



# The UK Young Ambassadors:

Enabling all young people to  
engage in an Inclusive, Diverse  
and Well-Connected Europe



## Background

The British Youth Council (BYC) is a charity that gives young people a voice. We empower young people aged 25 and under to influence and inform the decisions that affect their lives. We support young people to get involved in their communities and democracy locally, nationally and internationally, making a difference as volunteers, campaigners, decision-makers and leaders.

The UK Young Ambassadors project gives young people in the UK a voice at international meetings and events, on decisions that affect them and on issues they care about. Young Ambassadors provide a bridge between young people in the UK and people making decisions around the World.

## Inclusive, Diverse and Well-Connected Europe

During the summer of 2016, the Young Ambassadors, on behalf of the UK National Working Group for Structured Dialogue ran a UK wide consultation on the theme of an inclusive, diverse and well-connected Europe.

In this document you can learn some more about:

1. Structured Dialogue
2. The UK Young Ambassadors
3. Our research in the UK
4. The results
5. The outcomes of the EU wide consultation and the recommendations created jointly by young people and decision makers to tackle the issues identified.





# Structured Dialogue

## What is Structured Dialogue

'Structured Dialogue' is a process that supports young people to work with decision-makers to define national and European youth policy. The topic for the current cycle of Structured Dialogue is ***“Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe”***. The BYC elects Young Ambassadors specifically for this project. This report will inform the UK Young Ambassadors work in Europe and in the UK, and will feed into the British Youth Council's work.

Structured Dialogue is organised into 18-month work cycles. The current cycle runs from 2016 to 2017 over the course of the Dutch, Slovakian and Maltese EU Presidencies.



Tibor Navracics,  
European Commissioner for Youth on Structured Dialogue:

*“Europe needs the input of its young generation to overcome the big challenges it is facing. I want to give all young people in Europe the chance to have their voice heard... The Structured Dialogue has an important role to play in this. I am more determined than ever to reach out to one million young people during my term as Commissioner. Together, we can build an open, diverse, strong Europe.”*

The success of Structured Dialogue depends on the direct involvement of young people and youth organisations. The process in each country is organised by national working groups.

The UK National Working Group consists of:

- British Youth Council, represented by the UK Young Ambassadors
- Department of Culture, Media and Sport (previously the Cabinet Office) as the Government department responsible for Youth
- British Council (previously Ecorys as the National Agency for KA3 Erasmus+)
- Ad hoc representation from youth representatives, youth organisation, academics, experts etc.

## How is it done?

During each 18-month work cycle, there are 3 phases and these reflect the Presidencies of the Council of Europe.

**Phase 1 - Mapping the issue and planning.** Youth representatives and decision makers map the issues with young people and experts in their countries. They then come together at the first EU Youth Conference which was organised by the Netherlands and agree on a guiding framework for the national consultations organised in each country.

**Phase 2 - Consultation.** Following the first EU Youth Conference a consultation is run in each country. The aim of this is to engage as many young people as possible in Structured Dialogue. At the second conference in Slovakia, the outcomes of the national consultations were debated and Joint Recommendations, aimed at tackling the identified issues, are endorsed.

**Phase 3 - Implementation; turning words into action.**

During the final cycle, National Working Groups work on the recommendations, identifying how current youth policy reflects these, and what the political appetite is to implement the recommendations. At the third and final conference of the cycle which will take place in Malta in March 2017, the recommendations are debated by Youth Ministers from national governments, before being endorsed.

The final recommendations form the basis of a Council Resolution addressed to European institutions and national authorities, to be endorsed by youth ministers at the end of the 18-month cycle.

Structured Dialogue is governed at EU level through a European Steering Committee (renewed for every 18-month working cycle) comprising:

- Youth Ministry representatives of the three EU Presidency countries
- Representatives of national youth councils of the three EU Presidency countries
- Representatives of the Erasmus+ National Agencies of the three EU Presidency countries
- Representatives of the European Commission
- Representatives of the European Youth Forum

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## UK Young Ambassadors

The UK Young Ambassadors are a group of young people elected to represent the UK on an international level.

- 2 Young Ambassadors represent the British Youth Council on the European Youth Forum
- 2 Young Ambassadors represent the British Youth Council on the Commonwealth Youth Council.
- 8 Young Ambassadors act as the steering group for Structured Dialogue in the UK. They are the link between the National Working Group and young people in the UK. They designed and ran the consultation, evaluated the data, wrote the following report and represent the UK at the EU Youth Conferences. The 8 Young Ambassadors represent all 4 nations of the UK, with 4 young people representing the National Youth Voice organisations: British Youth Council, Scottish Youth Parliament, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, and Children in Wales, and the other 4 holding open positions.

You can find out more about our UK Young Ambassadors here: [www.ukya.org.uk/the-ambassadors/](http://www.ukya.org.uk/the-ambassadors/)





# Our research in the UK

## What did we want to find out?

- How different groups of young people feel about the communities they belong to; whether they feel they belong to their local community and what other communities are important to them
- How young people feel about Europe; do they feel European; and how they felt in the immediate aftermath of the EU Referendum.
- Young people's experience of diversity within their communities; what the barriers are to integration and what helps to build connections with people from different backgrounds.
- Young People's experiences of Discrimination and Hate Crime.
- The skills and competencies that young people need to become active citizens.

## Methodology:

- **Online survey** - This survey was designed and distributed by BYC and sought more detailed information about young people's views and experiences on the theme of "enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe", and more specifically the questions raised above. Over a 1000 young people aged 11-25 from across the UK took part in the survey.
- **Focus groups and interviews** - Alongside the surveys, focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews were carried out in towns and cities across the UK. These sessions drew out young people's stories and more detail about young people's experiences, motivations and ideas. Over 500 young people and experts took part in our focus groups.

## What next?

This research was the first stage. We will take the result of the research to decision makers in the UK and the EU in order to influence youth policy. With the evidence and ideas emerging we will be seeking out effective and innovative approaches address some of the gaps and challenges identified through this research.



# The results

The Young Ambassadors analysed all the data from both the online consultations and the focus groups along with information gathered from attendants at an extended meeting of the National Working Group, and formulated a response to the framework questions set at a European level. The following answers have been authored by the UK Young Ambassadors.

Here is what we found:

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**1) *What changes in society are you concerned about and what do you need to be able to adapt to such changes? What would make you feel more secure?***  
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*“The world is changing but people aren’t”*

Through the research we have conducted it is clear that young people believe the world around them is changing. From our survey 50% of young people felt that the world was changing for the worse and only 35% felt it was changing for the better. 34% felt they were incapable of keeping up with this change, with young people from lower socio economic backgrounds more likely likely to feel this way.

The changes highlighted in our research included; an increase in mental health issues, inequality (gender, racial, age, religious, disabilities, social etc), an increase in hate crimes, a rise in the far right and extremism, and Brexit. Young people highlighted that they were presented with various barriers that limit their ability to adapt and keep up with the changes in society. These barriers include things such as; lack of opportunities for young people, cuts to youth services, discrimination, inequality and having no voice in local and general elections. 53% of young people felt that lack of opportunities was the largest factor in limiting them to adapt to societal changes. Our findings echo the British Youth Council’s policy priorities of Votes@16, Mental Health and Saving our Youth Services; and the UK Youth Parliament’s campaign tackling racial and religious discrimination.

Brexit was a recurring theme throughout our research. Many young people highlighted concern and uncertainty for their future. Females showed a larger degree of worry and uncertainty than their males counterparts with 54% describing themselves as worried compared to 31% of males and 60% stating a degree of uncertainty compared to 43% of males. These feelings or worries and concerns are exasperated by the fact that 62% of participants told us that they feel european and this would reflect exit polls on



youth opinion on Brexit. With over 1.5 million of 16 and 17 year olds unable to vote in the recent referendum that resulted in Britain leaving the European Union young people feel it is vital that they have an active role in the negotiations and talks and receive more unbiased and reliable information.

A rise in the far right and extremism was another major concern for many of the young people we interacted with. We can see this in terms of media rhetoric. When young people were asked for one word describing how they felt about changes in society a Muslim scout group we consulted exhibited a more global perspective with words such as ‘Terrorism’, ‘ISIS’, ‘Trump’, ‘Israel’ and ‘Boko Haram’.

37% think gender inequality is holding them back and is the primary issue for young people in wales, followed by lack of opportunities. The outcome of the EU referendum may have exacerbated this issue with young people concerned about gender rights changing as a result of leaving the EU.

We believe that making high quality Personal, Social, Health Education a statutory entitlement for all young people would help young people feel more secure.

The British Youth Council believe that the Government should ensure compulsory and unbiased high quality citizenship education is a statutory (entitlement for all young people). We believe that the Government should support its delivery in primary school, secondary and post 16 settings. By doing so, we believe that the Government will reinforce the priority it places on life skills. We believe that high quality PSHE prepares young people to participate in democracy; empowers them to be active citizens; and prepares them to effectively participate in other areas of society and life. We believe that the government should ensure financial education; sex and relationship education with support from specialists and health professionals (including;) information on domestic violence and healthy relationships; employment rights; political education with support to register to vote, (body confidence and gender equality) should be covered in the delivery of PSHE. Young people also call for better education on different cultures and religion to combat racial and religious discrimination.

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**2. What would help you connect more and build trust with people from a different cultural, social, economic, religious background than yours?**

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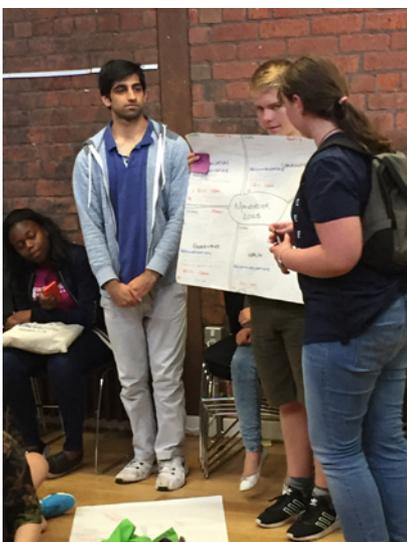
During our research we discovered that 92% of young people said they mixed with different backgrounds. The majority of the remaining 8% stated that the only reason they didn’t mix with

people from a different background was that they lived in an area that lacked diversity. Media rhetoric suggests that there are large divides in our communities but our research with young people shows that they don't feel this amongst people of their own age group. Many young people told us that they felt that there is a generational divide when it comes to integrated communities, with the young generation mixing freely within their local community, in schools/university, within their group of friends and online; whilst older people were seen as not mixing with people from other backgrounds and often being fearful or hostile towards people of different religion or ethnicity. We looked at the correlation between the feeling of belonging to your community and religion/faith. We observed that 75% of those who said they were religious felt that they belonged to their local community which is marginally higher than those who said they did not subscribe to a religious or faith group.

Young people said they mixed with others in places of education the most, ranking around 89 percent, following that was friendship groups at 71%. This is highlighted by the UK Youth Parliament choosing "Don't Hate, Educate" as their main campaign for 2015, with a strong focus on tackling racial and religious discrimination. When discussing this topic with young people they felt that the best way to learn about other cultures is immersion. Many had experience of a 'culture day' in school where activities such as people bring in food from around the world were organised in order to share culture. Young people however felt that this was very tokenistic and didn't actually result in any learning or understanding of other cultures. Young people told us that meaningful cultural immersion was very effective way of building connections. Notting Hill Carnival and community parties to celebrate events such as Eid were used as examples of good practice. Young people feel it's important that these experiences and events are authentic and are organised by the community. Surrounding cultural events has been used as a way of building mutual trust as well as a sharing of history. The feeling from young people was that immersion in differing cultures, religions, and societies was a better to connect and build trust whilst also being educational in a more engaging method, with classroom based education generating feelings of disinterest.

This does not diminish the fact that across the country, young people are calling out for better education about other religions and cultures in schools. During the recent Youth Select Committee on 'tackling racial and religious discrimination' it was suggested to the panel that faith schools should twin with other schools of another faith in order to build educate and immerse the students in other cultures. The use of technology in rural areas allows people from marginalised groups to connect with others who have similar interests and beliefs and is beneficial to reducing stigmatisation as well as building trust.

In a consultation with young people from Northern Ireland we



discovered that the main issue was sectarianism, with all young people at a focus group telling us that that sectarianism had an affect on their daily life. They encouraged more mixing between both faiths and better education. In Wales the common trend to the emotive sense of belonging to a local community stemming from the use of the Welsh language and the overall Welsh culture especially with cultural events such as the Eisteddfod which is the largest cultural event in Europe.

A common feeling since the vote to leave the European Union is that the vote itself created a platform for hate, racism and discrimination and that this was legitimated by the outcome of Brexit. Young people condemned campaigning tactics and campaigns in the lead up to the election that targeted immigrants living and working in the UK and were keen to emphasise the positives of migration and freedom of movement.

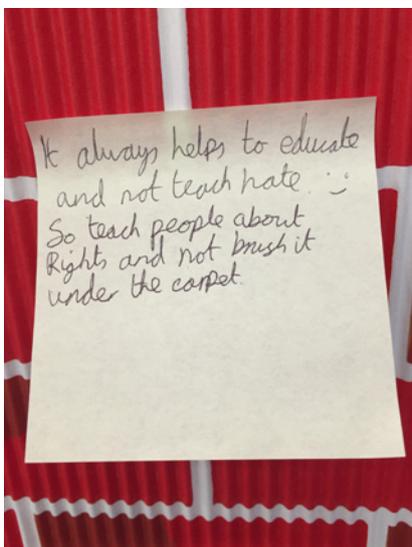
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### ***3. What can be done to avoid the stigmatisation of vulnerable young people and provide them with equal opportunities in society?***

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Through the research we have conducted it is clear that hate crime is a pressing issue for young people with 56% of those we surveyed stating that they have been victims of some form of hate crime. This figure increases for young people from the BME, LGBT+ and low income communities and increases even more significantly to 75% for those who have a disability. Therefore, in order to avoid stigmatisation and provide equal opportunities, the first thing we must address is how to eradicate hate crime.

Through various consultations across the UK it is apparent that education is the key to this. Currently many young people do not necessarily understand what constitutes a hate crime and are reluctant to report an incident. Many case studies, such as that from a young person from Cardiff who identifies as LGBT+ confirms this finding; when homophobic abuse was shouted at him on the streets, he was unaware that this was a hate crime, principally because it was such a common occurrence for him. According to our research, young people from minority groups find it harder to report hate crimes because of desensitisation and a lack of belief in those whose job it is to deal with reports. A Muslim young woman told us that she frequently gets spat at in the street and receives abuse from people threatening to rip off her headscarf however does not report it because she fears nothing will be done. She also highlighted the fact that once she was perceived to be a young woman as opposed to a child the amount of abuse she received increased drastically. Her feelings were echoed throughout our research. Consequently, we believe it is vital that education is given on hate crime and young people's rights





concerning it. This belief has already been put into action through UK Youth Parliament’s national campaign ‘Don’t Hate, Educate’.

In order to encourage more young people to report incidences, young people have told us that more needs to be done to enforce legal procedures and police action against hate crime and reaffirm young people’s trust in the justice system on this issue.

Additionally, More education is needed on different cultures in order to promote mutual respect and understanding. It is important however to use the term ‘education’ in the loosest sense; young people need to be immersed in different cultures as opposed to taught about them in the classroom. A good example of this is London’s Notting Hill Carnival held every August. Through this event thousands of people from all over the UK immerse themselves in Caribbean and Black Culture and celebrate both diversity and similarity. Encouraging travel and exchange programmes is another way in which this can be achieved. Engaging with other cultures in such authentic ways needs to be done from an early age.

Many young people also raised concerns regarding the media, arguing that the press fuel hate crime and give it a platform. There have been countless occasions on which hateful lies and misleading statistics have been published by the press. Subsequently, young people have told us that better independent press regulations are essential. For example, misleading statistics should be retracted on the front page of the next issue of a newspaper.

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**4. What do you think makes you feel that you belong to a local community, to society, to Europe?**

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In looking at the question of Young People feeling part of a local community, as part of society, and as part of a wider community in Europe, surveys and wider consultation suggest that 69% of Young People feel part of their local community. The local communities they feel most part of are, firstly Family, with 58% of Young People feeling part of that as a small community. Following that is Community of Interest, followed by Youth Organisations. Young People also feel they are part of a more transient society now in the UK, as opposed to the trend of more static societies.

In consultation, Young People raised that being involved in international organisations with a shared goal such as Scouts and GirlGuiding gave them a relief from feeling isolated in smaller, local communities. There is also a feeling that Young People seek out structured organisations with similar views and attitudes – for example at university, for a gay woman/man to be able to seek out the LGBT+ community. LGBT+ Young People feel statistically more negative about the Brexit result, and also 9 percent more European.



At 62%, a majority of Young People feel part of Europe. Mirroring the Brexit referendum results, the Young People from Scotland and Northern Ireland feel more European, and Wales and England feel less so. It is important to point out that the survey and consultations were conducted during and after Brexit, and as such, it is difficult to decipher if the result had an impact on the findings.

Another finding of the research conducted is that people who are in education are much more likely to feel part of their local community than those not in education. Nine out of ten Young People in Higher Education feel part of their local community, as opposed to only five out of ten of those not. This trend is mirrored in a feeling of being European, 72 percent of those in Higher Education feel European, compared to only 56 percent of those in Full time Education, and 53 percent of those in Further Education (BTECs etc). It is interesting to note that our research did not find that socio economic background has an effect on young people's feelings about Brexit and a feeling of being European.

The two religious groups of Young People most likely to feel part of Europe are those of no Faith, and Christians. In the surveys conducted, white people feel 7% more a part of their local community compared to BME respondents – with no significant difference in what specific local communities they feel part of.

Young people told us that mutual respect and a sense of shared history was very important to feel part of a local community, with many also stating that a shared history and culture contributed to the reason why they feel European.

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***5. What competences would help you when you are facing difficult situations?***

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All of our research point to young people calling for a better, more expansive PSHE curriculum (Physical, Social, Health Education). Young people told us that they needed better education, better self confidence, more efforts to tackle discrimination and better support with mental health.

Young people felt that they are taught how to pass exams and not how to think critically and this makes it hard to transfer skills learnt in formal education to the workplace and to life in general, resulting in young people calling for education to teach them “how to think rather than what to think”

We believe that learning should be personalised so that we are empowered to choose courses – both academic and vocational – that are most appropriate to our skills, needs and abilities. We must have the right to choose our courses with unbiased support and advice. We believe that all young people should have access to a valuable qualification based on their talents and aspirations

from the age of 14. We believe that we need to tackle educational prejudices to allow all young people to have opportunities to learn and succeed by creating a curriculum and qualification valued by society and more importantly, by young people. It's important to inspire us to learn, not force us. Young people who are not in education, employment or training need additional support to identify and achieve their route back into learning.

With tuition fees currently set at £9000 annually and set to rise in the UK, we oppose any form of tuition fees because they act as a barrier and a deterrent to participation. We believe there should be a properly funded education system, free at the point of entry, funded by progressive taxation gathered via the income tax system. There should also be a student grant that properly reflects the cost of living. The higher education funding system should be based solely on students' ability and be independent of economic or social background – allowing free access to education.

We believe that the compulsory teaching of first aid as part of primary and secondary education would equip young people with a knowledge of lifesaving procedures, and the power to act in an emergency situation.

Our research has shown a significant rise in hate crime and discrimination and as such we believe that all educational institutions should have a zero tolerance policy to any kind of discrimination against, or bullying, of students or staff and should have a responsibility to promote and celebrate diversity.

Mental health was seen as a big issue in our research with 49% of females and 27% of males identifying as having mental health problems, and we believe that the Government needs to do more to address mental health challenges faced by young people. We also believe that stigma surrounding mental health prevents many young people from seeking support; and that help and advice are often scarce. Greater investments need to be made to ensure that support and care is; age-appropriate, youth-friendly and accessible both locally and nationally for 16-25 year old, and that young people are taught about these issues in school and are adequately signposted.



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***6. What would you need to fully realise your potential and help other to realise theirs?***

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In answering the question of what young people need to help them fully realise their potential, we have used evidence both from our consultation and survey, as well as the findings of the 2013 Youth Select Committee, ran by the British Youth Council in partnership with the UK Parliament.

All three sources came broadly to the same conclusion: young people want to be taught key skills in a more expansive PSHE

curriculum (Physical, Social, Health Education; normally called ‘citizenship education’ in European and international contexts). Not only is current PSHE provision viewed as inadequate, with OFSTED (England’s schools inspectorate) stating in 2013 that 40% of schools in England do not adequately provide a PSHE curriculum, but that the scope of PSHE in general should be enhanced.

The types of skills that young people want to be taught range from personal finance, voting, politics, community cohesion, sustainability, cultural awareness and sex education. A key point that emanated from our other areas of research in the consultation was the need for young people to have a rights based approach to education as well. Young people lack a complex understanding of their legal rights and this has often led to acceptance of hate crime. This demonstrates that an understanding of the basics is not enough to ensure that youth rights are respected.

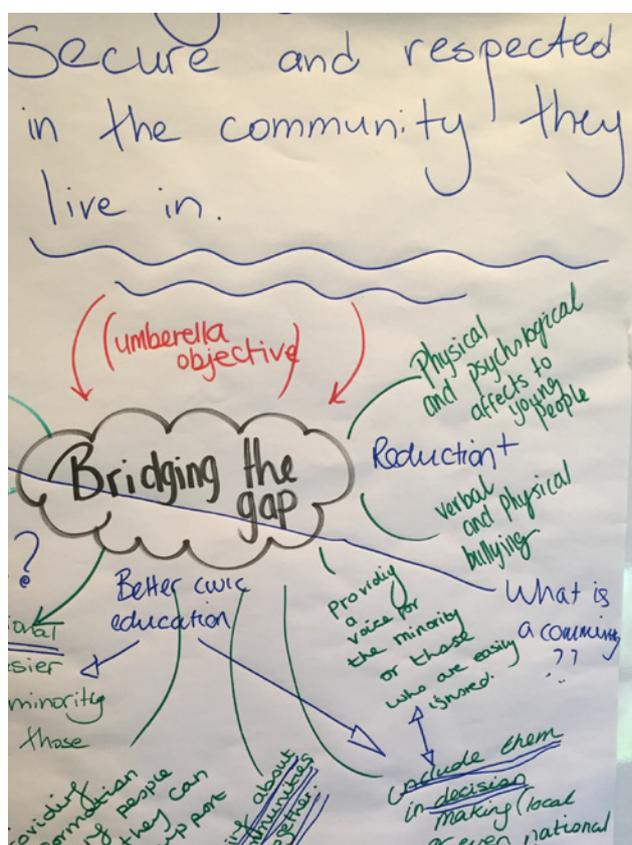
The Youth Select Committee report placed particular emphasis on digital skills. Although the current generation have been described as “digital natives”, this does not necessarily mean that young people have the full range of skills to compete in a digital world. In fact, such an assumption would underestimate the range of digital platforms, softwares and technologies available, the level of knowledge and skills required to navigate them and the scope for specialisation.

Whilst the home is a valuable place for young people, they do not believe that it is the most appropriate place to impart these skills and key bits of knowledge, citing differing levels of knowledge amongst parents as the key reason. Some parents simply will not

hold the necessary human and social capital to impart the necessary knowledge and skills young people require.

But one key message has materialised during our consultation: “we want to be taught how to think, not what to think”. This illustrates a key desire amongst young people for unbiased education that emphasises a critical approach.

Potentially the most interesting finding is that perhaps there is a link between community belonging and competence, even if this is merely a perceptual link. 13% of young people who said they feel part of their local community feel more equipped to deal with changes in society. Our research has not been able to reveal the reasons for this finding, it could be due to the fact that young people who felt part of their community were more likely to be ‘socially privileged’ or the local community could potentially be an integral part of equipping young people to deal with future changes in society.





# Structured Dialogue

## EU Recommendations

### So how did our research compare to the EU wide findings?

Our findings were collated along with the results from all the other Member States to create an EU wide result. In this section you will find the outcomes of the EU wide consultation followed by the recommendations created jointly by young people and decision makers to tackle the issues identified.

We will now take these recommendations to decision makers, stake holders and young people across the UK, to see how they are reflected in current policy and to lobby for implementation of those most relevant to young people and the youth sector in the UK.

### Access to Quality and Critical Information

Young people are quite critical of the media system across Europe and the way information is treated and communicated. For instance, the migration crisis and the terrorists' attacks have been depicted in a very unilateral manner, influencing greatly how citizens reacted to these issues. Likewise, the media have played a big role in the Brexit referendum, contributing to creating an environment of tension and suspicion. The fact that it is always easier to post opinion pieces and to reach other readers (through blogs, websites, articles, social medias) comes with risks such as a raise of non-controlled hate speech. Critical thinking, media literacy and political education are key elements that can help young people are well equipped to react constructively to mass-medias.

#### Recommendations:

1. The EU Institutions and the Member States should develop or further implement evidence based policy and practice that aim to continually improve the skills of young people to critically evaluate and process information through both formal and non-formal education
2. The EU Institutions and Member States, in cooperation with civil society organisations, should support youth-led media that are transparent, independent and diverse, as it contributes to enhancing media literacy, critical and analytical thinking amongst young people. The CULT committee of the European Parliament as well as the European Commission are invited to take into account this aspect while reviewing the « Erasmus + », « Europe for Citizen », « Creative Europe » and all other relevant programs.



## Young People Under Pressure: Building Resilience and Self Confidence

Young people feel a growing pressure is put on their shoulders coupled with high expectations coming from the society, the family, adults and institutions. Additionally, they point out that they feel that there is a negative perception of young people in the media and the political sphere etc. The competitive environment in school, at work, but also in looking for a job contributes to a feeling of exclusion, confidence issues as and can lead to mental health problems. While the general expectations on young people must be lower, young people must be provided with the skills that will enable them to fulfill their potential and to choose career path that suits them.

### Recommendations:

1. Considering that expectations to perform competitively are increasing in educational settings, national competent authorities must ensure that young people have enough time and space for activities that help them to build resilience, self awareness and self confidence.
2. National competent authorities should implement education on mental wellbeing and mental health, both through the formal education system and in the non-formal environment. The goal is to break stigma through raising awareness as well as to enable young people to learn how to maintain their mental health and how to communicate with their peers on this issue.

## Beyond Fear and Intolerance: Experiencing Diversity

Young people are concerned about the environment of tension, nationalism, fear and racism that is growing in Europe. The rise of extreme right parties in major European countries as well as the stories shared in the media do not encourage the development of solidarity and friendship beyond social and cultural groups. We must learn how to live together in diversity and young people believe that one of the most important steps to be taken is the creation of safe spaces where (young) people from different social and cultural background can meet and get to know each other. Indeed getting the chance to socialize and meet people from different social, economic and cultural contexts is the most natural and efficient way to build trust with people from different backgrounds.

### Recommendations:

1. European and National Authorities should increase funding and institutional support in establishing Local Programmes and National Level Exchanges to enable all young people to have a direct connection with others from different backgrounds and realities, so as to strengthen intercultural competences, tackle

discrimination, promote empathy and solidarity, and experience the benefits of diversity.

2. For all young people to live in a diverse Europe, the EU and National Competent Authorities must develop or support training and development programmes to teachers and school communities in order to create a safe and inclusive environment where young people can develop competences to overcome fear and discrimination.

## **Towards an Education System That Aims at Realising Young People's Potential**

Education is at the basis of our society and anytime we look at improving the way young people feel and interact one with another, we must look at the education system that is in place. Society is changing heavily as well as the structure of the labor market and the relationship to work. However, young people complain that the education system, the way we learn as well as the skills we learn do not adapt to these changes. Young people are conscious of this and are keen to see an education system that fosters creativity, critical thinking and learning to learn. This would enable young people to be better prepared to engage actively in the society

### **Recommendations:**

1. We ask for commitment in all member states to ensure guidance and counselling services that empowers all young people to develop themselves and find their path in life throughout all stages of education.
2. Education fails to provide young people with the necessary practical skills relevant to modern society. We urge all Member States to encourage the inclusion of practical life skills in education so young people can be active participants in diverse societies and in the workplace.



## **Fostering Young People's Engagement in Society, in Particular for Vulnerable Groups**

To feel connected to the society you live in, young people argue that they need to feel that they contribute to the community, that they participate. In particular, this is true for vulnerable young people who are often left aside the existing participative structures for young people. Therefore, young people across Europe are keen to see efforts to be made in order to enhance the participation (both political and non-political) of young people in the society (through volunteering, voting, community engagement etc). How to make sure that these structures are open to all groups of young people? What would young people need in order to be actively engaged in the society?



### **Recommendations:**

1. Educational institutions and local stakeholders, in cooperation with young people, should provide tailor-made support, accessible service, as well as create spaces for meaningful interaction, so that all young people can discover and embrace their individual identity and value. This is the basis for building mutual trust between young people from different background.
2. The European Commission and the Member States should ensure that every young person, regardless their personal and social situation, can freely engage in volunteering activities by making them accessible. Engagement should be ensured, for instance in youth organizations, to create a sense of belonging and to empower young people as citizens.

## **Rebuilding Trust of Young People in the European Project**

Citizens and young people in particular seem to have lost their trust in the European Union's capacity to bring jobs, solidarity and equality. The result of the British referendum vote on the EU is only the latest in a series of serious crises in Europe in recent years. If a great number of young people still share that they feel European, they no longer support the decisions that are taken by its leader and they no longer believe in its capacity to answer to young people's needs. It is high time to reflect on what must change in the European project in order to rebuild the trust of young Europeans to this project.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The European Commission and the European Youth Forum should work together to analyse and understand how young people access communication from and about the EU and to develop a communication strategy to inform young Europeans about the EU and how to positively impact the EU project.
2. To bridge the distance between young people and the EU and its policies, National and/or Regional EU Youth Festivals should be organized in all Member States in connection to European initiatives. These festivals, combining social, political and cultural activities should gather young people from different backgrounds. These events will foster learning and debating about the EU, its opportunities and shape its policies while having fun together.

## **Mobility Programme: Employment and Education Opportunities for All**

Mobility is a great tool for young people to develop a wide range of skills and to get to know different cultures. It has proven to contribute greatly to fostering tolerance and cultural understanding;

However, in times of crisis, a new form of “forced mobility” has emerged consisting of young people moving to other countries in order to find jobs. Mobility schemes and programmes must go beyond the cultural objective and should also be focused on providing skills and training for young people in order to ease their access to the job market.

**Recommendations:**

1. Member States and the European Commission should further their efforts to overcome existing obstacles to young people’s access to mobility. Access to mobility programs should be simplified and better adapted to the diverse needs of young people. Information and guidance should be provided to spread awareness of mobility opportunities.
2. EU Member States should create a legal framework for the recognition and validation of competences acquired through mobility programmes on national and European level. This will provide not only equal access to diverse learning opportunities but also validate the attained skills and contribute to social inclusion of young people.

## The Impact of Youth Work and Youth Organisations for All

Youth work and youth organisations have proven to have a positive impact on the lives of young people who benefit from these experiences. It offers a space to grow, try out, connect with other people, step out of your comfort zone, but also create friendship and the feeling of belonging. Yet, youth organisations and youth work remain not accessible to everyone. How can we transform these experiences and enlarge the impact of youth work and youth organisations for all young people?

**Recommendations:**

1. Member States and the European Commission should promote and support a range of virtual and physical spaces dedicated to qualified youth work in order to respond to the needs and interests of all young people.



2. The European Commission and Member States should allocate sufficient operational funding so that youth work and youth organizations are able to implement sustainable youth work that is accessible, relevant and meaningful for all young people.



## The British Youth Council

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[www.byc.org.uk](http://www.byc.org.uk) | [www.ukyp.org.uk](http://www.ukyp.org.uk) | [www.ymn.org.uk](http://www.ymn.org.uk)

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