

## Young migrants in the EU experience of participation

Young migrants have a great deal of valuable insights which contribute to our ever changing and growing EU and indeed inform the EU's stated values of inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination. The “Young Migrants Can Achieve Change” project (YMCAC) developed around the core mission of the SIRIUS network: Facilitating educational and social inclusion for young migrants through multi-stakeholder collaborations has brought together young migrants to share learning and experiences of their exclusion and lack of participation in daily and political life. With the upcoming elections for the European Parliament in 2024, we highlight these experiences both in this Policy Brief and through a Final Conference held in the Parliament in April 2023.

In order to elevate the voices of our young migrant participants and highlight the European Year of Youth 2022, we set out to both:

- 1- Ensure all participants achieve a baseline of knowledge, competency and skills in advocacy (around SDGs, local actions for migrant education, European frameworks) within the framework of the University of Youth and Development (UYD) of the North South Centre of the Council of Europe.
- 2- Support our young migrants while they set out to bring to life the campaigns they created during the initial training within their own national context and communities.

*The University on Youth and Development (UYD) is a partnership between the Spanish Government (INJUVE), the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the Spanish Youth Council (CJE) and other international youth led organisations and youth serving organisations. Since 2000, it takes place in the Euro-Latin-American Youth Centre (CEULAJ - Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres), in Mollina, Spain.” As the UYD gathers representatives of youth organisations and youth movements to discuss, train and be trained around the main issues on the global agenda, it was the perfect platform to bring young people kick-off our YMCAC-project and gather our participants.*

In this policy brief we synthesise all the ideas and insights gathered during the project and develop them into tangible policy recommendations.

## The campaigns

The participants developed advocacy skills and their campaigns during a one week course at the University of Youth and Development. The goal for each campaign was to help other young migrants appeal to political authorities and MEPs to ensure local institutions are working towards social and educational inclusion, transparency and accountability. After the training, the young activists worked with their own communities to create actionable items. Most importantly, they encouraged active political participation among young people and demonstrated how young migrants can see and understand their own active participation positively. This allowed them to demonstrate how political participation can help provide better opportunities for young people, specifically in terms of migration and equal education opportunities.

The following campaigns were developed:

Long way to go – campaign to encourage awareness and clear information around visas in Ireland.

Life without documents and papers - Barcelona, Spain

Refugees mental health - Budapest, Hungary

Obtaining citizenship and it's complications - Bologna, Italy

Bringing Together Ethnic Minority Communities - Leeds, UK

## Policy recommendations

- 1) Utilise a Youth Participatory Action Model to engage young migrants to develop their own political campaigns and become involved in their own possibilities to impact their and other young migrants social and education outcomes.**

*Youth participatory action research (or YPAR) is a subdivision of action research and participatory action research in which the collaborators of the research design and implementation are young people, minors or young adults, who belong to the community in which the research is conducted and who have a particular interest or stake in the social change initiated or desired by the action research-design. At it's core YPAR banks upon the interests, passions and needs of the participating young people to creating change through actionable research. This method starts from the very principle of including young people's voices in processes which can hugely affect their own lives and experiences. A PAR-infomed method to give participants the opportunity to create their own campaign for their own community was used by our trainers in the YMCAC-project. They were guided through planning and creating of their campaigns and then through the other steps of the PAR-method, including reaching out to other community members in their own contexts to*

*help create and organise the campaign and taking action (in other words: kick off their campaigns).*

- 2) Build safe, but critical, spaces. Trust comes first**
- 3) Showcase how input is used, transparency is key.**
- 4) Address power imbalances throughout the process.**
- 5) Mental health support during the process is a necessity.**
- 6) The person comes first (and what they need), their story next (if and when they are ready to share it) , the actions or pursuit for social change comes after. (Only once lived experience has been embodied can we move on to action.)**
- 7) Work with grassroot organisations, let young people work within their own communities.**
- 8) Value the knowledge and unique insights young migrants have, all knowledge can be valuable at some point of the action-process.**
- 9) Give them the opportunity to lead**
- 10) Learn about and play into the strengths of young migrants, make room for them to figure out their strengths, let them decide what strengths they value and how they want to utilize them**