

Democratic Participation & Civic Space

Name of the organisation

ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΝΕΩΝ ΔΗΜΟΥ ΘΕΡΜΗΣ

Website of the organisation

<https://youthermi.gr/>

Location of the organisation

VICTOROS HUGO 4, 57001 Thermi, Thessalonikis, Greece

E-mail address of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in implementing youth activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Inclusion
- Active citizenship/activism

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

The Municipality of Thermi, Greece, has become a prominent leader in youth engagement, recently being designated as the National Youth Capital for 2026. This recognition is largely due to the work of the Youth Council of the Municipality of Thermi (YouThermi), which operates using a unique, decentralized model designed to reach its various settlements.

The municipality's strategy for fostering democratic participation is built on the axis of Active Citizenship. The goal is to educate and familiarize young people (ages 15–29) with the internal administration and operations of local government. This approach aims to cultivate strong bonds between the new generation and local society, leading to a long-term local strategy for youth.

Good practice description

- **Decentralized Structure:** To ensure “meaningful youth participation in rural settings,” the Youth Council uses as its organizing tool, the **sociocratic model**. Accordingly, it is organized into “local circles.” Each village within the municipality has its own circle, which then sends a representative to the General Circle. This ensures that young people in more remote or rural parts of the municipality (like Trilofos, Vasilika, Ag. Paraskevi) have a direct voice and an active role in participating to the commons.
- **Information Provision:** The municipality uses the “**You Thermi**” digital platform and social media to provide information specifically tailored to young people across these dispersed areas. Web Link: <https://youthermi.gr/>
- **SAYouth Project:** Thermi participated in the “Reaffirming the civic participation of young people for a sustainable democracy” (SAYouth) project. A key objective was to develop inclusive

communication channels to reach **migrant youth** and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- **Addressing Inequality:** Research involving the council has highlighted a specific focus on addressing social inequalities related to **poverty, racism, and disability**. The council acts as a space where youth from vulnerable backgrounds (often supported by local welfare organizations) can participate in focus groups to influence local policy. Our youth council and the Municipality of Thermi, under this concept, actively participated in two European programs, Cities4her and Juniorxpress.
- **The invisible role of women:** a project action that began in March 2024 and ended in September 2025 at MIET (National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation), visual narratives of women of the municipality of Thermi. It was a project that aimed at empowering women in the communities and recognizing the important role they play in the passage of time. In their overall expression, these activities and events promote information, education and the exchange of opinions and experiences, offering a forum for discussing issues related to the position of women and gender equality, aiming at intergenerational connection.
- **International Training:** The Youth Council is highly active in European networks. For example, they participate in international training seminars (such as those by the **DYPALL Network**) to bring “European best practices” back to their local, less-privileged communities.
- **EU Rights Advocacy:** Through projects like “Youth Action for Democracy” (funded by the Active Citizens Fund), our Youth Council received and conducted experiential training for young people on EU rights and policy design, specifically targeting the Northern Greece region.
- The Youth Council of the Municipality of Thermi was established on the initiative of the Municipality in June 2020 and constitutes a modern institution for youth participation in the life of the local community. It was created to give young people a voice and to offer them an organized space for expression, dialogue, and action. The aim of the Council is to strengthen the active participation of young people in public life, to highlight the issues that concern them, and to contribute to the formulation of a local youth strategy in cooperation with the Municipality.
 - **Beyond Representative Democracy:** The Youth council goes beyond simple voting; it uses **sociocracy** (consent-based decision-making) to empower youth to co-create local strategy.
 - **Thermi’s Youth Forum:** An annual event that serves as a massive civic space for young people to discuss local and global issues (like climate change and social justice) with local politicians and academic stakeholders.
 - **Local Politics:** The council serves as an official advisory body to the Municipal Council, ensuring that youth-led policy proposals on everyday life (leisure, safety, environment) are actually heard by decision-makers.
 - **Digital Engagement:** The municipality has prioritized digital tools like the **e-thermi** platform (web: <https://eforms.thermi.gov.gr>) and the **SAYouth digital tool** to support young people who face geographical or physical barriers to attending meetings in person.
 - **Detached/Street Work:** While most Greek municipalities lean toward institutional youth centers, Thermi’s initiative to reach out to youth “where they are”—specifically to prevent vandalism and promote “healthy political expression”—aligns with the principles of detached youth work, though it is often integrated into the Youth Council’s “local circle” outreach.

Good practice result & concrete effects

The implementation of decentralized, sociocratic, and inclusive best practices in the Municipality of Thermi has resulted in several concrete effects on its youth work and local governance:

1. Institutional Recognition and Strategic Influence

- **National Leadership:** Thermi has been designated as the **National Youth Capital for 2026**.

- **Official Advisory Power:** The Youth Council (YouThermi) now serves as an **official advisory body** to the Municipal Council, ensuring that youth-led proposals regarding leisure, safety, and the environment are heard by decision-makers.
- **Policy Co-Creation:** Young people aged 15–29 are now actively involved in formulating a **long-term local strategy** for youth in cooperation with the municipality.

2. Regional and Rural Empowerment

- **Direct Voice for Remote Areas:** By using a **sociocratic model** organized into “local circles,” the municipality ensures that youth in remote villages (such as Trilofos and Vasilika) have a direct voice in the commons.
- **Bridging Geographical Barriers:** The use of digital platforms like **e-thermi** and **SAYouth** allows young people with geographical or physical barriers to participate in meetings and decision-making remotely.

3. Social Inclusion and Diversity

- **Inclusive Communication:** Participation in the **SAYouth project** led to the development of communication channels specifically designed to reach **migrant youth** and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Vulnerability Advocacy:** The council provides a platform for youth from vulnerable backgrounds (affected by poverty, racism, or disability) to participate in **focus groups** that influence local policy.
- **Gender and Intergenerational Bonds:** Projects like **Cities4her** and **Juniorxpress** have empowered local women through visual narratives and fostered **intergenerational connections**.

4. Skill Development and International Integration

- **European Knowledge Transfer:** Through the **DYPALL Network**, the council brings “European best practices” back to less-privileged local communities.
- **Civic Education:** Young people in the Northern Greece region have received **experiential training** on EU rights and policy design through the “Youth Action for Democracy” project.
- **Healthy Political Expression:** Outreach through “local circles” has been used as a tool to reach youth “where they are,” helping to **prevent vandalism** and promote constructive political dialogue.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice