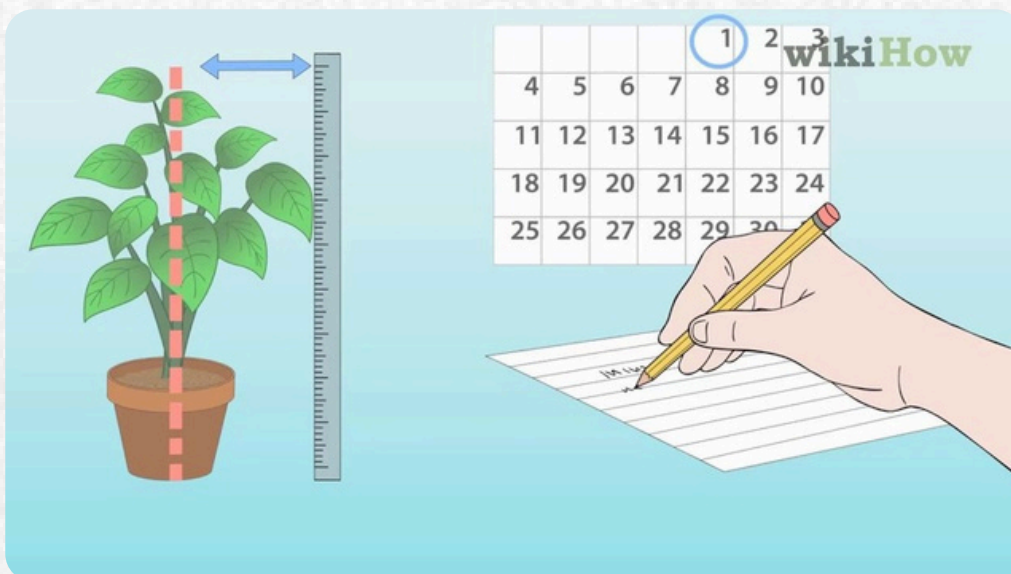


The facilitator shows 3 images on screen (or printed):

A school report card



A scientist measuring a plant's growth





Evaluation and next steps

Phase 1.

A group of friends chatting after an event



Ask the group: *'Which of these is evaluation?'*

take quick votes, then reveal: all three are! Use this to open up what evaluation actually means.

- Present them with a definition: 'Evaluation means honestly asking what happened? What worked? What did it mean? so you can understand your own work and share it with others.'
- Whole-group question: *'Have you ever evaluated something in real life without calling it that? A trip you planned, a party, a school project?'*
Invite 2–3 examples. Make them feel familiar with the concept.



Evaluation and next steps

Phase 2. Why does evaluation matter in YPAR?

15 min



Facilitator presents the '**3 Lenses of YPAR Evaluation**'

- **Lens 1: Process** ('Did we do what we planned, and was it fair and safe?'),
- **Lens 2: Learning** ('Did we grow as researchers and as people?'),
- **Lens 3: Impact** ('Did something shift for our community?').

Walk through each lens with a concrete example.



VERY IMPORTANT: Most traditional research only evaluates outcomes "did it work?", but YPAR also asks: "was the process good? Did WE change?"

That's what makes it participatory and action-oriented"

Divide them into national groups, give them the big post-its and open a discussion (5/8min):

- *"For each lens, think of ONE question you'd want to be able to answer at the end of your research. Write or draw it on your post-it"*

After they are done, open a moment to share their questions. The facilitator collects the post-its and puts them on a wall grouped by lens

Phase 3. What would success look like?

20 min



Give out a worksheet (each work sheet has 3 columns, one for each lens). Keep them into national groups and give them 10 min to work together to answer the following prompts (giving one short description for each lens):

- Imagine your research is finished. **How will you know it was successful?**
- **What would you be proud of?**

(give some suggestions for answers like: we managed to interview at least 10 people from my community, now we feel more confident speaking up, we felt heard, we felt safe, our local council heard our findings...



Evaluation and next steps

Phase 3.

Give them some time to think. After they are done, open a moment to share one of their indicators.

Highlight how they might be different depending on the context and the research and how it is the context that defined the success of your research in YPAR.

Phase 4. Debriefing

15 min



Gather them all together again and recap the 3 lenses

Evaluation isn't a moment at the end, rather it's a habit of honest reflection throughout.

From now until September, you'll be asking these questions as you go →

Connect to the research timeline

Close with an individual reflection:

- each participant completes ONE sentence on a post-it (facilitator reads all three options aloud, participants choose):
 - 'Evaluation matters to my research because...
 - One question I want my research to be able to answer is...
 - Something I now understand about evaluation that I didn't before is...

The post-its are posted on the wall or read aloud



Evaluation and next steps

Identifying the competences of a YPAR researcher

Session Outline

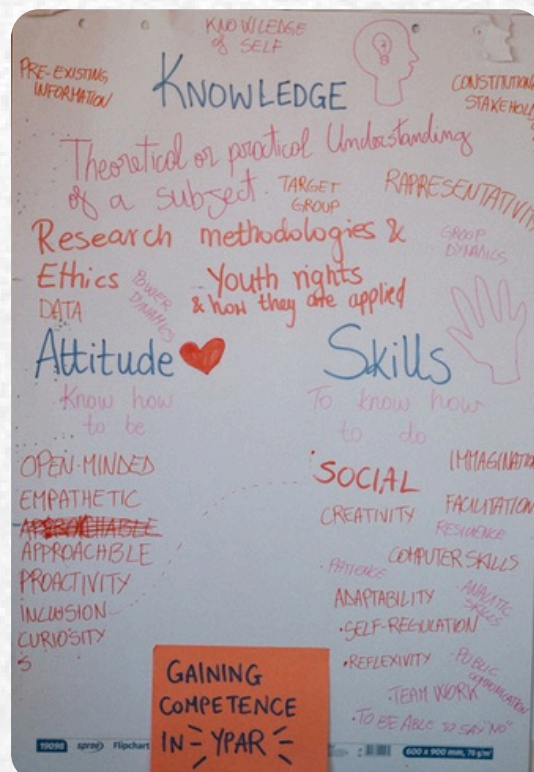
The competences gained in the YPARC project will be formalised with the [Youthpass](#) certificate. This session aims to understand the fundamental pillars of building a competence, and identifying the skills, knowledge, and attitude needed to be a competent YPAR researcher.

What is a competence?

A competence is the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and behaviours in different situations or contexts.

A competence is made up of three main pillars: knowledge (what we know), skills (the ability of doing something), and attitude/behaviour (how we apply it and embody it).

Below is the result of participants' brainstorming session about the elements of a YPAR researcher competence.





Co-funded by
the European Union



Youth Participatory Action Research for Change

Project 101245710

TOOLKIT

