SPARK
TURN ON INCLUSION

TOOLKIT FOR YOUTHWORKERS

Support-Engage-Vote

2025

SPARK

Fostering Political Participation among Young Europeans with Intellectual and Psychosocial Disabilities

Project Number: 101186990

Partners

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Introduction

Introduction

This toolkit is an indispensable resource for youth workers and anyone interested in promoting political participation among young people with disabilities. It aims to break down barriers to participation and support the inclusion of all young people in democratic life, in line with the principles of equality, accessibility, and the core values of the European Union.

Developed by the SPARK partnership, the toolkit equips youth workers with knowledge, strategies, and practical tools to advocate for and support the political engagement of young people with disabilities. It draws on collaborative input, research, and shared experiences from across six countries: Greece, Portugal, Poland, Cyprus, Spain, and Italy.

The toolkit includes the following sections:

- Overview of Political Participation in Greece, Portugal, Poland, Cyprus, Spain and Italy
- Political Rights in Practice: What You Need to Know
- Making Politics Understandable: Simplified Communication Tools
- Fighting Stigma through Empowerment
- Inclusive Political Participation Beyond Voting
- Partnering with Families and Support Networks
- Creating Inclusive Environments for Political Participation
- Digital Participation and Safe Spaces Online
- Helplines and Helpful Resources

Understanding Political Participation and Barriers

Supporting the political participation of young people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities begins with understanding the barriers they face. These may include physical obstacles, negative attitudes, a lack of accessible information, and structural inequalities. Such challenges often prevent young people from fully engaging in civic life and limit their ability to influence decisions that affect them.

The resources that follow have been created to serve as a practical and easy-to-use guide for youth workers, educators, youth organizations, and anyone working to create more inclusive and accessible political spaces. They reflect the shared knowledge and experiences of partners across Europe and offer both general guidance and country-specific tools.

To support action at the national level, the toolkit also includes helplines and contact points in each partner country. These provide access to services, information, and local support for those working directly with young people.

The SPARK partnership is fully committed to advancing the rights, inclusion, and well-being of all young people. It embraces a broad understanding of youth work as a meaningful combination of social, cultural, educational, and political activities that encourage personal growth and active citizenship. This toolkit is not just a set of resources. It is a valuable companion for youth workers and all those working to ensure that young people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities can participate fully, take the lead, and help shape the future of their communities and of Europe.

Overview of Political Participation in Each Partner Country

VOTE
HERE

Overview of Political Participation in Greece

In Greece, young people with psychosocial disabilities face significant barriers to political participation, stemming from both structural and societal obstacles. Key challenges include restrictive guardianship laws that limit legal capacity and autonomy, inaccessibility of polling stations, and a lack of inclusive voting procedures. While the 2023 introduction of postal voting has improved accessibility, institutional and systemic issues (limited transportation, inaccessible infrastructure, and societal stigma) continue to hinder full democratic engagement (European Disability Forum, 2020). These individuals often lack access to information about their political rights, and face exclusion due to poverty, low educational attainment, and high unemployment, which collectively reduce opportunities for civic involvement (National Confederation of People with Disabilities, 2023).

Families and caregivers play an important role in shaping the political lives of young people with psychosocial disabilities, often acting as intermediaries between them and broader society. However, due to prevailing models that emphasise protection over empowerment, this role can either support autonomy or reinforce dependency (Kasimatis, 2022). While no structured political education programs exist specifically for this group, broader support systems such as day care centers and Supported Living Residences contribute indirectly by promoting independence (Pavlidou & Kartasidou, 2017). The lack of targeted training for youth workers and caregivers in promoting political participation highlights a systemic gap, where disability is still primarily approached from a welfare, rather than citizenship, perspective (Skordos et al., 2023).
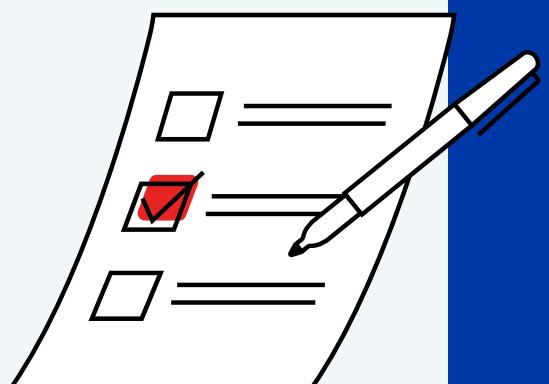
# Overview of Political Participation in Portugal

In Portugal, the right to political participation is guaranteed by the Constitution (Articles 48 and 49) and reinforced by Law no. 38/2004, which promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of civic life. A key legal milestone was Law no. 49/2018, which replaced the previous system of interdicts with the "Regime do Maior Acompanhado", restoring full legal capacity, including voting rights, to people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

Despite this progress, practical challenges persist. Electoral materials are rarely adapted to cognitive needs, polling stations may present sensory barriers, and staff are not consistently trained to offer reasonable accommodations. Individuals with conditions such as ADHD, autism, bipolar disorder, or borderline personality disorder often face stigma and structural exclusion from political processes.

Civic engagement through NGOs has grown, with organisations like APPDA, ENCONTRAR+SE, and FENACERCI supporting advocacy and awareness. Still, participation in political parties and decision-making structures remains limited, with few targeted outreach strategies or accessible environments.

Positive steps include the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021–2025), as well as inclusive local initiatives such as participatory budgeting in Cascais. However, low levels of political literacy, a lack of disaggregated data, and limited training for youth workers continue to hinder effective inclusion.

In sum, Portugal has removed legal barriers, but the full political participation of people with psychosocial disabilities requires systemic change, investment in accessibility, and stronger inclusion practices.
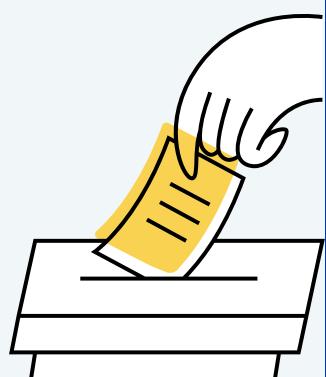
Overview of Political Participation in Poland

Political participation in Poland is grounded in the democratic constitution, which grants citizens the right to vote, stand for election, and take an active part in civil society. Since 1989, Poland has functioned as a multi-party democracy with regular elections at all levels. Polish citizens who are over 18 have the right to vote, but turnout, particularly among young people, remains inconsistent. A plethora of current research shows that many young Poles feel detached from political parties or sceptical about the impact of democratic participation.

Nonetheless, a noticeable rise in youth activism has been observed in recent years, especially around issues such as climate justice, gender equality, and anti-corruption. While this signals a shift toward more informal forms of political engagement, systemic barriers remain. People with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, often face challenges such as inaccessible information, physical obstacles at polling places, and limited exposure to civic education.

Although legal provisions for assisted or postal voting exist, they are not always effectively implemented. In this context, youth workers play a crucial role in bridging the gap between rights and real participation. By supporting young people to understand their civic rights, gain confidence, and engage locally, youth workers help create more inclusive democratic spaces and strengthen civic life in Poland.

Overview of Political Participation in CYPRUS

Political participation in Cyprus primarily revolves around its democratic institutions, including presidential, parliamentary, and local elections.

The significance of youth participation has become increasingly apparent in the lives of young individuals in Cyprus. There is a growing recognition among politicians, stakeholders, and state officials regarding the relatively **low levels of youth engagement** in the country, as indicated in the annual Youth Barometers (<u>Νεοβαρόμετρα</u>), (<u>5.1 General Context</u>, Youth Wiki).

**Key aspects of political participation in Cyprus:**

Voting:

- While voting was once compulsory, it is no longer enforced, but the average turnout in parliamentary elections remains relatively high compared to other EU member states.
- Turnout has been gradually decreasing, suggesting a potential decline in public engagement.

Factors Influencing Participation:

Several factors influence the levels of political participation in Cyprus:

- Trust in Institutions: A significant barrier to participation, particularly among youth, is a pervasive lack of trust in political institutions. Many young people feel their voices will not be heard or that their participation will not lead to meaningful change (<u>Young Cypriots Have No Trust in Political System</u>, 2024).
- Opportunities for Engagement: There is a perceived lack of opportunities for meaningful civic participation outside of elections. The percentage of the population engaging in volunteerism and civil society organizations is relatively low (<u>Why young people don't see potential in civic participation in Cyprus</u>, YourCommonWealth)
- Cultural Attitudes: Cultural attitudes in Cyprus can sometimes lead to civic participation being viewed more as an obligation than an opportunity for personal or societal empowerment (Ibid.)
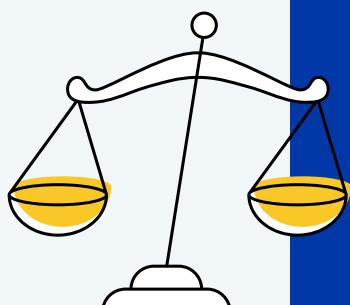
Overview of Political Participation in CYPRUS

Civic Engagement

Civil Society:

Cyprus has a range of civil society organisations, including youth organisations, that play an important role in shaping policy and promoting civic engagement.

Youth Participation:

The government actively encourages youth participation in political life, including through initiatives like e-consultations and the establishment of youth councils (5.2 Youth Participation in Representative Democracy, Youth Wiki).

E-Participation:

The Cyprus government uses online platforms for public consultations, allowing citizens to participate in shaping legislation and policy decisions (5.9 E-participation, Youth Wiki).

One example is the first online crowdsourcing platform for Youth, called "EkfraCY", launched in 2024 by Presidency in an effort to promote the interactive two-way communication between the government and people aged 18-35 and facilitate the participation of young people in the design and implementation of policies that affect them.

The platform aims to bring the voice of young people to the forefront, by collecting their views on specific topics and offering at the same time feedback from the Government itself and its officials. Specifically, the members of the platform will have the opportunity to submit their views and proposals on specific topics through thematic questionnaires that will be uploaded by the Government, but also submit their suggestions on any other issue of their interest. The design of the EkfraCY platform was based on the ease of registration and participation, in order to encourage the active involvement of all young people in Cyprus.

Overview of Political Participation in SPAIN

People with disabilities have historically faced multiple barriers that have limited their access to political and electoral life in Spain (Observatorio Estatal de la Discapacidad, 2021). These barriers can be classified into three main areas: legal, physical, and attitudinal.

According to studies by the Ombudsman's Office, many voting centers do not ensure universal accessibility, making it difficult for people with reduced mobility or sensory disabilities to vote independently (Defensor del Pueblo, 2020). Additionally, the absence of braille ballots or support systems for people with intellectual disabilities remains a challenge in certain electoral processes (CERMI, 2019).

However, there are some relevant initiatives:

·**Spanish Strategy on Disability 2022-2030:**
 This strategy, promoted by the Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda, aims to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of society.

·**Youth Action Plan 2022-2024:**
 This plan includes specific measures to promote the participation of young people with disabilities in political life and youth organizations.

·**Training and Awareness Programs:**
 Some organizations such as the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI) and the ONCE Foundation develop programs to train young people with disabilities in their political rights and the importance of democratic participation.

Spain has made significant progress in removing legal barriers and promoting electoral accessibility for people with disabilities. However, challenges persist in terms of accessibility, political representation, and effective support to ensure their full participation. The effective implementation of inclusive policies and societal awareness are key to consolidating a truly accessible and representative democracy.
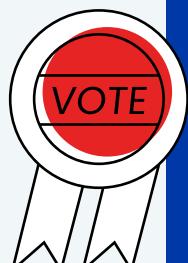
Overview of Political Participation in Italy

In Italy, the political participation of people with physical and psychosocial disabilities remains limited, despite constitutional guarantees. Article 3 ensures substantive equality, and Article 48 establishes the right to vote. Yet, these rights have often been denied in practice, especially to those with psychosocial disabilities, whose decision-making abilities were long undervalued.

A key moment came with Constitutional Court ruling no. 2 of 2021, which overturned the voting ban for individuals under guardianship due to mental illness. This marked a shift from a protective to a self-determination-based model, aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified in Italy by Law no. 18/2009.

However, significant obstacles persist. Social stigma continues to affect how society views the political abilities of persons with psychosocial disabilities. Even caregivers may, unintentionally, discourage engagement out of concern. Physically, many polling places remain inaccessible, particularly in smaller municipalities, due to architectural and logistical challenges. Although laws like Decree no. 570/1960 and Law 104/1992 mandate accessibility and assisted voting, their enforcement is inconsistent.

Digitally, platforms like partecipa.gov.it and decidim.org offer new democratic opportunities, but they often remain inaccessible to users with cognitive or sensory disabilities due to complex design, lack of simplified content, or missing assistive tools. Misinformation and cyberbullying further discourage engagement.

Still, initiatives like Io Voto by ANFFAS and easy-to-read civic workshops show that, with proper support, inclusive participation is achievable.
True political inclusion requires more than legal reform—it demands cultural, structural, and digital transformation, grounded in accessibility and
shared agency
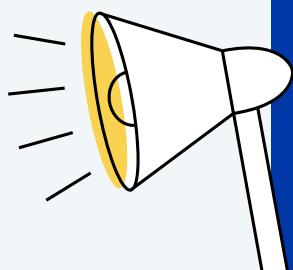
PRACTICAL RESOURCES
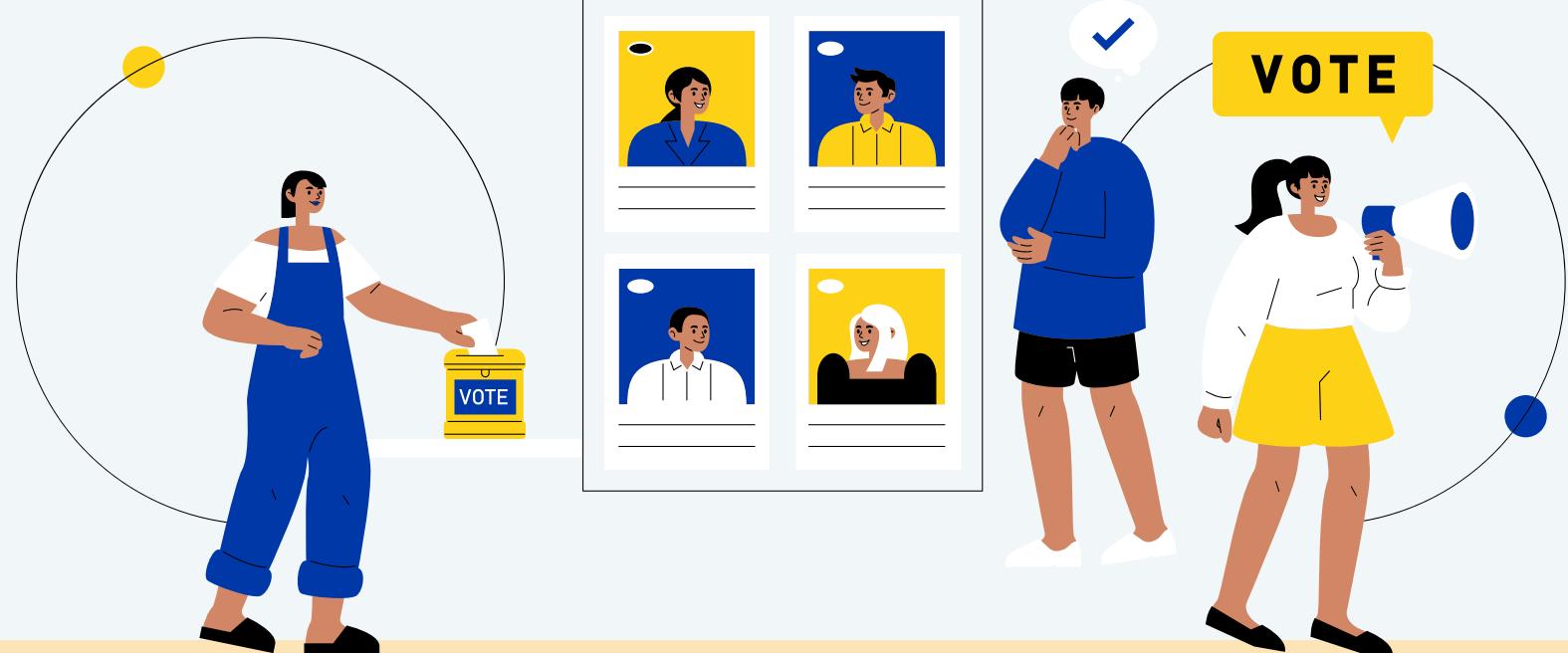
1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This part aims to provide youth workers with a hands-on understanding of the political and civic rights of young people, including those with psychosocial disabilities, and equip them with practical tools to foster meaningful participation in democratic life.

Understanding political rights is not just about knowing the law—it's about seeing how those rights play out in real life, especially for young people with psychosocial disabilities. The following activities are designed to help youth workers explore the legal foundations, practical barriers, and opportunities for inclusive participation. Each session combines knowledge-building with creative, hands-on learning to encourage reflection, discussion, and real-world application. Whether you're working with a group for one session or across a longer programme, these activities can be adapted to suit your context and the needs of the young people you support.

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Understanding political rights and participation

Political rights, as defined by international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), guarantee every individual the right to participate in public affairs without discrimination. This includes legal capacity, freedom of expression and association, and the right to vote and be elected (United Nations, 1948, United Nations, 2006).

For youth with psychosocial disabilities, realising political rights often means navigating and confronting systems that were not built with them in mind. Therefore, the role of youth workers is not only to inform young people of their rights but to actively support their participation by dismantling the structural and attitudinal barriers that stand in the way.

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. Know Your Rights: A Quick Quiz & Exploration

Estimated time: 60–75 minutes

Why this activity matters:

Youth workers need to understand the legal frameworks that protect young people's political rights —especially for those with psychosocial disabilities. This session lays the foundation for advocacy and inclusion by making abstract legal concepts tangible and relevant.

Objective:

Introduce youth workers to key legal instruments that protect political rights, especially for young people with psychosocial disabilities.

Materials:

- Printed fact sheets
- Internet access
- Markers
- Flipchart

Instructions:

- Begin with a short quiz to test participants' knowledge of political rights (e.g., right to vote, freedom of speech, right to protest).
- Divide into small groups. Assign each group a document (e.g., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN CRPD, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights).
- Each group identifies 3 rights related to political participation and explains how they apply to youth with psychosocial disabilities.
- Groups share key takeaways with everyone.

Debrief:

Facilitate a discussion: How well do current laws support inclusive participation? Are there gaps across EU countries?

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

2. What's Holding Us Back? Mapping Barriers and Supports

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Why this activity matters:

Understanding the systemic, social, and personal challenges that prevent youth from participating in political life is the first step toward breaking them down. Youth workers can use this mapping to guide support strategies.

Objective:

Identify barriers and enablers affecting political participation for youth with psychosocial disabilities.

Materials:

Barrier/enabler template

Post-its

Markers

Instructions:

In plenary, brainstorm barriers to voting, joining a political group, or protesting.

Repeat for enablers (e.g., peer support, transport, plain language materials).

In groups, use the template to categorize items as structural, social, or individual.

Debrief:

Highlight key trends. Discuss which barriers youth workers can directly influence at the local level.

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

3. Step Into My Shoes: Political Participation Role-Play

Estimated time: 75–90 minutes

Why this activity matters:

Simulations help youth workers understand the lived experiences of young people with psychosocial disabilities, fostering empathy and problem-solving skills.

Objective:

Simulate real-life political participation challenges and opportunities.

Materials:

Role/scenario cards

Ballots

Voting booth mock-up (optional)

Instructions:

Participants draw role cards (e.g., youth with an anxiety disorder, polling officer, advocate).

In groups, act out a voting or political event scenario.

After the role-play, discuss barriers that arose and how they were handled.

Debrief:

Reflect on both emotional and structural aspects. What made participation easier or harder? How can youth workers reduce barriers?

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

4. Make a Change: Design Your Own Mini-Campaign

Estimated time: 90 minutes

Why this activity matters:

By designing their own campaigns, participants shift from identifying problems to creating solutions. This activity promotes leadership and creativity, especially for including youth with lived experience.

Objective:

Support youth-led initiatives that raise awareness about political rights and participation.

Materials:

Campaign planning sheet

Markers and creative materials

Instructions:

Groups pick one barrier from Activity 2.

Design a campaign to raise awareness or drive change (e.g., community mural, podcast, video challenge).

Present the campaign idea in a 2-minute pitch to the group.

Debrief:

Discuss how realistic the campaigns are. How could they include or be led by youth with psychosocial disabilities?

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Supporting young people to understand and claim their political rights requires both awareness and action. Youth workers are in a unique position to bridge the gap between legal rights and real participation, especially for those who may feel excluded or disempowered.

Here are three top tips to guide your approach.

Make Political Rights Tangible

Use real-life examples, role-plays, or local case studies to show how political rights apply in everyday situations. This helps young people connect abstract rights to their lived experiences and see themselves as active citizens.

Create Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Ensure that discussions around politics are respectful, accessible, and open to diverse perspectives. Pay special attention to the needs of young people with psychosocial disabilities by using clear language and flexible formats.

Connect with Real Opportunities

Link young people with local initiatives, youth councils, or participatory budgeting events. Practical involvement builds confidence and demonstrates that their voices can influence change.

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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1. POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Goal: The primary goal of the *Making Politics Understandable: Simplified Communication Tools* section is to empower youth workers to communicate political information clearly, concisely, and effectively to a broad and diverse audience such as, people with psychosocial disabilities. This aims to bridge the knowledge gap often present in politics, which can be complex and filled with jargon, making concepts accessible to those without a political background.

In an era of abundant information, simplified communication helps cut through the noise, promoting clarity and reducing misinformation. When political messages are transparent and easy to grasp, it enhances trust and legitimacy in political processes and institutions. Ultimately, this section provides practical skills and strategies for communicating political information, helping to reach diverse audiences and achieve specific political goals, whether it's mobilizing voters or simply informing the public.

2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Tools for simplified written communication

1. Active Voice and Simple Sentence Structure

Writing in active voice (where the subject performs the action) and using simple sentence structures makes communication clearer and more engaging. It avoids confusion and improves reader comprehension.

In Practice:

- Instead of: "The report was submitted by the manager."
- Use: "The manager submitted the report."
- Use short, direct sentences, especially when explaining complex ideas.

2. Avoiding Jargon and Acronyms

Technical language, abbreviations, and industry-specific terms can confuse readers unfamiliar with them. Replacing them with plain language ensures broader understanding.

In Practice:

- Replace "API" with "a tool that lets different software talk to each other" when writing for a non-technical audience.
- Define unavoidable acronyms the first time they are used: "The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends..."

3. Effective Use of Headings and Bullet Points

Clear headings and bullet points help break up large blocks of text, making information easier to scan, digest, and retain.

In Practice:

- Use descriptive headings like "Steps to Apply" instead of generic ones like "Process".
- Bullet lists help highlight key items:
  - Keep points concise
  - Begin each point with a capital letter
  - Maintain consistent formatting

2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Tools for simplified written communication

4. Summaries and Key Takeaways

Providing summaries helps reinforce important points and ensures readers walk away with the core message, even if they skim the content.

In Practice:

- End emails or reports with a "Key Takeaways" section.
- Example - Summary: This guide outlines tools for clearer writing, including using active voice, avoiding jargon, and organizing content for easier reading.

5. Fact-Checking and Citing Sources

Ensuring accuracy builds trust and credibility. Citing reputable sources also allows readers to verify information and explore topics further.

In Practice:

- Cross-reference claims with reliable sources (e.g., government websites, peer-reviewed articles).
- Example: According to the CDC (2024), vaccination rates increased by 12% last year.

2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Activity: Policy in a Nutshell Challenge

Objective: To condense complex policies into easily digestible, everyday language.

Materials: Whiteboard or large paper, markers, sticky notes (optional), timer.

Estimated Time: 1 hour and 10 mins

Why does it matter?

This activity matters because it turns complex policies into clear, simple language, helping participants think critically, communicate clearly, and become more informed citizens.

Instructions:

1. Choose a Policy: Select a current or relevant political policy (e.g., a proposed law, a government initiative, an international agreement). It should be something that has some level of complexity.

2. Initial Brainstorm: As a group, list all the technical terms, acronyms, and complex phrases associated with the policy. Don't censor anything, just get it all out.

3. The "5-Year-Old Explanation": Challenge participants to explain the policy as if they were talking to a 5-year-old. What are the absolute core ideas? What does it do?

4. The "Elevator Pitch": Now, refine that explanation into a 30-second "elevator pitch." What's the main problem it addresses? What's its main solution? Who does it affect?

5. Visual Metaphor/Analogy: Encourage participants to think of a simple metaphor or analogy from everyday life that explains the policy. (e.g., "A budget is like a household grocery list")

6. Key Takeaways (3 Bullet Points): Finally, distill the policy down to 3 essential bullet points that anyone can understand and remember.

Discussion Questions:

What was the hardest part about simplifying this policy?

How did thinking about different audiences (5-year-old, busy adult) change your explanation?

Can you think of other policies that would benefit from this kind of simplification?

2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Tip #1: Drop the Jargon, Keep It Simple

Avoid political jargon, acronyms, and overly formal language. Use clear, everyday words, short sentences, and relatable examples that connect to young people's experiences and concerns. This means understanding their slang, their humour, and the issues that genuinely impact their lives.

Tip #2: Meet the young people where they are, online and offline

frequent (like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, X, Facebook), create engaging visual content (infographics, short videos), and consider interactive formats like polls or Q&As. Crucially, combine this with real-life interactions, such as community events, workshops, or informal discussions, to build genuine connections and trust.

Tip #3: Facilitate dialogue, don't just dictate

Encourage active listening and create a safe space for young people to express their opinions. Instead of lecturing, ask open-ended questions, challenge their ideas respectfully, and help them think critically about political issues. Position yourself as a guide and facilitator, empowering them to explore, question, and form their own informed perspectives.

2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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2. MAKING POLITICS UNDERSTANDABLE: SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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- Language is a powerful tool in political discourse and it is a powerful tool for persuasion and manipulation in politics. Political leaders use language to convey their messages, shape public opinion, and mobilize support for their agendas' (International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 2024).
- In 'Easy Language–Plain Language–Easy Language Plus: Balancing Comprehensibility and Acceptability', Claudia Maaß (2020)

3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

From learning to action: What this module offers

This module supports youth workers in helping young people with psychosocial disabilities build confidence and engage in political life. It explores how internalized stigma can limit participation and provides practical ways to challenge these barriers through empowerment, inclusion, and rights-based approaches.

Through a mix of brief theory, real-life tools, hands-on activities, and reflective exercises, professionals will strengthen their ability to create supportive spaces, use empowering language, and promote youth-led advocacy. By the end of the module, readers will gain concrete skills to shift stigma into strength and guide young people toward active, meaningful political participation.

3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

Understanding empowerment and internalised stigma

Empowerment is not just about helping individuals feel better, it is about shifting power. In the context of psychosocial disabilities, empowerment means supporting young people to reclaim agency, challenge social norms, and recognise themselves as rights-holders.

When youth workers take a rights-based approach, they don't simply provide care, they create conditions for participation, voice, and influence. This challenges stigma at its roots by redefining who holds knowledge and who deserves space in public life (WHO, 2010).

What is internalised stigma: Internalised stigma (also called self-stigma) involves accepting and internalising public stereotypes and prejudices about mental illness, which then become part of a person's self-concept and identity (Drapalski et al., 2013)
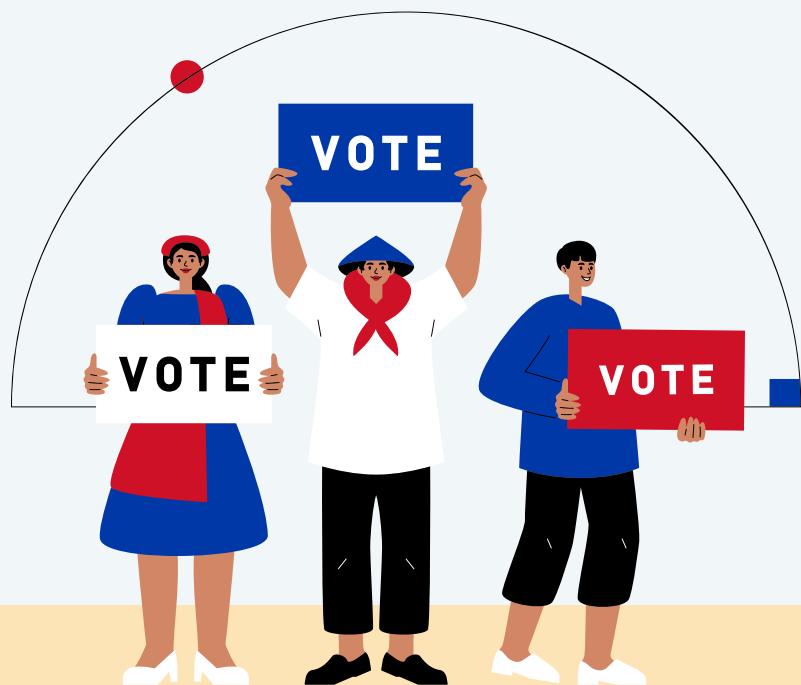
3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

Tool: The empowerment lens

What it is:

The Empowerment lens is a reflective framework that youth workers can use to assess and adapt their practices, environments, and language to reduce stigma and increase inclusion. It helps professionals shift from seeing youth with psychosocial disabilities as passive recipients of support to recognising them as political agents with rights, knowledge, and power.

How to use it:

Before designing an activity, facilitating a discussion, or preparing a space, ask yourself the following guiding questions:

- Voice – Does this space/activity allow young people to express their views freely and safely?
- Agency – Are young people encouraged to make choices and take initiative?
- Representation – Are youth with psychosocial disabilities involved in decision-making or visible as leaders?
- Support – Are accommodations, peer support, or emotional safety nets available?
- Power shift – Does this challenge traditional power dynamics (e.g., expert vs. client) and center lived experience?

Why it matters:

Using the Empowerment lens helps youth workers move from well-meaning support to transformative inclusion. It reminds professionals that true empowerment requires both emotional safety and structural access to power.

3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

Activity 1: "Walking in their shoes"

Goal: This activity will help youth workers build an understanding of internalised stigma and the lived experience of exclusion.

Time: 45–60 minutes

Materials: Paper, markers, empathy map template (or flipcharts)

Instructions:

Introduction: Briefly present what internalised stigma is and how it can affect political confidence and identity.

Scenario: Present a fictional profile of a young person with a psychosocial disability (e.g., anxiety, depression, schizophrenia) who is interested in social change but feels they "don't belong" in political spaces.

In small groups, participants fill in an empathy map answering:

What might this young person think and feel?

What might they see, hear, or experience in their environment?

What are their fears and hopes about speaking up or engaging?

Debrief: Discuss what professionals can do to support youth like this in gaining political voice.

3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

Activity 2: "Map the Barriers, Build the Bridge"

Goal: Identify barriers to political participation and co-develop inclusive solutions.

This activity will help youth workers move from awareness to action in inclusive political support.

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Large sheets of paper, markers, sticky notes

Instructions:

Ask: What stops young people with psychosocial disabilities from engaging politically? Write all answers on a board (e.g., fear, inaccessibility, lack of confidence, stigma).

Small Groups: Assign each group one barrier. Their task: design a practical support strategy a youth worker could use to address it.

Use the prompt: What would support look like in real life?

Bridge-Building: Each group presents their support solution and writes it on a large poster.

Wrap-up: Discuss which ideas can be applied immediately and what changes might require advocacy or system-level support.
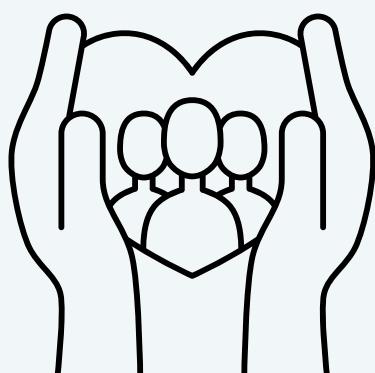
3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

How to make people with psychosocial disabilities feel more empowered

Tip #1: Use Empowering and inclusive language

Avoid labels like "mentally ill" or "sufferer." Use respectful, strengths-based language like "young person with lived experience of psychosocial disability."

Tip #2: Talk openly about stigma

Create safe opportunities to explore how stigma affects self-image and political confidence. Let youth express how society's messages have shaped their beliefs about themselves.

Tip #3: Connect lived experience to strength

Reinforce that their personal experiences give them valuable insights. This makes them not just participants, but experts in shaping policy that affects them.

3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

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3. FIGHTING STIGMA THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

Additional Resources

Youtube video: Cultivating Young People's Empowerment and Participation in Society - Dr Darren Sharpe

Guide: Political Participation of Persons with Intellectual or Psychosocial Disabilities

Training material: extra-c EU-funded project for young people with intellectual disabilities

Youtube video: Interrupting our Mental Health Stigma

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

PARTICIPATION IS FOR EVERYONE

Everyone has the right to be heard and to take part in decisions that affect their life. People with intellectual disabilities and autistic people have unique experiences and ideas that are important for building stronger and fairer communities.

Through accessible and practical activities, participants will explore how they can:
- Share their opinions on community issues,
- Speak up for themselves and others (self-advocacy), and
- Take part in public meetings and forums.

Each activity in this toolkit focuses on building confidence, communication, and awareness of civic rights in a supportive environment. The goal is to empower every participant to understand that their voice matters and that they can play an active role in shaping their community

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

People with intellectual disabilities and autistic people have the same rights as everyone else.

Political participation is about more than casting a vote.

It means having the chance to:

- Speak up about what matters to you

- Be involved in decisions that affect your daily life

- Help shape your community in ways that work for everyone

But they often face barriers such as:

- Difficult or unclear information

- Not being invited to participate

- Not being listened to or taken seriously

Inclusive participation means:

- Using accessible language and tools (like visual aids, easy-to-read materials)

- Providing support to communicate and understand

- Creating spaces where all voices are respected

Everyone can contribute in their own way. For example:

- Sharing your opinion in a community discussion

- Asking questions at a public meeting

- Creating a campaign poster or video

- Telling a local leader what is important to you

- Joining a self-advocacy or support group

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

TOOL: My opinion card

- Goal:

To help people express their opinions and ideas in a clear, structured, and accessible way during community meetings, public forums, or group discussions.

- What is it?

A simple and visual template (printed or digital) that helps a person communicate what they think, like, want to change, or ask about a community topic.

- Card Sections (with visual support):

I want to talk about: A topic that is important to the person

I like this: Something they support or want to keep

I dont like this: Something they want to change

My idea is: A personal suggestion

I have a question: A question for group members

- How to Use It:

A facilitator or support person helps the participant fill out the card before a meeting.

The person can read it aloud, show it, or hand it in during a discussion.

It can also be used in group settings to collect shared ideas.

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

Activity 1. Community Opinion Wall

Objective:

To express ideas and concerns about community issues in a visual and accessible way.

Estimated Time:

60–90 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Large poster boards or mural paper
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Scissors and glue
- Magazines or printed images
- Visual aids or pictograms
- Sticky notes

Activity Description:

1. Create a mural divided into themed sections (e.g., transportation, health, parks, accessibility).
2. Participants share their ideas using drawings, words, cut-out images, or pictograms.
3. Facilitators help participants communicate their suggestions clearly.
4. The completed mural is presented or displayed in a public space.

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

Activity 2. Inclusive public meeting simulation

Objective:

To practice participating in a public forum or community meeting.

Estimated Time:

90–120 minutes (can be split into two sessions)

Materials Needed:

- Simple agenda or meeting script
- Role cards (e.g., community member, city councilor, moderator)
- Visual aids or prompt cards (e.g., pictures, symbols, sentence starters)
- Name tags or hats to show roles
- Microphone or talking stick (optional for turn-taking)

Activity Description:

1. Simulate a community meeting where a local issue (e.g., improving a park) is discussed.
2. Participants are assigned roles and supported to prepare simple statements or questions.
3. Use visuals and structured turn-taking to support understanding and participation.
4. Everyone practices expressing their ideas respectfully

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

Here are three key strategies to promote inclusive political participation from a youth perspective: It's about transforming attitudes, methods, and structures so that young people with disabilities can fully exercise their citizenship.

Tip #1 Co-design accessible participation spaces

Invite young people with disabilities to take part in designing and evaluating political activities (workshops, debates, youth parliaments). Make sure that:
- Information is available in accessible formats (easy-to-read, sign language, subtitles, pictograms).
- Physical and virtual environments follow universal accessibility standards

Tip #2 Training in rights and inclusive leadership

Offer workshops on human rights, disability, and youth leadership adapted to different types of disabilities. This empowers young people with disabilities to take on political roles beyond voting, such as youth delegates, spokespeople, or facilitators.

Tip #3 Facilitate joint advocacy networks

Promote inclusive spaces where young people with and without disabilities collaborate on advocacy initiatives (campaigns, petitions, youth councils). This helps break down attitudinal barriers and fosters social cohesion.

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

Additional resources

Easy-to-Read: "My Rights in the EU":
- Accessible documents on human rights, the right to participate, and how to speak with politicians
- LINK: https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read

nclusion Europe – "Hear Our Voices" Conference Series
- Real testimonies from people with intellectual disabilities across Europe participating in political debates.
- Self-advocacy and leadership activities in their communities.
- LINK: https://www.youtube.com/@InclusionEurope/videos

4. INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND VOTING

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5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Families and close support networks often serve as the most influential voices in young people's lives, yet they can unknowingly become barriers to political participation when driven by protective instincts or misconceptions about political engagement and disability. Research shows that young people with psychosocial disabilities are more likely to engage in civic life when their families understand and support their participation. However, many families harbor fears about their young person's safety, capacity, or the potential for discrimination in political spaces.

The relationship between families and political participation is complex - while some families may discourage participation due to stigma or safety concerns, others may be overprotective in ways that inadvertently limit autonomy. Successful family partnerships require addressing these concerns while recognizing families as experts on their young person's needs and valuable allies in creating inclusive political spaces.

Cultural backgrounds, previous experiences with discrimination, and family dynamics around disability all influence how families view political participation. Creating genuine partnerships means acknowledging these diverse perspectives while working together to expand opportunities for meaningful civic engagement.

5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

What This Module Is About and Why It's Useful

This module focuses on transforming families and support networks from potential barriers into active allies in supporting young people's political participation. Rather than working around families or trying to convince them separately, this approach brings everyone together to explore participation as a shared journey.

The strategies in this module are useful because they:

- **Build understanding through experience:** Instead of just talking about participation, families experience it together, reducing fear of the unknown
- **Address concerns directly:** Create safe spaces to discuss worries, misconceptions, and hopes without judgment
- **Strengthen relationships:** Use political engagement as an opportunity to deepen understanding between young people and their families
- **Develop shared problem-solving skills:** Equip families with tools to identify and overcome barriers together
- **Create lasting support systems:** Establish networks of families who can support each other's civic engagement journey

When families become partners rather than gatekeepers, young people gain confidence, resources, and the emotional support needed for sustained political participation. This approach also helps families see their young person's political interests as a sign of growth and capability rather than a source of concern.

5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Goal: strengthen the role of families and close networks as allies in empowering young people with psychosocial disabilities to engage in political life.

1. Family Dialogue Circles

Goal: Create a safe space for open discussion between youth, families, and youth workers

How:

Small group circles (in person or online)

Use guiding questions:

"What does participation mean to us?"

"What fears or hopes do we have?"

Include real stories from other families to spark reflection

Impact: Encourages empathy, addresses misconceptions, and fosters shared understanding

Process:

- Identify a shared concern or issue that affects the family
- Research the issue together, including policy background and key decision-makers
- Practice communication skills through role-playing exercises
- Attend advocacy meetings or events as a team
- Reflect on the experience and plan next steps together

5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

2. Civic Experience Days

Goal: Encourage families to participate together in civic events as a shared learning experience

How:

- Organize group visits to accessible civic events such as:
  - Local council meetings with disability-friendly accommodations
  - Participatory budgeting sessions where communities decide spending priorities
  - Voter registration drives at community centers
  - Public forums on issues affecting the disability community
- Provide preparation materials explaining what to expect and how to participate
- Arrange accessible transportation and support as needed
- Follow up with structured debriefing sessions including youth, families, and facilitators
- Document insights and reflections to share with other families

Impact: Transforms political participation from an abstract concept into a concrete, shared experience. Reduces fear of the unknown while building confidence and practical knowledge about civic processes.

5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

3. "Political Timeline Together"

Goal: Connect personal and family history with broader civic moments to personalize politics

How:

1. Provide large timeline templates or digital tools for collaborative creation

2. Guide families to map significant moments including:

- Personal milestones (diagnosis, school transitions, achievements, challenges)
- Family events (moves, changes in support, advocacy moments)
- Political events (elections, policy changes, disability rights legislation, protests)
- Community events (local campaigns, accessibility improvements)

3. Facilitate reflection discussions on how political events intersected with personal experiences

4. Identify moments of empowerment and exclusion in both personal and political spheres

5. Create connections between past experiences and current opportunities for engagement

Impact: Personalizes politics by revealing how civic life has already intersected with family experiences. Helps families see political participation as part of their ongoing story rather than something foreign or risky.

5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Tip #1 - Start with Listening, Not Telling

Begin by understanding the family's experiences, values, and concerns. Don't assume resistance means lack of care—it might be fear, past trauma, or misinformation.
Ask: "What do you hope for in your child's future?"
Avoid: "You need to let them be more independent."

Tip #2 - Respect Emotional Journeys

Families may still be processing the diagnosis or struggling with protective instincts. Acknowledge their role with empathy, not judgment.
Say: "Your support is such a key part of their strength. Let's explore how to channel it toward their civic growth."

Tip #3 - Avoid Blame – Focus on Collaboration

Rather than blaming families for being "overprotective," work with them as allies. Use "we" language.
"How can we work together so that Ana feels supported and confident at the event?"

5. PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

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6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

What this module offers

This module helps youth workers design and manage both physical and digital spaces where all young people, including those with disabilities, can engage, speak up, and take part in political life. It focuses on practical tools, clear communication, and inclusive strategies that remove barriers and create safe, welcoming environments. Whether it is a workshop, campaign meeting, online event, or community space, youth workers will learn how to make participation truly accessible for everyone.

By the end of the module, readers will enhance their skills to strengthen inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful political participation for young people with disabilities. They will be better equipped to foster environments that empower all youth to have their voices heard and participate fully in democratic processes.

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

What it is:

A guide for youth workers to spot and remove barriers that might keep people, especially young people with psychosocial disabilities, from joining or fully taking part. It offers simple, practical ways to make any event, whether in person or online, welcoming and accessible to all.

How to use it:

Before you plan your event, think about what might overwhelm or exclude some participants, such as loud music, flashing lights, or crowded spaces. Choose venues that are easy to access with clear signs and quiet, calming areas. Share the schedule early and give people options to join in ways that suit them, whether that is in small groups, one-on-one, or remotely. Get advice from disability advocates or mental health experts and train your team on mental health awareness. Use inclusive language and give content warnings when needed. Most importantly, make sure the space feels safe, comfortable, and respectful for everyone.

Why it matters:

Inclusive events do not just welcome people, they empower them. By removing barriers and offering real choices, you help young people with disabilities feel confident and valued. This builds stronger communities where everyone's voice counts and everyone can participate fully.

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Important Points to Consider for Inclusive Event Planning

Community Building

Fostering a sense of belonging and participation

Flexible Attendance

Allowing attendees to participate in ways that suit them

Sensory-Friendly Spaces

Providing environments that accommodate sensory sensitivities

Expert Consultation

Seeking advice from professionals to improve inclusivity

Clear Communication

Ensuring information is easily understandable

Identifying Barriers

Recognizing potential obstacles for attendees

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Activity 1: " Responding with Care - Role-Play Training"

Goal: Help staff and volunteers learn how to support young people with psychosocial disabilities

Time: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Introduction: Begin with a short introduction explaining what psychosocial disabilities are and why inclusive, supportive environments are essential for youth participation.

Next, divide participants into small groups of 3 to 5 and assign each group a scenario to role-play. These scenarios represent real-life situations involving youth with psychosocial disabilities, such as a participant feeling overwhelmed in a group, showing signs of anxiety before an activity, having a panic attack, or disclosing depression and asking for confidentiality.

Each group should act out how a trained staff member or volunteer would respond, practicing techniques like active listening, offering reassurance, de-escalating tension, maintaining privacy, and giving participants choices and a sense of control.

Come back together for a 15-minute discussion. Ask how it felt, what was difficult, and what support they might need. Conclude by highlighting the importance of empathy, non-judgment, and continued learning in creating inclusive spaces.

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Activity 2: " Your Space, Your Way"

Goal: how to clearly communicate group expectations and give participants real choices in how they engage.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Instructions:

Introduction: Start with a short talk on why choice, clear communication, and flexibility matter for youth with psychosocial disabilities.

Divide participants into small teams. Ask each team to design a short activity (real or imagined) for a youth workshop. They must include: group size, how social interaction is involved, and at least two ways a participant could join (e.g. small group, one-on-one, or solo).

Each team presents their activity and explains how they made it inclusive and flexible. Encourage them to use simple language, clear instructions, and include quiet or optional break spaces.

Wrap up with a quick discussion on how offering choices helps participants feel safe, respected, and in control of their experience.

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Tip #1: Involve people with psychosocial disabilities in planning, delivery, and evaluation

Research consistently shows that participation designed with people who have lived experience is more inclusive, relevant, and empowering (Askheim et al., 2020).

Tip #2: Staff & Volunteer Training on Psychosocial Disabilities

Provide specialized training sessions for staff and volunteers to enhance their understanding of psychosocial disabilities

Tip #3: Create Sensory-Friendly Spaces

Providing quiet zones and flexible attendance options helps people with psychosocial disabilities feel safe and included.

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Additional resources

Youtube video: How to Build Inclusive Events

Guide: Planning of Inclusive Events

6. CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

References – Further Reading

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7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

From learning to action: What this module offers

This module is designed to help youth workers support young people—particularly those from marginalized backgrounds—in taking an active, safe, and inclusive role in the digital world. It underlines that digital participation goes beyond access to devices or platforms; it's about having the confidence and freedom to express ideas, collaborate with others, and take part in shaping civic and political life online.

The content explores how to build digital environments where everyone feels respected, protected, and encouraged to engage. It stresses the importance of fostering digital citizenship rooted in mutual respect, inclusion, and awareness of rights and responsibilities.

Combining key concepts with practical guidance, case examples, and interactive exercises, the module equips youth workers to promote constructive online interaction and help young people become active contributors in digital spaces. By the end, participants will be better prepared to create positive, empowering digital experiences and guide young people in making meaningful use of the digital sphere for civic engagement.

# 7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

Digital participation is not only about being online—it's about having a voice. For young people, especially those from vulnerable groups, it means being able to shape digital spaces, express opinions, and take part in decisions that affect their lives. True participation requires more than access to technology; it demands inclusion, protection, and recognition.

Creating safe online spaces goes beyond moderating content or preventing harm. It involves building digital environments where young people feel respected, valued, and free from judgment. When youth workers take an inclusion-based approach, they don't just teach digital skills—they nurture critical awareness, empathy, and agency. They help young people understand their rights online and support them in using digital tools for civic expression and community building.

What is digital exclusion: Digital exclusion isn't just the lack of internet access. It includes inaccessible platforms, online harassment, and the silencing of marginalized voices. For many, these barriers reinforce feelings of isolation and reduce trust in digital environments. Supporting young people to navigate and reshape these spaces is key to building a more equitable digital world.

7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

Tool: The Digital Compass
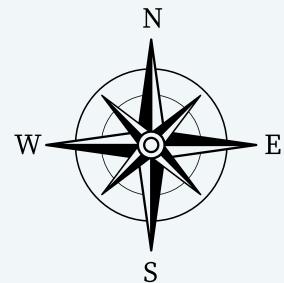
- What it is:

- The Digital Compass is a conceptual and practical tool youth workers can use to navigate the challenges and opportunities of online participation with young people. Just like a compass provides direction, this framework helps professionals orient their digital practices toward safety, inclusion, and empowerment—especially when working with youth who face psychosocial barriers.

- Rather than focusing only on digital literacy or risk management, the Digital Compass invites youth workers to reflect on four cardinal values:

- North – Safety: Are we creating emotionally and psychologically safe spaces?

- East – Expression: Do young people have the means and confidence to share their views?

- South – Belonging: Do participants feel they are part of a meaningful digital community?

- West – Leadership: Are we encouraging young people to take the lead in shaping online spaces?

- How to use it:

- Use the Compass before, during, or after digital workshops or online engagements. Ask:

- Are we pointed toward "North"—is this space truly safe?

- Are all voices being heard (East), not just the loudest?

- Does everyone feel included and represented (South)?

- Are we enabling young people to take initiative (West)?

- Why it matters:

- The Digital Compass helps shift from passive participation to digital citizenship. It centers the experience of youth as co-creators of the digital world—not just users or followers.

7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

Activity 1: "Design a Digital Backpack"

Goal:

Help youth workers explore the internal resources young people need to feel confident and safe when engaging online.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Paper, markers, template of a backpack (optional)

Instructions:

1. Introduction: Ask participants to imagine a young person with a psychosocial disability preparing to "travel" through the digital world.

2. Group task: In pairs or small groups, participants draw or outline a "digital backpack" and fill it with the skills, supports, and tools this young person would need to feel safe and empowered online. Examples might include: emotional vocabulary, peer allies, privacy tools, easy-to-read interfaces, self-care strategies.

3. Discussion: Share backpacks and discuss:
   - What kinds of support can youth workers provide directly?
   - What systemic or platform-level changes are needed to offer these resources by default?

7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

Activity 2: "The Shield and the Portal"

Goal:

To help professionals reflect on the tension between protection and participation in digital spaces.

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts or printed outlines of a "shield" and a "portal" (doorway)

Instructions:

1. Introduction: Explain that safety in digital spaces can sometimes be framed in two ways:
   - The shield: Protecting young people from harm
   - The portal: Creating access to voice, agency, and connection
   - Ask: How do we balance the two?
2. Group task: In small groups, participants write inside the shield the protective measures youth workers can take (e.g., setting boundaries, monitoring for cyberbullying). In the portal, they write what makes digital participation open and meaningful (e.g., co-creation, choice of platforms, inclusive design).
3. Debrief: Invite reflection on where there may be tension (e.g., does too much protection risk exclusion?) and how to design digital practices that honor both safety and access.

7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

Tip #1 Center Emotional and Digital Safety

Before starting any online activity, ask yourself if all participants will feel safe joining in. Set collective norms for respectful interaction, provide multiple options for engagement (like chat, voice, or anonymous input), and follow up regularly. A sense of psychological safety is essential for genuine digital participation.

Tip #2 Make Digital Expression Accessible

Not all young people communicate in the same way. Use simple language, visuals, subtitles, and multi-format tools (polls, whiteboards, reactions) to ensure everyone can express themselves. Digital inclusion means designing for diversity—not just adapting afterward.

Tip #3 Shift from Control to Co-Creation

Invite young people—especially those with psychosocial disabilities—to take part in shaping the space itself. Whether it's choosing discussion topics or co-writing community guidelines, participation becomes empowering when youth feel ownership of the process.

7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND SAFE SPACES ONLINE

References – Further Reading

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Italian Ministry of Education. (2020). Guidelines for the teaching of civic education. Retrieved from https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/educazione-civica

Parole O_Stili. (2024). Manifesto for non-hostile communication. Retrieved from https://paroleostili.it/manifesto/

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Hyland-Wood, B., Gardner, J., Leask, J., & Ecker, U. K. H. (2021). Toward effective government communication strategies in the era of COVID-19. Nature Communications, 12(1), 7154. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-25406-6

USEFUL HELPLINES

HELPLINES IN GREECE

- **P.E.P.S.A.E.E : Ipirou 41   Athens 104 39**

For: Psychosocial support, work reintegration, and mental health services

Telephone: 210 8818946

Email: ekhkkd@pepsaee.gr

Website: www.pepsaee.gr

- **Argo: Ipirou 41, Athens 10439**

For: Community-based psychosocial support and social integration

Telephone: 211 11 13 992

Email: info@argo.org.gr

Website: http://argo.org.gr/index.php/foreis

- **National Center of Social Solidarity**

For: People in crisis, survivors of violence, trafficking victims

Vas. Sofias 135 & Zacharof, Athens 11521

 197 (Hotline, free of charge)

- **Ministry of health: Psychosocial support hotline**

For: Mental health support, emotional distress, crisis counseling

Website: https://10306.gr/

10306 (24/7 support line)

HELPLINES IN PORTUGAL

- **SOS Voz Amiga**

For: Emotional support, loneliness, anxiety, crisis prevention

Phone: 213 544 545 / 912 802 669 / 963 524 660 (3 PM–12 AM, daily)

Website: sosvozamiga.org

- **Linha do Cidadão com Deficiência**

For: Information on disability rights, services, and discrimination

Phone: 800 208 462 (Free)

Email: cidadaniainclusiva@mtsss.gov.pt

Website: inr.pt (Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação)

- **SOS Estudante**

For: Students experiencing distress, academic or emotional crisis

Phone: 915 246 060 / 969 554 545 / 239 484 020 (8 PM–1 AM, every day)

Website: sosestudante.pt

- **Associação Encontrar+se**

For: Mental health stigma reduction, resources, and support for families

Email: geral@encontrarse.pt

Website: encontrarse.pt

- **APPDA – Associação Portuguesa para Perturbações do Desenvolvimento e Autismo**

For: Autism-specific family support and advocacy

Regional Branches: e.g., Setúbal: appda-setubal.org

Email: geral@appda.pt

HELPLINES IN POLAND

- **Office of the National Disability Ombudsman**

For: People with disabilities who need help protecting their rights, want to report discrimination, or need support in difficult life or official situations
Phone: (+48 22) 55 17 700 or 800 676 676 – Mon–Fri, 8:15 AM–4:15 PM

- **Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People**

For: People with disabilities and organizations seeking information about entitlements, support systems, and government disability policy
Phone: (22) 461 60 00 / (22) 529 06 00 – Mon–Fri, during office hours

- **Support Center for Adults in Mental Health Crisis**

For: Adults experiencing emotional distress (stress, crisis, loneliness)
Phone: 800 70 22 22 – 24/7, free of charge

- **Crisis Helpline 116 123**

For: Adults struggling with emotional crisis, depression, anxiety, insomnia, or violence
Phone: 116 123 – every day, 2 PM–10 PM (free of charge)

HELPLINES IN CYPRUS

- **Ministry of Health – Mental Health Services**

For: Quality mental health care, treatment and rehabilitation, prevention of mental disorders, and mental health promotion

Telephone: +357 22 605300

Email: ministry@moh.gov.cy

Website: www.gov.cy/moh/en/about/mental-health-services

- **Cyprus Red Cross Society – Psychosocial Support**

For: Psychosocial support addressing mental illness, domestic violence, family breakdown, and antisocial behavior

Telephone: +357 22 670000

Email: info@redcross.org.cy

Website: www.redcross.org.cy/en/what-we-do/psychosocial-support

- **Pancyprian Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation**

For: Mental health services, including counselling and therapy for individuals with psychosocial disabilities

Contact: Available through local mental health directories and community social work networks

Website: BFSWS Cyprus (indirect access via social work services)

Emergency Mental Health Services (Cyprus)

For: Mental health emergencies and crisis intervention

Telephone: 112 (General emergency line – request psychiatric emergency support)

HELPLINES IN SPAIN

- **CERMI – Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities**
For: Advocacy and political representation for people with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities. Training in political participation, legal support for inclusive candidacies
Email: cermi@cermi.es
Website: https://www.cermi.es/

- **Autismo España – Autism Spain Confederation**
For: Rights advocacy and political lobbying for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Training programs, public policy campaigns, and advisory support
Email: info@autismo.org.es
Website: https://www.autismo.org.es/

- **Independent Living Office (OVI) – Madrid**
For: Personalized support for independent living, including people with ASD. Services include personal assistance and planning for social/political participation
Email: ovidi@madrid.es
Website: https://www.madrid.es/ (search for "Oficina de Vida Independiente")

HELPLINES IN ITALY

- **Samaritans Onlus – Emotional Support Line**

For: Emotional support for individuals experiencing crisis, loneliness, depression, or suicidal thoughts

Telephone: 06 77208977

Website: www.samaritansonlus.org

- **Telefono Amico Italia**

For: Overcoming emotional tension, promoting emotional health, empathetic listening, and combating loneliness

Telephone: 199 284 284

Email: info@telefonoamico.it

Website: www.telefonoamico.it

- **Italian Red Cross – Psychological Support**

For: Psychological assistance for individuals facing emotional distress, loneliness, or crises

Website: www.cri.it

- **Emergency Mental Health Services (Italy)**

For: Psychiatric emergencies and mental health crises

Telephone: 112 (General emergency line – request psychiatric services or mental health support)

- **Community Mental Health Centers (CSM)**

For: Community-based mental health care, rehabilitation, and psychiatric support

Access: Through local ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale – Local Health Authority)

Services: In line with Italy's psychiatric reform (Law 180/1978), emphasizing community care over institutionalization

CONCLUSION

This toolkit is a practical and empowering resource for youth workers, educators, and all those working to promote political participation among young people with disabilities. It reflects the core priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme, including inclusion and diversity, active citizenship, and equal opportunities for all young people to engage meaningfully in democratic life.

Created through the collaborative efforts of the SPARK partnership, it draws on experiences, research, and good practices from six European countries: Greece, Portugal, Poland, Cyprus, Spain, and Italy. The result is a comprehensive collection of tools, methods, and strategies designed to support youth workers in breaking down barriers and enabling inclusive participation in political processes.

Encouraging political engagement among young people with psychosocial disabilities is not only a question of rights but a commitment to building a more democratic, inclusive, and participatory Europe. Every voice matters, and this toolkit is a step towards ensuring that no one is left behind.

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