# Participatory Innovation Practices Mapping - Report

## 1. Introduction

The mapping of Innovative Participatory Practices was developed within **WP3 – Participatory Innovation Practices Mapping** of the IN.PACT project. The activity aimed to identify, document and analyse existing approaches that actively involve young people in their communities, with particular attention to practices addressing **inclusion, sustainability, internationalisation and wellbeing**.

Within IN.PACT, innovative participatory practices are understood as activities, initiatives or projects that promote active youth engagement and empowerment and involve young people in decision-making, planning and implementation processes, while fostering creativity, inclusion and collaboration.

The mapping was conceived not only as a collection of examples, but as a way to increase the consortium's knowledge of participatory methodologies, understand their implementation and potential limitations, and identify approaches that could inspire or be adapted by other organisations. The knowledge collected was also intended to contribute to subsequent project activities and to connect organisations and practitioners working with participatory approaches across Europe.

The research resulted in the collection of practices by the four IN.PACT partners and contributed to the development of the **Interactive Map of Innovative Participatory Practices**, a public resource designed to make these experiences visible and facilitate knowledge exchange and replication. The activity was also connected to the establishment of the IN.PACT Community of Practice, bringing together stakeholders with experience in implementing participatory approaches.

## 2. Objectives of the Mapping Activity

The mapping activity aimed to:

- identify and document innovative participatory practices related to inclusion, sustainability, internationalisation and wellbeing;
- analyse how these practices engage and empower young people

- examine the methodologies, impact, challenges and potential transferability of the identified practices;
- increase the knowledge of the IN.PACT partners about existing participatory approaches and provide useful material for subsequent project activities;
- identify and connect relevant organisations and stakeholders, contributing to the creation of the Community of Practice;
- make the collected practices accessible through an Interactive Map, supporting knowledge exchange and providing inspiration for other youth organisations, practitioners and facilitators.

The initial implementation plan foresaw the collection of 8–12 practices per partner, for approximately 40 practices overall. The present report consolidates the research carried out by the four partner organisations into a single document, while maintaining visibility of their respective contributions.

# 3. Methodology and Implementation

A common research approach was developed to support partners in identifying and documenting participatory practices in a consistent way. Mundus led the establishment of the indicators and research tools, while all partners contributed to their refinement and carried out the mapping activities.

## 3.1 Identification and analysis criteria

The research focused on practices connected to the four priority areas of **inclusion, sustainability, internationalisation and wellbeing**, with youth participation as the common element.

The mapping methodology identified different forms that participatory innovation could take, including co-creation and co-design, digital engagement, creative and artistic expression, community-based participation and inclusive approaches.

To support a common analysis, practices were examined according to criteria defined within WP3, including:

- youth empowerment;
- inclusivity;
- capacity building;
- sustainability;
- innovation and creativity;
- adaptability and scalability.

These criteria helped partners look beyond the description of individual activities and consider their contribution to meaningful youth participation and their potential relevance in other settings.

### 3.2 Collection of practices

Partners conducted research to identify relevant organisations and initiatives and contacted potential contributors to gather more detailed information about their practices.

A common **Innovative Participatory Practice Fiche** was developed for this purpose. The fiche collected information on the organisation and the practice, including its objectives, target groups, activities, innovative characteristics, approach to inclusion, expected and achieved impact, implementation challenges, resources and potential for adaptation or replication.

Where relevant, direct exchanges with organisations were intended to complement the information collected and provide a better understanding of how the practices operated in reality. The methodology also established common ethical principles concerning transparency, informed consent, data protection and respect for different cultural and national settings.

### 3.3 From research to the Interactive Map

The collected practices provided the content for the **Interactive Map of Innovative Participatory Practices**. The map was designed to make the identified initiatives and methodologies accessible in a visual and user-friendly format, supporting knowledge exchange and helping other organisations discover approaches that could inspire or be adapted to their own work.

The mapping activity was also linked to the creation of the **Community of Practice**, through which relevant stakeholders identified during the research could connect, exchange experiences and contribute to the wider IN.PACT learning process. In this way, the mapping served both as a research activity and as an entry point for building connections among organisations working with participatory approaches across Europe.

## 4. Mapping Implementation and Results

Following the common methodology, the four IN.PACT partners carried out the mapping process by identifying and documenting participatory practices relevant to the project's thematic areas. While each partner worked through its own networks and research channels, the use of a common Practice Fiche supported the collection of comparable information on the initiatives, their methodologies, target groups, impact, innovative elements and implementation challenges.

The resulting collection reflects a wide variety of organisations, settings and approaches to participation. The mapped practices range from local community initiatives and youth centres to educational programmes, international projects and established methodologies. They also show that the four IN.PACT thematic areas frequently intersect: practices addressing sustainability may simultaneously promote social inclusion and wellbeing, while international initiatives often combine mobility and intercultural learning with youth empowerment and capacity building.

Rather than presenting the collected practices as isolated examples, the following sections provide a brief overview of the contributions gathered by each partner and the main characteristics emerging from their research.

## 4.1 Mundus

The practices collected by Mundus illustrate different ways of combining **youth participation with inclusion, wellbeing, skills development and community engagement**.

Among the identified initiatives, particular attention is given to approaches that respond to concrete challenges affecting young people and the professionals working with them. The **We Care** initiative, for example, addresses mental health and wellbeing by equipping young people and youth workers with practical tools and activities that can be used in their organisations and communities. Its resources include workshops, reflection activities, podcasts, games and other materials designed to make mental health support more accessible and applicable in youth work.

The **Odyssea Youth Center** provides another model, connecting participation with employability and social inclusion. Its activities combine vocational learning, career support, volunteering and community engagement, particularly for young people facing barriers to employment and participation. Young people are encouraged not only to access services but also to contribute through volunteering, community initiatives and the co-development of their learning pathways.

Across the practices collected by Mundus, participation therefore appears closely connected to **practical empowerment**: creating opportunities for young people to develop skills, strengthen their wellbeing, contribute to their communities and take a more active role in shaping their own pathways.

## 4.2 Inesto

The practices collected by Inesto show a particularly strong use of **peer learning, informal education and shared experiences** as mechanisms for participation.

Several initiatives create opportunities for young people to move from participants to active contributors. **Peers for Equality**, for example, trains young people as peer educators who subsequently design and facilitate activities on gender equality with other young people. The practice demonstrates how peer-to-peer approaches can support both capacity building and greater ownership of the learning process.

Other practices use everyday activities as spaces for participation and community building. **Good Kitchen** brings people together around food preparation and community kitchens, combining social interaction, skills development and the reduction of food waste. **Timbuktu Hostel** similarly uses shared living, cultural exchange, volunteering and community activities to foster interaction among people from different backgrounds.

Wellbeing also appears through simple but intentional practices such as **Low Dopamine Evenings**, where quieter collective activities are used to create moments of rest, reflection and connection within youth programmes.

Taken together, these examples show how participatory learning can emerge through **ordinary shared experiences,** cooking, living together, facilitating a discussion or creating moments of collective care, **rather than only through formal participatory structures**.

## 4.3 Grain&Sens

The practices collected by Grain&Sens place particular emphasis on **experiential learning, empowerment, ecological transition and community-based participation**.

A recurring characteristic is the creation of environments in which young people can learn through practical experience while developing confidence and autonomy. **Katapult**, for example, accompanies young people over an extended period through civic engagement, coaching and collective activities, with the objective of strengthening their capacity to act and supporting their personal and professional pathways.

The **ETRE schools** similarly use practical learning in ecological professions as an alternative pathway for young people, particularly those who have disengaged from traditional education or employment. Learning takes place through real activities and professional environments, combining ecological transition with social and professional inclusion.

Other practices emphasise horizontal relationships and collective learning. **Visual Democracy** creates a structured space for participants to express positions, listen to others, reflect and reconsider their views without imposing a single correct answer. **Volonterre**, meanwhile, embeds learning in everyday community life through gardening, cooking, ecological activities and shared responsibility.

The practices collected by Grain&Sens therefore highlight the importance of **learning by doing, trust, horizontal relationships and connection to a real territory or community**. Participation becomes a means of strengthening individual agency while contributing to collective and ecological change.

## 4.4 Gaia Education

The practices shared by Gaia Education strongly connect **participatory learning with sustainability, regeneration, community development and personal wellbeing**.

Several of the initiatives are based on experiential education in which participants work directly with communities and real sustainability challenges. The **Ecovillage Design Education (EDE)** programme, for example, combines ecological, social, economic and cultural dimensions of sustainability and encourages participants to learn through collaborative design and immersion in living communities.

Similarly, **Gaia Education Design for Sustainability (GEDS)** combines online learning, systems thinking, collaborative projects, mentoring and peer exchange. Other initiatives, such as **Youth in Transition**, connect sustainability with green skills, entrepreneurship and local action, supporting young people in developing responses to environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

Wellbeing and personal development also form an important part of the mapped approaches. **YAFNA** combines nature-based activities, mindfulness and resilience with youth leadership and community action, while **Gaia YES** promotes youth-led and co-created learning processes in which young people can contribute to shaping the educational experience itself.

Across these practices, participation is closely associated with **co-creation, experiential learning and regeneration**. Young people are encouraged to understand connections between social, ecological, economic and personal dimensions and to translate learning into action within their own communities.

## 4.5 Overall Picture

Despite the diversity of the practices collected, several characteristics recur across the four partner contributions. Young people are frequently given active roles as **co-creators, peer educators, volunteers, facilitators or community actors**, rather than being approached exclusively as beneficiaries.

Experiential and non-formal learning also appears repeatedly, with learning taking place through real activities such as community work, environmental action, volunteering, cooking, peer education and collaborative project development. At the same time, many practices pay explicit attention to creating the conditions that enable participation, including trust, wellbeing, accessibility, belonging and supportive relationships.

Finally, the mapping shows considerable overlap between the four IN.PACT thematic areas. **Inclusion, wellbeing, sustainability and internationalisation are rarely addressed in isolation**; instead, many of the identified practices combine several of these dimensions within the same participatory process.

# 5. Key Findings from the Mapping

The analysis of the mapped practices reveals several common elements despite the diversity of organisations, countries, target groups and thematic areas represented. Rather than pointing to a single model of participatory innovation, the findings show a set of recurring principles that support meaningful youth participation in different settings.

## 5.1 From participation to active ownership

Across the mapped practices, participation frequently goes beyond attendance or consultation. Young people are given opportunities to take an active role in shaping activities, facilitating peer learning, volunteering, developing projects, contributing to community initiatives or making decisions that affect their learning and participation.

This active involvement is closely connected to capacity building. Alongside specific professional or practical competences, many practices aim to strengthen **confidence, autonomy, communication, cooperation, leadership and the ability to take initiative**. In this sense, participation functions not only as a way of involving young people in an activity, but also as a process through which they can progressively develop greater agency and responsibility.

The mapping therefore suggests that meaningful participation is strengthened when young people have **real opportunities to contribute and influence the process**, rather than being involved exclusively as recipients of activities designed by others.

## 5.2 Creating the conditions for inclusive participation

The mapped practices show that inclusion depends not only on who is invited to participate, but also on **how participation is designed and supported**.

Different initiatives address barriers through free or affordable access, financial support, outreach, adaptable formats, multilingual resources or activities designed for young people facing unemployment, migration, educational disengagement or other obstacles to participation. At the same time, several practices place particular attention on trust, wellbeing, supportive relationships and a sense of belonging.

This indicates that meaningful inclusion requires organisations to consider the conditions surrounding participation from the beginning. Creating **accessible,**

**welcoming and supportive environments**, where people can engage according to their needs and capacities, can be as important as the activity itself.

## 5.3 Learning through experience, peers and communities

Experiential and non-formal learning is one of the clearest recurring features of the mapping. Many of the practices create learning opportunities through **doing, experimenting and interacting with others**, rather than relying mainly on formal instruction.

This can take the form of peer education, volunteering, community work, collaborative projects, environmental activities, shared living, creative practices or practical professional experiences. Communities and real-life settings often become learning spaces themselves, allowing participants to develop competences while responding to concrete needs or challenges.

Peer relationships are also important. In several practices, knowledge is shared horizontally and participants learn from one another, while facilitators or educators support the process rather than being the sole source of knowledge.

The mapping therefore highlights the value of connecting participation with **practical experience, relationships and real community environments**, making learning directly relevant to participants' lives and communities.

## 5.4 Innovation, sustainability and transferability

The practices show that innovation in participatory work does not necessarily mean creating entirely new activities or relying on technology. It often lies in **combining existing methods differently, creating new roles for participants, connecting different areas of learning or developing alternative spaces for participation**.

The mapping also shows different approaches to sustainability. Some practices directly address environmental issues and ecological transition, while others focus on maintaining communities, networks, skills or participatory processes beyond a single activity or project.

Transferability is supported in several cases through toolkits, manuals, educational resources, digital platforms and training models that can be reused or adapted by other organisations. At the same time, the practices highlight that successful replication depends on factors such as local needs, available resources, organisational capacity, facilitators and relationships with the surrounding community.

Rather than simply reproducing a practice elsewhere, the findings therefore point towards **adaptation**: identifying the elements that make an approach effective and adjusting them to the people, place and needs where it will be implemented.

## Overall finding

Taken together, the mapping shows that innovative participatory practices can take very different forms, but their effectiveness often relies on similar foundations: **meaningful roles for young people, accessible and supportive environments, experiential and peer-based learning, strong links with communities, and sufficient flexibility to respond to local needs**.

These findings reinforce the idea that participatory innovation is less about applying one specific methodology and more about **how participation is designed, facilitated and sustained**.

# 6. Contribution of the Mapping to IN.PACT

The mapping activity was conceived as more than a standalone research exercise. By identifying and documenting existing participatory practices, it created a shared knowledge base that could support the subsequent activities of IN.PACT and strengthen connections with organisations already working with innovative approaches to youth participation.

One of its main outputs was the **Interactive Map of Innovative Participatory Practices**, which transformed the research into an accessible public resource. By bringing the identified initiatives together in one place, the map increases their visibility and enables youth workers, facilitators, organisations and other interested actors to discover examples, methodologies and resources that may inspire their own work.

The mapping process also supported the development of the **IN.PACT Community of Practice**. Organisations and practitioners identified through the research became part of a wider network for exchange and mutual learning, creating opportunities to share experiences and maintain connections beyond the initial collection of practices.

The knowledge gathered through the mapping also provided a useful reference for the project's subsequent learning activities. The examples and approaches identified across the four thematic areas contributed to the project's understanding of participatory innovation and offered practical references for the development of the **online course and the Smart Participatory Lab**, where participation, peer learning, experimentation and community engagement were further explored.

Finally, the Interactive Map provides a way for the results of the research to remain accessible beyond the mapping phase itself. As an open resource that can incorporate additional practices, it can continue to support the visibility and exchange of participatory approaches and contribute to the continuation of the IN.PACT community beyond the project activities.

# 7. Conclusions

The mapping activity provided IN.PACT with a shared overview of innovative participatory practices and helped translate existing experience into a practical resource for the project and its wider community.

By bringing together different approaches and making them visible through the Interactive Map, the activity supports continued exchange, inspiration and adaptation of participatory practices in different contexts. It also reinforces the value of connecting research, practice and community-building within the wider IN.PACT process.