YouCount
Youth Citizen Science

D3.2

Meta-report on the Typology of Drivers and Model for Social Inclusion

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www.youcountproject.eu

Project Acronym	YouCount
Project Name	YouCount – Empowering youth and cocreating social innovations and policymaking through youth-focused citizen social science
Grant Agreement no.	101005931
Start date of the project	01/02/2021
End date of the project	31/01/2024
Work Package producing the document	WP3
WP Leader	ESSRG
Other Partners involved	AAU, KTU, OsloMet, UCLan, UNINA
Deliverable identifier	D3.2
Deliverable lead beneficiary	ESSRG
Internal Scientific Reviewer	Reidun Norvoll
Due date	30 November 2023
Date of delivery	30 November 2023
Version	2.0
Author(s)	György Pataki and Alexandra Czeglédi (ESSRG), Julie Ridley and Maria Turda (UCLan), Fortuna Procentese and Flora Gatti (UNINA), Ingar Brattbakk and Aina Landsverk Hagen (OsloMet), Michael Søgaard Jørgensen (AAU)
Classification	Public

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D3.2 Meta-report on the Typology of Drivers and Model for Social Inclusion

This deliverable is based on Work Package (WP) 3 in the EU YouCount project which includes a multiple case study of 10 cases in 9 countries across Europe and Task 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5 in WP3 consisting of a case summary report from each case. It elaborates on the experiences of using citizens science as a tool for exploring young people's perspectives on social inclusion. It has a particular focus on involving youths at risks for social exclusion and disadvantaged areas.

The conceptual approach to social inclusion is also outlined in D1.2 Report on the conceptual, innovative, evaluation and ethical framework for youth citizen social science from 2021.

The methodological approach is outlined in D1.3 Methodological framework for data collection and analysis from 2022.

The vision of YouCount is twofold, addressing and combining both the scientific and societal needs of our time. The scientific *vision* of YouCount is to strengthen the transformative and participatory aspects of citizen science and social science, by enabling citizen participation in all facets, reaching out for a more egalitarian way of conducting science. The societal vision of YouCount is to contribute to create inclusive and innovative societies for European youths and to empower them in promoting active citizenship and a just and equitable future, particularly for youths with disadvantages.

Table 1: Revision history

VERSION	DATE	CREATED BY	COMMENTS
1.0	15/11/2023	György Pataki and Alexandra Czeglédi (ESSRG), Julie Ridley and Maria Turda (UCLan), Fortuna Procentese and Flora Gatti (UNINA), Ingar Brattbakk and Aina Landsverk Hagen (OsloMet), Michael Søgaard Jørgensen (AAU)	First version delivered to internal review
1.1	22/11/2023	Reidun Norvoll (OsloMet), Alexandra Czeglédi, Barbara Mihók, Márton Oblath and György Pataki (ESSRG)	Internal review
2.0	28/11/2023	Julie Ridley and Maria Turda (UCLan), Fortuna Procentese and Flora Gatti (UNINA), Ingar Brattbakk (OsloMet), Michael Søgaard Jørgensen (AAU)	Second version, revised based on internal review
	30/11/2023	György Pataki and Alexandra Czeglédi (ESSRG), Julie Ridley and Maria Turda (UCLan), Fortuna Procentese and Flora Gatti (UNINA), Ingar Brattbakk and Aina Landsverk Hagen (OsloMet), Michael Søgaard Jørgensen (AAU)	Final version submitted by Reidun Norvoll (OsloMet)

Table 2: Terms and Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	FULL TERM
CM	Consortium meeting
CS	Citizen science
CSS	Citizen social science
C-YCS	Young citizen scientists from the local community or targeted organisation or population (lower level of participation)
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LL	Living lab
PAR	Participatory action research
RRI	Responsible research and innovation
RT	Research team
R-YCS	Young citizen scientists participating in the research team
WP	Work Package
YCS	Young citizen scientist
Y-CSS	Youth citizen social science
YouCount App	'YouCount CSS app' on the SPOTTERON CS platform

Executive Summary

This deliverable includes a presentation of the social inclusion cross-case analysis of the 10 YouCount hands-on citizen social science (CSS) case studies. It explores three key empirical research questions: What are young people's views on the critical issues for social inclusion? What are young people's experiences with opportunities for social inclusion in their daily lives? What new means and policies to increase social inclusion are needed?

The primary source of data for the analysis presented in this deliverable is the final case study reports, based on a common template structuring the analytical dimensions, written by the professional researchers working on the 10 YouCount case studies. In addition, some preliminary findings from the YouCount App data analysis are also integrated.

Two main chapters (chapter 2 and 3) presents the substantive cross-case social inclusion analysis. Chapter 2 summarises significant themes of social inclusion based on the perception of young people. It includes the contested meanings of social inclusion, critical issues of youth social inclusion related to places, feeling safe, feeling discriminated and stereotyped, economic and financial concerns, and youth voices in decision-making. Furthermore, the opportunities for social inclusion in young people's daily lives, the gender dimension of youth social inclusion, empowerment processes, employability and work are all elaborated upon. Importantly, citizen social science (CSS) as a social inclusion process and space for creativity are also discussed, better means and policies young people perceive as significant contributions to enhancing social inclusion are shared.

Chapters 3 provides an analysis of the drivers for youth social inclusion. It highlights the key features of social inclusion (such as reciprocity and communication), discusses the contextual issues of youth social inclusion (including bureaucracy, policy and basic rights issues, language, and institutional relationships), describes the psychosocial aspects of social inclusion (empathy, trust, stereotyping, and valuing each other), the role of socialisation processes, local relationships (the proximal social context), advocacy and empowerment. Eventually, it provides a multi-level psychosocial model for youth social inclusion.

Finally, some of the main lessons learnt are shared in the concluding part. Importantly, young people's suggestions about how their participation, sense of belonging and citizenship could be increased highlighted the need to increase collaboration between young people and other stakeholders (emphasis also on inter-generational collaboration); more and better youth-friendly opportunities created where they can feel accepted (including meaningful employment); and supporting and encouraging young people's participation in local democratic processes, ensuring that under-represented voices are heard. Citizen social science as a participatory process itself can create a space for creativity and social inclusion for young people.

1. Introduction

YouCount is an EU project funded under Horizon 2020, the Science with and for Society (SwafS) programme. Its key objective is to generate new knowledge and innovations to increase the social inclusion of youth through co-creative youth citizen social science (Y-CSS), where young people contribute as citizen scientists.

This deliverable includes a presentation of the social inclusion cross-case analysis of the 10 YouCount hands-on citizen social science (CSS) case studies. The cross-case analysis was implemented under YouCount WP3 tasks. More specifically, the following tasks:

- T3.1 'Cross-case analysis of social inclusion opportunities' (lead partner: UCLan)
- T3.2 'Cross-case gender analysis' (lead partner: UNINA)
- T3.4 'Cross-case analysis of positive drivers' (lead partner: ESSRG)
- T3.5 'Develop a theoretical model' (lead partner: UNINA)

This work was organised in an iterative way. It has started with an overview of the theoretical approaches to social inclusion in order to build the YouCount conceptual framework (Butkevičienė et al. 2021, see particularly chapter 1.1). Moreover, as social inclusion was supposed to be analysed across all YouCount case studies, a methodological framework for data collection and analysis was also developed and discussed with case partners (Ridley et al. 2022, see particularly chapters 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 on data colelction, and chapters 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 on data analysis).

Throughout the YouCount project, various events and tools were used to further the joint understanding among case partners the conceptual and methodological perspectives of the social inclusion analysis (see for details Figure 1). WP3 has used the space provided by online and offline consortium meetings (CMs) to work with case researchers to report the state-of-affairs regarding the development of their cases. The monthly online meetings of WP2-3 were also served to provide space for case partners to reflect upon the development of their own cases and learn from each other.

Here, we would like to thank all YouCount case partners for their committed work on their case study reports.

Figure 1: Timeline of the social inclusion cross-case analysis work in WP3

D 3.2 META-REPORT ON THE TYPOLOGY OF DRIVERS AND MODEL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

28-29 SEPTEMBER 2021
State of art presentation on social inclusion and positive drivers at the CM

8-9 JUNE 2022
Presenting the preliminary results on social inclusion at the CM

20 SEPTEMBER 2022
Presenting the first version of case study report template at the WP2/3 meeting

2 DECEMBER 2022
Presenting the interim case study report template at the WP2/3 meeting

16 JANUARY 2023
Deadline for the interim case report submission for D 3.2

22-23 APRIL 2023
Presenting the emerging findings from the social inclusion research at the CM

10 MAY 2023
Presenting the final case study report template at the WP2/3 meeting

30 JUNE 2023
Deadline for the case report submission

28 SEPTEMBER 2023
Presenting the framework of social inclusion analysis at the CM

15 NOVEMBER 2023
Submission of D 3.2 for internal review

22 NOVEMBER 2023
Deadline of the D 3.2 internal review

30 NOVEMBER 2023
Deadline of D 3.2 submission

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The structure of this report is the following. Chapter 1 is devoted to an introduction, including the objective of YouCount WP3 (1.1), a brief explication (1.2) of the methodological approach, and an overview of the YouCount cases (1.3). Chapter 2 is devoted to the cross-case analysis of social inclusion. It covers the framing of the meaning of social inclusion (2.1), the critical issues of social inclusion as perceived by the youth (2.2), the opportunities for social inclusion in young people's daily lives (2.3), the gender dimension of youth social inclusion (2.4), youth empowerment (2.5), employability and work as drivers for social inclusion (2.6), citizen social science as a social inclusion process (2.7), and finally the means and policies suggested by the youth for social inclusion (2.8). Chapter 3 is devoted to the analysis of YouCount case studies from the point of positive drivers of social inclusion and summarises the major lessons in a psyhosocial model for youth social inclusion. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes on the main lessons of the cross-case social inclusion analysis. The Appendix intends to assist the transparency of the research and cross-case analysis conducted in YouCount WP3.

1.1 Objective

YouCount WP3 aims to develop new and better ideas for social innovations and policy-making to cocreate positive social change in the field of youth social inclusion. One of the intentions within the YouCount project is a better understanding of youth social inclusion from a point of view of social innovation and social change.

The social inclusion sub study in YouCount aimed to generate new knowledge about social inclusion to improve the lives of young people across Europe who face exclusion. The 10 cases of youth citizen social science (Y-CSS) used a variety of methods, mainly creative and participatory but also surveys and more traditional qualitative methods (see for more details the forthcoming YouCount D2.3 deliverable, Ridley et al., 2023) to explore three key empirical research questions:

- What are young people's views on the critical issues for social inclusion?

- What are young people's experiences with opportunities for social inclusion in their daily lives?

- What new means and policies to increase social inclusion are needed?

The present deliverable aims to report on our exploration of youth social inclusion of the ten YouCount hands-on CSS case studies, including the analysis of social inclusion opportunities as experienced by young people, youth empowerment, employability, gender analysis, positive

drivers for youth social inclusion, and the proposed psychosocial framework for youth social inclusion.

1.2 Methodological Approach

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approach applied in the social inclusion analysis. Two issues are presented in detail. First, the methodological approach taken by the cross-case analysis of youth social innovation is introduced. Second, the methodological approach of the YouCount App Study is presented in detail. Although substantively (in terms of research findings) this latter will only be shared in a subchapter integrated into the analysis of young people's perception of their social inclusion, due to its novelty in citizen social science (CSS) and its significance in the YouCount co-creation approach, relatively more space is devoted to its methodological details.

1.2.1 Cross-case Analysis

The YouCount project developed its conceptual framework (Butkevičienė et al., 2021) that positions and informs the social inclusion analysis, including gender analysis, conducted across the 10 YouCount case studies. Most importantly, social inclusion is understood as a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional phenomenon (Moyano et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2019) which aims at "improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights. Thus, social inclusion is both a process and a goal" (UN, 2016, p. 20). Consistently, an ecological, multilevel approach is needed to address its individual, interpersonal, community-related, and contextual, intertwined dimensions and drivers. In this vein, building upon the data gathered across the 10 case studies, the complexities related to social inclusion dynamics and its drivers with specific reference to youths' experiences are addressed.

The primary source of data for the analysis presented in this deliverable is the final case study reports written by the professional researchers working on the 10 YouCount case studies. A case study report template was co-developed by WP3 partners (ESSRG, KTU, UCLan, UNINA with contribution by FD) and case partners in order to provide a comparative basis for cross-case analysis. A 'testing' phase was initiated in order to learn about how the template serves the purposes of meaningful reporting by the cases and the cross-case analysis by WP3 partners. A major lesson was drawn that more detailed guidance was needed for case researchers to report their cases in a way that serves the purpose of cross-cases analysis well. An extensive modification

of the template was carried out based on the experience of this interim reporting, including guiding questions in each subchapter of the template to be answered by case researchers when elaborating upon their own reports. The final case study report template (see the content in Appendix 1) not only included the reporting structure but brief explanations and guiding questions were provided for each chapter. The social inclusion analysis presented in this deliverable is primarily based upon the relevant chapters of all YouCount final case study reports, in addition to data collected through the YouCount app, and data collected in cooperation with WP4 (YouCount's evaluation workpackage), especially regarding data for gender analysis.

The social inclusion analysis chapter of the report (chapter 2) presents a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, 2022b), which aimed to identify the key common strands from the research findings on young people's perspectives and experiences of social inclusion reported by the 10 YouCount cases. To explore meanings, critical issues, and opportunities for social inclusion we have adopted both a deductive and inductive approach to analysing the case reports. Those relating to meanings of social inclusion are discussed with reference to the three predetermined categories, whilst acknowledging that there is inevitably some overlap between these. Data relating to young people's views on the critical issues and opportunities for social inclusion are presented under emergent key strands across the case research findings.

As YouCount project is sensitive to the multiple factorial and intersectional dimensions that may influence social inclusion processes, gender was considered a focal point across all the activities. Our aim is to challenge and reduce (unconscious) prejudices and discriminations with respect to gender norms and stereotypes. Indeed, YouCount is dedicated to contributing to UN Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 8 and 10. Two of these – Goals 5 and 10 – deal with gender equality and inequality reduction respectively. In order to identify possible (gender-related) biases and discrimination, analysis was conducted according to the complexities of different levels and participants embedded by the YouCount project – that is, by asking professional researchers, R-YCSs, and community members (C-YCSs) about their experiences and perspectives across the different activities implemented within the project (local case experiences, Living Lab meetings, dialogue forums). In this way, specific gender-related challenges can be countered and measures to ensure equality can be adapted according to the results of the gender-related analysis.

The gender analysis of youth social inclusion (chapter 2.4) builds upon what was reported by each case partner in the final case study reports (see Appendix 2), in addition, on data that was collected by the WP4 evaluation team (UNIVIE) through the evaluation-aimed interviews with local (i.e. case study) professional researchers and focus groups with local R-YCSs (see Appendix 3). The analysis work was carried out through thematic analysis, run by the two professional researchers from UNINA. Each researcher read the materials several times and generated initial codes to label the extracts first; then, each researcher grouped the codes into potential themes, which were defined and labeled to clarify their meaning and discussed together in order to reach a consensus agreement.

The social inclusion drivers analysis (chapter 3) was run by the two professional researchers from UNINA. Each researcher read the case reports several times and generated initial codes to label the extracts first; then, each researcher grouped the codes into potential 'macro-themes' and 'themes', which were defined and labeled to clarify their meanings; the macro-themes and themes were discussed together in order to reach a consensus agreement.

1.2.2 YouCount App Study

The analysis of social inclusion in chapter 2.2.2 draws on data from the "YouCount App Toolkit" which is developed in close cooperation with SPOTTERON, a citizen science app design company, and the YouCount case partners, including R-YCS, in the period from September 2021 to December 2022. The App have been used for slightly different purposes depending on the focus of the local case and both individually and in organized collective sessions (like walkalongs).

The App toolkit provides the following data:
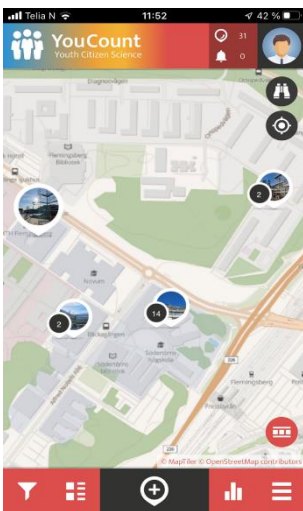
- GIS data (place based – interactive map)
- Quantitative (spots, numbers, categories - statistics)
- Qualitative (text in various form)
- Images (e.g., pictures)

Source: SPOTTERON, the YouCount App design

The App consists of: a 1) general part consisting of four mandatory questions, where are you? (Physical and virtual place/location), what are you doing there? (Activities and social participation), who are you with? (Accompanied or on your own – Social networks and social capital) and how do you feel in this place? (With elaborations on what kind of feelings and why you feel this way: At home, Safe, Included, Part of the community – belonging, social participation, citizenship, social cohesion) and 2) a case-specific part exploring what kind of opportunities you see in this place for topics specific for one or more of the cases.

The App is used as a tool for capturing youth's daily social life, lived experiences of inclusion and exclusion and their perceived opportunity structures in real time through 'immediate' data`on the

go'. In addition, the app is supplementing other data collection methods used in the study such as interviews or workshops, dialogue forums and LLs. A more detailed methodological description of the App and its designing process will be provided in the upcoming deliverable D2.3 about the case experiences by December 2023.

The analysis in this report builds on data provided from a total of 193 young people in the ten cases in the nine European countries taking part in the YouCount project, and these youths have contributed 958 validated spots in the period of March 2022 until October 2023.

The data was exported from the data administration feature of the SPOTTERON platform as Excel files. Data cleaning was a joint, participatory effort as the OsloMet-researcher first cleaned and validated the data before case researchers were invited to screen the data, validate it and clean it if necessary, before the cross-case analysis took place using Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics.

1.3 Overview of YouCount Case Studies

The YouCount project implemented 10 individual cases of Y-CSS located in 9 countries across Europe that are considered as highlighting key social challenges within the three social inclusion domains: citizenship, community belonging, social participation.

The 9 countries which provided the context for YouCount case are the following:

- Austria – Vienna (but through hybrid workshops also residents of other Austrian cities)
- Denmark – South Harbour, Copenhagen
- Hungary – the village of Siklósbodony (Hungary-B) and the city of Szeged (Hungary-A)
- Italy – Forcella, Naples
- Lithuania – Panevėžys district municipality
- Norway – Gamle district, Oslo
- Spain – Gipuzkoa province, Basque country
- Sweden – Botkyrka municipality
- United Kingdom (UK) – Preston

The types of youth groups at risk of social inclusion engaged in YouCount were the following: hard of hearing youth, migrant youth, rural youth, and urban youth.

YouCount separated three domains of youth social inclusion and grouped the case studies accordingly:

- Citizenship (citizen rights and responsibilities): Austria, Denmark, Spain
- Community belonging (social and community relationships and networks): Hungary-B, Italy, Lithuania, UK
- Social participation (participation in social and community activities and spaces): Hungary-A, Norway, Sweden

There is merit as well as obvious limitations to generalising findings across such diverse studies of social inclusion. One is that in doing so, we miss the rich and interesting insights pertaining to specific populations as detailed in the individual case reports. A wide variety of young people were involved in YouCount, and we acknowledge that the experiences, views, and aspirations of young teenagers (14-17 years) living with parents and at school will invariably differ from that of young adults (18-29 years) who are students, in work or looking for work, living independently or looking for a place to rent. Furthermore, YCSs in the YouCount cases came from widely differing backgrounds and target groups: they included hard of hearing young people (Hungary A), unaccompanied migrant youth (Spain), 'native' and migrant youth in another (Italy), and in others, young people who were recruited according to age and geographic location (e.g. UK, Lithuania). The cases also differed in whether focusing on participation, citizenship or belonging and, as Table 4 shows, in the specificity of case topic. For example, while one case explored the drivers for social inclusion through youth employability, another asked what helps, as well as what gets in the way of young people feeling they belong and are connected to where they live. Nor can this analysis fully account for the cultural differences across the nine partner countries in YouCount. Nonetheless, we have been able to report on common strands as well as differences of opinion about social inclusion from youth perspectives and experiences.

Table 3 summarises the main features of the YouCount cases regarding youth social inclusion.

Table 3: Ten Cases of Y-CSS in YouCount

Country	Type of youth group/geographical area	Case topic	Social inclusion domain
Austria	Migrant youth / Urban	Which civic engagement opportunities do young migrants have and which opportunities are missing?	Citizenship
Denmark	Urban youth	How to engage youth in co-designing sustainable activities in their local environment, and can these processes create civic youth engagement and social inclusion?	Citizenship

Hungary-A	Hard of hearing youth / Urban	What are the challenges and enablers in becoming autonomous adults?	Social participation
Hungary-B	Rural youth	What are the constraints and possibilities for sustainable agriculture techniques to be applied?	Community belonging
Italy	Migrant youth / Urban	Which are the drivers for social inclusion of young migrants in the hosting local community?	Community belonging
Lithuania	Rural youth	What does it influence whether young people feel they belong to the local community?	Community belonging
Norway	Urban youth	What are the drivers for social inclusion through youth employability and social entrepreneurship in the city?	Social participation
Spain	Migrant youth / Urban	Which are the inclusion factors for young migrants in our society?	Citizenship
Sweden	Youth Council / Urban	Can engagement in a youth city council lead to other forms of social inclusion?	Social participation
UK	Urban youth	What helps, as well as what gets in the way of young people feeling they belong and are connected to Preston? What are the factors (or drivers) that better promote a supportive climate for youth-driven solutions?	Community belonging

2. Social Inclusion Analysis

This part of the deliverable report presents the social inclusion analysis across the YouCount case studies. This analysis is primarily based on the case study reports, except subchapter 2.2.2 that reports on the preliminary findings of the analysis of the YouCount App data collected by YCS.

First, the meanings of social inclusion is discussed since young people challenged the conventional concept during the YouCount co-creative research process. Second, critical issues of youth social inclusion is discussed, this analysis reveals the multiple issues young people perceive as significant with regard to social inclusion. These critical issues relate to places, feeling safe, feeling discriminated and stereotyped, economic and financial concerns, and youth voices in decision-making. Here, data gained through the YouCount App are integrated in the analysis of "good places" and feeling (un)safe. The third subchapter of this part of the present report discusses the opportunities for social inclusion in young people's daily lives. Then, the gender dimension of youth social inclusion is elaborated upon. Across the YouCount cases, the analytical dimension of power was also revealed and main findings are reported here under the subchapter of youth empowerment. Employability and work also emerged as themes relevant for youth social inclusion. Then, our attention turns to citizen social science (CSS) as a social inclusion process, including the significant aspect of creativity. Finally, lessons are shared regarding the new means and policies young people perceive as significant contribution to enhancing social inclusion.

2.1 Meanings of the concept of 'social inclusion'

The literature about what the terms 'social inclusion' mean to young people appears scant. However, there is more known about what, for example, young people think about and their experiences of citizenship (Lister, et. al., 2003). Further, there is limited exploration of whether these are terms that young people themselves use and relate to, or they are terms applied by researchers and policy makers. It was even less clear whether these terms are meaningful to young people, and whether they consider aspects of social inclusion as more important than others. In the mainly adult focused literature, 'social inclusion' is identified as a multifaceted term, understood as 'both a process and goal' (Rich et al., 2015, p20) As such, it is about improving participation in society for people who may be disadvantaged by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, class and/or other status such as economic situation, by ensuring enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights (Butkevičienė et al., 2021). Consistently, the literature refers to a social exclusion-inclusion continuum (Moyano et al., 2020). In view of the gap in research on social inclusion from the perspective of young people, the YouCount consortium decided to explore social inclusion from young people's perspectives focusing on three key dimensions as identified in the literature:

- Participation in social life (Norway, Spain and Hungary A);

- Community belonging and connectedness (Italy, Lithuania, Hungary B and UK);

- Citizenship and civic participation (Austria, Denmark, Sweden).

Across the 10 cases, the term 'social inclusion' itself was universally disliked by young people. They generally found it in need of updating to reflect the most important elements such as connecting and reciprocity as active ingredients. In other words, social inclusion was less of a process done to those from disadvantaged backgrounds and was an inter-active process with the emphasis on reciprocity, trust, and cooperation as well as participation and communication. Far from being a passive process that happened to them, young people saw themselves as actively involved in social inclusion, for example, as willing volunteers contributing to society. Young people from a migrant background in, for example, the Italian case disliked the term because to them, it referred to an assimilative concept that implies that people from different cultures must fit into the dominant cultur, preferring instead engagement in intercultural dialogue. They proposed the word "exchange" as more appropriate than inclusion. Young people from other cases found social inclusion to be too abstract a term, and several reported that it was not popular with young people:

> *"To me it also sounds more like a theoretical thing. Something that requires a lot of thinking, something that is immediately associated with science." (YCS, Living Lab, Lithuania)*

Thus, while agreeing that social inclusion is both a goal and a process, "social inclusion building" were terms from young people that capture the sense that young people had of themselves as active agents of social inclusion rather than passive recipients of initiatives and policies tackling issues of exclusion.

While the YouCount cases set out to explore one of the three dimensions of social inclusion, it became clear there is significant overlap between participation, belonging and citizenship making it difficult to distinguish between them as separate terms. The importance of participating for example to feel a sense of belonging was clear from discussions with young people, and similarly, the importance of participation in civic opportunities to enact their rights and citizenship was emphasised. In short, from young people's perspectives, social inclusion meant participating in society including in the workforce, in social life; having connections and social networks with others that make them feel like they belong; and, equally, having basic legal rights in place to be able to access and enjoy a standard of living that should be available to all.

2.1.1 Social Inclusion as Participation

The first dimension of social inclusion - participation - explored by some YouCount cases was initially defined as young people's attendance and involvement in social and community spaces and activities, including education and work (Butkevičienė et al, 2021, p15). As Bečević and Dahlstedt (2022, p. 364) have recently argued, participation and citizenship-based rights are inextricably linked given that citizenship relies upon individuals and groups having opportunities to participate. Further, while 'social participation' is identified as central for young people's development (Piškur et al., 2014), less was known at the start of the project about wider meaning of participation for young people.

Three of the 10 cases decided to focus specifically on participation – Hungary A, Norway and Spain – although unsurprisingly, other cases found that participation and social inclusion are synonymous, that is, they go hand-in-hand even if the nature of the participation varies. Collectively, we also found a relationship between participation and sense of belonging, as well as with achieving citizenship and this is widely acknowledged in the literature (Butkevičienė et al., 2021). Some young people defined social inclusion as participating in activities with people they had something in common or an affinity with (Norway, Lithuania). Being able to participate in social activities that young people were interested in, irrespective of race, sex, age and other social characteristics was important (Lithuania). The opportunity to participate in community events including sports festivals, helped build social belonging in daily life (Hungary B). In another sense, participation and citizenship were closely intertwined: participation had a direct association with formal and informal citizenship and feeling able to participate in various ways in society (Spain, Austria).

Reflecting on the meaning of participation, one case concluded that for young people who are hearing impaired (HH young people), it is important to be able to "participate in the life of the community through free and clear communication". The importance of addressing communication needs for participation was underlined by this group of young people who reported experiencing marginalisation and exclusion daily. This demonstrates a clear overlap between social inclusion as participation with belonging and connectedness to others in society. Emphasising this, HH young people involved in Hungary A, even called for re-naming social inclusion as "connection or re-connection".

Though focusing on social inclusion as community belonging at the outset, Hungary B found a strong association with participation. Commonly, young people from rural backgrounds in this case regarded participation as "a must" if social inclusion was to be achieved. However, these young people's experiences of participation in education were often negative, which they felt would affect their future social inclusion opportunities, for example, work chances. As a result, the possibility of participation in society was uncertain in a world that "prevents rural young people from figuring out their own success story" (Hungary B). The YouCount project itself offered them

the opportunity to participate in agricultural entrepreneurship, which these young people felt was a positive participation model that had potential for enhancing the prospects of marginalised young people.

2.1.2 Social Inclusion as Belonging

There are few studies on belonging from young peoples' perspectives. Jones et al. (2020) have suggested that 'belonging' is a concept that concerns people of all ages and describe it as feeling valued, respected, accepted, and included, having supportive relationships, and that this is expressed through dynamic and complex processes of identity construction. Further, Riley (2019) highlights the importance of being part of something, whether this be through interest groups (Hoffman, 2021; Montague, 2018), gang membership (Boden, 2019), sports-based activities (Morgan, 2017), or taking collective action for social change (Montague, 2017).

Sense of belonging and connectedness were central to our conceptualisation of social inclusion in the YouCount project (Butkevičienė et al., 2021, p. 17). Four of the YouCount cases decided to focus on exploring the concept of community belonging in their research with young people – Italy, Lithuania, Hungary B and UK – and their findings underline that central to social inclusion are the relationships and connections that young people have with others in groups and communities. Several studies have suggested that belonging is shaped by social environments, including school settings (Xin Ma, 2003).

Summarising findings from discussions about 'belonging' with such diverse groups of young people, is a challenge. It was a concept that had, to some extent, become elusive and idealised:

> *"I've never just felt a sense of community. Like, have different*
> *groups of people on that and I have different like bonds with*
> *different like types of people. But in in my head like*
> *'communities', everyone coming together and I don't really like*
> *feel that." (YCS, focus group, UK)*

In one case an increased sense of belonging to an intergenerational group was fostered through working together and learning to trust and cooperate with others, identifying belonging as a key aspect of social inclusion (Hungary B). Many young people across the cases identified connections with others to be at the heart of what belonging means. Thus, 'belonging' was synonymous with feeling accepted, cooperating with others, and being connected to groups and others in communities. It equated with a "feeling of warmth, of home" (Lithuania, Austria), which was further expanded upon in the Norwegian case:

"[Belonging means] collectiveness, responsiveness, and emotions, like the feeling of safety that comes through affirming gestures or the feeling of joy and pleasure through participating in joint activities. These feelings seem to be embodied and connected to other humans." (Norway)

Nevertheless, the irony pointed out by a young person participating in the UK case was that despite belonging to different groups, they did not feel a sense of belonging in a general sense. For the main part, therefore, belonging equated with networks of relationships, positive social connections, and shared interests with peers and others in their communities. Conversely, when describing instances of not belonging, this was often framed as not having relationships with the people around them. In contrast, a desire to fit in and belong somewhere could lead some young people to engage in antisocial, even criminal activities and behaviours. This was explained as the feeling of belonging a young person might get from being part of a gang, even though this was contradictory to social inclusion:

"By joining the criminals and provide services to them, the kids can get the items their parents could never afford. Here the kids may experience a sense of social inclusion, albeit in a subculture far from the ideal mainstream society." (Notes, Sweden)

2.1.3 Social Inclusion as Citizenship

The third key facet of social inclusion in the YouCount project is the notion of citizenship including civic rights and responsibilities, understood as the link between the state and individual, implying membership of society (Butkevičienė et al., 2021, p. 19). The concept of citizenship was acknowledged to encompass broader civic engagement, including formal and non-formal expressions of citizenship. Three cases – Austria, Denmark, and Sweden – specifically explored citizenship in more depth.

While young people in these cases often spoke of social inclusion in terms of belonging, feeling a 'legitimate' part of society was a crucial aspect of social inclusion for those who were migrant young people. Young migrants in the Austrian case were more likely than other young people to accentuate the importance of individuals adapting - "being curious and always trying to learn something new", overcoming language and cultural challenges, "improving yourself", "be open". Also, it was important for young people not in their native country to feel they were accepted, to "feel at home" and to 'fit in with society" so that others understood them, and their culture.

Young people in the Austrian and Spanish cases highlighted the importance of what they referred to as "legal citizenship" alluding to the construction of citizenship as fundamentally about having basic civil, social, and political rights in place. The most important issue identified by unaccompanied young people in Spain concerned getting legal status and having documents such as residence and work permits. Many of those involved in YouCount did not have citizenship status, which they identified as impeding their ability to "lead a peaceful life without difficulties" as one commented:

> *"If we don't have papers, we can't find work and without work,*
> *we can't pay the rent..." (YCS, Spain)*

There was consensus amongst the young people in the Danish case that having a safe community was an essential requisite for citizenship. Feeling safe and a part of a "respectful community" that left no one out, significantly affected young people's interest in civic engagement. Having opportunities to voice their opinion and not be treated as "one more refugee" was important to young people in the Austrian case. However, this needed facilitating by NGOs and specialist initiatives supporting migrants, otherwise young people could not access educational opportunities, peer mentoring groups, social and political activities that enabled them to be citizens. Young people in the Swedish case were concerned about formal processes of citizenship, specifically with young peoples' "active membership in the municipality". Developments in formal processes over time meant it was more difficult for citizens to engage in democratic processes beyond voting every fourth year.

2.2 Critical issues for young people's social inclusion

For each individual young person involved in YouCount there were issues affecting their social inclusion, which were dependent upon their personal characteristics (including age, gender, and ethnicity), their family and economic circumstances, and the country and place where they lived. Whilst accepting that critical issues are as individual as the young people and will be context specific, an inductive thematic analysis of the case reports identified six key critical issues that were commonly highlighted by young people. These were 1) critical issues related to places including localities and communities; 2) feeling (un) safe and how this impacts social inclusion opportunities; 3) discrimination towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees; 4) negative stereotyping of young people; 5) economic and financial issues that act as barrier and/or facilitator of social inclusion; and 6) young people not having a voice or the means to engage in democratic decision making as part of their communities. In addition to these six critical issues, the YouCount App analysis also revealed and reaffirmed the importance of places and the qualities of 'good places' for young people. Thus, the preliminary findings of the YouCount App study is also integrated below (see 2.2.2).

2.2.1 Place-related issues

Several young people across the cases identified place-based issues as positively or negatively impacting their social inclusion. Places mentioned included towns, cities and villages where young people lived. The issues raised were multi-layered and context specific. In some cases, for example, Hungary B, young people experienced structural uncertainty in their rural village, and this affected their outlook. This was related to socio-cultural and economic factors including household financial poverty, territorial stigmatisation, discrimination. They were not hopeful that formal authorities would address such community-based issues either as it required time and energy investment, so the future looked rather bleak.

Another issue was feeling unwelcome where they lived, for instance, young migrant people reported feeling "like strangers" in their neighbourhood (Italy). This resonated with the literature that has identified place-based 'bonding ties' as important for social inclusion (Stockdale et al., 2018; Reynolds, 2013). In some of the cases, young people commented both positively and negatively on the physical qualities and aesthetics of where they lived. The spectrum of views ranged from positive and enthusiastic observations about outdoor spaces and modern architecture, to negative comments about "unattractive" or "run down" parts of cities. This is valuable in understanding young people's perceptions of belonging as it demonstrates there is an association between pride of place and young people's sense of belonging and connection to a place, which can also impact their desire to remain or leave in a place.

In some countries, young people observed there were few social spaces that allowed different communities and people from different cultures to come together, which was important for social cohesion (Italy). Also, there were felt to be too few youth-friendly spaces (UK, Lithuania, Sweden). Schools, too, were mentioned as places that were important to belong to. Despite the reputation of the Swedish school system, young people in the Swedish case mentioned their disappointment with the "deteriorated school environments in classrooms, schoolyards and their teachers' lack of qualification and attitudes". Moreover, similar disenchantment with school systems were expressed by young people from other cases such as the young people in rural Hungary.

2.2.2 Good places: YouCount App analysis

One might say that the App applied a socio-spatial lens on the local area and activities of the youths. The R-YCS and C-YCS were guided by their local case researchers and asked to look at their local surroundings and doings through analytical lenses focusing on positive drivers and opportunities of social inclusion. They put on glasses to identify where, how and to what degree they experienced to be socially included by 1) taking part in, or 2) belong to, the community (or several communities) and by 3) performing or exercising their citizenship as active citizens. As we will come back to later, this guidance has led to a positive bias in the answers as most youths have been actively looking for what they perceive as 'good places' in their neighbourhood or local area. This has implications for where youths spotted and on the interpretation of the YouCount App-data.

The first task the R-YCS and C-YCS are asked to contribute with in the YouCount App is taking a photo and uploading it. Secondly, The R-YCS and C-YCS were asked to answer, 'where are you?' by choosing from nine fixed options (Figure 2). Approximately one third of the spots were registered while R-YCS and C-YCS were 'outdoor / on the go'. That may partly be since quite a large amount of the spots was registered as part of collectively organized sessions like walk-alongs and that it may be easier to spot while being outdoor. The three next most frequently used place categories are schools, cultural and religious venues and other. Schools stands out as important places for youths, places where youths volunteered, learnt, hung out or participated in work-related activities with teachers, fellow students, friends, or partners. Cultural and religious venues were also places for quite frequent spotting and are examples of arenas for recreation and leisure activites which the youths report as good, safe, and socially inclusive places and places with great opportunity potential. Youth clubs, cultural activities and events, and churches and mosques offering gatherings and youth activities are examples of such places. A distinct sense of belonging, being able to connect with others and being part of communities are commonly expressed experiences in most of these places.

Figure 2: Where are you? Frequency of pre-defined answer options from the YouCount App

'CATEGORY': <u>outdoor_on_the_go</u> appears most often.
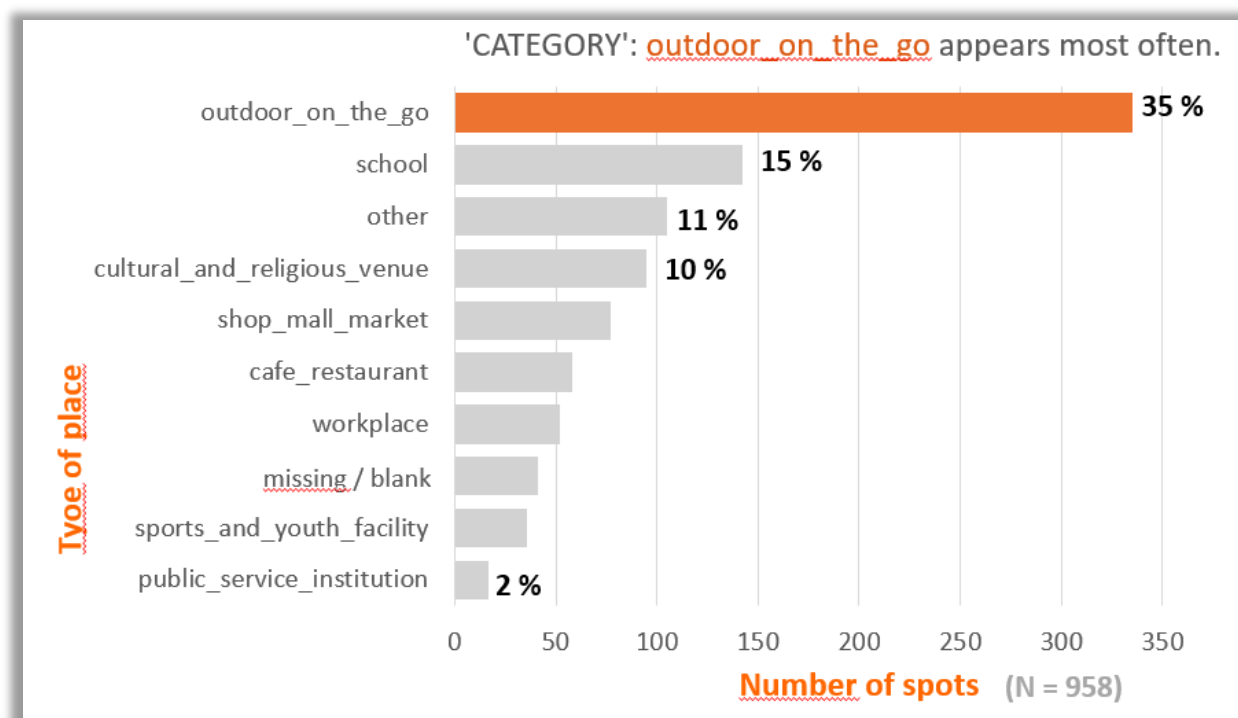
*'Other' = home, public transport, school/gymnasium/university, cultural venue / youth club

'Other' is an open category where the youths could specify in an open text field, and analysis shows that a lot of the categories are variants of the pre-defined categories. Home is an exception from this, and the reason why home was not one of the fixed options is that the youths where guided not to spot at home to avoid revealing their home address which may give opportunity for indirectly identification that goes against the project research ethics and GDPR rules.

Hanging out in shopping malls and cafés are also places and activities reported by R-YCS and C-YCS in the YouCount App. Most of the spots are stating that these are safe spaces, but for some groups of youths the attention towards these places is more complex. For the Hard-of-hearing (HH) Y-CSS in the Hungarian case A (HUA) the most visited location was the shopping opportunities. The HH Y-CSS was especially focused on how they were met in shops, e.g., if the staff seemed to be bothered when they became aware of the young person in front of them being Hard-of-hearing, making the young person feel uncomfortable or patronized. How other people behave, act and react is of course important to us all, but seemed to be especially emphasized by the HH-youth. When they describe how they feel and why they feel this way; the range of other people's behaviour, attitude and reactions are pictorially and vividly described. For the experience of being socially included it becomes evident how crucial it is to be met in an open, welcoming, and attentive way, yet in a natural way without exaggerated attention to the hearing impairment and not in a devaluing or patronizing way.

Interestingly also, around 6 percent of the contributed spots was recorded from the youth's workplaces. Young people rate their part-time workplaces as very good places to be, fostering a feeling of safety, belonging, support and taking part in community.

'On the go' was also a category of activities for the next question; What are you doing here? Figure 3 shows that this was the most frequent activity, reported by almost one fourth of the R-YCS and C-YCS.

'Hanging out with friends and socializing' was the second most frequent option and describes the activity taking place outdoor and in many of the arenas mentioned in the previous question of place. The activity-question was a multi-select, and the analysis shows that both of these options also were the most frequently chosen options in combinations with other options. Their standing as the most common activities is thus strengthened. 'Work related activities' and 'learning or doing homework' are also common among the reported activities. Except for 'on the go' are these three activities implicit social in their nature.

Figure 3: What are you doing? Frequency of pre-defined answer options from the YouCount App
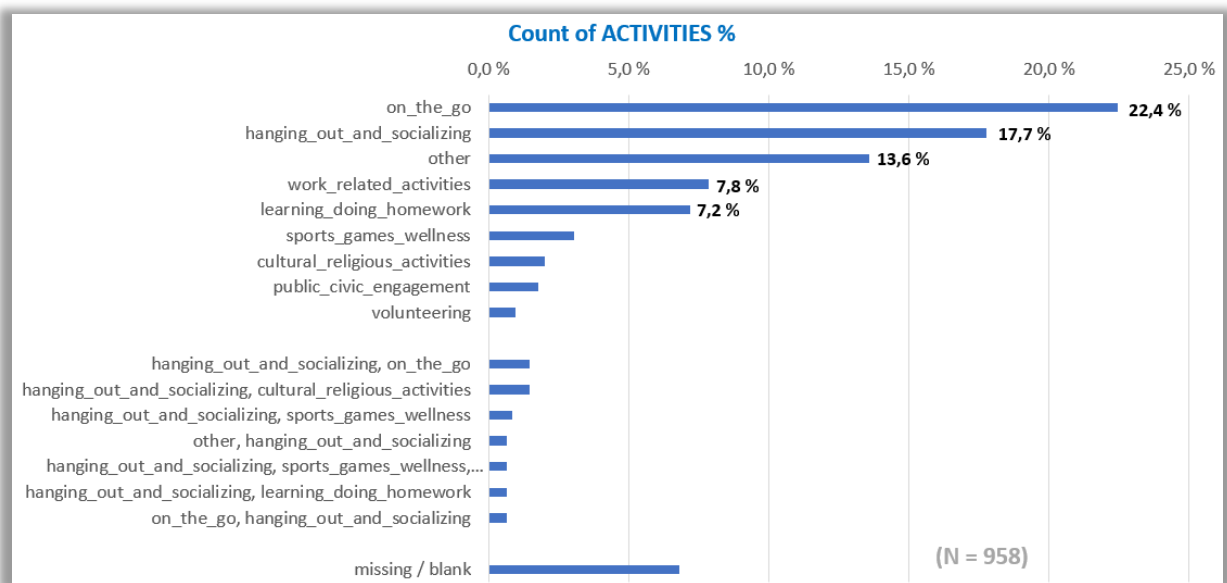
*9 activities listed and 91 different combinations (multi select)

'Friends or partner' are by far the most frequent companions in the places where youths were spotting (see Figure 4). When adding the number of times 'friends or partner' was chosen as the only option to all the times they were chosen in combination with other options it turns out to comprise half of the spots. Workmates, teachers or activity facilitators, family and fellow pupils / students are all ticked off alone in around 5 percent of the spots, whereas fellow pupils / students

are most often chosen in combination with other options. All these options partly reflect that they spent time with other members of the YouCount team while using the YouCount App.

One fifth of the youths' report being 'on my own' while spotting. This indicates that the App also have been used individually and outside organized App-sessions. It seems like the ones spotting while being on their own more often are emphasizing outdoor places in parks or nature where they feel safe, belonging and connected to the place, as well as reporting that they are enjoying solitude and peacefulness more, than the ones who are accompanied by others. The spots added by youths being alone are more reflective, providing richer descriptions and elaborations in the open text fields, and seeing more potentials and opportunities in the places they spot, than the ones socializing with others while spotting.

Figure 4: Who are you with? Frequency of pre-defined answer options from the YouCount App
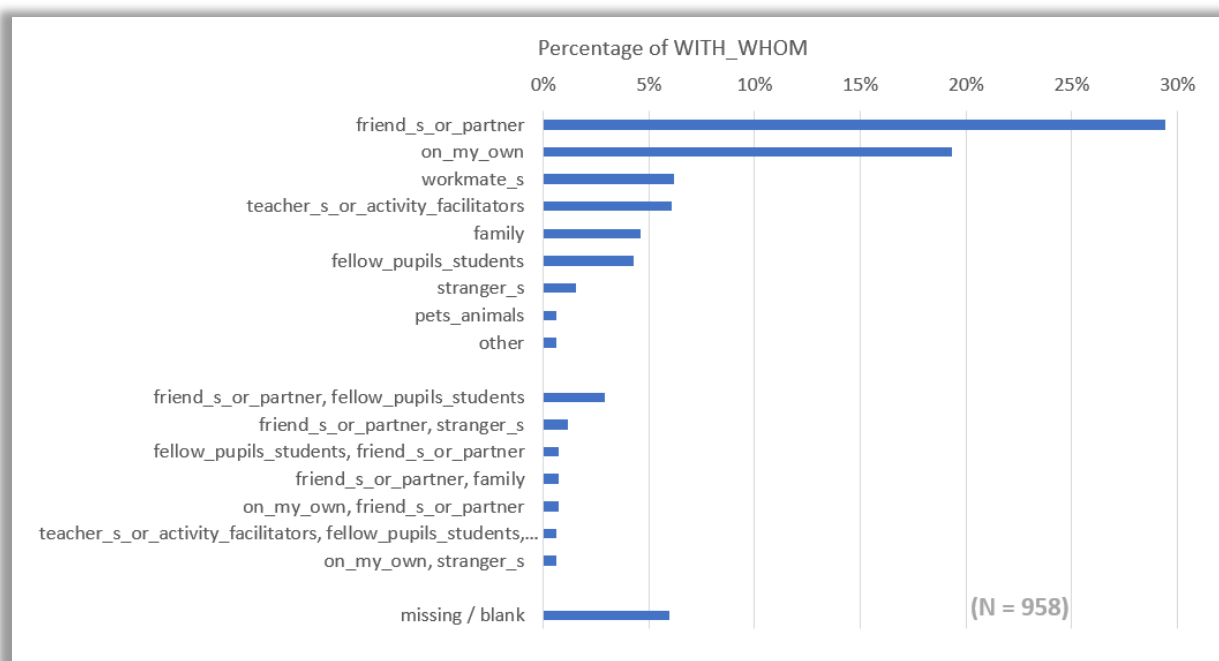
In all ten cases, even if focus would be adjusted to the local case, the main focus of the YouCountApp usage was exploring and finding 'the good places': places where young people feel good. Places where they experienced to be socially included, places where they experienced a feeling of belonging and being connected or where they saw potential for taking part in the community (or communities). Belonging, social participation and citizenship were central dimensions for the exploration of their local neighbourhood, city, village, or region.

As a result, the empirical findings from the YouCountApp data have a strong positive bias. It reflects the overarching purpose of the YouCount project as exploring positive drivers of social inclusion. This imposed positive bias is evident when looking at the places where youths have spotted in the YouCount App and how they report to feel in these places. For 92 percent of the spots, they report to feel good (26 %) or very good (65,6 %) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: How do you feel in this place? Frequency of pre-defined answer options from the YouCount App
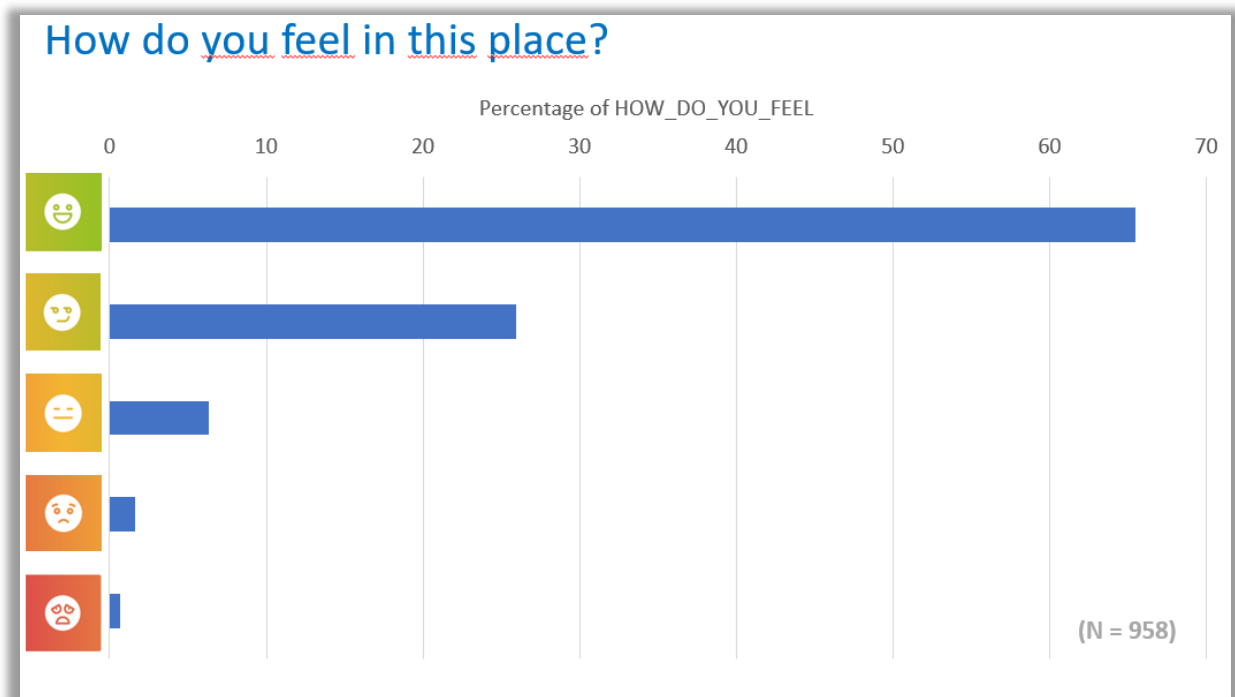
Our interpretation is thus that the R-YCS and C-YCS have taken the message (both from the original project idea and from co-creative formulations of research focus including Y-CSS) about searching for the places where they feel good in order to learn which qualities and characteristics are crucial factors enabling social inclusion of youths (see Illustration 1, 2 and 3).

Figure 6: Illustration 1, 2 and 3: Photos and comments from three spots in the YouCount App

1

> Comment:
> «Hanging out with friends. Feeling good in this place»

2

> Feeling type:
> Accepted and trusted by others.
> What makes you feel this way?
> "I'm with people I know"
> Comment: "Very good!"

3

> Local Café
> Activity:
> Volunteering
> With Whom: teachers or activity facilitators
> How do you feel here? 5 - very good
> Do you feel you belong? 4 - yes
> "A safe feeling environment where you are able to belong"
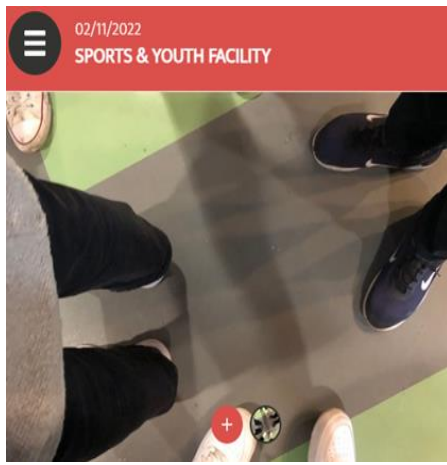
The R-YCS and Y-CSS were asked to elaborate on the question of how they feel in this place by choosing one or more of the pre-defined answers explaining more about what make them feel the way they do. The options they could choose from was belonging, supported, taking part in the community, accepted, and trusted by others, safe or able to make a change. Being safe came by far out as the most important factor explaining why they had a good feeling in the place they spotted (see Figure 6). One of three (32 %) selected safety as the important quality of a "good place".

Figure 7: How do you feel at this place; do you want to specify more about how you feel at this place? Frequency of pre-defined answer options from the YouCount App
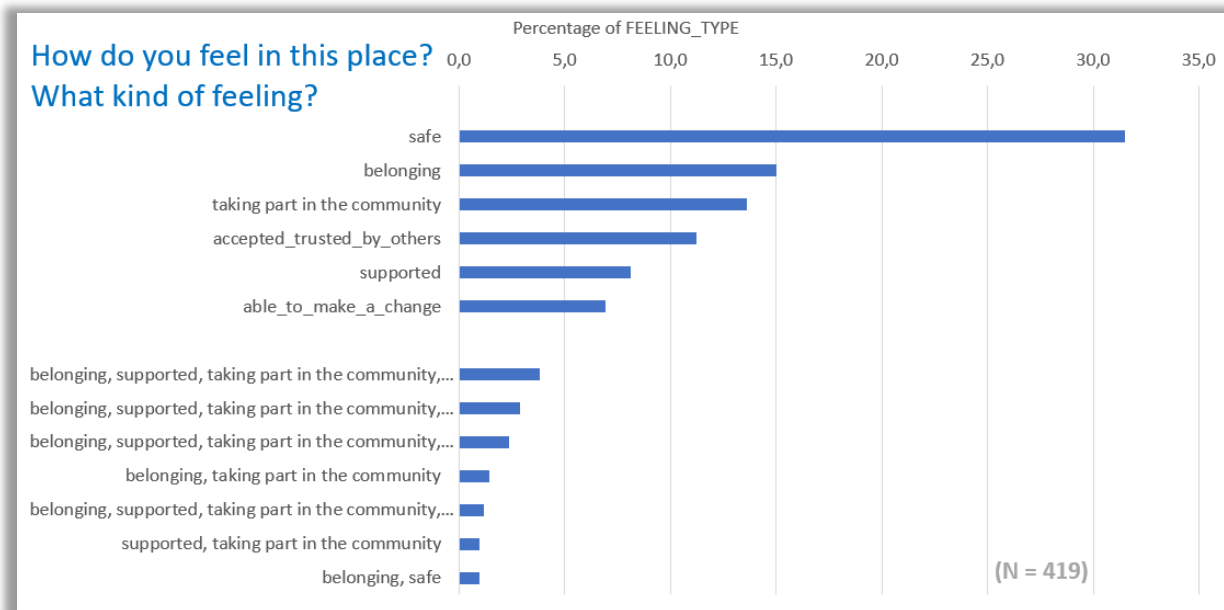
*6 types of feelings listed and 64 different combinations of feelings (multi select) (N = 419)

There are spots that illustrate that also negative feelings of place were expressed in the App, and emphasizes the importance of safety (see Illustration 4).

Figure 8: Illustration 4: Photo and comment from a spot in the YouCount App

Bus Station
Activity: On the go
With Whom: On my own

"The bus station is often an unsafe place for some people, there is a great amount of antisocial behaviour and there is generally an unsafe and uncomfortable setting"

Belonging, taking part in the community, and being accepted and trusted by others turned out to be the important factors for feeling good in a place by 12 to 15 percent of the youths. Whereas being supported and able to make a change was underlined as the single most important factor by 7 to 8 percent of the youths. As this was a question with multiselect options there is also interesting to see what combinations of options that was made by those 14 percent of the youths who were combining different factors. Safe, belonging and taking part in the community – which were dominating choices among the ones singling out just one factor – turned out to be the most frequent choices among the ones choosing combinations as well.

2.2.3 Feeling (un)safe

Safety was a wide-ranging issue perceived by young people across the cases to be central for social inclusion. The way people related and interacted with each other mattered and could either engender trust or distrust:

> *"My dream city is a place where everyone feels nice and talk with each other…the city is today divided in different socioeconomic classes, and they do not talk with each other, that's a shame. We can learn a lot if we mix and expand our horizon. If we talk with each other, we will feel safer where we live" (S, Interview 13, Denmark)*

Young people from various backgrounds and age groups commented that social inclusion was hindered if they felt unsafe (Denmark, UK, Sweden, Spain, Hungary B). Other researchers have found that avoiding certain places can stem from associations with these as dangerous and/or violent places, or as places where young people experience discriminatory attitudes (Frost & Catney, 2020; Casey, 2016). Young people gave numerous examples of where they felt unsafe including neighbourhoods, public transport, rail and bus stations, public walkways, and a range of public spaces such as parks and city centres particularly in the evening:

> *"When you're in the bus station, you get a bus, then you cut through, then you can see St. John's, there's that giant open area. There's usually all sorts of trouble makers hanging around there." (YCS, training days, UK)*

During some of the Living Labs in the UK, young people raised specific safety issues directly with local government stakeholders, leading to some immediate improvements (e.g., more CCTVs around college, illuminating certain areas in the town centre). Similarly, in Denmark, young people expressed concerns about certain areas that they tended to avoid, especially at nighttime, as they were "unpredictable", and situations could quickly become unsafe:

> *"Z had noticed that this street (Borgmester Christiansens Vej)*
> *is very dark at night and that someone had been robbed by the*
> *prostitutes who often work there... E had also noticed this,*
> *which made her change her running route." (Observation E,*
> *Denmark)*

Furthermore, criminality emerged in the context of safety. Criminal gangs, "macho attitude," and social media influences were suggested as risk factors for young people being "dragged into criminality" (Sweden). One YCS in Sweden raised concerns about these risks for his younger brother who had not yet completed secondary school. Issues of criminality in relation to social inclusion were also discussed in the UK case with young people mentioning "no-go areas", but also how non-participation in anti-social behaviour could lead to exclusion:

> *"Well I used to hang out with a lot of them [young people] but*
> *then when they started like smashing windows and stuff, all*
> *the police got involved all the time. So I live with my*
> *grandparents and they didn't want me involved in any of that.*
> *So I don't go out much anymore and I don't really socialise*
> *with people in my area. So I'm not really included, if that*
> *makes sense." (YCS, focus group, UK)*

Interestingly, other groups of young people, such as young migrants in Spain, commented that how they were treated by security forces, police abuse and brutality directed towards refugees and migrants led to them feeling unsafe and to avoiding certain areas. Their lack of documentation and the risk of being questioned by the police in these areas increased their sense of isolation and reduced potential for connecting with others and/or accessing services they needed.

Among other issues of safety reported were those related to "fake opportunities for work", which were a significant issue for young people from communities and groups with poor employment prospects locally (Hungary B). Due to their lack of experience, low social capital, and low self-confidence they were inclined to listen to "success stories" of migration even though these were not always verified. At the same time, they were aware of other stories of exploitation of young people.

Although most cases advocated for increasing the number of youth-led spaces, the lack of adult supervision and regulation was thought to present safety issues for some young people (Sweden). Finally, the YouCount project itself was said to offer a safe space and some young people expressed gratitude for this. For instance, working with a group of HH young people, Hungary A case were able to raise awareness and reflect upon the best ways to ensure HH people are heard, welcomed, and included in society. Similarly, young people in the Norwegian case mentioned that being part of the YouCount consortium had increased their feelings of safety.

2.2.4 Prejudice towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

Experiences of xenophobia or racism have been found to negatively impact young people's identity and sense of community belonging and connectedness (Sime, 2020; Tyrrell et al., 2019). Discrimination can lead to young people feeling excluded, sometimes excluding themselves for fear of negative experiences (Robinson, 2020; Toft, 2020). Young people across several of the cases identified issues specifically related to discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of ethnicity, race and/or their migrant or refugee status (Denmark, Hungary A, Hungary B, Italy, Spain, Sweden). They reported this as affecting young people's civic engagement, sense of belonging and participation. The experience of prejudice, stereotyping, microaggressions, and exlusions due to cultural and ethnic backgrounds was prevalent in those cases such as Austria and Spain that had focused on the experiences of young migrants or refugees. Also, young people from rural communities or Roma backgrounds in Hungary (case B) often referred to prejudices they experienced. When these issues were not addressed, young people reported experiencing fear, anxiety, and anger. For migrant youth, non-inclusive and discriminatory language was a major challenge to their social inclusion (Italy). Additionally, some of the young people claimed that due to a young person's migrant status, as well as their skin colour, society can make it impossible for them to access social inclusion opportunities. Not only that, but they also suffer verbal, psychological, and physical attacks on account of these differences (Spain). Their experiences included being monitored and followed in department stores and having false and difficult criteria applied for accessing housing.

Young migrants, asylum seekers or refugees encountered an additional layer of challenges to social inclusion. Being in a new society required skills, adaptability, resilience, and patience in dealing with "unwelcoming societies and systems" (Austria). In such a context, when young people felt unwelcome and lacked support their overall well-being deteriorated. On top of these issues, as some cases reported, young people had to wait a long time for their official documents to become citizens during which they experienced restrictions in the work and education opportunities open to them. Although in other countries, the process was shorter, migrant young people in Spain stated that dealing with "too complex and complicated" bureaucratic systems alongside managing life under uncertain circumstances meant some gave up:

> *"The police stop us just for not being from here…they ask us*
> *for our documentation and as some of us don't have it we*
> *don't go near that area for fear." (YCS, Spain)*

Young migrants and refugees in the Austrian case commented that discrimination in official system towards meant delays in obtaining documentation which restricted their access to education, employment, and housing. Securing housing was a particular issue raised by young people in the Spanish case. They asserted that racist and xenophobic attitudes were reinforced in the procedures for accessing housing, regardless of potential income. Being excluded, feeling

unwelcome and having reduced opportunities as described above leads to social exclusion. Young migrants in Spain for instance, described how hard it was, if not impossible, to join social groups. Thus, even if they tried, they did not manage to overcome obstacles to connect with others. Such failures of connectivity only served to exacerbate feelings of exclusion. Consequently, as in the Italian case, young people commented on this leading to a process of self-isolation and ghettoization.

2.2.5 Negative stereotyping of young people

Dominant images of young people that portayed them in a negative light represented another important issue for young people and social inclusion. This issue resonated with young people 's experience from across the cases, with several reporting they encountered patronising attitudes from elders and prejudice from the public based on their age and/or appearance:

> *"Z said that he previously had experienced people commented on his little sister having a darker skin colour when walking by them... T also said that one of his friends was called 'homo' because he had another hair colour (Red, yellow, blue)" We should be allowed to be who we are and have the hair we want." – (Observation F, Denmark)*

According to several young people, social media perpetuates and reinforces negative stereotypes of young people. The young people in the Spanish and Austrian cases thought this was especially the case in relation to young migrants. In the case of Spain, young people suggested that many news reports about young migrants criminalise them by emphasising only the negatives, while "any positives are hidden from public view". They argued that when the media cover bad news and identify the offender's ethnic origin, this influences how society regards them:

> *"What hurts me the most is how the natives see me. They link us directly to theft. Society needs to change its mentality. These are the things that hurt me." (R-YCS, Spain)*

General stereotyping of young people was also encountered. They believed that people who were older than them judged young people solely on their young age and they were often falsely labelled as "up to no good". Such biased misrepresentations of youth were noticed across the cases and were felt by young people to be "unfair", even though they did acknowledge some young people were involved in gangs and engaged in anti social behaviour. They argued these assumptions revealed an "old fashioned mind-set" and a prejudice towards young people:

*"Older people seem to think young people are up to something
'sketchy' if they hang out in groups." (YCS, focus group, UK)*

Young people felt disempowered by older generations in terms of current global concerns such as climate change that they were expected to act upon, while simultaneously they did not feel they had a voice. Discussions about feeling underrepresented and being controlled by older people sparked much debate in the Danish case. As in the UK case, some of those in Denmark, considered that most of the older generation were narrow-minded and as young people are generally underrepresented in decision-making forums, youth had limited power or influence. Similarly, young people in Lithuania spoke of many examples of locations (e.g., cultural centres) that discouraged youth involvement since they tended to be run by "elder generations" and their interests and needs, which did not correspond with those of young people. HH young people encountered several forms of exclusion based on ignorance and the inconsiderate attitudes of hearing people (Hungary A). They reported many instances where they had been directly excluded and discriminated against in job interviews, mocked or ridiculed at school.

2.2.6 Economic and financial issues

The financial circumstances of young people, including their economic situation and background, as well as having access to meaningful employment opportunities, were highlighted by many young people as critical for social inclusion. As other researchers have found, those with inadequate financial means may be unable to participate in activities that could promote a sense of belonging, which in turn can exacerbate exclusion (Spyrou, 2013). Young people in Hungary (B) discussed the negative effect of the stigma of being poor for Roma people and how this resulted in labelling rural areas where they lived as "dangerous". Thus, economic context significantly impacted how young people are defined and what opportunities they can access. Other young people discussed the difficulties related to their economic situation and possibilities of social inclusion when working 16-hour days (Italy), the impact of inflation, and low salaries and high taxes negatively impacting opportunities to belong and connect (Lithuania). In this latter case, young people also discussed the lack of employment not only for themselves but also for their parents, which they said led to migration with challenges for Lithuanian society.

A similar situation was encountered in the case of Hungary B, where young people experienced financial uncertainty, resolved in some instances by moving and migration. Some positive examples of migration increased the hope of young people in the region. Yet, young people were also sceptical as on the other side of the spectrum, they had heard of stories of exploitation. Refugee young people experienced "not having the economic capacity to rent… find themselves in situations of homelessness" (Spain). In the case of both Spain and Italy, young people discussed

the challenges of accessing employment and how that leads to shadow economies where they faced risk and encountered adverse working conditions.

Financial barriers were also mentioned by young people in the UK case who highlighted, for example, the lack of affordable transport reducing their sense of belonging and possibilities of participation. Having the financial means to access groups and places to feel connected and to participate in a range of activities constitutes an important aspect of accessibility and thus affects young people's social inclusion (Wilson & Milne, 2016). The UK Health Foundation have recognised the importance of addressing transport issues for social inclusion, specifically implementing fair bus costs for young people to open opportunities for participation (Collings et al., 2022). Financial opportunities through becoming an entrepreneur were discussed in Hungary (B). The young people aspired to become independent and have a business/farming enterprise, yet lacked knowledge, mentorship, and resources (e.g., land, investment capital). Although these prospects were ideal for them, they were hard to reach due to all the uncertainties linked to entrepreneurship.

2.2.7 Issues with youth participation

As argued by McGeehan (2019), young people need to be recognised as political stakeholders rather than consumers. Involving young people from all communities in both local and national decision-making could foster a shift from policies which "emphasise blame and punish" to those which "empathise and assist" (Hochlaf et al., 2019). The lack of opportunities for young people to be engaged in democratic processes in their communities was commented on by young people of all ages across the cases. Participation was thus a critical issue for youth social inclusion. Problems with young people generally not "having a voice" and low levels of participation in decision making processes, were highlighted (Denmark, UK, Sweden). Among the cases, there were several examples where authorities implemented youth-centred projects without consultation or dialogue with young people. Failure to include young people's voices in general, a lack of democratic participation opportunities and young people not being heard were identified as "frustrating" and "disappointing". Having their voice heard was vital to feeling socially included (Norway), and some just "want to be heard, acknowledged and be able to tell my story" (Austria).

The lack of democratic spaces and opportunities for civic participation increased in the case of young migrants, asylum seekers or refugees (Spain, Austria, Denmark, Italy). Due to the complex and lengthy bureaucratic procedures, formal civic participation opportunities were greatly reduced, affecting their education, housing, and access to services (Austria, Spain). HH young people, although present among hearing people, also felt they were "not fully recognised" and could not contribute as much as they would like to society (Hungary A). Thus, their voices and chances for participation were much reduced. Moreover, some young people in the Austrian case

felt limited in sharing their voices due to their country background and the fear of being stigmatised. As an example, such instances were encountered in political environments, such as protests to do with the climate where they felt that: "I can't belong even if I want to." (Austria).

Being able to speak and being asked for their opinion increased young people's sense of inclusion, belonging and participation (Norway, Lithuania, Spain, UK).

As part of YouCount itself, young people felt the possibilities for participation increased and their voices were being amplified. Some YCS were keen to acknowledge this and emphasised the need to share their needs and challenges with stakeholders and to be able to influence society and decision-making (Spain, Hungary A), as suggested by one young citizen scientist (YCS):

> *"I would like to see more citizen science projects because there are many things to improve and we can contribute to them."*
> *(YCS, Spain)*

What other researchers have found about participation in research processes fostering belonging: that is, when young people are actively engaged in research, a process of voice, exploration, reflection, and action can promote personal growth and wellbeing (Riley, 2019) was therefore borne out by the experience of YCSs in YouCount.

2.3 Opportunities for social inclusion in young people's daily lives

Given understandings of social inclusion were multifaceted, the kinds of opportunities for social inclusion in young people's daily lives were similarly wide ranging. There was mention of a variety of opportunities, including those involving participation in certain places, going to events like music concerts or "gigs", being part of interest and other groups and being part of communities where they felt they belonged. In the Austrian case, young migrants appreciated the valuable support they had received from the NGO that helped facilitate educational, training, and social opportunities amongst others. In the UK case, some young people were keen to draw attention to aspects of their native city they appreciated commenting that "there is more to do than first appears…you have to dig deep" (UK). Educational and leisure activities, as well as outdoor spaces such as parks were positive spaces that provided young people with opportunities for social inclusion. This was despite there being low awareness about some of these opportunities amongst young people generally, which showed the need for better promotion.

Intrinsic factors partly determined access to social inclusion opportunities, (Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Demark). For instance, young people's "interest, curiosity and urge to learn, search for

friends" affected whether they participated at the Youth Council in the Swedish case. Staff from specialist organisations facilitated access to opportunities for young people (Hungary B, Norway, Spain). In all these cases, young people acknowledged the importance of the third sector organisations and the resources they invested in their programs for young refugees and asylum seekers. Among the benefits, some discussed social inclusion and well-being, suggesting that "they helped me not to feel alone" (Spain), they were considered "bridge builders" and others emphasised that:

> *"The work done by social entities in this area is very positive*
> *and should be highlighted" (YCS, Spain)*

Moreover, through this engagement, young people found role models (Sweden, Denmark). Feeling a sense of togetherness in communities and groups that made them feel welcome, engendered young people's engagement and access to social inclusion opportunities (Denmark, Italy).

A central theme across the 10 cases was the perception that social inclusion opportunities for young people were lacking. Although the nature of the opportunity gap varied due to specific contexts and circumstances, some common gaps emerged. For the young people of South Harbor in Denmark there was felt to be "nothing to do for young people". Moreover, they suggested this was responsible for increased antisocial behaviours, as well as for young people moving away from the area:

> *One girl mentioned: "There is nothing to do in South Harbour,*
> *so otherwise, we go to a cafe and eat or something like that or*
> *stay at home." One of the boys looked at his phone and added,*
> *"We cannot do anything for South Harbour; it is too late now."*
> *(Observation A, Denmark)*

Similarly, young people from the UK case remarked how there was "little or nothing to do" other than "go shopping", "sit in the park "or "hang out around in the bus station". Additionally, access to leisure activities in the city were restricted by the time of year:

> *"There's not enough basketball courts indoors; not many*
> *indoor social spaces; need more activities." (YCS, training day,*
> *UK)*

Access to sports activities, although important for young people, were not always accessible due to financial barriers (Spain), and they could be physically inaccessible for disabled people (Hungary A). Additionally, young people suggested that specific youth-orientated opportunities were either hard to engage with (Lithuania, Austria); offered too far away from home (UK); or they were unaffordable (UK, Spain). In the Spanish case, for instance, young people noted the "few options to develop and promote their leisure and sporting activities" as the majority need to be paid for.

Similarly, problems with transportation affected access to and sustainability of social inclusion opportunities in Lithuania and the UK. Transportation issues were significant in rural areas affecting young people's participation.

Hard of hearing (HH) young people faced additional limitations when seeking to access social inclusion opportunities (Hungary A). Thus, they mentioned several places (e.g., cultural or religious venues) as being barely visited by those who are hard of hearing due inaccessibility or experiencing prejudice at those locations. Further, technology, devices and procedures which would allow them better access and participation in social life tended to be lacking. Similarly, physically disabled young people, for instance wheelchair users, experienced environmental barriers to participation:

> *"Even walking, when you have loads of bumps and all that in a pavement, they get annoying after a bit. And then the roads when you're driving either damage the car, depending on how deep the pothole is, and it can become very annoying for people." (YCS, focus group, UK)*

Poor access to education and learning opportunities, especially language skills, were commonly raised as an issue by young people across the cases. In Denmark, young people encountered the process of finding apprenticeship opportunities difficult and demotivating. Similarly, young people in Hungary (B) discussed uncertainties in education and were focused mainly on informal learning options. Although they have gone through formal education, their experiences were unpleasant (due to discrimination), and some considered that it was a waste as they "did not learn anything practical", and their options were reduced in these educational settings. While some other young people had access to formal education and schooling, for some with migratory backgrounds, learning the native language was a priority (e.g., Italy, Spain, Austria). In the Italian case, young people considered language education was crucial for inclusion, yet it was not always easy to access.

Educational opportunities were valued as young people wanted to learn, build competencies and skills in their areas of interest (Hungary B, UK, Denmark). HH young people (Hungary A) felt much more supported to access educational opportunities at university level. Thus, they suggested that improvements and adaptation to the needs of younger HH students need to be considered, such as flexibility, awareness, new methods of teaching and more support from peers. Access to quality education and professional guidance was not straightforward for young people from Roma background in Hungary (case B). They valued and believed in social mobility through education, and many wanted to become entrepreneurs. Such views were shared and encouraged by their families and considered a main factor for success. Further, access to school and youth clubs in terms of educational spaces was noted across cases as important (e.g. Sweden, Norway, UK). In

these spaces, young people could feel safe, able to access education opportunities, and make connections with others.

Regarding work opportunities, although there were 'entry-level' positions there were fewer satisfactory employment opportunities for young people and both young people and stakeholders suggested that more could be done in that regard (Norway, UK). In the case of Spain, young people working on the YouCount project sought to continue working on the project as it allowed them to access opportunities and, moreover, increased their ability to speak up and influence decision-making regarding issues that concerned them. Another example of opportunity appreciated by young people in Hungary B concerned farming opportunities using permaculture, which was the topic foucsed on by the case. Through participating in permaculture, they had connected with others, had an opportunity for income and had noticed growing cohesion in the community. Thus, in the Hungary B case, the possibilities of improvement and opportunities were influenced by the farming possibilities and resources – such as cultivation, quality of land, and investment in farming. Finally, although not common, some HH young people (Hungary A) also had positive experiences with supportive working environments. Still, overall, they would prefer self-employment as it allows flexibility in structuring their environment.

Leisure opportunities were important too (Hungary A, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK). These kinds of opportunities not only "bring people together" (Norway) but they also increase the sense of belonging to a place (UK), promote connection, wellbeing and "a place to escape" (Spain). Among such opportunities and entertainment activities were those related to music such as going to "gigs" and concerts (UK, Norway), food and eating places (UK, Norway), going to the cinema (UK), and activities in nature and outdoor spaces such as parks (UK, Denmark, Hungary A). Public spaces that promoted outdoor activities such as specialised sports arenas were important. However, young people in Denmark identified that more work could be done to involve young people in planning urban spaces so that they were more youth- orientated.

Having access to sports activities was highlighted as important by young people in the UK, Spanish and Danish cases:

> *"Playing football creates the opportunity to play together with other people, and that is cool, that some sort of community is created." (F, Observation C., Denmark)*

> *"The football team I play for is like a family to me. It takes my mind off my problems and takes away the sadness and depression I sometimes feel. It helps me to forget my problems a little bit." (YCS, Spain)*

Some young people highlighted how they had benefited from the YouCount project, having the opportunity to travel, and attending consortium meetings where they met other young people from other countries. These opportunities allowed young people to connect, learn about each other and to explore cultures and the world differently, apart from the training opportunities and stakeholder engagement within the project and had inspired some to engage socially and politically (Norway, Spain, Hungary A, Sweden). For HH young people, it brought the opportunity of "joining a community" (Hungary A). Finally, online spaces were also mentioned as necessary, especially for young people during the pandemic and enabled them to connect and continue to take part in educational, social and entertainment activities (UK, Austria). Some of the young people highlighted opportunities offered in faith-based places or contexts, which they valued as providing valuable social activities (Norway), and for others were linked with an increased sense of belonging and community (UK).

2.4 The Gender Dimension of Youth Social Inclusion

In this chapter, we report on the gender-related dimensions which stem from the different activities carried out locally by the different case partners. The analysis primarily builds upon what was reported by each partner of the project in the final case study reports. In addition, data collected through the evaluation-aimed interviews and focus groups were also integrated. The thematic analysis of all data produced the themes which is elaborated upon in this chapter. First, the invisibility of gender is discussed; second, the stereotypical gender roles;

2.4.1 From the invisibility of gender to the activation of a dialogue about gender

An emerging representative dimension calls for invisibility since what was reported opens up a dilemma about how to deal with gender issues with youths and detect them in the different sessions of the work. In many cases, the difficulties of addressing these issues with youths due to the fear of inducing a mutual bias on gender roles emerged. The theme of invisibility stems from the initial positioning assumed by professional researchers as well as by YCS, who all considered gender as something not requiring to be addressed in an explicit way when talking about social inclusion. That is, partners' point of view when they started to address the topic of gender was to consider it as a non-problematic issue for the inclusive processes of young people involved in the countries where the activities took place.

In a second step, when gender-related aspects were made more explicit, their invisibility was replaced by a perspective of equity, which seems to dominate the thoughts with reference to the neutrality of the effects of gender roles:

> *"overall, there were not a lot of observable gender differences in our case, as neither the CS addressed this topic a lot, nor could we as facilitators observe any striking variations in the behaviour of the workshop participants"* (Austria)

> *"looking through the stakeholder representation in the project in the Danish case in general, there is an equal amount of female representing the organizations in relation to males"* (Denmark)

> *"gender did not significantly influence the young people's views and experiences in our study. Members of the research team developed our research question and research method as a result of a participatory interview process"* (Hungary case A)

Furthermore, even when stereotypes and differences were reckoned, their expression was not considered as having a relevant impact on project activities and outcomes, as it was reported by Lithuanian partners:

> *"The gender dynamics of the project activities also revealed and mirrored several other gender stereotypes, although in general their expression was not particularly dominant in the project activities, nor did it lead to different project outcomes"* (Lithuania)

Differently, in other countries R-YCSs acknowledged some gender-related differences which had shaped their participation in the project and attributed them to cultural and societal dimensions and expectations:

> *"The R-YCS agreed (both male and female) that gender had not affected their own participation in the project in any way despite that there were more females than males in the group. However, they also agreed that gender norms had negatively impacted the project in the sense that fewer boys wanted to engage with them and fill out the survey. The boys did not see the purpose to engage in politics and influence society as opposed to the girls. The R-YCS attributed this to different societal expectations on boys vs girls. However, the question*

> *seems to be more complex than that because boys have a huge social influence/impact in other areas, for example sports activities like football. The participants thought this had to do with different societal expectations for boys and girls." (Spain)*

> *"From the innovation processes, we observed apparent differences between the innovations developed in the research teams consisting of only boys and girls. Differences that create stereotypes between the genders: There is a lot of stereotypes...Yes, I think that in general boys like sport and football lanes, and girls are more creative… I also think that girls can be more engaged." (G, Interview 12, Denmark)*

Therefore, at an early stage, gender-related aspects were not openly addressed. However, starting from the representation of gender issues shared within the research group, the paths of thought differed: in each case, different methods were adopted to address gender-related aspects and how they could impact social inclusion processes. Subsequent thoughts led to consideration of the importance of the mixed composition of the working group at different levels:

> *"However, based on our assumption (not proven or analyzed during the recruitment process) the organic evolution may have been influenced by the call for proposals that included a female research leader, and later, after getting to know each other within the group and with other academic researchers, it might have been discovered that altogether three senior female academic researchers were involved in the project, which may have also influenced the participants' decision to engage" (Hungary case A)*

> *"From the female research teams, there is a similarity in wanting to create more green areas through community gardening and sharing activities. These innovations could be seen as stereotypical because gardening and greenery are about taking care of something, which is from old gender roles that are imposed the women. The innovations show that the participants are, to some degree, still imprinted by old traditions. Innovations from mixed-gender research teams show a mix between sports, concerts, greenery, and food, so it is hard to tell if coincidences create the youths' innovations or if their choices are based on gender" (Denmark)*

That is, the composition of the group – that is, whether there were more males or females – also influenced the choice of the activities to be proposed during the local case development, as well as the context in which the activities were supposed to take place did – based on what was locally (that is, culturally) and individually represented as a "typically male" or "typically female" activity. In this direction, a possible resonance of gender dimensions emerges in the promotion of equitable inclusive processes and in the reflection on a diverse and representative design of boys' and girls' needs.. What has been highlighted recalls the dimension of construction of meanings connected to the vision of one's own gendered identification. Gender is constructed through the daily interactions of the individuals with their environment, that is, all the systems with which they interact. In this vein, gender is a situational construct, rather than a given and individual one:

> *"A detailed participatory reflection of the mental frames*
> *(including the spatial and labor driven organization of local*
> *gender roles) behind gender inequalities would certainly mark*
> *one of the 'additional divisions' in the eyes of the community."*
> *(Hungary case B)*

This perspective requires constant reflection on the different actors involved in the process in order to design inclusive policy actions.

2.4.2 Stereotypes and prejudices as cultural declinations

When there was a lack of knowledge and awareness of the meanings attributed to gender dimensions and their impact on relationships and inclusion processes, project partners began to reflect on and consider cultural and stereotypical representations of gender roles with reference to specific social categories – e.g., in relation to groups of specific nationalities, ages, or other identity-related peculiarities:

> *"We also have migrants and refugees, most of them are*
> *refugees, young refugees in Austria – and we have the thing*
> *that they told us they feel that men are much more left behind*
> *than young women that are with a refugee background"*
> *(Austria, professional researcher)*

Indeed, the socio-cultural representations about male and female roles, responsibilities, duties, and socially acceptable behaviors and attitudes have an impact on the opportunities individuals have to take part in their local community. These aspects generate inequal opportunities for expression and possibilities to act, since they characterize how individuals should behave, interact, and be included within communities:

"The CS did verbalise, is that they feel like the males of our core group have less opportunities, because 'young male Arabs' are the most stigmatized refugee group in Austrian media. Hence, females are offered more opportunities, quicker solutions, and friendlier ways of interaction. This was supported by both males and females (and researchers who experienced it from a bystander perspective). Firstly, by a 'Tell your story'-themed social media channel/National…" (Austria)

"Boys will be boys, outgoing, funny, smart future leaders, whereas when it comes to women, it's more like an alien, show off, loud, not smart at all. And that thought too much. It's just the impact that can have, and that does lead to differences." (Female YCS)

Social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) aligns with the observation that boys are often praised for being outgoing, funny, and intelligent, with an assumption that they will become future leaders. These qualities are seen as desirable and align with traditional expectations of masculinity. On the other hand, girls who exhibit similar qualities may be perceived as strange or show-offs, deviating from societal expectations of femininity. These differing expectations based on gender roles can create disparities in how boys and girls are treated and impact their sense of belonging and self-perception (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2020). There was a perceived disparity in how boys and girls are expected to express their intelligence:

"Boys usually have the opposite [experience]. They can be loud, they can do whatever they want, but girls usually get shut down and feel different if they exhibit similar behaviours as boys." (Female YCS, UK)

"When talking about stereotypes and prejudices, one could expect these to be common for both, migrant boys and girls, yet differences can also be identified regarding these youngs' life experiences. While Moroccan boys are more associated with delinquency, thus generating feelings of fear and mistrust in the host society towards them; Latina girls are connected to sexual thoughts and beliefs." (Spain)

Therefore, a social organization aimed at an inclusive togetherness needs take into account cultural representations and their impact on acculturation processes. For example, studies over the past 20 years have shown that, compared to men, migrant women experience greater difficulties with

communication and language barriers due to rigid educational prescriptions and gender roles from their culture of origin, which they often internalize (Dumper, 2002):

"As to the local case, most of the participants were female and some of them were mothers too. From their words, this means that they were responsible for and felt in charge of taking care of their children and house-related duties and responsibilities. According to this, they underlined that the opportunities for social participation and to freely spend their spare time according to their needs and desires are strongly shaped by gender issues in their personal experience in Naples." (Italy)

"Staying in the geographic space of the village is strongly structured along gender boundaries: Women stay in the village on public work during daytime and so they are responsible for taking the kids home when they arrive from the school at 4.30 PM. Men leave the village for factories or construction work in early morning. This division of labor and usage of village space clearly contradicts the expectations related to agricultural work, which are gendered in an opposing way." (Hungary case B)

"In Lithuania, as in many other countries, the cultural division of gender roles presupposes a dominant tradition for a man (along with other practices that support such a model of behaviour) to let a woman through the door first, and then to go through the door by himself. This tradition is viewed favourably by a large part of society and is perceived as an expression of respect for women. Without taking a feminist perspective on this behavioural pattern, it is worth noting that among the young people in our project, the vast majority of the young male citizen scientists also behaved in this way during their encounters with them. They would let the first woman pass through the door during project meetings. The female participants found it a pleasant experience and that it was well received. It can be assumed that certain stereotypical gender patterns of behaviour are still culturally dominant among young people." (Lithuania)

"When young women migrate alone, they do so due to the extreme circumstances, much more extreme than in the case

> *of the boys, they face in their countries of origin. These circumstances to which we refer often have to do with the normative and traditional values their societies defend and stand for and the gender roles these girls are supposed to assume at the time of their transition to adulthood." (Spain)*

Also, the cultural organization dimensions emerged at other levels, as shown in the Danish and Norwegian case reports:

> *"It seems like a lot of the organizations are very male dominant, and that is a general problem in society." (V, Interview 8, Denmark)*

> *"…in a workshop held with stakeholders and youth in April 2022, one stakeholder mentioned that boys in the district were more vulnerable to either losing their job or becoming active in criminal activities, especially during summer vacation. In general, there are much more worries for boys than girls among stakeholders (local organisations, public and private institutions, etc.)." (Norway)*

2.4.3 Valuing real life experiences as gendered experiences

Traditional roles in villages and cities with gender-divided tasks impact participation choices at different levels, impacting males' and females' ways of experiencing different areas of their community-related daily lives:

> *"…the only thing I can think off related to gender difference, is that we only talked with male actors in the field. This naturally brings a male dominant perspective of South Harbour. It could have been nice to get a female perspective as well." (J, interview 8, Denmark)*

> *"Migrant young women find themselves in a more precarious and vulnerable situations of social risk (domestic work, prostitution, theft, and robbery) than young migrant men. These situations are framed in contexts of marginality that keep them in a completely social invisibility. It is true that these situations of vulnerability, invisibility and marginality are*

not contexts that specifically occur and begin in the host country but have their roots in the country of origin." (Spain)

"Indirectly, through observation and translation of the social reality of Panevėžys district community, it has been observed that the student parliaments of schools and gymnasiums are more dominated by female students and are more involved in the activities, However, male youth are more dominant in the activities of non-governmental organisations such as scout troops, in the steering groups of sports activities, and in the activities of the Panevėžys District Union of Youth Organisations (in a sense, in local communities inspiring change in youth political thought or local politics). This still reflects the general trend in Lithuania, where women are less prevalent than men in the top political positions in local self-government institutions or in leadership positions in the education sector." (Lithuania)

This trend also reflects in how youths perceive social contexts and interactions in educational settings, as reported by other partners:

"…they perceive that communication is directed more towards boys, indicating a bias or preference in how teachers interact with students. This quote suggests that girls may feel excluded or marginalised in the classroom setting, where communication and attention from teachers are perceived to be more directed towards boys, which may impact their sense of belonging in the educational environment." (UK)

Such differences are expected to impact individuals' lives across the different paths and experiences they will go through, shaping them as suggested by Spanish partners in their report:

"These characteristics will be traveling companions in the trajectories and life experiences of these young migrant women since being a woman often means being a victim of certain inequalities and occupying a position of subordination. This is aggravated by the traditions and customs of the countries or regions of origin, even depending on other axis, such as 'city-countryside', among others. For this reason, it could be deduced that these girls' reasons for abandoning their countries can be of different nature than the reasons

shown by the Moroccan boys: the coexistence of contradictory tendencies or ideas between the family and the young girl about what her role should be, both in the domestic sphere and in the public sphere; or contradictions between what the family or the partner expects of this young girl and what he expects of her." (Spain)

"…the main threat to equal opportunities across gender was related to the different opportunities males and females had to manage their spare time and reconcile it with the time needed to manage family-related issues. Based on this, some of our participants proposed to choose time and dates for our meetings according to the school hours of their children as a concrete and operative solution. Indeed, they had to reconcile their family-related tasks, duties, and responsibilities with the others related to other life domains. Building on this, having the YouCount commitments when their children were involved in some school activities allowed them to attend out meetings. This highlighted local women's attitude to take care of their family members and of the management of their house and children, suggesting that this kind of tasks might be attributed to the female members of the families in Forcella, according to a sort of still patriarchal culture." (Italy)

Indeed, the ecological feminism underlines that social and natural processes are interconnected, so that social expectations and representations are somehow linked to the traditional, gendered roles women and men played in societies and communities (Salleh, 2017).

In this vein, according to the intersectionality perspective (Collins, 2020), some partners highlighted the need to unpack the role of gender issues as well as of other identity-related issues (e.g., ethnic ones) in the unfolding of social inclusion processes:

"This young woman contributes to the group by bringing her experience as a Latina woman and single mother of a young child. It does not need to be further explained that both profiles of young people, Moroccan boys and Latina girl, have gone through completely different experiences. Although among these difficulties and obstacles both profiles identify factors that hinder their social inclusion, stereotypes and prejudices in the host society are a common thread on their narratives." (Spain)

2.4.4 Paths to reduce the impact of gender-related cultural stereotypes on social inclusion processes

From the reports, YouCount partners and participants detect several paths that could potentially reduce the impact of gender-related cultural stereotypes on social inclusion processes.

A first path refers to creating different kinds of spaces where youths can identify and acknowledge shared and co-created meanings:

> *"Workshop/something similar to that, they want to publicly decrease stereotypes about Arabic refugees generally, and young Arabic males specifically. Also, the perception that Arabic women deserve "pity" should be changed in their opinion, because by fleeing from those countries they em-powered themselves to some extent already." (Austria)*

The spaces created within YouCount activities are reckoned as an example of this:

> *"The Lithuanian case study attempted to reconcile different approaches and to allow the different qualities of youth in terms of social expression and communication (openness, engagement in debates, argumentation, polemics, etc.) to emerge in different activities in different ways, thus creating an inclusive project environment. The project activities also promoted tolerance, respect, the influence and importance of the phenomenon of gratitude, friendliness and openness." (Lithuania)*

Another path refers to using theories to think about the implemented practices and how gender issues shape within them:

> *"The main ideas behind these theories may help us reflect on how we work. What became clear both in the reflections of us senior female researchers and in the research group meetings as well (where young members of research groups typically participate) is that gender might not influence the frequency of statements, the expression of opinions, the opportunities available to participants, and generally the way of participation in this atmosphere we tried to create. [...] Both in terms of the research group meetings and the living labs, it can*

be concluded that participation is diverse and balanced in terms of gender, the participants are active irrespective of gender, the atmosphere is free and equality as a value is fundamental. 9 men and 10 women attended to the first living lab, 7 women and 7 men to the second and 5 women and 3 men participated in the third online living lab and based on the notes and our observation, everyone could actively participate" (Hungary case A)

"They emphasised the importance of challenging stereotypes related to gender roles, appearance, and behaviours, adopting an approach that avoids discrimination and 'makes sure everyone's points are heard and looked into'. They highlighted that the concept of gender is not binary, as one young person in an early participatory event expressed, 'I think gender is binary, but am willing to accept for some it's not'. One way of addressing this suggested by a young person is to 'use nonbinary or ask people's preference for pronouns' thus promoting a sense of belonging and respect for individuals' gender identities and acknowledging personal agency in self-identification." (UK)

Furthermore, using different tools to offer opportunities to think about gender issues and make them visible is another proposed strategy:

"…there seems to be a need for more places or better promotion of the latter where girls can spend their free time outside of home, school, and work. This could potentially be linked to the case topic of employability as places to hang out can be opportunities for networking and might be beneficial when seeking a job. However, this needs to be further investigated together with the youth citizen social scientists and linked to the comment that more girls than boys have employment." (Norway)

Another example is proposed by the UK research team, who tries to unpack the meaning of gender equality in the area of implementation of their case study:

"Gender equality has long been a crucial topic in Preston, primarily addressing historical injustices and empowering girls and women. However, it is essential to recognize that true

gender equality can only be achieved by including all genders in the conversation. Boys, too, face unique challenges and experiences that require attention and advocacy." (YCS, focus group, UK)

"Young people emphasised a need for open discussions about gender equality and disparities. They proposed creating platforms for dialogue and awareness campaigns that engage students, teachers, parents, and the wider community. These discussions they thought could help challenge biases, promote understanding, and create a shared commitment to equal opportunities." (UK)

When discussing gender equality, youths offered valuable suggestions to address existing disparities and create a more inclusive society for both boys and girls. Their insights shed light on the significance of implementing inclusive educational practices, promoting positive role models for girls and boys, fostering open dialogue and awareness, addressing biases in hiring and promotion, and challenging societal pressure and stereotypes:

"Young people emphasised the importance of promoting gender equality in education. They proposed creating a more inclusive learning environment that encourage active participation and equal opportunities for boys and girls. This could involve fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere, providing equal access to resources and opportunities, and challenging gender stereotypes. For example, they said: They perceive schools to be primarily structured and operated in a manner that perpetuates the belief that gender identity and expression are strictly binary. This is particularly evident in school uniforms, restroom facilities, and sports participation." (UK)

"Young people highlighted the significance of showcasing diverse and positive role models for both boys and girls. They suggested introducing more female leaders and successful women in various fields as role models to inspire girls and challenge traditional gender norms. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of promoting positive male role models who defy stereotypes and encourage boys to value equality and respect." (UK)

Last, a collaborative approach is suggested by youths as a path through which stakeholders, policymakers, and adults broadly speaking could engage as an attempt to foster more inclusive spaces and communities for all youths:

> *"…young people highlighted the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in pursuing gender-related solutions and innovations. They emphasised the need for collaboration among educators, policymakers, parents, and the wider community to create a collective effort towards achieving gender equality. This collaborative approach recognises that addressing gender disparities requires a comprehensive and systemic response encompassing various aspects of society, including education, workplace environments, media representation, and cultural norms. The young people's perspectives underscored the significance of ongoing dialogue, awareness campaigns, and policy changes to drive lasting change and create a more equitable future for all individuals, regardless of gender." (UK)*

2.5 Youth Empowerment

This section analyses whether and how youth have been empowered or disempowered through the YouCount case studies. The analysis is based on secondary empirical material from analyses of empowerment and disempowerment in the YouCount case summary reports. The section starts with a short introduction to the concept of empowerment, followed by a sub-section where the analytical approach to empowerment in YouCount is described. The following sub-sections describe processes of empowerment and disempowerment in the YouCount case studies.

2.5.1 The Concept of Empowerment

The understanding of empowerment in YouCount is based on the understanding of empowerment developed by Paulo Freire (1970). According to Freire empowerment occurs through the creation of a collective critical consciousness about the way persons exist in the world. For persons to become empowered, it is important they do not understand the world as a static reality, but as a reality in process that is not just shaped by own behaviour but also by broader historical and social contexts.

Freire describes another aspect of empowermentas creation of ideas about how persons collectively can act against oppressing conditions.

Furthermore, an understanding of "the world", including aspects of disempowerment and empowerment, can be developed through action research, like in the YouCount project. This implies that when actors try changing "the world" through action research, they at the same develop their understanding of the "world"(Andersen & Bilfeldt, 2017).

2.5.2 Identification of Processes of Youth Empowerment in Case Studies

According to the template for the YouCount case study summary reports, a case report should analyse the following aspects of empowerment and disempowerment:

- What has contributed to empowerment on individual level or for the community/targeted organisations?
- Description of decision-making, processes of empowerment and disempowerment, particularly with regard to youth citizen scientists
- Describe how power relations were changed, primarily regarding the power of young people (including individual and group level changes)

The analysis in the following section is based on texts from the case study reports where aspects of empowerment is mentioned explicitly. Some parts of the analysis is based on citations by youth participating in a YouCount case study, while other parts of the analysis is based on researchers' impressions of whether and how youth feel empowered through their participation in a YouCount case study.

2.5.3 Aspects of youth empowerment in YouCount case studies

The analysis of empowerment processes mentioned in the case summary reports identified the following three aspects of youth empowerment, which are described in the following three paragraphs:

- Empowerment through the case study research design and the use of participatory methods
- Empowerment through knowledge and insight developed by the case studies
- Empowerment beyond the YouCount case studies

Empowerment through the case study research design and the use of participatory methods

Duea et al. (2022) describes how participatory research methods recognizes citizens' contributions to the co-creation of knowledge in a way that also can empower the participants. Several YouCount case summary reports describe how youth have felt empowered through the participatory research design and the participatory methods applied in YouCount. The Austrian case summary report describes that a condition for feeling empowered through participatory research might be the development of a common understanding of *"adequate wordings and framings for certain scientific terms and inquiries".*

The Austrian case report describes that the research design with the youth and their daily life as the centre of the case research makes the young participants feeling empowered. The Austrian research design empowers youth by creating what the Austrian researchers describe as *"safe spaces"* where youth felt *"seen and heard".* Such space can empower youth through development of a collective consciousness because the youth could reflect upon their own experiences together with persons experiencing the same life conditions.

The same mechanism of empowerment through meeting and working with other persons, who experience the same challenge, is expressed in the Hungary A case study where hard-of-hearing youth got the opportunity to meet other young people experiencing hearing challenges.

The Spanish case study also shows how the participatory methods seems to make the youth *"more confident and empowered to share their views during the sessions and to make suggestions for next steps."* Furthermore, the youth

> *"…also felt comfortable during the forums to express their experiences and requests about aspects that they think need to be improved, something particularly important given their legal status as "non-citizens"."* (Spanish case report)

The UK case summary report describes the applied Living Lab (LL) method and its participatory aspects as empowering the youth:

> *"…. possibilities of quality communication were allowed to emerge rather than being resigned to states of simple consultation; and spaces of empowered engagement were provided, rather than dialogues within a framework of disempowered presence."* (UK case report)

Furthermore, it was important that the LL was felt like a *"safe space".*

Furthermore, the UK case study shows what could be called the "productive" role of participatory research:

> *"The young people have not only been able to contribute their voices but, by doing so, have offered unique viewpoints that would not have been considered by the researchers or stakeholders." (UK case report)*

These viewpoints provide real movement and momentum in unpredictable ways, changing the power dynamics and truly empower the Y-CS. As a group, potential moments of disempowerment can instead become empowering.

Empowerment through knowledge and insight developed during the case studies

When trying to obtain youth empowerment through the YouCount case research, the potentials or challenges of the societal frame becomes visible. The Italian case summary report describes how

> *"…most citizens in (….) have a strong sense of disempowerment, discouragement, and feeling that they cannot make a difference, have a say, nor change the circumstances they currently find themselves in." (Italian case report)*

However, during the case research

> *"….young citizens developed further planning skills, as well as a more aware perspective about social inclusion processes and experiences." (Italian case report)*

Furthermore, the Italian report describes how the participation of policy makers in the case research created knowledge amongh those stakeholders, which might create more empowering societal conditions for the youth:

> *"….stakeholders and referents of local associations were able to listen to the experiences and perspectives of the young citizens who directly experienced social inclusion or exclusion processes and to enrich their present and future plans by incorporating them…" (Italian case report)*

The youth felt empowered through the same processes by becoming *"more aware perspective about social inclusion processes and experiences"* (Italian case report)*.*

Like in the Italian case, the societal context in the Lithuanian case study is described as disempowering:

> *"[S]ome specific characteristics which may be typical of a post-socialist society where civil empowerment index is still low."*
> *(Italian case report)*

However, the Lithuanian case research enabled empowering changes, at least at the individual level:

> *"Several things have been changed regarding the empowerment and disempowerment of Y-CSS.   At individual level, Y-CSS recognized their relevance to the local community." (Lithuanian case report)*

In the Austrian case study focusing on young refugees, the youth experienced *"the most empowering moment"* when two politicians declared their solidarity to the youth and *"promised to try to push further regarding refugee friendly policies in the future"*.

The UK case study shows how the youth through the participatory methods also gets an opportunity to collectively express their unease with their present conditions in terms of

> *".... disconnect several young people expressed with 'older' generations in Preston is critical in terms of both feeling a sense of belonging in the wider community, and also in terms of their own sense of empowerment." (UK case report)*

Furthermore, the UK case shows how the collective approach of YouCount can change power dynamics and make *"potential moments of disempowerment .... empowering"*.

The Spanish case study describes that public visibility of the conditions of the youth makes the youth feel empowered:

> *"Having their stories portrayed in the news has also contributed to feeling more empowered, as one of their critics was the lack of positive stories about migrants in the news." (Spanish case report)*

Youth empowerment beyond the YouCount case studies

The case study summary reports mention a few examples of youth empowerment outside the YouCount research by building on empowerment obtained during the YouCount research process.

Youth participating in the UK case study expressed *"[i]ncreased confidence and understanding in the YCS was noted by the young people themselves"* due to the *"…opportunity to talk and to be heard by the many stakeholders at the Living Labs."*

The Hungarian case A with youth with hearing challenges developed an empowering community of research participants:

> *"By meeting other hard of hearing people, they could change information about hearing aid device and get access to more accurate hearing aid adjustments." (Hungary-A case report)*

The Hungarian case B summary report indicates empowerment outside the YouCount case study through the collective production of video about permaculture, because

> *"…production and circulation of participatory moving images (….) provides an empowering tool by generating publicly recognized self-representation for marginal communities that be applied for local communication purposes." (Hungary-B case report)*

2.6 Employability and Work

The main findings from the case reports show that work is one of several dimensions of social inclusion for youth across Europe, or it seen as interconnections of challenges, or attached to place-based challenges. In only a few of the cases employability was approached as the main topic of investigation (Norway, Hungary case A). Here we see that the youth and stakeholders share ideas and opinions on what is needed to ensure social innovation in this field. These suggestions are centring on both attitudes towards youth in (part-time) employment and to regulatory issues that need transformation.

2.6.1 Work as one of several dimensions of social inclusion

In a majority of the cases, we find that young people have experiences with and views on the opportunities and access to work as one of several dimensions that would foster experiences of social inclusion. In some of the cases, it is highlighted as one of several structural challenges, as the unemployment rate is generally high and job opportunities low (UK, Lithuania), or the stereotypes, racism or misrecognition of certain groups in society make it more difficult to find employment (Hungary case B), have access to work permits (Spain, Austria) or to be treated fairly

in the job (Italy). As one young person states on the topic of discrimination and misrecognition towards hard of hearing (HH) youth:

> *"I felt a bit of a disadvantage on my own when I was at a time*
> *when I wanted to look for a job, in Szeged, I didn't have a*
> *degree yet, I felt that when I said I was hard of hearing I felt*
> *that I wasn't going to get this job. And at that time, I felt it was*
> *a very big disadvantage." (R1 Hungary case A)*

2.6.2 Employability as an interconnection of challenges

In the cases where employability – or the lack of it – is seen as interconnections of challenges, we see that youth are struggling to achieve a lifestyle consisting of the basic human needs of safe housing, citizenship status and financial situation. The interconnection of work, wage and purchasing opportunities are leading to uncertainty for the youth in Hungary, as job opportunities are scarce, access to quality education is very limited (case B), and low income reduce housing opportunities (Spain). In Hungary (case B) the youth consider various forms of social exclusion especially racial prejudice and discrimination the most critical issue in relation to social inclusion, also in employment.

> *"If we don't have papers, we can't find work and without work,*
> *we can't pay the rent. We have to add that there aren´t job*
> *opportunities. It is very difficult to find a proper job." (R-YCS,*
> *Spain)*

Young migrants in Italy reported difficulties related to conflicting choices influencing their economic conditions, as they need immediate earnings when arriving to Italy, yet this did not allow them to devote themselves to real inclusion. It also forced them to accept underpaid jobs since this allowed them a first economic entry:

> *"It is not easy to make a young person arriving here*
> *understand that it is better to earn 500 euros per month doing*
> *a training placement than 1,000 euros per month but working*
> *16 hours a day." (Italy)*

In the Danish case, the situation is somewhat different. Here the youth feel conflicted and pressured to get a part-time job in addition to performing well in school. They also feel the additional burden of climate change and that it is their responsibility to solve this problem.

Work as a barrier for social inclusion is also connected to place-based challenges for the youth. Territorial stigma is prevalent in several of the cases, as job seekers' address may prevent them from getting hired (Hungary case B, Italy, Norway). In Lithuania, local communities report a risk that young people move from rural to urban areas due to low job opportunities. Also, the youth feel a need for more meaningful activities in their local area due to lack of work opportunities (Lithuania).

Getting a job does not necessarily in itself contribute to the experience of social inclusion (Norway, Hungary A), although employment may be a factor for inclusion, despite that it is very difficult to get "a proper job with good conditions" (Spain). In Hungary, the hard of hearing youth are discussing self-employment as a solution to the discrimination that exclude them from work life.

> *"I want to work as a self-employed person, that's what I have in mind. ...The main problem should not be that I am hard of hearing. If it's the same situation as at school, being picked on behind my back, I don't want to go through that again. I try to stay away from psychological trauma, and I don't want to fall back into that situation again. (…) But everyone told me to go self-employed because I'll do better with colleagues and hearing." (R5 Hungary case A)*

Another strategy is to accommodate to the majority population, as in the case of study A in Hungary showed that HH people who wear hearing aids, who integrate their studies, who communicate through spoken language, find it easier to get a job, and are less likely to attribute the cause of failure to hearing impairment and integrate better with hearing people. Some of the exclusion factors mentioned were also connected to embodied attributes, like working in noisy environments, online meetings, or the problem of physical work, as this causes heavy sweating, which makes it more difficult to wear the hearing devices (as it becomes more slippery/unstable). This influences their career choices:

> *"I would prefer to work in an office as a designer, but I'm not averse to industry, just with minimal communication. Because in industry you usually work with noisy machines." (R2 Hungary case A)*

Gender becomes an exclusion factor, in the circumstances where work opportunities are currently abundant in the region, but mobility is gendered. Young people, particularly girls, tend to move from job to job, especially when they are hired alone, while local boys often seek employment where their fathers or other relatives are already working (Hungary case B). The girl's "careers" often end up in a deadlock with a return to the village, getting married and staying at home with their kids and education degrees (Hungary case B). In the Norwegian case, the Y-CS found a

gendered territoriality with need for more or better promotion of places where girls can spend their free time outside of home, school, and work. Such places to hang out can be opportunities for networking and might be beneficial when seeking a job. A similar experience was reported in the Swedish case:

> *"The R-YCS girls expressed that it was more difficult for girls to find meaningful public leisure activities. Youth centres were perceived as being places appropriated by boys cultivating macho attitudes." (Sweden)*

In the Norwegian case, entrepreneurship was seen as a way of skipping unwanted, negative social control for girls with minority background.

Bureaucracy and (il)legality where reported as exclusion mechanisms for youth with immigrant background in several of the cases:

> *"Especially on policy level, having to wait for five to six years just to get a residence permit is the most difficult aspect. Legally they are not allowed to work during this period, also a lot of other (voluntary and/or education) offers are not allowed to be taken up on (….) Bureaucracy hurdles when it comes to all kinds of work, education, or formal applications for fundings, residency, etc. was declared a nightmare by almost everyone." (Austria)*

These cases show that lack of citizenship becomes a big hurdle for formal civic participation and hence hinders the youth in taking part in "official" opportunities", and to get to know local people, and thus to form networks to spur their career or get access to higher education. Weil et al. (2005) write on the problems of excluded youth adapting to a working identity. Young people who manage to alternate between unemployment, work and the educational system prolong the traditional adolescent phase, 'literally turning their life into an experience of lifelong learning' (Weil et al., 2005).

2.6.3 Employability as the main topic of investigation on drivers for social inclusion

In contrast to most of the cases in YouCount, the cases of Norway and Hungary case A have youth employability, work and (social) entrepreneurship as their main topic of investigation when looking at drivers for social inclusion together with their groups of young co-researchers. The

Spanish case started out with this as a focus, but later diverged to other topics more pressing to the involved youth. This contributed to an added value; the data that the Y-CS produced was enriched by stories, examples of and suggestions for drivers of social inclusion, and the innovations needed. Here we see that the inclusion factors concentrate on being heard and taken seriously, feeling at home, network and career visions, and the need for a peer community at work. This represents a shift from a technical (provide jobs) to a relational approach (secure quality jobs for youth). The Norwegian case team did a scoping review in 2021 on the topic of youth, employment, social entrepreneurship and inclusion/exclusion in Norway in English and Norwegian, period 2016-2021 (2011-2021), including grey literature and found little peer-reviewed research is done on this topic in this region. In a review of Nordic research literature on inclusion of young people in society, Frøyland et al. (2022) found a general need for more knowledge about how to achieve lasting inclusion in school, work, or society in a Nordic setting.

The Y-CS in the Norwegian case highlighted the significance of being able to ask questions as a crucial aspect of feeling socially included in their workplace:

> *"They saw that it was important for the youths they had interviewed to work amongst people they had something in common with, such as age or same cultural and religious background. It was also important for them to be heard and taken seriously at their job. Some of the youths they interviewed also expressed that they felt as if they were part of a community at their place of work." (researcher, Norway)*

Findings from dialogue forums with youth in Oslo identified seven criteria for quality jobs for youth: I contribute to society; I learn new things; I am listened to, and I get to say my opinion; I collaborate with others and do not just work alone; I get help to build a network and think about my career; I get to know, and I feel community with, my bosses and colleagues; I get to use my energy.

When asked to define the topic of investigation in YouCount, a Y-CS in Austria replied, "social inclusion for me means to feel at home". This view is supported in the case report, how feeling accepted and as a legitimate part of the society is crucial for feeling socially included and thus, for feeling at home in Austria. Further, access to education (language courses), work possibilities and voluntary work shapes the self-efficacy feelings of the youth, and hence fosters own ambitions. This is closely connected to what the Lithuanian case found, where they identified several drivers for social inclusion connected to work; 1) career visions, if they relate to forms of civic participation in society or to opportunities for young people's involvement, activism or specific knowledge in this field, and 2) prospects of employment and the development of social networks and connections, etc. (Lithuania). This is also including peers, as an important inclusion factor at work, is for youth to be more than one young person at their workplace, and generally to have the

opportunity to be social. Youth mentioned in interviews that their job involves working with different people all the time, which makes it challenging to form strong connections with their co-workers. Expressing her thoughts, one interviewee stated, "I believe it would be better to interact with people on multiple occasions to feel more included" (Norway).

> *"They were helpful, if I got stuck on something I could ask*
> *them for help. Officially, I worked in [company name] in*
> *Budakalász for a month and a half, no problem. They asked*
> *me if I needed any help, but I didn't. I managed fine.*
> *Colleagues were also helpful (…) It was a positive experience".*
> *(R5 Hungary case A)*

The proposed social innovations originating from YouCount data material represents a shift from today's more technical approach (how many youth jobs, the level of the hourly salary) to a more substantial, relational, and emotional approach, where we focus on how youth feel when they are working (to combat age discrimination, patronizing or adulto-centric practices, etc.). One interviewee that worked part-time in the youth council in a local public library said that he felt heard by his adult colleagues and emphasized the importance of their input in decision-making processes, stating,

> *"Our job is to make choices. We must make choices for*
> *organizing events. The adults here need to consider our*
> *thoughts if they want to achieve things." (Norway)*

Here three cultural institutions, in cooperation with the local business association, have together hired twenty local young people that work on events in the three institutions and beyond in the Bjørvika area in the capitol Oslo (Norway). Among the social innovation ideas reported from the Norwegian case is the co-creating of a youth social inclusion "label" in the window for employers that have youth at work, to design a dedicated job platform for youth, or to secure tax relief for companies that hire youth actively. In Spain, the Y-CS suggested to introduce a social register, regulate rent prices, especially those that are close to the capital (San Sebastián), as they see it as a city of opportunities (Spain).

On the regulatory side, the cases suggest to create a system where action is taken when something happens in a youth job, youth can report issues, and a response is provided (Norway), or introduce new means for policy: more language courses, more work opportunities, more voluntary opportunities and less bureaucracy/waiting times (Austria). In general, the cases found that there is a need for more opportunities for young people including work experience and jobs.

2.6.4 Conflicting commitments: Work and CSS

When it comes to the situation for the Y-CS themselves, they were subject to conflicting commitments throughout the project period, where their employment diverged their resources and interest from YouCount activities:

> *"There are some young people who have found a job, and although they cannot attend the work sessions, we value this fact very positively." (Spain)*

The UK case adds to this:

> *"The lives of young people are often complex, with different commitments including education and employment – thus reaching and engaging with young people has been challenging at times." (UK)*

Priorities on time use is precarious for youth because they both need to take care of their education, friends, and leisure jobs.

> *"Therefore, they see everything they do besides jobs and education as precious time." (Denmark)*

Another perspective on this is to view youth citizen social science as work, like the Norwegian case did – and the UK case argues for:

> *"Financial incentives may have had benefits for this group: Encourage engagement and commitment (both in the initial engagement and in encouraging longer-term commitment), empowerment and demonstrating value, and to promote a culture of equality within the whole YouCount team." (UK)*

They argue that providing appealing incentives would build rapport with the Y-CS

> *"…by showing genuine care about their lives outside the project, fostering a sense of belonging, and valuing their perspectives and experiences." (UK)*

2.7 Social Inclusion in CSS

> *"… When you are socially included you are part of a community. You are not walking the road alone. You get a feeling of joy and safety, but also excitement – you feel welcomed." (C-YCS, Norway)*

Becoming a young citizen social scientist is potentially an inclusion process in the making, from the very first acts of recruitment, through the training exercises, data collection and analysis of the results, until dissemination and communication of results and experiences to meet stakeholders and a wider audience (Hagen & Lorenzen, forthcoming). When the topic of investigation is social inclusion of young people in Europe, a double mental process occurs among all the involved in the co-created research; as the case teams evolved and matured, the young co-researchers started to question the premise of the terminology itself. Should we call it social inclusion, or is that a term that implies that someone is excluded in the first place? And who gets to decide who is in or out?

From the case reports, we see that Y-CSS as social inclusion are concentrated around three spheres; 1) the CSS space, co-created through the in-betweens of 2) the CSS activities of research, and emerging from this, 3) the meta-level reflections of what social inclusion is and who gets to decide what questions we ask, and who defines the terminology that functions as a starting point for research.

2.7.1 The co-created CSS space as social inclusion

When the young co-researchers interviewed other youth, in their pursuit of what the local drivers for social inclusion where, insights emerged on the importance of safe and trusting spaces for youth, and how repetition and the slow building of long-term relations are crucial factors for feeling well.

> *"The youth brought up that the same people come to spaces like Youth clubs regularly, which contributed to feeling safe and comfortable because of the regular presence of familiar faces. A participant drew a parallel with the YouCount meetings, stating "I feel more comfortable with you [researchers and other R-YCS], because I've met you multiple times"." (researchers, Norway)*

The researchers in the Spanish case reflect on how the YCS

> *"…are grateful that the sessions are dynamic and that a pleasant and trusting atmosphere has been created, accompanied by catering and being in a place such as the university, prestigious places in our societies."* (researchers, Spain)

This emphasis on the physical, material, and sensory aspects of co-creating safe spaces, also came to the surface at the first consortium meeting of YouCount, in Copenhagen in June 2022. The importance of travelling together was brought up in subsequent discussions and was also reflected in the interviews with other youth in the local community in Oslo where they emphasized the notion of travelling together and explained that

> *"Because we feel, when you travel together, no matter where you travel to, you come closer together."* (Norway)

A highlighted aspect in the discussions with the YCS towards the end of the project period was the need for more consortium meetings.

> *"Meeting other people, other cases and other working methods has helped them to increase their level of motivation and to stay involved in the project."* (Spain)

Not only meeting other youth, but also meeting youth with a similar background language-, cultural- or religious-wise, across nationalities, also seemed to make a difference for the YCS when they were included in the consortium meetings, and this resonated with informant statements from interviews with other multicultural youth.

> *"Additionally, one mentioned that travelling with someone who shares the same cultural background allows them to be themselves and talk freely about anything."* (Norway)

The safe space created when the researchers secured time for the YCS to just be, to joke around – and to share food together, were anticipated from the start of the project, and thus included in the budget. But still, the effect of this seemed to have more of a magnitude than expected.

> *"Planning and conducting the two living labs taught us that we need to include the R-YCS in the preparation and the implementation of such facilitated events. They need to have an actual say and a designed role before and during the event, in order to feel included. Time is a main factor here, and taking time turned out to be a positive driver for youth social inclusion."* (Norway)

When organising the second Living Lab session, the Norwegian team reflects that

> "We met earlier than last time to have time for last minute preparations and a burger for the research team and YCS. This food was important for everyone. We had fun preparing the plan for the evening with the YCS. The YCS needs time also for joking around and talk about other things, so it's good with extra time." (Norway)

2.7.2 The CSS activities of research as social inclusion

> "... I feel included when I'm doing something uncomfortable or new, and the people around me support me – then I feel socially included. When they listen to what I have to say, and I listen to them." (YCS, Norway)

The case reports show that CSS as social inclusion is achieved by the methods and approaches used, the attitude or expectancy that YCS become change agents, and work collaboratively with the researchers on an equal level, as well as the importance of CSS in creating new roles and additional responsibilities.

The Spanish researchers reflect on this:

> "Inclusivity is approached by putting the R-YCS at the centre of the dialogue forum. The design takes care of them being active actors in the session by organising the forum according to their views, giving them a role in presenting some contents, and taking care that their views and opinions are taken into account during the session." (Spain)

These reflections are mostly one-sided, done by the researchers;

> "(...) the empowerment of the youth when they get involved in analysing the information and presenting it to the stakeholders and wider society. It makes them feel that their voice is important, thus enhancing their sense of belonging. It also makes them feel that they can be agents of change." (Spain)

But the case reports also show how the youth reflects similarly:

> *"I would like to participate in more citizen science projects because there are many things to improve, and we can contribute to them." (R-YCS, Spain)*

The UK case reports on positive outcomes for youth of getting involved in Youth Councils and other participation mechanisms, also in CSS:

> *"A statement by a YCS, which was read by his friend, highlighted what he saw as the 'uniqueness' of YouCount where young people and researchers worked on an equal level collaboratively to tackle issues and, in some cases, identified the same challenges facing young people in different countries." (UK)*

They added:

> *"Each 'voice' contained powerful messages about moving forward beyond the life of the LL and the YouCount project." (UK)*

We see also that the new roles and additional responsibilities of YCS, includes the opportunity to talk and to be heard by the many stakeholders at the Living Labs, and how this was empowering to the youth.

> *"The adult stakeholders commented on the increased confidence and agency that they observed in the young people and flagged this up as one of the highlights of the Living Lab process." (UK)*

In the UK case, the reported shift in self-confidence is obvious:

> *"By the time the project had reached the third Living Lab, several YCSs had presented to the entire audience of stakeholders and were confident in their deliberation. Alongside this, the YCS started to be empowered to take on additional responsibilities without being requested to." (UK)*

This is reinforced by the report from the Italian case, who states

> *"R-YCSs felt gradually more comfortable and confident in their role of facilitators, becoming more autonomous in carrying out activities and tasks." (Italy)*

Lastly, the increased skills, social capital and new connections arising from involvement as a YCS, seems to be comparatively important in all the case reports.

> *"The youth see the YouCount project as a good opportunity to develop, in addition to their social capital, their communication and participatory skills. (…) [The youth] say that they are having the opportunity to get in direct contact with people with whom they would not normally have that opportunity."* *(Spanish case report)*

The same applies for the Italian case:

> *"Being C-YCSs in YouCount allowed them to come in contact with experiences they would have not met since they were not involved in local associations nor engaged for the promotion of social inclusion (…) (and) working together with professional researchers and referents of associations allowed local youths too to develop their planning and organizational skills."* *(Italy)*

The Austrian case reports that

> *"…reflecting together on one's own experiences, some of which were similar, and sharing those very experiences with outside people, seemed to be an empowering experience for all of them [the YCS]."* *(Austria)*

A majority of participants in both the Hungarian cases

> *"…evaluated their involvement in the research process primarily as an opportunity for learning new things, gaining new social connections and receive recognition."*

> *"It's probably the thing about being included in something, with someone who knows so much about the subject, and your opinion is taken seriously. It is a lot of knowledge that you feel you can contribute with"* *(R, Interview 7, Hungary-A case report)*

The continuation of engagement after the project ends is highlighted by the youth and the arenas for meeting other youth across cases. Another element of CSS being a social inclusion practice in itself, is the inclusion of youth in co-creating the tools for data collection and strategies for recruiting and engaging and analysing the results.

2.7.3 The meta-level reflections of what social inclusion *is*

Lastly, the maturity of experienced YCS brings forth new kinds of reflections, about the terminology itself and the role of the youth. The Danish case reports how doing the research for real, is particularly including:

> *"Applying research methods to a natural science class can be inclusive. The students found it engaging to be part of an actual project, contributing their knowledge, and working with researchers. (…) [And] feeling socially included creates a feeling of being accepted and recognized. Involving the students in actual projects and letting them define and develop problem statements and solutions make them feel heard and seen." (Denmark)*

This inclusion also seem to lead the involved youth from a place of increasing confidence to a leading position. In the UK case, they report that

> *"…the YCS have grown more confident, both within the group and in approaching and discussing findings with stakeholders. In turn, they are motivated to see the results of their work achieved through action and have certainly become active citizens (…) The conversations taking place within the Living Labs were not only young person-focused but young person-led." (UK)*

Finally, this confidential, youth-led practice of CSS, seem to bring out independent, critical voices among the involved youth, where they question the terminology itself, and also proposes alternative words and meanings to what it is to be socially included.

> *"With reference to the Living Lab experience, according to participants the sharing of ideas and viewpoints represented not only a first concrete activity to begin to co-construct a different vision of social inclusion, but also an expression of the process of social inclusion itself. (…) With specific reference to the social inclusion of youths with migratory backgrounds, the word inclusion was questioned by Italian youths because, according to them, it referred to an assimilative concept rather than to an intercultural dialogue; the term exchange was proposed as an alternative." (Italy)*

This proposed "vocabulary of inclusion" have references to the words the youth reckoned as more appropriate to the topic after the discussions held during the previous Living Lab meetings:

> *"To gather these words, participants stood in a circle along*
> *with R-YCSs and in turn one participant said a word to be*
> *included in this vocabulary, and then passed the turn to*
> *another member who had to choose another word, and so on."*
> *(Italy)*

The words that emerged from the dialogical intervention in the Italian case were: exchange, friendship, discovery, entanglement, network, equal opportunity, exploration, added value, interaction, commitment, together, dialogue, union, storytelling, dreams, desire, shared experience, community, openness, doors, international, knowledge, comparison, connection, co-design, active participation, construction, curiosity, experimentation, values, culture, active listening, knowledge, awareness, process, goal, journey, discovery, evolution, emotion, justice, fair future, civilization, experience, root, growth.

Finally, this leads us to recognise what was explicitly stated by one YCS in the Norwegian case:

> *"In an interview with a stakeholder in March 2022, one of our*
> *youths said that she always wanted to be involved in research*
> *or science but that no researcher looks like she does (with*
> *hijab and dark skin) and therefore she lost interest. She added*
> *that having grown up in (multicultural) Grønland, she felt that*
> *research has been used against and not with "them', with CSS*
> *she got interested again." (Norway)*

This lack of representation in science, by young people with a different background, but also looks, is a driver of social exclusion in the scientific sphere.

2.7.4 Creativity as social inclusion in Y-CSS

All the 10 cases in YouCount have incorporated creative and arts-based methodology, tools and approaches in some form or another throughout the co-research process with the participating youth. Yet, they have done it in very different ways, building upon their own, local expertise and diverse research backgrounds.

We find that creativity is present in three different forms; 1) creativity as methodology, mainly connected to the planning, execution, and analysis of the dialogue forums, 2) creativity as process, connected to how the researchers have sought to spur engagement in the co-research teams, and

3) creativity as output, connected to how the analysis and dissemination of the research results are presented to stakeholders or to a broader audience. All three forms of creativity functioned as inclusion drivers between the young citizen social scientists and the professional researchers teams, through building trusting relations over time, a recurring atmosphere of safety and empowerment through embodied, sensuous, and aesthetic participation in dialogue.

Creativity as methodology – in dialogue forums

The Lithuanian case have actively used design thinking as a methodology to inform how they co-created their group exercises and dialogue forums (Lithuania), while the Norwegian team built their approach to dialogue forums on a seminar with a local artist who introduced infographics as a theoretically informed approach to visualize analysis of data material in ways that show the social disparity and inequality of race and class relations. The Danish team used gamification methods to create engagement among the students in the collaborating high school, while the team in Italy based their dialogue forum on photovoice (Wang & Burris 1997).

The Hungarian cases used arts based participatory action research as their outset for forming the engagement with youth and stakeholders in dialogue forums, and in Hungary case B, participatory video making exercises were employed to enhance the documentation of the innovation process from the perspective of the local youth. To find research questions, the researchers followed a zooming in approach, to avoid imbuing research questions by the researcher but rather develop what they call an "aesthetic space", like they do in participatory theatre (Boal 2006) and arts-based research (McNiff 2008).

Creativity as process – and having fun

> *"From our collaboration with the local high school, we can see from the data that the youth's interaction with analog tools sparked their creativity. The students appreciated getting away from their computers and screens, which they are used to." (Denmark)*

The co-creation processes with the young citizen social scientists were either focused on the embodied experience, using storytelling, personas, empathy maps (Lithuania, Hungary B), role-playing, dramatic exercises (Lithuania, Denmark, Hungary B, Spain), competitions, games, innovation rally and play (Norway, Denmark, Lithuania), or on visualisations (all cases). The visual techniques deployed ranged from photo elicitation, use of spider diagram, collaborative mind-mapping. or digital jamboards, to the creation of video narratives and co-creation of a sci-fi film (Hungary case B). Some cases actively used "tactile" versions of visualisation, like splotting (Hagen & Osuldsen 2021), embroidery, posters, cards, or prototyping; drawings, models, do-it-yourself

thoughts, graphic illustration, and general arts- and crafts exercises (Norway, Lithuania, Hungary, Denmark, Hungary A, B).

In the Danish case, several of the Y-CS reflected on creativity directly, pointing particularly to these as embodied experiences:

> *"It's been exciting and a different way of being taught, which is good for me, and getting out and being creative, instead of just sitting on your flat ass." (S, Observation L, Denmark)*

> *"It was nice to roleplay persons that you normally hate and try to feel like a cool capitalist. It gave something different to the teaching. And all the discussion elements were very nice, I think that is also what makes us remember the collaboration at this point, because we discussed so much." (V, Interview 7, Denmark)*

Creativity as process – and product

Finally, several of the cases produced creative outputs from the co-creative research processes. In the UK case, the Y-CS and researchers designed "listening events", an idea suggested by the youths, with stalls to discuss with students and other community stakeholders, while in four of the cases the teams co-produced various forms of exhibitions from their results and preliminary findings (Norway, UK, Italy, Denmark). Also, the products that came out of co-creative processes included film, photo & video outputs (UK, Italy, Hungary B, Norway), analogue design games (Denmark) and physical maps of the digital YouCount app content (Norway).

Among the reflections on creativity in the case reports, we find also quotes from stakeholders, like one teacher involved in the Danish case reflecting on the learning process:

> *"I have learnt a lot through the process, and I am very inspired by your creative way of working, that is something we do not have time for in the teaching profession." (L, Interview 9, Denmark)*

In the Italian case, the researchers reflect on the mutual connection between creative processes as both drivers and effects of social inclusion:

> *"So many prejudices are unconscious, so working on them, paying attention to them, is also important. Sometimes they stem from lack of knowledge, so the encounter with different others can help us break down these prejudices and*

> *consequently open up more to the others, with incredible implications also on our creativity and ability to listen to them, because opening our minds also means learning to stop and think a little bit outside those culturally constituted patterns. All this generates just a positive collaboration, in general."*
> *(Italy)*

2.8 Young people's suggestions to better means and policies that would increase young people's inclusion

Of central importance in the YouCount project was foregrounding young people's views and ideas about social inclusion. Young people's suggestions about how their participation, sense of belonging and citizenship could be increased are summarised under three main headings and include suggestions to increase collaboration between young people and other stakeholders; more and better youth-friendly opportunities created where they can feel accepted, including meaningful employment; and supporting and encouraging young people's participation in local democratic processes ensuring that under-represented voices are heard. Practice and policy recommendations highlighted should be addressed not only at country level, but also at the international level by the European Union.

2.8.1 Increase Inter-generational dialogue

Involving young people directly in local practice developments and policy making by ensuring they are present and collaborating alongside adult stakeholders was a common theme (UK, Spain, Hungary B, Italy, Sweden). Young people called for involvement in planning and project developments, especially when these were specific to young people as well as general urban planning (Denmark, UK). They suggested that better collaboration with young people could be achieved by planners working with existing youth groups or organisations:

> *"The youth would have a higher voice if it came from an association or a larger group. The more tangible data and documentation they have, the better chance they have."*
> *(Observation D, Denmark)*

This may require further investment in youth associations, committees or NGOs addressing youth issues, to support this valuable expertise in effective engagement of young people. It includes specialist groups, for example, those groups supporting asylum seekers and refugees so that young people can be supported to be alongside decision makers to identify what needs to change

(Italy, Spain, Austria). Collaborations with young disabled people are also vital to increase awareness regarding their needs and what they think supports better social inclusion:

> *"We need many programmes for hearing people, where*
> *hearing people can learn about the problems of the hearing*
> *impaired and their daily lives." (R11, Hungary A)*

Additionally, better collaboration was called for among local government and civil society to ensure "proper communication" and inclusivity (Italy, UK). A sense of responsibility amongst young people and real co-creation was imagined through such dialogue taking place (Lithuania). Finally, young people felt that creating opportunities for multi-stakeholder collaborations would increase young people's trust in public authorities and would positively affect their sense of belonging in the wider community.

2.8.2 Create Social Inclusion Opportunities

Improving existing opportunities for social inclusion was a common theme across the cases. Examples of the kinds of opportunities that needed to be considered were more training and youth-related groups/spaces where they could learn new skills (Denmark, Austria, UK); more language courses (Austria, Spain, Italy); volunteering opportunities (Austria); more social projects involving young people including shared cultural events (Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Sweden); more political and citizenship training and opportunities to engage in politics and leadership (UK); and more youth-orientated job opportunities (Norway).

Creating work opportunities and other facilitators of financial independence included more accessible access to the labour market (Austria, Spain, Italy, Norway; UK); easier access to work permits (Austria, Spain); recognising learning from other countries (Austria); possibilities to open bank accounts prior to formal citizenship (Austria); opportunities for training and capital funding to start their own businesses (Hungary B); and access to land for farming (Hungary B).

Increasing young people's awareness of what opportunities currently exist represented another key area for improvement (Austria, Denmark, Italy, UK, Lithuania). It was noted that young people learned about initiatives through stakeholder collaborations at the YouCount Living Labs (UK, Austria). All these examples suggest finding better communication systems that will reach more young people, including using media channels such as Instagram or TikTok.

2.8.3 Amplify Youth Voices

One message that was loud and clear across the different groups of young people and the cases was that young people want more opportunities for their voices to be heard and listened to in policy making. Young people from different backgrounds want to be involved in policy making forums and for their suggestions to influence policies that affect their day-to-day lives and their communities. Their participation and voice could also be reflected through voting rights for young people some young people suggested (UK, Austria). Another important element of the kind of participation sought was to allow and trust young people to lead designated spaces designed for young people (Denmark, UK), thus, providing opportunities for young people to direct and manage their spaces and projects. Moreover, when adults manage places and activities for young people, these should still be attractive to young people and in line with their needs and interests (Denmark, Lithuania). Meaningful youth participation in research and developments was important and might include rewards or incentives to encourage better youth participation and give them the confidence that their voices will be heard (Lithuania). Finally, it should be acknowledged that the YouCount project had created a platform for hearing young people's voices, and some urged that such initiatives be sustained and further developed in the future.

3. Analysis of Positive Drivers to Build a Psycho-social Model for Youth Social Inclusion

This chapter and its sub-chapters report on the cross-case analyses about the drivers for youths' social inclusion, up to proposing a psychosocial model of youth social inclusion processes. The thematic analysis was run by the two professional researchers from UNINA using the texts provided by case researcher in the case study report template. Each researcher read the materials several times and generated initial codes to label the extracts first; then, each researcher grouped the codes into potential macro-themes and themes, which were defined and labeled to clarify their meanings (see Table 4); the macro-themes and themes were discussed together in order to reach a consensus agreement.

Table 4: Macro-themes and themes emerging from the thematic analysis

Macro-themes	Themes
Key features of social inclusion	Reciprocity, defragmentation, and "interdependent transformation" Communication as a key issue
Contextual threats to social inclusion	Services, policies, and bureaucracy Youths' relationships with Institutions Do not underestimate the impact of basic rights Language can be tricky
Psychosocial aspects of social inclusion	Stereotypes and prejudices as an "invisible boundary" Trust as a requirement for inclusive communities Valuing everyone's characteristics and contributions Open-minded attitude and empathy as paths to overcome mental barriers Taking and sharing responsibilities
The role of socialization processes in community building	Safety allows to build a trustworthy community Shared activities can glue the local social fabric Shared places as flywheels for community experience
Local relationships as proxies for social inclusion	The role of proximal social contexts Local projects as flywheels for social inclusion
Youths' advocacy, empowerment, and "horizontal citizenship" to foster social inclusion	

Each of the following sub-chapters will respectively address one macro-theme and its sub-themes; the last sub-chapter will describe the overall emerging model.

3.1 Key features of social inclusion

The first macro-theme was labelled *Key features of social inclusion*, as it gathers the main characteristics of this phenomenon according to YouCount participants' perspective. Two main themes emerged: (a) *reciprocity, defragmentation, and "interdependent transformation"*, and (b) *communication as a key issue*.

3.1.1 Reciprocity, defragmentation, and "interdependent transformation"

Collaboration among community members is reckoned as a path to defragment current community settings in order to make them change towards more inclusive assets – with reference to this, they talk about an "*interdependent transformation*" (Hungary – case A). However, as previously mentioned in the analysis about the meanigns of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1), participants mention that for this to happen, it takes all the involved social actors – that is, the minority and the majority – to change and reciprocally adapt. In this vein, the relational dimension of social inclusion is underlined, requiring a shift from the widespread welfarist perspective to the framing of social inclusion as a "*two-way process*" (Hungary – case A; Pienimäki, 2020; Sampedro & Camarero, 2018).

3.1.2 Communication as a key issue

Being able to properly communicate allows to establish and maintain social relationships as well as to gather the needed information. Conversely, not feeling comfortable when communicating with others can lead to frustration and (self-)isolation, hindering participation and intergroup social contacts – be it due to contingent circumstances (e.g., wearing facemasks, plastic screens dividing from the interlocutor), to the characteristics of the surrounding social context (e.g., an "*abusive, judgmental school environment*", Hungary – case A), to the social dynamics played out, or to the personal characteristics of the involved social actors. This can weaken people's sense of belonging to that community at last. Conversely, improving accessibility and communication possibilities for everyone in daily social contexts could foster more inclusive life spaces.

3.2 Contextual threats to social inclusion

The second macro-theme referred to the role of macro- and meso-systems in posing obstacles to social inclusion processes; it was labelled *Contextual* threats *to social inclusion*. It includes four

themes, respectively labelled (a) *services, policies, and bureaucracy*, (b) *do not underestimate the impact of basic rights*, (c) *language can be tricky*, and (d) *youths' relationships with Institutions*.

3.2.1 Services, policies, and bureaucracy

Local services, policies, and bureaucracy processes can play a role in sustaining social exclusion processes and experiences. The lack of access to local services may be due to several reasons across cases and countries (e.g., asylum status and document-related issues, lack of citizenship, language/communication challenges, racism, prejudices); however, YouCount participants show a common wish for better and more welcoming services and policies, which could make it smoother for them to access the local opportunities and to benefit from their basic rights (e.g., to obtain citizenship, to get a regular job, to open a bank account) – as already mentioned in chapter 2.2.7. In their opinion, faster, more transparent, and fairer procedures may allow faster and more effective social inclusion processes: "*they complain about the difficulty involved in complying with all the requirements established by the administration, as well as the length of time it takes to process the documentation, which can even take up to two years, which means that there is a long period of time in which they find themselves in an uncertain situation*" (Spain). Furthermore, youths underline that the requirements from local administrations often create a dog-biting-its-own-tail-situation – e.g., "*while one of the requirements is to get a job with a one-year full-time contract, they are not eligible because they do not have their papers in order, and at the same time they do not have their papers in order because they do not have a job with a one-year full-time contract*" (Spain). The constraints posed by policies and bureaucracy often pose youths in the position of "*working without a contract, in the black economy and under negative conditions*" (Spain), which implies low incomes, increased daily challenges, and bad chances to get decent housing conditions in turn – as also mentioned in the employability analysis (see chapter 2.6): "*if we don't have papers, we can't find work and without work, we can't pay the rent*" (Spain). In the same vein, the constraints posed by services (e.g., lack of proper transportation connecting the city center and the surrounding areas, with most services only being in the city center) may represent threats to them feeling at home too – as also mentioned in the analysis about the meanings of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1).

3.2.2 Do not underestimate the impact of basic rights

As already mentioned in the results about the meanings of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1), seeing their rights guaranteed is a main concern for young people – even more when they have migratory backgrounds, as it was the case of some YouCount participants. Not assuring basic rights (e.g., to vote, to work, to achieve adequate housing conditions) to everyone can hinder some people from actively taking part to community life – both with reference to their social, civic,

and political participation and to them having time and money to invest in leisure activities and in attending social gatherings and other kinds of events. In this, they reckon "*political and historical circumstances*" (Italy) among the causes of inappropriate policies. This can have an impact on their social life too, since taking part in social activities and gatherings – be them leisure or work ones – could represent a strategy to "*get to know locals*" (Austria), enlarge their social capital, and feel part of the surrounding community.

3.2.3 Language can be tricky

Mainstream language(s) can play a role in fostering or rather undermining social inclusion processes and experiences too. Indeed, on the one hand youths "*emphasized the importance of mastering the local language for social inclusion*" (Austria) as it allows to share experiences, perspectives, thoughts, emotions; however, on the other hand, they also reckoned how language can represent a threat to social inclusion in different ways. First, "*speaking different languages can represent a concrete barrier to communication opportunities and mutual understanding*" (Italy); further, even among people speaking the same language it is possible that they refer to different frames of meanings, which could still make it difficult for them to refer to common dimensions. Second, the mainstream daily language may rely on some non-inclusive expressions, which may generate feelings bringing to (self-)ghettoization processes. Last, language can represent a barrier to social inclusion also when people do not express their language-related difficulties because they are afraid of getting stigmatized; however, this exposes them to the risk of communication mismatches – e.g., if hard of hearing people "*don't hear and react to somebody's calling, when facing to another direction*" (Hungary case A) they may be considered unpolite should the interlocutor not know their communication needs. Altogether, all these possible sources of misunderstanding could undermine trust processes within the community, weakening and fragmenting its social fabric.

3.2.4 Youths' relationships with Institutions

Across countries, a widespread lack of trust and sense of abandonment emerge with reference to youths' relationship with local Institutions, with youths describing Institutional referents as not deserving trust, not interested in citizens' actual needs, and not being able to protect and secure citizens in the area. However, youths also acknowledge that Institutions should rather be responsible for the detection of paths to facilitate youths' engagement in their local contexts.

3.3 Psychosocial aspects of social inclusion

The third macro-theme, *Psychosocial aspects of social inclusion*, includes the psychosocial dimensions and processes which make a community inclusive and sustain inclusive processes. Specifically, this theme refers to (a) *stereotypes and prejudices as an "invisible boundary"*, (b) *trust as a requirement for inclusive communities*, (c) *valuing everyone's* characteristics *and contributions*, (d) *open-minded attitude and empathy as paths to overcome mental barriers*, and (e) *taking and sharing responsibilities*.

3.3.1 Stereotypes and prejudices as an "invisible boundary"

The stereotypes and prejudices connoting a given culture and/or social context can represent mental barriers hindering social inclusion. Indeed, YouCount participants acknowledge that misrepresentations, stereotypes, and prejudices can represent an "*invisible boundary*" (Italy) to reciprocal knowledge and acknowledgment since they provide individuals with predefined "*frames of meanings*" (Italy) that are not based on others' actual characteristics – be them related to ethnicity, gender, age, or other. Living in a social context where misrepresentations, stereotypes, and prejudices exist implies the risk for some social groups not to have access to decent housing (e.g., due to racism attitudes), to be excluded from some social groups, not to feel heard and accepted by local institutions, and to be victims of verbal, psychological, and physical attacks – that is, it implies the risk of some basic rights being violated for some social groups – as also mentioned in the analysis about the meanings of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1). Furthermore, feeling object of stereotypes and prejudices can make individuals feel forced to act in a given way, not making them feel heard with specific reference to their actual needs. Conversely, easing stereotypes and prejudices may bring about higher levels of self-esteem, strengthen individuals' efforts in starting new social interactions, sustain their ability to build strong social ties.

Specifically, the role of local media in sustaining misrepresentations, stereotypes, and prejudices is underlined by youths, who highlight that media are used to provide a "*one-sided reporting*" (Austria), meaning that they only spread the views and perspectives of the majority group. Furthermore, media usually tend to emphasize negative pieces of information and representations, while positive ones are often untold; thus, spreading positive information about minority groups through local media may represent a strategy to prompt more awareness overcome stereotypes and prejudices according to youths.

3.3.2 Trust as a requirement for inclusive communities

Participants reckon trust as "*the main enabler for feeling a sense of belonging within a community*" (UK), since it allows to overcome interpersonal differences, and as a driver for social participation and interpersonal contacts. According to participants, trust despite interpersonal differences can be developed through intergroup meaningful (that is, in which each involved actor is visible and recognized with its peculiarities), direct contacts and can be built upon individuals belonging to the same community and sharing the same spaces and spending time together for daily activities; it can in turn sustain social cohesion and support within the community, as well as prosocial behaviors among its members. In this vein, YouCount is also acknowledged by the involved youths as an opportunity for spaces where to come in contact with different people and social groups with whom they would not usually have the opportunity to interact – as already mentioned in chapter 2.7.

3.3.3 Valuing everyone's characteristics and contributions

The "*one-size-fits-for-all approach*" (Hungary – case A) does not work when it comes to foster social inclusion. Indeed, it takes to pay attention to others as individuals who are bearers of peculiarities, skills, abilities, as well as specific culture, values, and beliefs to make everyone feel heard, seen, and included in the community. Conversely, when such attention is lacking, social contexts may provide barriers to social inclusion processes – such as prejudices and stereotypes. In this vein, participants reckon the need to move "*from a welfarist perspective – in which migrants are perceived as in need of assistance – to a* relational one" (Italy), based on the idea that interpersonal differences do not represent threats to societal cohesion but rather opportunities for enrichment for all the involved actors: "*hence, the importance of recognizing not only the needs but also the unique characteristics and richness of the other is highlighted, promoting a bidirectional enrichment. In this vein, it becomes relevant also to co-design the services and activities aimed at supporting social inclusion processes*" (Italy).

However, YouCount participants also reckon a sort of "*cultural unpreparedness, that is, the more general lack of skills to welcome and understand others – even more when they are bearers of different values, perspectives, cultures – and the presence of prejudices and stereotypes*" (Italy). In this vein, education towards differences and reciprocal understanding can represent the main path enabling more attention to everyone's characteristics. Furthermore, YouCount participants highlight that respecting individual characteristics and interpersonal differences without assimilating them also means respecting and accepting everyone's pace when working in groups – e.g., having an "*oppressive expectation*" (Hungary – case A) about obtaining the same level of participation and involvement from each participant of a working group in each moment seems unrealistic and forcing the group in this sense would mean not respecting interpersonal differences.

3.3.4 Open-minded attitudes and empathy as paths to overcome mental barriers

Openness to differences, solidarity, and being ready to help others are identified by participants as tools for understanding others' feelings and experiences, thus overcoming interpersonal differences, mental barriers (e.g., stereotypes and prejudices), and defensive attitudes; moreover, getting to know different cultures, perspectives, and traditions represent sources of personal and collective enrichments for all the involved social actors. However, an open social climate requires reciprocal efforts and proactive attitudes from all the involved social actors. Again, education towards differences and empathy are consistently seen as paths towards a stronger sense of belonging, since perceiving others' openness, curiosity, and interest towards oneself foster the feeling of being included in that social group. Furthermore, an open, respectful, and democratic social climate can allow real participation in local social contexts up to bring about more inclusiveness.

3.3.5 Taking and sharing responsibilities

Responsibility-taking and -sharing processes are described by youths as drivers for feeling included and for ownership specifically. Indeed, being able to take responsibilities for one's community of belonging and to share them with other community members when needed can make individuals feel accepted, that they can have a say, and that their contributions to the group are valued and valorized by others, promoting their civically engaged behaviors. Moreover, as a side advantage, this brings individuals towards further social interactions and connections, thus gluing the local social fabric and making them feel more involved in the community they belong to.

3.4 The role of socialization processes in community building

The fourth macro-theme refers to the role of socialization processes in building cohesive and inclusive communities. Such macro-theme is labelled *The role of socialization processes in community building*, and it refers to three main issues influencing the unfolding of such processes, that is (a) *safety allows to build a trustworthy community*, (b) *shared activities can glue the local social fabric*, and (c) *shared places as flywheels for community experience*.

3.4.1 Safety allows to build a trustworthy community

Safe contexts and environments are needed to create trustworthy communities. Differently from what emerged from the analysis about the meanings of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1) and from those about the YouCount app study (see chapter 2.2.2), safety is here meant in a more psychosocial sense, that is, as feeling that one's ideas, values, needs, and beliefs can be expressed without being judged, or that it is possible to ask for help when in need. Specifically, according to youths, safety can be created through (a) providing information and guidance about the available opportunities and resources, (b) dedicating time and patience to others and to their needs, and (c) structuring social situations so that everyone can take part and have adequate understanding of what is said and what is happening. Thus, safe spaces can develop trust and ease uncertainties, allowing to take part in shared activities and to attend shared places. In this vein, safety can represent a driver for collaboration.

Youths specify that the organization of time and space is a powerful tool to prompt safety since an inclusive context needs to provide enough time and an organized space so that everyone can understand what is being said or is happening. In this vein, since not feeling safe in a social context or not feeling able to properly understand what is happening can lead to (self-)isolation, time is felt as an aspect of power: "*those who can give time, have the power*" (Hungary – case A); "*only by the way we structure the places we can include or exclude people from the flow of communication*" (Hungary case A).

3.4.2 Shared activities can glue the local social fabric

As emerged in chapter 2.3 on social inclusion opportunities, shared activities can "*create community*" (Denmark) as they represent moments of socialization, confrontation, and conviviality, allowing individuals to get to know each other better and to start caring about others' needs. Overall, shared activities and a shared focus can bring community members together despite interpersonal differences, creating value for the community. This allows them to create a shared pool of perspectives, values, and ideologies, to reckon diversities and accept them based on the shared broader context. In youths' perspective, getting involved in shared activities along with other community members can prompt feelings of safety, citizenship, social capital, a responsible way of living together and sharing contexts, knowledge of the surrounding context, social cohesion, and social inclusion at last; conversely, a lack of opportunities to spend time together and get involved in shared activities can bring about the fragmentation of local social fabric since individuals may be more prone to keep being involved with their social groups and may not be triggered to come in contact with others bearing different values and ideas. Youths also highlight the potential role of local associations in this since their projects can serve as shared activities providing community members with a shared focus too.

3.4.3 Shared places as flywheels for community experience

Shared places can represent flywheels for community experience since they allow local interactions on a regular basis. Based on this, available, safe, clean, and livable spaces can foster local participation, socialization, togetherness, social capital, and sense of belonging to the community; that is, by allowing youths to share experiences and create relationships, they can strengthen their feelings of being socially included at last.

Across cases, youths complain about the lack of socialization spaces and express the desire to detect more of them and be able to share them with others (e.g., by using the YouCount app – see chapter 2.2.2). Improving socialization spaces and the social processes they host could represent a strategy to better community conditions at large.

3.5 Local relationships as proxies for social inclusion

The fifth macro-theme refers to the role local social relationships and smaller social contexts can play as proxies for social inclusion in youths' lives. Consistently, it was labelled *Local relationships as proxies for social inclusion*, and it deepens two main aspects: (a) *the role of proximal social contexts* and (b) *local projects as flywheels for social inclusion*.

3.5.1 The role of proximal social contexts

Proximal communities (e.g., school, work, peer communities) can serve as drivers for a stronger social inclusion thanks to them allowing interactions with peers they have something in common with and because of them making youths feel heard and respected by their peers and by other generations (Pienimäki, 2020; Sampedro & Camarero, 2018). By providing support and encouragement, making youths feel they can have a say, get involved in decision-making processes, and cooperate with peers and with adults, these social contexts can enhance their social belonging and connectedness, easing loneliness – consistently with the results from the analysis about the meanings of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1). Furthermore, these relationships can also sustain youths' engagement in the broader community, by motivating them and making them feel that their contribution is valuable and appreciated. Conversely, not being able to take part in the social environments they are embedded in (e.g., not understanding the shared communications) may sustain youths' feelings of being socially excluded from that context.

3.5.2 Local projects as flywheels for social inclusion

Local associations and groups can play a role in fostering social inclusion (Sampedro & Camarero, 2018) through the projects they implement. Such projects and activities are reckoned as good practices aimed at safeguarding disadvantaged groups by youths. Furthermore, youths acknowledge that these projects can support their participation by setting clear, concrete, and sustainable goals to be achieved through their efforts.

3.6 Youths' advocacy, empowerment, and "horizontal citizenship" to foster social inclusion

The last macro-theme does not include different themes, as it only refers to the processes and psychosocial positions which could foster social inclusion according to YouCount participants – based on this, this theme was labelled *Youths' advocacy, empowerment, and "horizontal citizenship" to foster social inclusion*, as they reckon the active role they can have in such processes – as already mentioned in the analysis about the meanings of "social inclusion" among youths (see chapter 2.1) as well as in those about empowerment processes in YouCount (see chapter 2.5).

What emerges from partners' project reports shows that youths acknowledge individual and organized (i.e., activism) advocacy as paths that can trigger Institutional changes with reference to proximal contexts (e.g., "*asking for additional support from individual teachers or peers, asking the medical staff to pull down their masks during speaking*", Hungary – case A). Furthermore, they identify an "*horizontal citizenship*" (Italy) – meant as being active in facing the absence of stable services of policies through mutual exchanges and enrichments – as a potential answer to citizens' needs when Institutions do not meet them; building on this, it seems like citizens feel that they can rely on their own resources when they experience or reckon inequalities or injustices, so to try to face them and ease theirs and others' hardships. In this vein, they seem to suggest that individual and collective empowerment could represent paths to enhance everyone's social inclusion.

However, YouCount youths also acknowledged they may not have the power to directly improve current circumstances, even though they were able to detect several weaknesses. Nevertheless, as mentioned in chapter 2.5.3, they also reckon that being able to have conversations and discussions about collective issues with people who can directly or indirectly influence local policies (e.g., politicians, councilors, but also journalists and workers from social organizations) and using the knowledge and skills they have developed in YouCount – as further described in chapter 2.7 – to trigger social changes and social inclusion processes could represent paths to

empower themselves as well as to endeavor to prompt Institutional changes instead of only supplying the current lacks as possible.

3.7 A Psycho-social Model of Youth Social Inclusion

Altogether, the cross-case analyses based on local reports support the need to consider youth social inclusion as a two-way process (Pienimäki, 2020; Sampedro & Camarero, 2018) in which youths endeavour to get more involved in the community but also expect the latter to change in order to favour their involvement. Furthermore, they support the need for an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to address the complexities related to social inclusion experiences and the multilevel drivers which can impact them (Moyano et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2019) – see Figure 9.

Figure 9: A psychosocial model of youth social inclusion
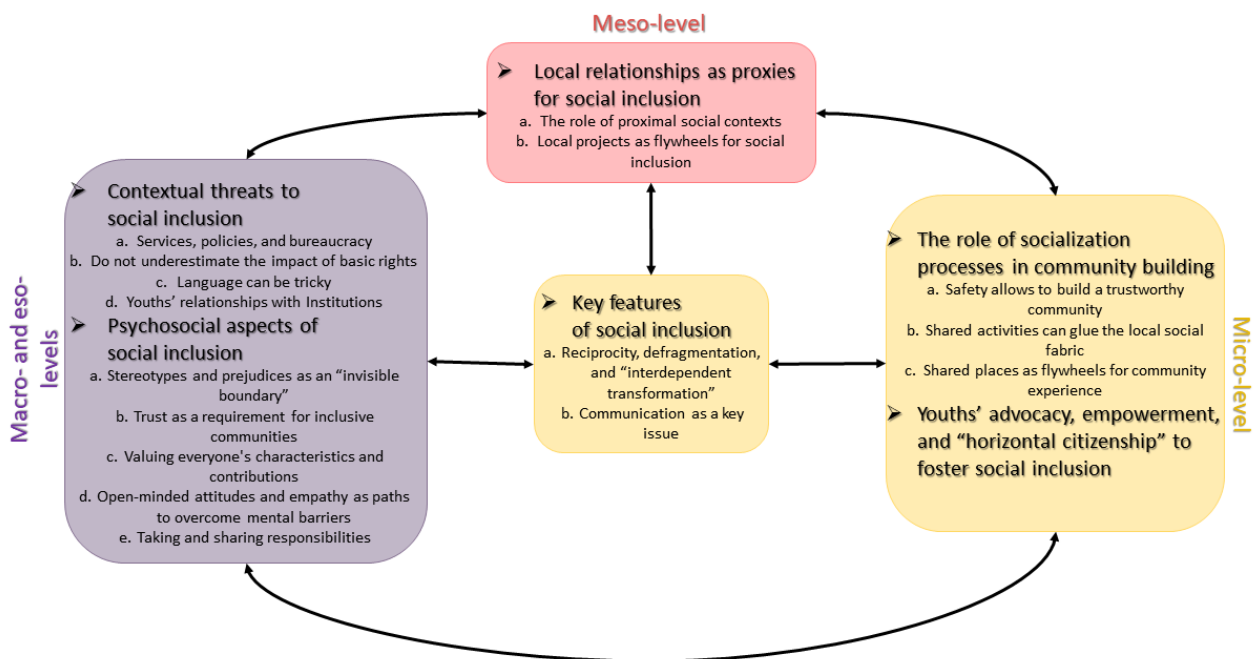
In this vein, at the macro- and meso-levels, the community-related elements on which the youths would like to prompt changes attain to both objective – e.g., policies and bureaucracy, the role of local Institutions – and psychosocial – e.g., the existence of stereotypes and prejudices, the levels of reciprocal trust and openness – features of the community. Indeed, while objective community

features shape the context in which youths move and the opportunities and resources they can grab (Wu & Sun, 2020), psychosocial ones do the same and in addition shape the social environment in which the proximal communities they are part of interact with each other and build reciprocal knowledge and representations.

At the meso-level, the role of smaller social groups and proximal social contexts in favouring youths' feelings of social inclusion emerged too (Pienimäki, 2020; Sampedro & Camarero, 2018; Wu & Sun, 2020). Their role is not only related to the direct interactions they can get involved into there – which would rather attain to the micro-level – but also to the relationships between the different proximal social contexts youths are part of, which can give them the feeling that the contexts they are embedded in are open to other ones and value cross-groups collaboration.

Last, at the micro-level youths reckon the role of direct socialization processes in making them feel socially included. However, they also acknowledge the tight link between these processes and community objective and psychosocial feautres since they related their opportunities to create new social connections and maintain already existing ones to the availability of safe and liveable local spaces to be attended and to shared activities to get involved into. Moreover, at this level youths acknowledge that they can have a direct impact on the other levels by assuming an active position in their community of belonging and engaging to address individual and collective needs (Moyano et al., 2020; Pienimäki, 2020; Sampedro & Camarero, 2018).

4 Conclusions

The social inclusion analysis of the 10 YouCount hands-on CSS case studies has brought some lessons that we summarise below.

'Social inclusion' was not a popular term with young people involved in our cases. Most commonly from their perspectives it meant they had opportunities to participate in society, they had positive social networks and connections with others that gave them a sense of belonging, and their basic legal and human rights were in place. There was more agreement with 'social inclusion' as a process, and to better capture young peoples' sense of themselves as active agents of social inclusion they coined the terms "social inclusion building". Participation and social inclusion went hand in hand, even if the nature of participation varied. Across the cases we found a strong relationship between participation and sense of belonging as well as with citizenship. This relationship is already acknowledged in the literature and is supported by this research project. 'Belonging' was synonymous with feeling accepted, with cooperating and being connected. It equated for some young people with a "feeling of warmth, of home". Not only that, but they also needed to feel that communities were safe and "respectful" and that no one was left out before engaging as citizens in whatever ways were meaningful for them. The concept of social

inclusion as citizenship can, therefore, be seen as complicated for young people and place specific. For instance, achieving citizenship for some meant establishing basic human rights in a country that was not their native country. This was harder in some places and countries than others. Though for young migrants, it was an essential to have in legal rights in place before being able to pursue a "decent life".

An inductive thematic analysis of the case reports identified six critical issues highlighted by young people. The first highlights the key importance of place-based bonding ties for social inclusion. It showed the association between feeling proud of where they lived or came from and the sense of belonging and connection to that place, which ultimately impacted young people's desire to remain or leave. A lack of places where different communities and cultures can mix and too few places that were 'youth-friendly' were other place-based issues for social inclusion and community cohesion. Secondly, safety was a wide-ranging issue across the cases identified by young people as central for social inclusion. Young people from different backgrounds gave numerous examples of where they felt unsafe including neighbourhoods, public transport, rail and bus stations, public walkways, and a range of public spaces such as parks and city centres particularly in the evening. There were safety issues reported by young people from specific groups, for example, those from various ethnic minority backgrounds. Thirdly, the experience of racial discrimination and prejudice, exclusion because they were different from the majority population in terms of their cultural and ethnic background, was prevalent particularly in those cases involving young migrants or refugees. Fourthly, negative stereotyping of young by adults was identified as a major issue by several cases, being judged unfairly by adults just because they were young people. Fifth, the financial circumstances of young people, including their economic situation and background, as well as whether they had access to meaningful employment, were highlighted as impacting young people's potential to participate. Finally, the lack of opportunities for young people to be engaged in democratic processes in their communities was regularly commented upon by young people of all ages across the cases as affecting their social inclusion.

Given how social inclusion was understood as multifaceted and a dynamic process, the kinds of opportunities for social inclusion identified in young people's daily lives were similarly wide ranging. There was mention of social participation, going to events like music concerts or "gigs", being part of interest and other groups such as faith-based organisations, as well as educational, employment and leisure opportunities. Low awareness of these opportunities sometimes hampered young people's perception of what opportunities there are for social inclusion in their daily lives, and a common theme across the 10 cases was a perception that these were lacking. It was suggested by some young people that there was "nothing to do", however, they also identified intrinsic and other barriers preventing them from accessing these opportunities. Some of the YCS highlighted how they had benefited from the YouCount project, having the opportunity to travel, and attending consortium meetings where they met other young people from other countries.

Of central importance in the YouCount project was foregrounding young people's views and ideas about social inclusion. Young people's suggestions about how their participation, sense of belonging and citizenship could be increased fell under three key areas: suggestions to increase collaboration between young people and other stakeholders; more and better youth-friendly opportunities created where they can feel accepted, including meaningful employment; and supporting and encouraging young people's participation in local democratic processes, ensuring that under-represented voices are heard.

Altogether, what emerges from the gender analysis further highlights the need to take into account gender-related dimensions, peculiarities, and eventual stereotypes and representations when planning and implementing activities at each level. Indeed, not doing so implies the risk of making the gendered dimension "invisible", flattening activities and representations on the wrong idea that if gender differences and peculiarities are not made explicit places and activities can be considered "neutral". Differently, not addressing gender-related issues, dimensions, and peculiarities in an explicit way only makes social environments comply with the implicit gender-related representations and stereotypes of the locally dominant culture.

The case studies show that a research design based on participatory methods and a focus on the everyday life of the participating youth can empower youth and make room for creativity. For example, youth might develop planning skills and become more aware about social inclusion processes. Empowerment is also possible in societal conditions, which the the youth describe as disempowering. Under such conditions, empowerment might take place when young persons can exchange experiences with other young persons, who experience the same challenges. The empowerment of youth might reach beyond the YouCount case studies, as participatory research processes, and into the daily life of the youth, e.g., into a young person's relation to their teachers in the school or to elder generations in their community.

The analysis of social inclusion drivers and the emerging model of youth social inclusion processes (see Figure 7) suggest the need for Institutions, policy-makers, and researchers to consider and address the complexities underlying such processes. On the one hand, this means moving from a welfarist perspective – that is, the excluded groups have needs to be addressed too – to a relational one – the excluded and the included groups need opportunities to interact and get to better know each other, so that each of them can adapt to others and relate to them – which is an already ongoing tendency, as also mentioned by YouCount participants. However, on the other hand, this also means acknowledging that an intervention, a project, any kind of action aimed at enhancing social inclusion requires to work not only on social interactions among social groups and their members, but also an analysis of the opportunities and constraints posed by the physical, bureaucratic, and psychosocial characteristics of the contexts in which individuals and social groups live.

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Appendixes

Table 5: Appendixes

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YouCount Case Study Report

Final Template

Title	
Authors Name and Affiliation	
Work Package producing the document	WP3
WP Leader	ESSRG
Other Partners involved	UCLan, UNINA, KTU, FD, OsloMet,
Work Package producing the document	WP3
WP Leader	ESSRG

2023

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Appendix 2

Questions addressing gender dimensions in the final case reports

An analysis is required by addressing the following main research questions with reference to (a) youths' perspectives, (b) researchers' perspectives, (c) stakeholders' perspectives:

- To what extent and how did gender influence the young people's views and experiences with opportunities for social participation in the community of belonging?

- Did you ask for or discuss the gender perspective with the R-YCS group? What did you find?

- To what extent and how did stakeholders in community/targeted organisation address gender as important for social inclusion)

- What did your case participants propose in favour of equal opportunities across genders as to the local case you are taking part to? How did gender influence the casework when setting up the R-YCS group, did you consider gender balancing criteria?

- Did you use gender balance criteria when inviting young participants to the case study?

- Do you think that specific commitments for boys and girls have had an impact on their participation in the case study and the proposed activities over time? Did you ever talk about this?

- Did belonging to ethnic or other cultural groups present specific ways of participating in the case study activities?

- To what extent did you find a need for gender-related solutions/innovations? Did any of these emerge from your local case participants?

Appendix 3

Questions addressing gender-related issues in the evaluation focus groups

Thinking about your experience, have you noticed gender-related differences in behaviors, attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, and perspectives in the local case study?

- From your viewpoint, how might gender influence the opportunities for social participation in the community of belonging?

- What would you propose in favor of equal opportunities across genders in the local case study?

- To what extent do you find a need for gender-related solutions/innovations? What could these be?

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