

# Empowering Youth Workers - multi municipal partnership project

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We are pleased to introduce to you Sofia Giannouchidou, one of the Empowering Youth Workers project coordinators from the Youth Information Center of Kordelio-Evosmos in Greece. Sofia shared with us more about a collaboration project for increasing the skills and competencies of municipal youth workers. The partners on this project are five municipalities in five different countries. Sofia is based in Greece, which is one of the participating countries, and the other partners are municipalities in Norway, Iceland, Denmark, and Germany.

**‘Empowering Youth Workers’ - this is exactly what we are interested in! What are the goals of this project, and who are the partners and participants?**

‘Empowering Youth Workers’ is a two-year Erasmus+ project (KA153-YOU - Mobility of youth workers (KA153-YOU) implemented by the Norwegian Municipal Organization Fortene of the Municipality of

Indre Ostfold Kommune. The program involves five municipalities from Europe (Municipality of Kordelios Evosmos – Greece, Municipality of Indre Ostfold Kommune – Norway, Municipality of Hafnarfjordur – Iceland, GSJ – Gesellschaft für Sport und Jugendsozialarbeit gGmbH – Germany, and Aalborg Ungebyråd/Ungaalborg – Denmark) as partners.

All program partners participated in drafting the program proposal, with each partner contributing uniquely to its implementation. International research highlights that while overall knowledge about democracy is strong, democratic self-confidence is declining among young people. This has led to a rise of anti-democratic movements and growing distrust in governments and political institutions. To counter this, our project aims to empower future generations with democratic competence and provide them with the tools to combat anti-democratic trends, ensuring the preservation of European values and systems. The first target audiences are youth workers who will carry out these programs for the youth.

### **Our program's specific goals are to:**

- Strengthen the competences of youth workers in promoting democratic participation and inclusion
- Equip youth workers with tools to empower young people towards active citizenship
- Foster cooperation between organizations
- Promote democracy and democratic values among youth and youth workers
- Provide participants with practical tools for their daily work
- Build a network that facilitates youth exchanges and supports municipalities in strengthening democratic initiatives and youth councils.



**The project includes five municipalities from five different countries. How is this partnership structure enriching the project? Are there any challenges?**

The program will consist of three youth worker exchanges and one system development phase, with each country focusing on a specific area of expertise:

### **Iceland: Climate Change and Youth Participation**

Iceland will host a training course focused on climate change and sustainability, exploring how youth workers can facilitate youth engagement in climate action. Participants will learn best practices for promoting youth participation, as well as how youth councils can play a key role in addressing environmental issues and driving sustainable change.

### **Greece: Democratic Challenges**

Greece will focus on the threats to democratic values and principles. The training will delve into the fundamental principles on which democracies are built, examining the challenges democracy faces

today, including migration and the rise of anti-democratic movements. Participants will explore strategies for restoring and strengthening democratic systems and promoting common democratic values.

### **Norway: Radicalisation, Hate Speech, and Extremism**

Norway will offer a training course and workshop aimed at providing tools to combat hate speech and radicalisation. The focus will be on empowering youth workers to address these issues within youth work, ensuring democratic participation, and facilitating the role of youth councils in countering extremism and fostering inclusivity.



Partners from **Denmark and Germany** will contribute with their good practices and further support the program in the system development phase.

### **System Development: Establishing and Developing Youth Councils**

A key component of the program will be system development, where practical tools, materials, and

guidance will be provided to establish or improve youth councils. This phase will focus on creating sustainable structures to ensure democratic youth participation and support the development of effective youth councils across participating countries. Each country plays a crucial role in strengthening the overall objective of empowering youth workers and young people, addressing democratic challenges, and promoting active youth participation.



### **How is this project bridging the gap in youth participation in democratic processes?**

This initiative addresses the critical issue of youth participation in the processes. Many young people feel disconnected from politics and lack understanding of how democratic systems work, which affects the overall effectiveness of democracy. This project will try to bridge this gap by

- Increasing youth engagement
- Providing knowledge and tools to help young people understand and influence political systems
- Overcoming socio-economic, cultural, and educational barriers to participation
- Promoting intercultural dialogue, tolerance, and collaboration

By empowering young people to become active citizens, the municipal youth work wants to contribute to creating more inclusive and responsive democratic systems. This project builds on our successful past collaboration, enhancing the impact on youth and their communities.

## **What is the expected impact of the Empowering Youth Workers project?**

The project will improve the quality of youth work by equipping participants with valuable tools to engage youth in climate action, tackle hate speech, and build sustainable youth councils. The activities will directly contribute to the European youth work agenda, promoting the development of youth work across Europe.

Participants will gain access to high-quality materials, frameworks, and policy templates for youth work, helping them incorporate youth needs into their strategies. The program will create a network of youth workers who can serve as experts in implementing youth councils and promoting youth participation in policymaking.

Organizations will be empowered to establish and develop their own youth councils using the provided system development materials, driving greater youth engagement in democratic processes.

Moreover, the project will open opportunities for further collaboration and future projects with youth and youth workers from other countries, broadening horizons and fostering personal, professional, and organizational growth.



## **What would be your message for the municipal youth work in Europe?**

Our message to municipal youth work in Europe is to recognize the critical role it plays in shaping the future of democratic engagement and youth empowerment. While challenges such as the rise of anti-democratic movements, climate change, and radicalization may seem daunting, they also present unique opportunities for impactful work.

It's essential to focus on building strong, sustainable structures for youth participation, such as youth councils, and to equip youth workers with the necessary tools and knowledge to address these issues effectively. Emphasizing youth involvement in decision-making processes, promoting democratic values, and fostering climate action can have a lasting impact on the resilience and engagement of future generations.

Look forward to the opportunity to collaborate across borders, learn from best practices, and develop high-quality materials that can enhance your youth work practices. By creating a network of like-minded professionals and organizations, we can create a powerful movement of youth-led change. Together, we can strengthen democratic values and ensure that young people are empowered to shape the future of Europe.

Read more and get in contact:

[Empowering Youth Workers project info \(GR\)](#)

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