



# Research & Needs Analysis Report

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**Youth Voices Rising** brings together youth work organisations from six European countries:

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Project partners: Jugendakademie Walberberg (Bornheim, Germany) | Stiftung Europäische Jugendbildungs- und Jugendbegegnungsstätte Weimar (Weimar, Germany) | Internationales Forum Burg Liebenzell e.V. (Bad Liebenzell, Germany) | Associazione Interculturale NUR (Cagliari, Italy) | YouthCoop – Cooperativa para o Desenvolvimento e Cidadania CRL (Aguilva-Cacém, Portugal) | Szubjektív Értékek Alapítvány (Budapest, Hungary) | KIRKO S.E. (Thessaloniki, Greece) | Irenia, Jocs de Pau (La Nou de Berguedà, Spain)

**Responsible partner organisation** for Work Package 2, Research & Needs Analysis:

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# 1 Introduction

This report presents the Needs Analysis conducted within Work Package 2 (WP2) of the project “Youth Voices Rising: Empowering Through Local and EU Advocacy.”

“Youth Voices Rising” aims to equip young people with the skills and confidence necessary to influence policy-making at both local and European levels, strengthen their civic participation, and promote high-quality youth work as a response to pressing societal issues. It further seeks to motivate marginalised young people and youth-focused NGOs to engage actively in democratic processes, advocate for solutions to community challenges, and work collectively toward improved youth work conditions. In parallel, the project strives to build the advocacy capacity of NGOs so they can more effectively influence policy agendas and decision-making structures.

WP2 plays a foundational role in achieving these ambitions. Its main objectives are to (1) identify gaps and needs in young people’s advocacy-related skills, as well as in the competencies, attitudes, and values of NGOs engaged in advocacy and lobbying; (2) define the advocacy topics that should be prioritised during and beyond the lifetime of the project; and (3) provide evidence-based guidance for Work Packages 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8, so that upcoming trainings, activities, and workshops can be closely aligned with the needs expressed by the project’s target groups and wider community of practice.

To meet these objectives, WP2 started with combining a research phase and an internal discursive process involving all project partners. This collaborative effort led to the design of three distinct but comparable online surveys, tailored to the realities of (X) young people, (Y) NGOs, and (Z) youth service providers working within or alongside the youth work sector and expressing an interest in advocacy and lobbying. In total, 350 individuals participated across the three surveys, providing a robust data set for analysis. The surveys were structured around five core categories that allow for systematic comparison between groups:

- a) Advocacy methods
- b) Advocacy topics
- c) Key skill gaps
- d) Barriers
- e) Training priorities (formats)

The following report presents the findings of this analysis. It offers insights into current capacities, needs, and aspirations related to advocacy within the youth field, and lays the groundwork for the project’s subsequent capacity-building and policy-influencing actions.

## 2 Key findings

During the research process it became clear that the survey among young people must be at the core of the analysis. They are the target group of the project's subsequent trainings and to gather information about their experience with advocacy and lobby as well as their specific interests regarding the topic is crucial to further developing the international and local trainings within the Youth Voices Rising project. In total 251 young people aged between 18 and 30 from several European countries, mainly the project's partner countries: Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Portugal completed the youth survey. Many respondents are already connected to youth work environments, but a large group is still outside organised structures. The analysis of their survey answers led to the definition of five main needs and challenges:

### Young people's main needs and challenges

#### 1. Lack of knowledge: "I want to act, but I don't know how"

A very common message in the survey is that young people feel motivated, but do not understand how political systems work. Many respondents said they:

- Do not know how decisions are made
- Do not understand how laws or policies are created
- Feel confused by complex language and bureaucracy

#### 2. Skills gaps: confidence and practical skills

Young people also identified clear gaps in their skills. They said they need more support in areas such as:

- Public speaking and expressing their opinions clearly
- Critical thinking and building strong arguments
- Research skills and using data
- Organising campaigns and working in teams

#### 3. Not being taken seriously

Across different countries and languages, many young people expressed frustration about not being taken seriously by adults and institutions. They often feel that:

- Their participation is symbolic, not real
- Decision-makers listen, but do not act
- They rarely receive feedback on their input

#### 4. Lack of resources and support

The survey shows that motivation alone is not enough. Young people also need practical support. Frequently mentioned needs include:

- Safe physical and digital spaces to meet and organise
- Small amounts of funding to start actions or campaigns
- Less bureaucracy and fewer legal barriers
- Access to mentors, youth workers, and experienced activists

#### 5. Training does not match needs

Many respondents said they had little or no experience with advocacy training. Others criticised existing trainings as being too theoretical or too similar to school. Young people clearly prefer:

- Hands-on methods, such as simulations, role-plays, and real case studies
- Blended formats, combining online learning with in-person meetings
- Follow-up support, mentoring, and practical next steps after training

Hence our condensed recommendations for future trainings for young people in the field of advocacy and lobbying are as follows:

### Recommendations for future training

1. **Hands-on Training and Practical Experience:** The report highlights the need for realistic, hands-on advocacy practice. Future training programs should focus on experiential learning, such as mock hearings, debates, and real-life scenarios. This approach will help participants gain practical skills and confidence.
2. **Blended/Hybrid Learning Models:** There is a preference for blended learning models that combine online and in-person sessions. Online resources can be used for theoretical knowledge, while in-person sessions can focus on practical exercises and networking.
3. **Inclusive and Accessible Training:** Training programmes should be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all participants. This includes providing materials in multiple languages, offering scholarships or funding for travel, and ensuring that training is not overly centralised in capital cities.
4. **Follow-up and Mentorship:** Continuous support and mentorship are crucial for the success of training programmes. Providing follow-up emails, checklists, and feedback loops will help participants apply their skills and stay motivated.
5. **Focus on Soft Skills and Confidence Building:** Training should emphasize the development of soft skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, and confidence building. These skills are essential for effective advocacy and lobbying.

## 3 Methods

### 3.1 Background research

In the beginning of the process of carrying out our needs analysis was the necessity to explore the research field of advocacy and lobbying within youth work. The aim was to synthesise relevant literature and practice-based insights to provide an evidence base for the survey design of this study with the central theme of gaining better understanding of young people's experience, knowledge, and attitudes towards advocacy and lobbying.

#### *Advocacy and Lobbying in the Generation Europe Network*

Within the Generation Europe network, advocacy and lobbying are framed as strategic practices that empower youth work organisations and young people to influence decision-making processes at local, national, and European levels. The Take Power Manual<sup>1</sup>, first published in 2024, serves as a foundational resource, defining advocacy and lobbying, and offering practical guidance for planning campaigns and engagement with stakeholders. It emphasises the importance of clarifying goals, mapping stakeholders, developing a theory of change, and risk analysis when engaging in these activities. These tools are intended to lower barriers to engagement, particularly for beginners, fostering confidence and competence in interacting with institutional actors.

Advocacy is positioned not merely as an optional activity but as a democratic necessity. It enables young people and youth work actors to express their needs and influence public policy that affects their lives and communities. The handbook presents lobbying as a complementary approach focused on targeted engagement with decision-makers to secure policy commitments or institutional support.

#### *Advocacy in the Wider European Youth Work Community of Practice*

Within the field of European youth work, advocacy is increasingly recognised as a capacity-building and policy advocacy necessity for strengthening youth work structures and youth participation. The Growing Youth Work Survey Report 2025<sup>2</sup> highlights the ongoing implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) across 34 countries, demonstrating wide variation in how youth work, often linked to advocacy for structural support, is understood and operationalised at national levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Generation Europe – The Academy (2024): Take Power. [Handbook](#) to Get Started with Advocacy and Lobbying. IBB e.V., Dortmund.

<sup>2</sup> Hofmann-van de Poll, Frederike (2025): The state of play of national processes within the European Youth Work Agenda implementation. [Survey report 2025](#). Bonn.

The survey findings reflect the diversity of national realities that shape youth work and related advocacy capacities. In countries with emerging youth work infrastructures, advocacy often focuses on foundational recognition and resource mobilisation; in others where formal structures are better established, advocacy may centre on policy innovation or quality development.

The Futures of Youth Work Research Report 2024<sup>3</sup> conducted by the European Academy on Youth Work situates youth work within emerging social and technological shifts, emphasising adaptive capacity, system awareness, and resilience. While not focused solely on advocacy, this work underlines the need for youth workers and young people to exercise influence in policy debates and adapt advocacy approaches to rapidly changing contexts. Although the report does not directly foreground advocacy and lobbying, the identified trends (e.g., digital transformation, shifting demographics) imply that surveys should explore how young people perceive emerging spaces for influence, barriers to participation in formal decision-making, and the role of youth work in facilitating agency.

European-level initiatives such as advocacy handbooks or toolkits that are being developed by various actors within the field point to growing attention to practical capacities among youth work actors. These resources emphasise adaptability to local needs and contexts and provide models for structured planning and action.

### *Key takeaway for survey design*

The research done on the needs and challenges of specifically young people regarding advocacy and lobbying seems very limited. Yet the demand for active and impactful participation of youngsters appears to be pressing as well as a logical consequence of years of active citizenship promotion and civic education. On top of that increasing democratic and demographic challenges are to be dealt with in Europe. All of these factors were frequently discussed in our working group, and implications for our survey design derived. Questions should probe both conceptual understanding (e.g., what respondents think advocacy and lobbying mean) and experiential dimensions (e.g., opportunities to practice these skills, access to tools or support). Items should also explore confidence in advocacy, perceived barriers, and motivators to participate in advocacy activities. The survey should capture context variability by allowing respondents to describe country-specific enabling and inhibiting conditions for advocacy (e.g., access to decision-makers, restraints). Thus five core categories of questions were developed. In addition, we recognised the importance of using simple language as well as the need for translations to enhance access to participate in the surveys. The discussions were followed by several rounds of peer reviewing the survey drafts.

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<sup>3</sup> Evrard, G., Marković, D., Senyuva O., Szymczyk, A. (2024): Futures of Youth Work. Future Foresight Research Report. Movit, Ljubljana.

## 3.2 Obtaining the data

For collecting the data, we designed surveys for the three target groups. It was important deciding which medium to use for implementing and distributing the surveys such that both the collection and analysis of the data is easily achievable. After researching commonly used tools, we decided to implement and distribute the surveys via KoboToolbox, a free, open-source platform for digital data collection, management, and analysis, widely used by humanitarian, development, and research organisations for surveys. We used the European Union KoboToolbox Server to ensure that the collected data is stored within the EU. Furthermore, the use of this tool allowed for us to have the survey available in English, as well as the languages of the project partners (German, Hungarian, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese) within the same centralised survey. Therefore, the survey was more accessible to our target groups and all the data was collected in one place. Other tools often require that you create a different survey for each language, while here users could simply select their preferred language in the one survey. The surveys were translated with the help of tools such as DeepL, Google Translate and ChatGPT. These translations were afterwards checked and improved by native speakers (usually someone from one of the project partners).

The surveys were shared by partners mainly through their networks (e-mails, social media, organisation activities for youth; personal e-mail and contacts for NGOs and Youth Service Providers). The surveys were available and filled in online. Due to the way of hosting and distributing the survey (especially for the youth target group), a variety of responses were collected, including from people who may not have been 100% aligned with the target group. At the moment of the data analysis, some minimal cleaning and filtering of the data was required, which diminished total numbers of collected surveys for certain categories.

In addition to the quantitative data the aim was to also gain some more qualitative information through interviews. This step was also discussed to be a fruitful way of identifying and engaging local stakeholders. Guidelines for conducting interviews with NGOs were distributed among the project's partner organisations. At the same time, not all partners were confident to be able to conduct deep interviews due to a lack of time. The results of the interviews carried out appear in chapter 4.3.1.

# 4 Results

## 4.1 Data analysis – general remarks

The cleaning of the data was minimal and it mainly consisted of applying an age filter for the youth respondents. Due to the survey structure, many of the answers were directly comparable and allowed for straightforward analysis. Furthermore, the participants seem to have completed the survey responsibly and no cleaning in terms of dropping entries was required. The plots, percentages, statistics were generated through Excel and Python. The free text data that was provided for part of the questions was analysed via the use of LLMs with specific prompts and verifications. The data that was passed through LLMs was punctual, anonymised. Furthermore, the highest privacy settings were used as long as only temporary storage for processing was active. Regarding the other types of data and analysis: if no comparison was used, then the total value counts were used. If there were comparisons (such as across countries, or respondent category) then percentages were used to ensure comparability. However, within the comparisons, there was no further normalisation of the components (i.e. the normalisation was only across the comparison category, e.g. type of respondent, and not also e.g. for the countries within each category – hence, in this case, each reply counted the same and certain differences may have been lost due to this fact, e.g. Germany did have most respondents for youth, NGOs and Youth Service Providers). Nevertheless, further analysis and investigations can be carried out with the desired normalisations on the raw data from the surveys. This raw data is available to project partners via their KoboToolbox accounts, or it can be directly requested from the project responsables.

### *Overview of collected Survey Data*

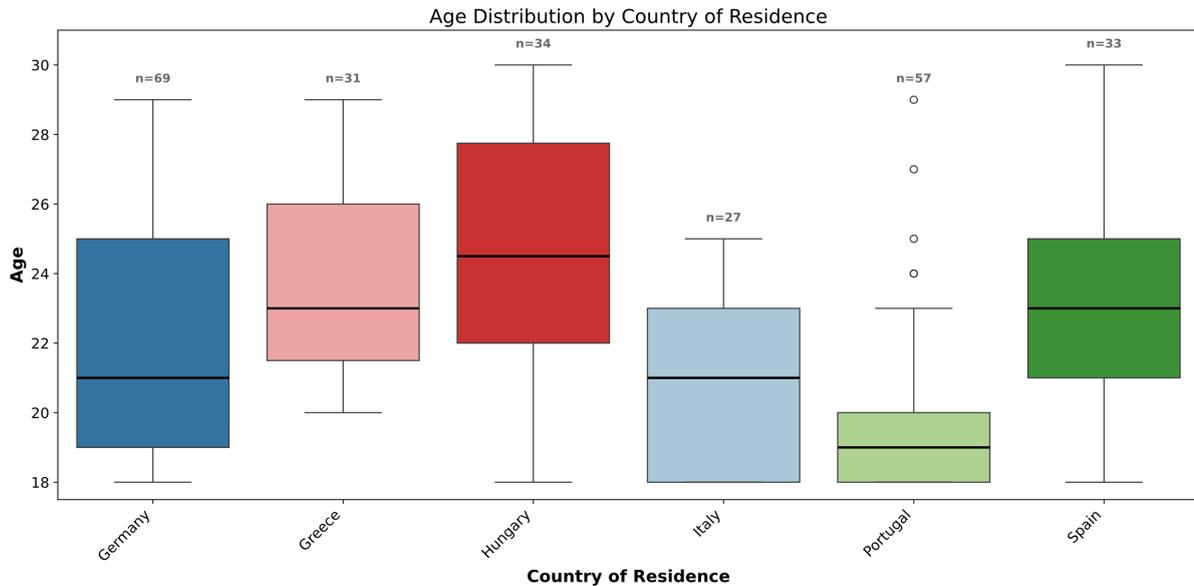
Survey-submissions by partner country	Youth		NGOs		YSP	
		aim		aim		aim
Germany	94	90	22	15	8	3
Greece	32	30	5	5	1	1
Hungary	37	30	5	5	1	1
Italy	29	30	5	5	1	1
Spain	35	30	5	5	1	1
Portugal	60	30	5	5	2	1
Other	3		2		0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>290</b>	240	<b>49</b>	40	<b>14</b>	8

## 4.2 Youth survey data

While the youth definition varies across countries, national legislation and funding requirements, for the purpose of this survey, we decided together with the partners to analyse the responses of those between the ages of 18 to 30. Hence, the following statistics are focused on the youth aged between 18 and 30, amounting to a total of 251 analysed responses.

Key insights about the youth based on their responses:

- **Urban vs rural setting:** A significant majority of the youth participants (80.9%) live in urban settings, with only 19.1% residing in rural areas.
- **Gender distribution:** The dataset shows a higher proportion of female participants (61.4%) compared to male participants (33.5%), with smaller percentages for non-binary and prefer not to say categories.
- **Education level:** The majority of youth (66.7%) have a university education. Secondary education accounts for 18.9%, followed by vocational (10.0%), and very small percentages for other (4.0%) and primary (0.4%) education.
- **Involved in a youth organisation/movement:** More than half of the youth participants (54.6%) are currently affiliated with a youth organisation or movement, while 45.4% are not. From those affiliated with a youth organisation, some are affiliated with the project partners or their extended network.
- **Age distribution by country of residence:** The boxplot below illustrates the age distribution of youth participants (aged 18-30) across the six different countries. The numbers represent the number of responses per country after the age filtering. The analysis reveals variations in both the central tendency and spread of ages among the participating nations. While all participants fall within the 18-30 age bracket, median ages differ, with Portugal exhibiting the lowest median (approximately 19 years old) and Hungary showing the highest (around 24.5 years old). The interquartile range, representing the middle 50% of ages, is generally consistent across countries, typically spanning 4-6 years. Noteworthy is Portugal, which displays several older outliers, indicating a broader age range among some of its participants compared to the general trend within that country's sample. The median age across all countries is 21, while the mean is 22.



- How they found out about the survey:** The vast majority found out about the survey through the project partners and their networks. Many provide the name of the organisation. Others refer to friends, or people associated with the project partners. A few have also found out about the survey via organisation newsletters, their school/university environment, or even by themselves via social media.
- Participation in any advocacy or lobbying activities:** From the respondents, less than half, namely 37.05% previously participated in lobbying and advocacy. Those who answered yes provided further details in terms of their role and the activities they took part in (free text responses). Overall, participants were involved in a wide range of activities such as protests, volunteering, youth exchanges, community projects, and different forms of political or social activism. Many took part in demonstrations for climate justice, gender equality, human rights, education, or local issues, while others helped organise events, support youth groups, or worked on creative projects like theatre, podcasts, or social media campaigns. Some were active in youth parliaments or met with politicians, and others focused on helping their communities through tutoring, food banks, or local initiatives. Together, the responses show that young people are engaged in many ways, both by participating and by taking on leadership roles in causes they care about.
- Youth opinion about what would help young people advocate more effectively in their country and community:** The responses collectively suggest that effective advocacy is a result of an ecosystem involving education, material resources, and a shift in institutional culture.

Here is a summary of the key findings:

**1. Education and civic literacy (The “how-to”)** The most frequent barrier identified is a lack of knowledge regarding how systems work. Young people have the motivation but lack the technical roadmap.

- **Civic education:** Respondents called for “plain-language civic/legal literacy” and “understanding how a bill becomes a law.”
- **Skill development:** There is a high demand for training in public speaking, critical thinking, data research, and organisational skills.
- **School integration:** Many suggested that advocacy and political education should be integrated directly into school curriculums (“Educational programs for young people in schools”).

**2. Genuine inclusion vs. tokenism:** A profound frustration expressed across all languages is the feeling of being ignored or not being treated as an equal partner.

- **Being taken seriously:** Phrases like “Ser escuchados” (Spanish: to be heard), “being taken seriously,” and “Augenhöhe” (German: eye-level) appear repeatedly.
- **Feedback loops:** Respondents want to see the results of their advocacy. They requested “real participation channels with feedback”, so they know their input was not discarded.
- **Intergenerational respect:** There is a call for “less pride” from older generations and a willingness to mentor rather than dismiss youth.

**3. Resources and infrastructure:** Advocacy requires more than just passion; it requires logistical support.

- **Safe spaces:** A recurring request for physical and digital spaces (“Räume,” “Espaços,” “Safe spaces”) where youth can meet, debate, and organise without judgment or cost.
- **Funding:** “Seed funding,” “money that is not following ideologies,” and “state-funded resources” are seen as essential to move from ideas to action.
- **Bureaucracy:** German and Portuguese respondents specifically noted that reducing red tape (“Weniger Bürokratie,” “Less legal constraints”) is necessary to make participation accessible.

**4. Mentorship and networking:** Respondents are looking for guidance.

- **Mentorship:** There is a strong desire for “knowledgeable youth leaders taking them under their wing” and connections with professionals.
- **Collaboration:** Requests for better networking between youth organisations, NGOs, and local authorities to create a “sense of community.”

### Summary of requests by category

<b>Tangible assets:</b>	funding/grants; physical meeting spaces; access to data/research tools; legal support
<b>Intangible assets:</b>	mentorship/guidance; confidence building; critical thinking skills; motivation/hope
<b>Systemic changes:</b>	reducing bureaucracy; advisory roles in institutions; plain-language communication

#### Key insight: The "apathy" gap

A notable minority of respondents answered with "I don't know," "Non lo so," or "No idea." This highlights a meta-problem: a significant portion of the youth population is disconnected enough that they do not even know what would help them reconnect. This suggests that the **first step of any advocacy strategy must be basic outreach and awareness-raising.**

Based on the youth responses, there is a clear consensus that the current model of "passive learning" is outdated. Respondents are calling for a shift toward experiential, hybrid, and continuous learning. While a significant portion of respondents answered "I don't know" or "No" (indicating a lack of exposure to existing training), those who provided feedback offered highly specific structural improvements. Here is a summary of the suggestions for delivering and improving training programmes:

**1. Methodology: "less theory, more action":** The most overwhelming request is to move away from theoretical lectures ("school style") toward Learning by Doing. Participants want to practice advocacy through mock hearings, debates, and real-life scenarios (simulation and roleplay). Training should result in a tangible output (e.g., drafting a real policy letter, planning a real event) rather than just absorbing information. One detailed response specifically suggested "short doses of knowledge" (5–10-minute videos) combined with practical tasks, rather than long seminars (micro-learning).

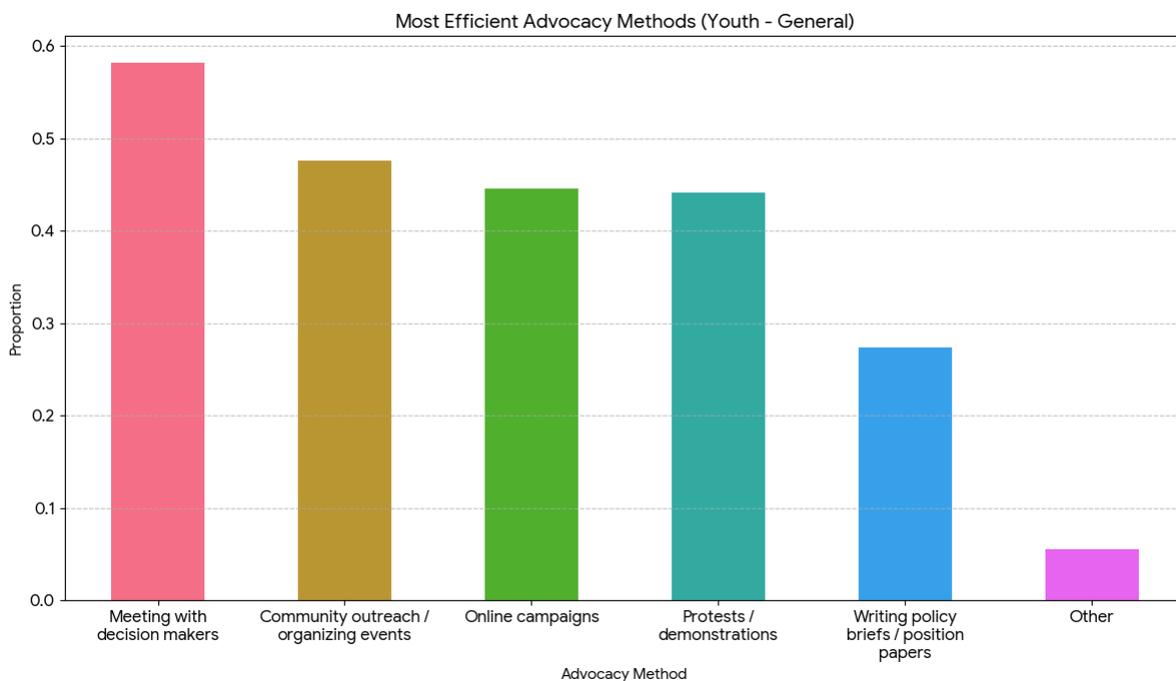
**2. Format: the "blended" consensus:** There is a tension between the desire for connection and the need for accessibility, leading to a preference for blended/hybrid models. The majority prefer face-to-face interaction for networking, "energy," and effective debate as highlighted by the keywords "in person," "summer camps," "small groups." Online resources are recognised as essential for those working, studying, or living in rural areas ("vidéki" - Hungarian for rural), but must be self-paced. As a compromise, one could use online tools for the "theory" (reading/watching) and use in-person time exclusively for "practice" and networking.

**3. Accessibility and reach:** Respondents emphasized that training is often too exclusive or centralized. Hungarian and Portuguese respondents specifically noted that activities are too "Capital-centric" (decentralization). Regarding financial support, requests for "free basic

courses," "scholarships," and funding for travel were identified. Language plays an important role and the content should be in "plain language" (Leichte Sprache) and not overly academic.

**4. The "after-care", follow-up and mentorship:** A critique is that training programs often "stop" once the session ends, leaving participants with motivation but no direction. There is a strong demand for post-training guidance from experienced professionals and youth leaders (mentorship). Respondents want follow-up emails, checklists, and feedback loops weeks or months later to ensure skills are applied (continuity).

Notable comments: "Things work for me if they are really slow." (Suggesting a need for paced, digestible content). "Don't wash people's brains." (Spanish: No lavar el cerebro) – Keep it non-ideological. "Less cringe social media appearance." (German: Weniger cringer Social Media Auftritt).



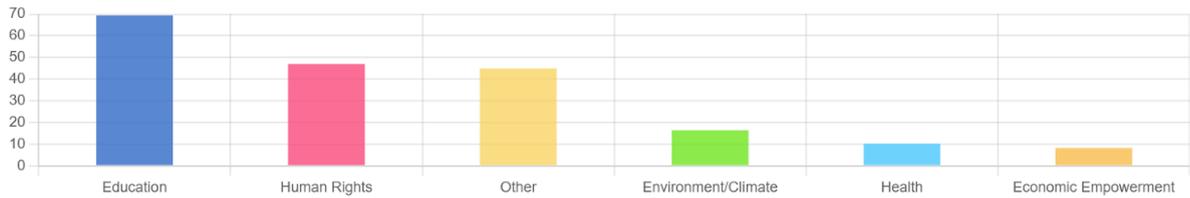
### 4.3 NGO survey data & qualitative insights

The NGO representatives who filled in the surveys include both some of the project partners, as well as a series of other NGOs from the partners' extended network and collaborators.

The following figure offers an overview of their primary focus areas, with most of them having a strong focus on education (almost 70%), followed by human rights. The *Other* category predominantly includes art and culture, youth empowerment and participation/engagement, inclusion and migration.

Primary focus area(s):

TYPE: SELECT\_MULTIPLE. 49 out of 49 respondents answered this question. (0 were without data.)

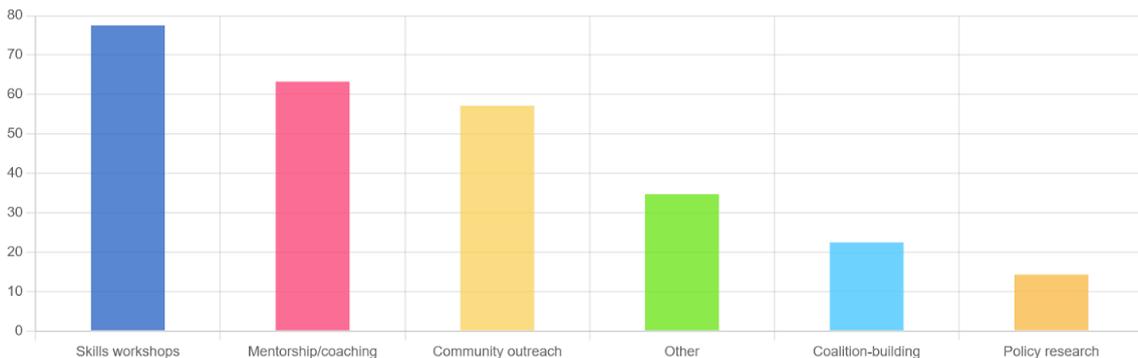


Value	Frequency	Percentage
Education	34	69.39
Human Rights	23	46.94
Other	22	44.9
Environment/Climate	8	16.33
Health	5	10.2
Economic Empowerment	4	8.16

The following figures highlight the main youth interventions that the NGOs engage with. Most of them carry out skills workshops, mentorship and coaching activities, as well as community outreach. The *Other* category includes a variety of projects with a focus on culture, participatory and youth engagement activities, as well as campaigns to raise awareness, for prevention etc.

Type of interventions with youth:

TYPE: SELECT\_MULTIPLE. 49 out of 49 respondents answered this question. (0 were without data.)



Value	Frequency	Percentage
Skills workshops	38	77.55
Mentorship/coaching	31	63.27
Community outreach	28	57.14
Other	17	34.69
Coalition-building	11	22.45
Policy research	7	14.29

To gather qualitative insights from NGOs, we adapted our research method to fit the current reality of the working field. Originally, we planned to conduct a series of separate, in-depth interviews. However, as many organisations are currently facing high workloads and limited staff resources, we decided to choose a more flexible approach. To respect the partners' time constraints, we combined two sources of information: a) Selected conversations with youth work organisations where possible, and b) an analysis of the written feedback and open comments provided in the online survey. This integrated approach allowed us to capture authentic perspectives and identify key needs without placing additional pressure on the youth work professionals in our network.

We want to express our sincere thanks to the organisations and the dedicated people behind them who despite difficult circumstances took the time for an interview in addition to filling out the online survey. Their answers were included in the evaluation of the open text answers from the surveys. They are: Estudiantes Catalanes de Origen Pakistani, Spain (ECOP); Joventut Africa Negra, Spain (JAN); Joves de Gràcia, Barcelona, Spain; Nexes Intercultural, Spain; PAKMIR, Montcada i Reixac, Spain; Selyemút Diákalapítvány (Silky Way Student Foundation), Hungary; Service Civil International-CAT, Spain.

Below, we have structured the overview of the feedback using questions from the questionnaire. The inserted quotations are exemplary statements from the qualitative interviews.

*“Based on your experience, what additional support or resources do youth most need to succeed in lobbying and advocacy?”*

According to the feedback, NGO representatives consider that youth need a combination of practical support, emotional safety, and access to real influence to succeed in advocacy. This can be summarised into four essential clusters of needs:

**Skills, knowledge & mentorship:** Young people need hands-on training in policy analysis, campaign planning, negotiation, and communication. Crucially, this must be paired with ongoing mentorship from experienced, trusted adults who can guide them through complex processes.

*“Advocacy is not yet seen as a natural or encouraged part of youth participation in many contexts.” - Spokesperson of Selyemút Diákalapítvány (Silky Way Student Foundation), Hungary*

**Psychological safety & confidence:** Success requires safe, non-judgmental spaces where youth can meet, build trust, and develop ideas. They need to build confidence through seeing tangible examples of success, feeling their voice matters, and having a stable mindset (supported by mental health resources) to persevere.

**Access & tangible opportunities:** Young advocates need direct, facilitated access to decision-makers who are genuinely open to dialogue. They also require low-barrier, flexible funding (seed grants) and visible platforms to turn their ideas into action and see measurable results.

**Inclusive & practical infrastructure:** Support must be accessible to all, overcoming barriers like language, geography (e.g., rural isolation), and bureaucracy. This includes physical spaces (like well-funded youth clubs), clear information, and practical tools they can immediately use.

*"Treat youth as present leaders, not future ones. Provide access, trust, and resources."  
- Spokeswoman of JAN, Joventut Africa Negra, Spain*

In short, youth advocacy thrives when it is mentored, measurable, and meaningful, combining skill-building with real opportunities to influence decisions in a supportive environment.

*"Any suggestions for designing or improving training programs to fit your beneficiaries' needs?"*

Effective youth advocacy training programmes must be rooted in the realities faced by young people, blending real-life relevance with interactive and hands-on activities. For instance, offering low-cost or free local options with flexible schedules can overcome logistical barriers, while hybrid (online and in-person) formats help reach rural or isolated youth. Programmes should also use youth-friendly language and supply materials in participants' native languages, ensuring respect for diverse backgrounds. Creating a safe, non-judgmental environment is essential, beginning with personal reflection ("What matters to me?") and gradually building advocacy skills. Support should extend beyond initial training, with ongoing mentorship, coaching, and peer networking to sustain motivation. Opportunities for youth to connect with real advocacy channels, participate in campaigns, and access safe spaces, small grants, and practical tools are vital.

*"Beyond training, youth would benefit from exposure to good practices and examples of successful advocacy initiatives, which can inspire and guide their own efforts."  
- Spokesperson of Selyemút Diákalapítvány (Silky Way Student Foundation), Hungary*

Involving young people in programme design, providing direct contact with leaders and experts, and focusing on empowerment, such as building confidence and understanding of politics allow them not only to gain skills but also to transform learning into meaningful action despite challenges like ageism, limited visibility, and safety risks.

*"What cultural or contextual challenges affect youth advocacy in your region?"*

*"Cultural sensitivity is key. Many Youth face family and community pressures that affect their ability to engage in advocacy, so programmes should consider these dynamics."  
- Spokeswoman of ECOP – Estudiantes Catalanes de Origen Pakistani*

The main cultural and contextual challenges hindering youth advocacy can be summarised as follows: young people often face dismissal and ageism, with their voices not being taken seriously and their involvement being merely symbolic; systemic and political obstacles such as restrictive laws, bureaucratic complexity, and societal inequalities further limit meaningful participation; logistical issues such as limited time, rural isolation, and lack of safe meeting spaces are also highlighted; advocacy itself is not widely visible or understood, with few role models and limited knowledge about effective participation; many young people feel disconnected from formal advocacy, favouring informal or community-based actions which seem more accessible; finally, safety and security risks, including threats, harassment, and violence, remain significant deterrents for those wishing to speak out or take action.

“The main barriers young people face are a lack of resources and funding, as well as a fear of backlash or negative reactions when expressing opinions on sensitive topics. Additionally, many youth have limited time to engage in advocacy because of heavy educational commitments — as they say, ‘Sokat kell tanulni és nem jut idő másra’ (‘They have to study a lot and have no time for anything else’).” - *Spokesperson of Selyemút Diákalapítvány (Silky Way Student Foundation), Hungary*

#### 4.4 Youth Service Provider (YSP) survey data

The YSP responses include answers from representatives (youth workers, volunteer coordinators, programme managers) of youth centres, public administration bodies, or specialised youth services.

*“Based on your experience, what additional support or resources do youth most need to succeed in lobbying and advocacy?”*

The free text responses suggest that youth need several key supports to succeed in lobbying and advocacy:

- **Guidance:** Mentors and youth leaders who listen and help create opportunities for young people.
- **Practical training:** Skills in communication, policy analysis, and advocacy, with hands-on learning rather than just theory.
- **Real-world experience:** Chances to meet decision-makers, practise in safe settings, and succeed in visible ways (even if minor) to build confidence.
- **Good resources and networks:** Safe spaces for discussion, small grants, and connections with other young people to avoid isolation.
- **Empowerment:** Building confidence, understanding politics, and encouraging young people to speak up and know their voices matter.

*“Any suggestions for designing or improving training programmes to fit your beneficiaries’ needs?”*

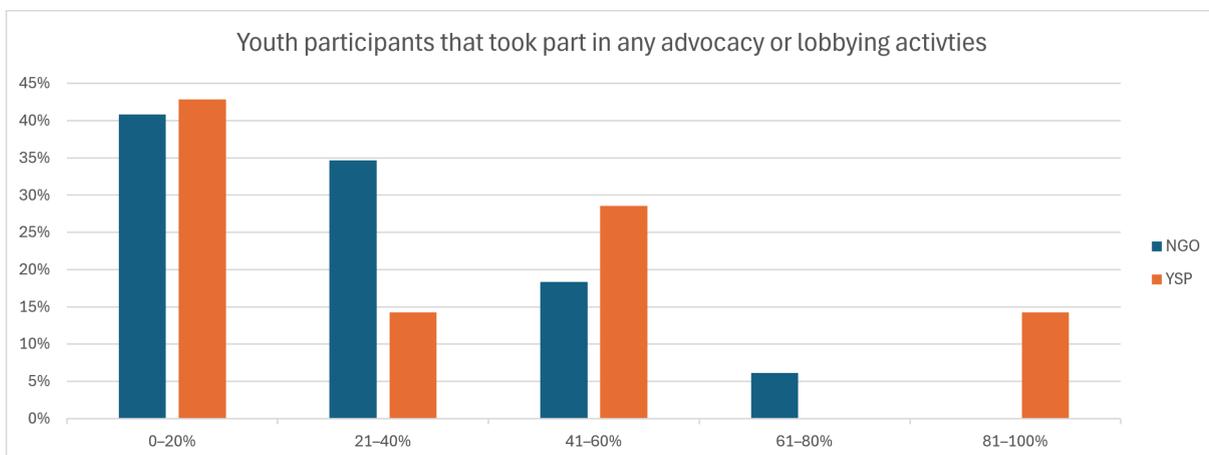
Key recommendations for improving advocacy training programmes for young people include making activities practical and hands-on, ensuring accessibility (starting with basic concepts and ensuring that programs are easy to join and have no financial barriers) and relevance to everyday life, involving youth in programme design, offering direct contact with leaders and experts, and focusing on a few practical tools rather than overwhelming information. The overall approach should be participatory and co-created with young people, enabling them to gain real skills and connections that can be used immediately.

*“What cultural or contextual challenges affect youth advocacy in your region?”*

Youth Service Provider representatives highlight an array of issues. A core issue is not being taken seriously; their involvement is often tokenistic rather than meaningful, and adultism can dismiss their perspectives outright. Social divides based on race, class, or culture create barriers to building unified movements, while a difficult political (shift to the right) and economic climate (funding shortages and shifting priorities) makes sustained advocacy harder. Many youth feel disconnected from formal advocacy, which they perceive as abstract or purely "political," preferring more direct, informal community action. Finally, the social risk of speaking up remains high, with fear of backlash or bullying from both peers and adults discouraging open participation.

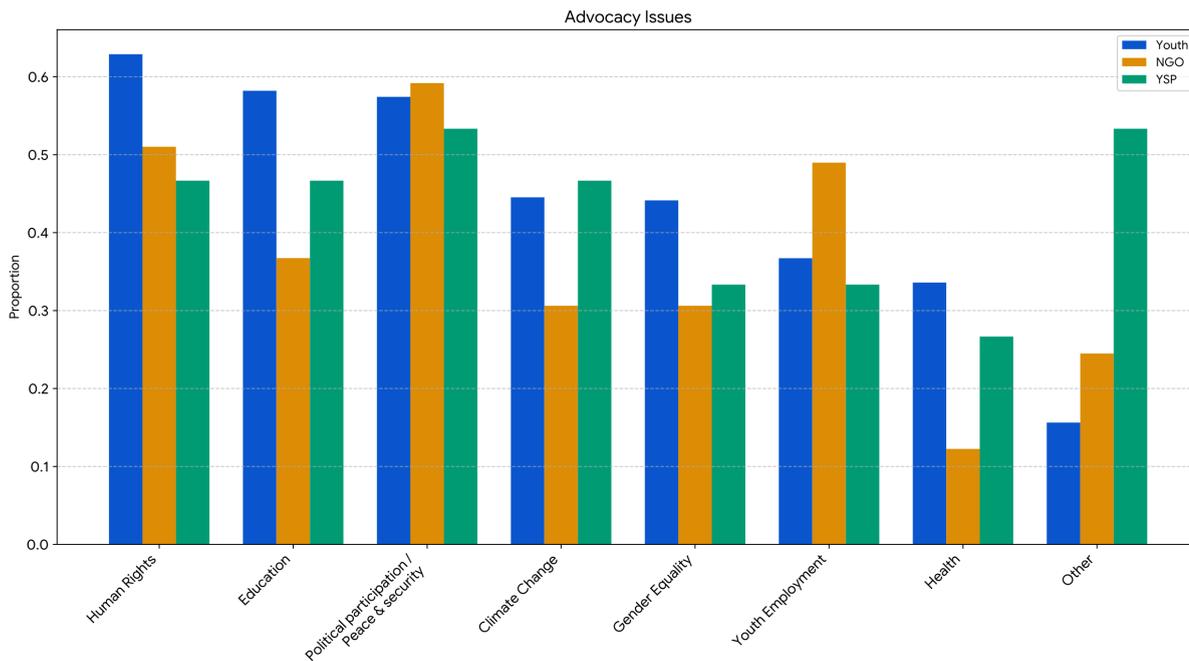
## 4.5 Comparing data

Below we include a visualisation of the NGOs and Youth Service Providers assessment on the percentage of youth beneficiaries that took part in any advocacy or lobbying type of activity. We notice similar trends with both highlighting minimal youth involvement in such activities. Also, by analysing the free text responses that the two provided, we noticed similar observations and suggestions. More details can be seen in the sections above.



#### 4.5.1 Advocacy topics

The figure below showcases the advocacy issues of interest as perceived by the three respondent groups. Most often, the *Other* category has been used to add further or specific issues of interest, such as art and culture, sustainability, social and human rights issues (LGBTQ rights, racism, discrimination, integration), mental health etc.



The bar plot compares the percentage of youth who advocated for or were interested in each issue, against the percentage of NGO and YSP representatives who observed youth in their programmes most frequently engaging with those issues. Topics of high interest for youth (above 50%) include *Human Rights*, *Education*, *Political Participation / Peace & Security*. The latter is also highlighted by the NGO and YSP respondents, with *Human Rights* being a close second. The NGO representatives also observed *Youth Employment* to be a theme of high interest for their youth, while Youth Service Providers highlighted also the other issues that youth take interest in.

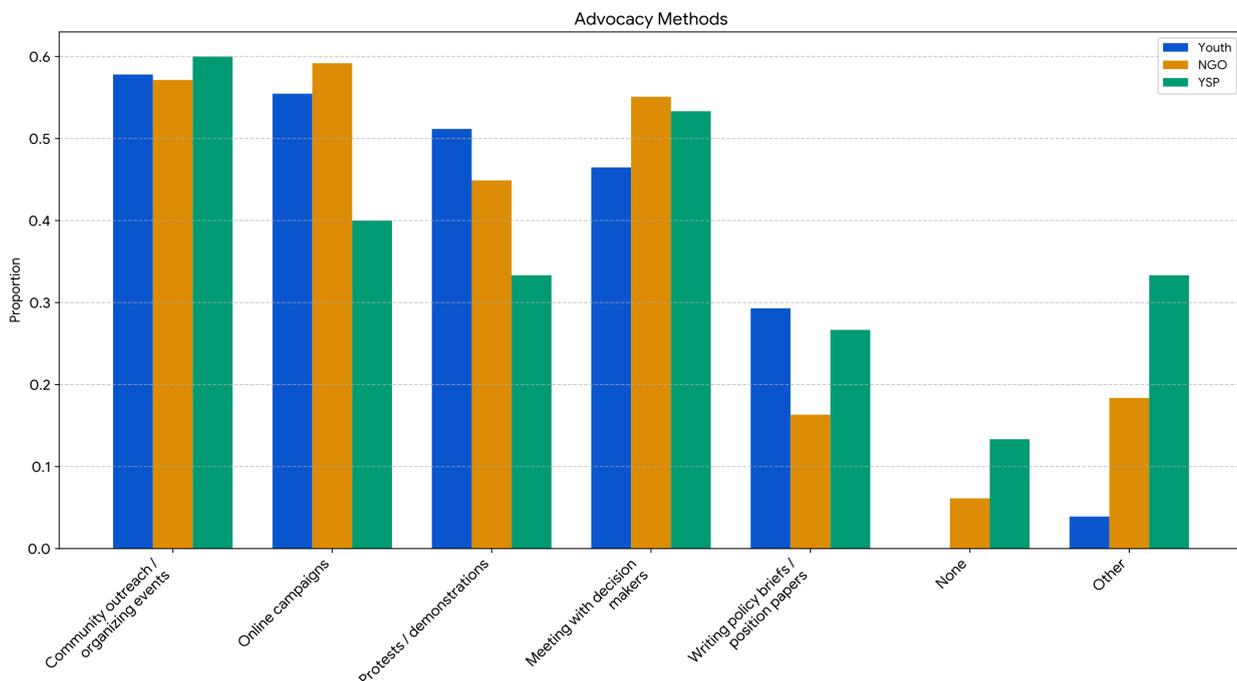
- **Top Priorities:** Youth primarily advocate for *Human Rights* (62.9%) and *Education* (58.2%). However, both NGOs and YSPs report that *Political Participation / Peace & Security* is the top issue they see youth engaging with.
- **Key Discrepancies:** There is a significant disconnect on *Education*, where Youth interest is much higher (58.2%) than what NGOs observe (36.7%).

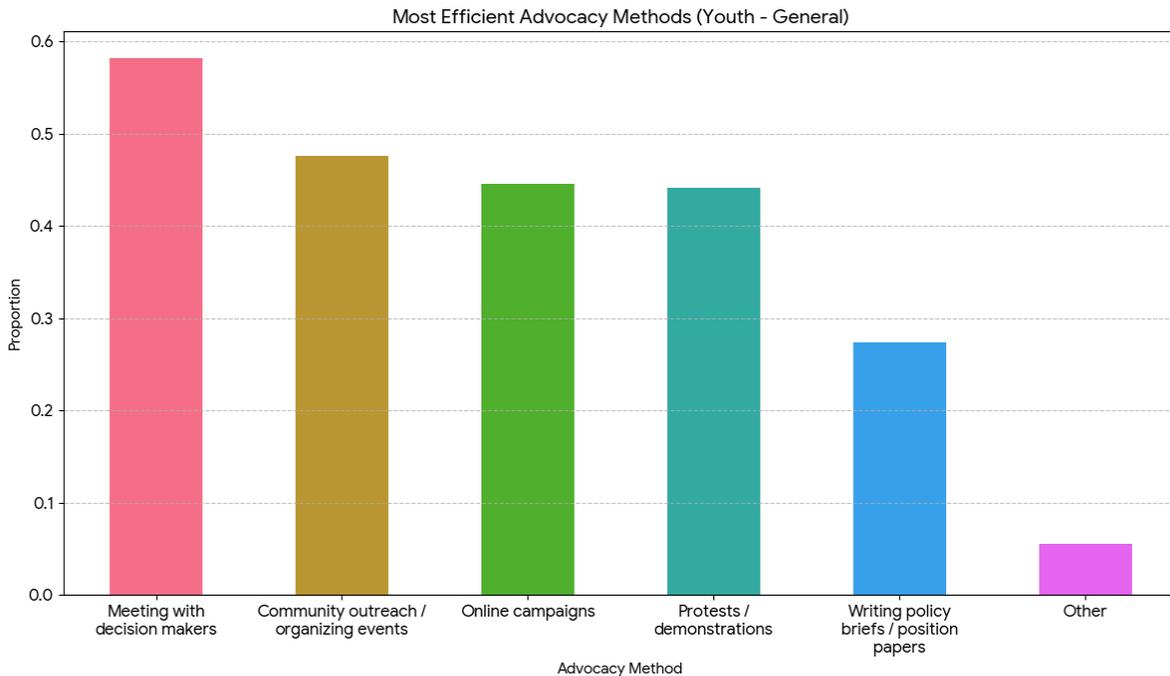
### 4.5.2 Advocacy methods

The figure below showcases how the three actors (Youth, NGOs, YSPs) view the usage of advocacy methods (most used). The NGOs and Youth Service Providers answered the question of what advocacy methods they have observed to be most used by youth, while the youth are choosing which methods they have used or are interested in using. This figure is then complemented by two other views, namely the advocacy methods that youth find most effective for lobbying and advocacy (either through personal experience or from their network), one showing the general overview, and the other one offering the view by country.

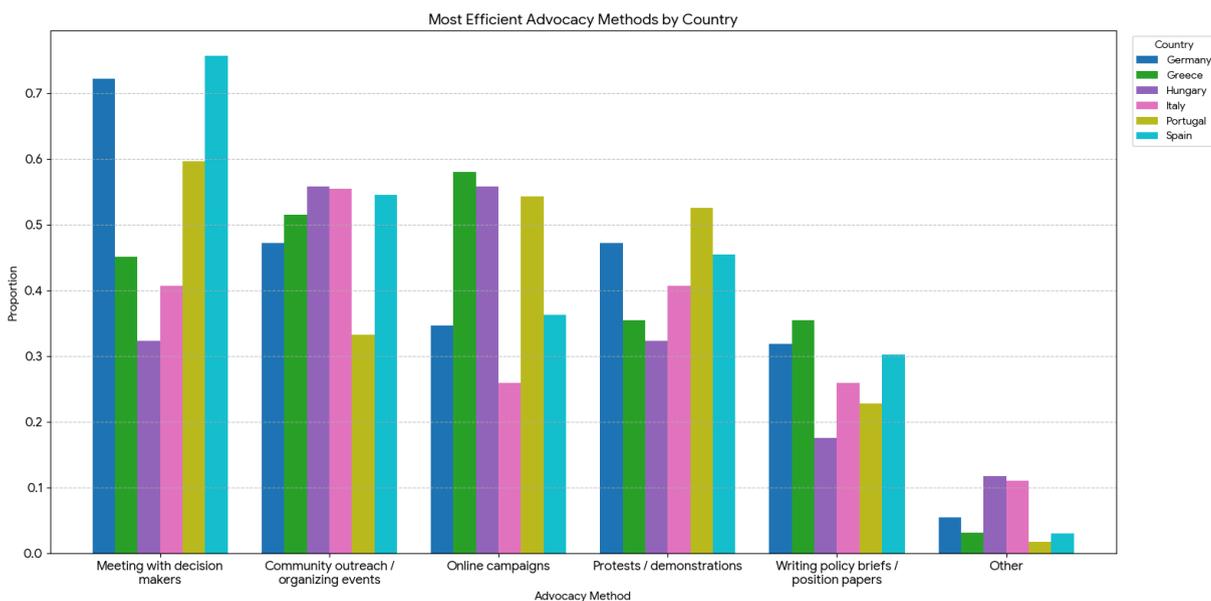
Generally, the top scorer method across the three respondent categories is *Community Outreach/Organising Events*. For youth, the second and third place are occupied by *Online Campaigns* and *Protests/Demonstrations*. However, the NGO and YSP respondents observe *Meeting with Decision Makers* and *Online Campaigns* more often.

The *Other* category included forms of direct engagement via youth councils, youth parliaments and local politics, internships within institutions, cultural and creative activities, such as World Cafes and publishing newspapers, and organising workcamps and fundraising.





Youth perceive that *Meeting with Decision Makers* is by far the most effective advocacy method (especially respondents from Spain, Germany and Portugal; however, there is a stark contrast to Hungary where the perceived effectiveness is much lower). *Community Outreach/Organising Events* is in the second position, with a similar distribution percentage across countries (important to note that participants from Portugal though rate the effectiveness of it fairly low). Local landscape (political, economical, social) does shape the perceived effectiveness of the advocacy methods. *Other* suggested efficient methods include non-violent direct action, direct discussions and dialogue among youth and with persons of influence (resources-holders), as well as creating documentaries and posters.



### 4.5.3 Skills assessment – key skill gaps

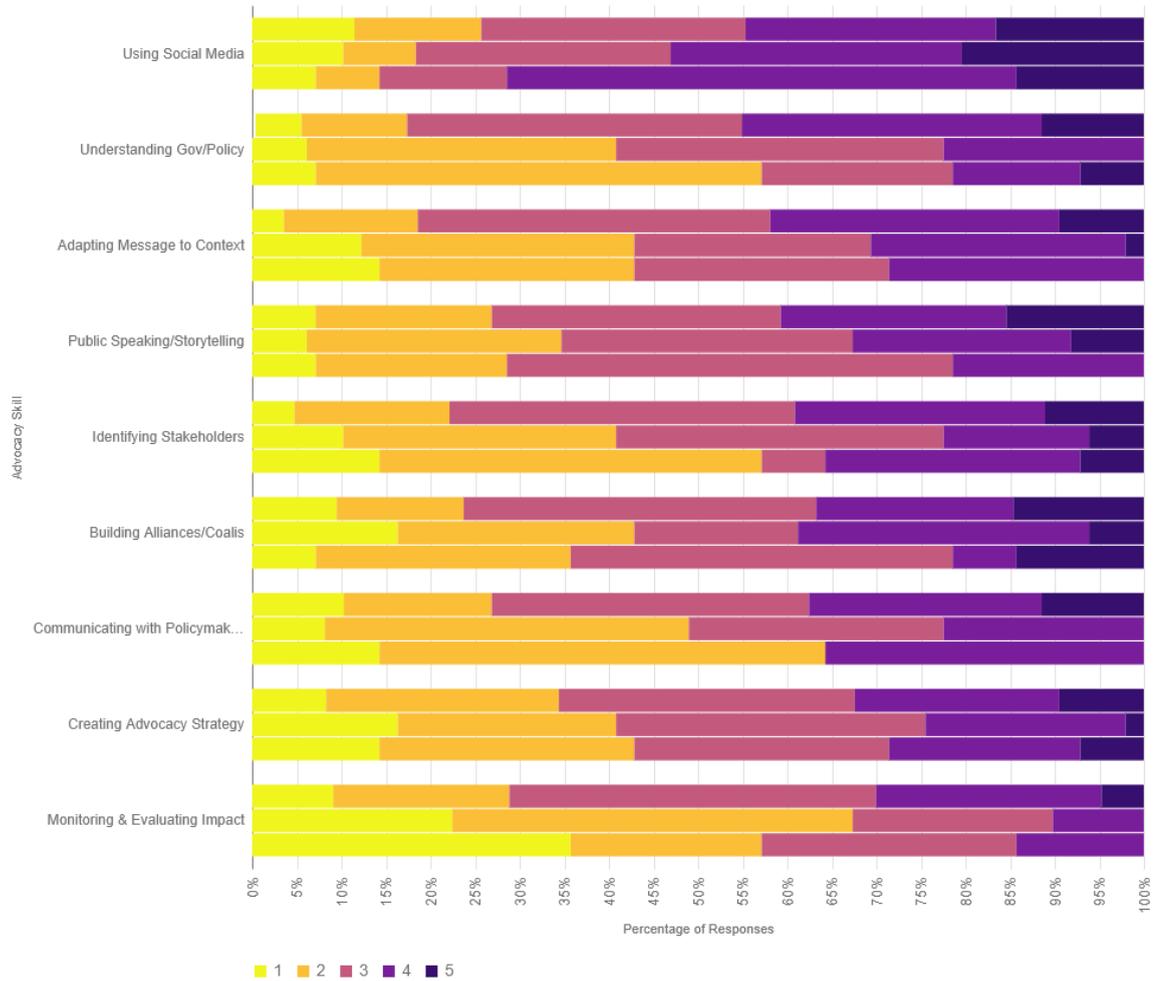
In the surveys, respondents were asked to evaluate a series of skills (selected based on the literature review and discursive process with project partners from before designing the surveys), namely:

- Understanding how government or policy systems work
- Knowing how to adapt a message/strategy to different cultural or political contexts
- Identifying key stakeholders and decisionmakers
- Creating an advocacy strategy or campaign plan
- Communicating effectively with policymakers; writing or speaking confidently to decisionmakers
- Public speaking and storytelling for advocacy
- Using social media for advocacy
- Monitoring and evaluating advocacy impact (tracking goals, policy change, signatures)
- Building alliances or coalitions with other youth or organisations

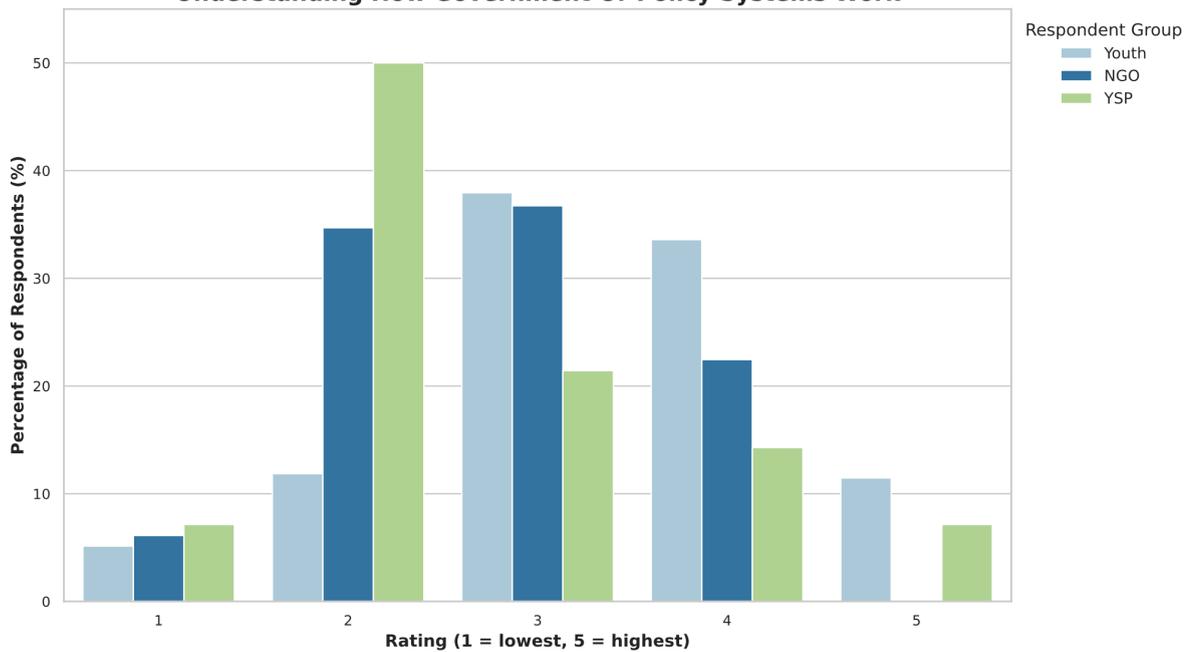
In the following, we investigate how a variety of skills are being perceived by the youth respondents (self-assessment), and how the NGO and YSP respondents perceive the corresponding skill level of the youth they interact with. The answers include 253 replies for the youth, 49 from the NGOs and 14 from the YSPs.

The first figure is an overview figure of all the skills to be assessed containing a stacked bar chart of the grade (1 to 5, color coded as yellow to purple). For each question the first row corresponds to the youth assessment, the second to the NGOs and the third to the Youth Service Providers. Afterwards, a series of individual figures for each question with a vertical combined barchart is provided.

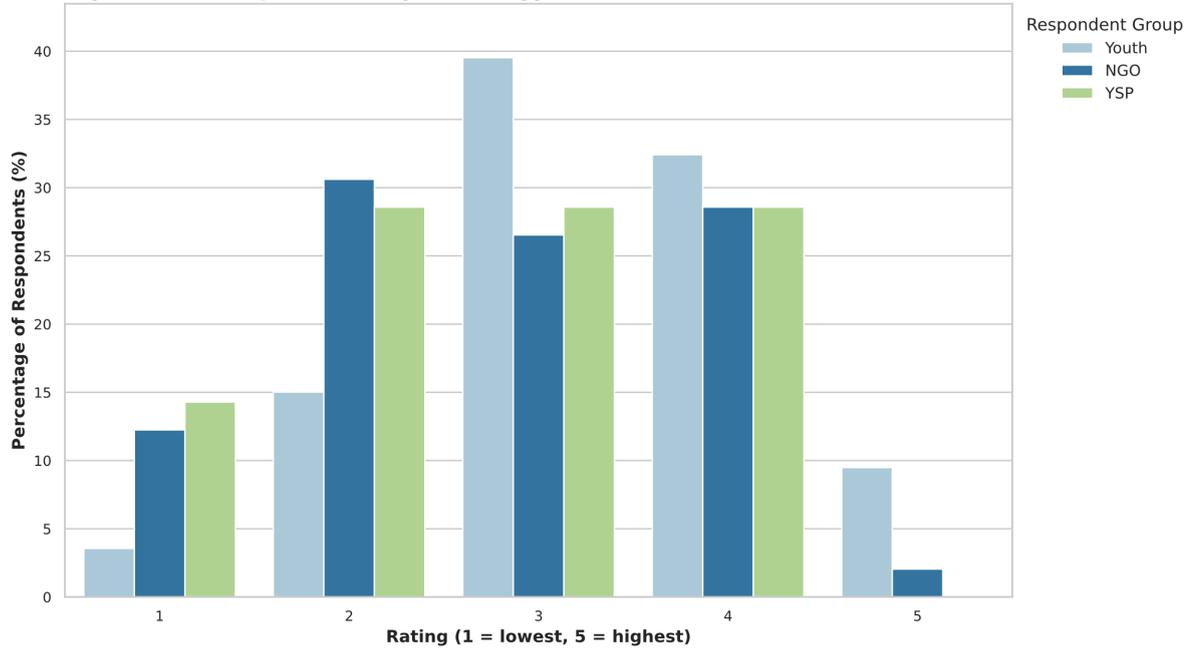
Distribution of Advocacy Skill Grades by Skill and Respondent Category



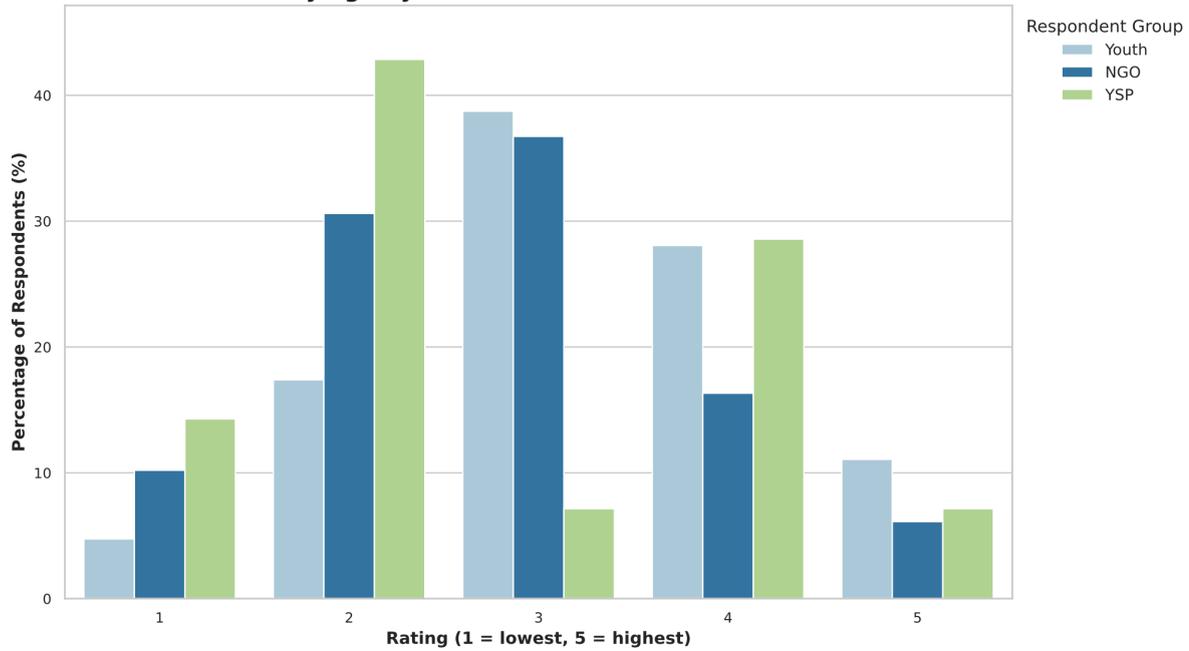
Understanding How Government Or Policy Systems Work



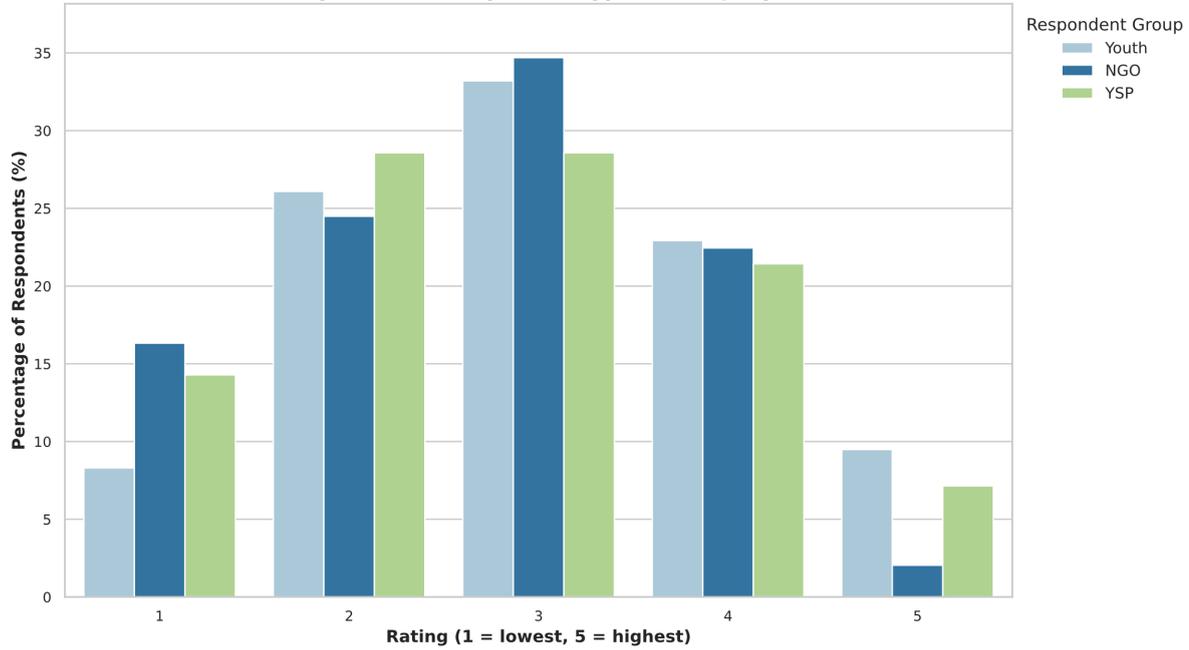
**Knowing How To Adapt A Message Strategy To Different Cultural Or Political Contexts**



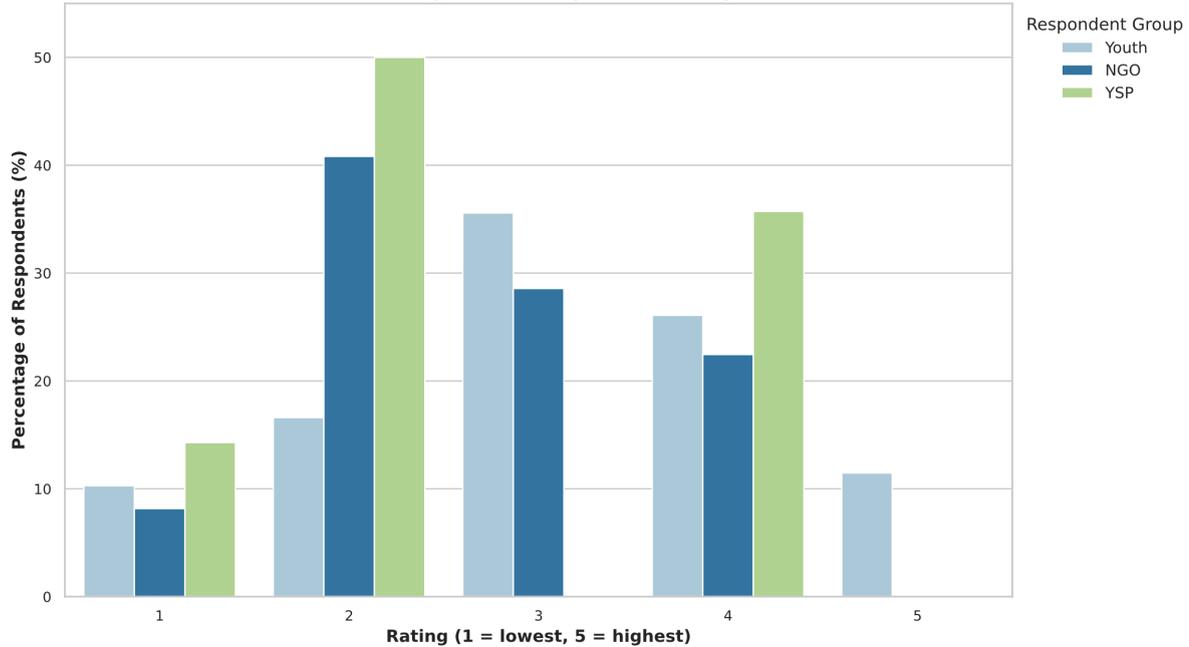
**Identifying Key Stakeholders And Decisionmakers**



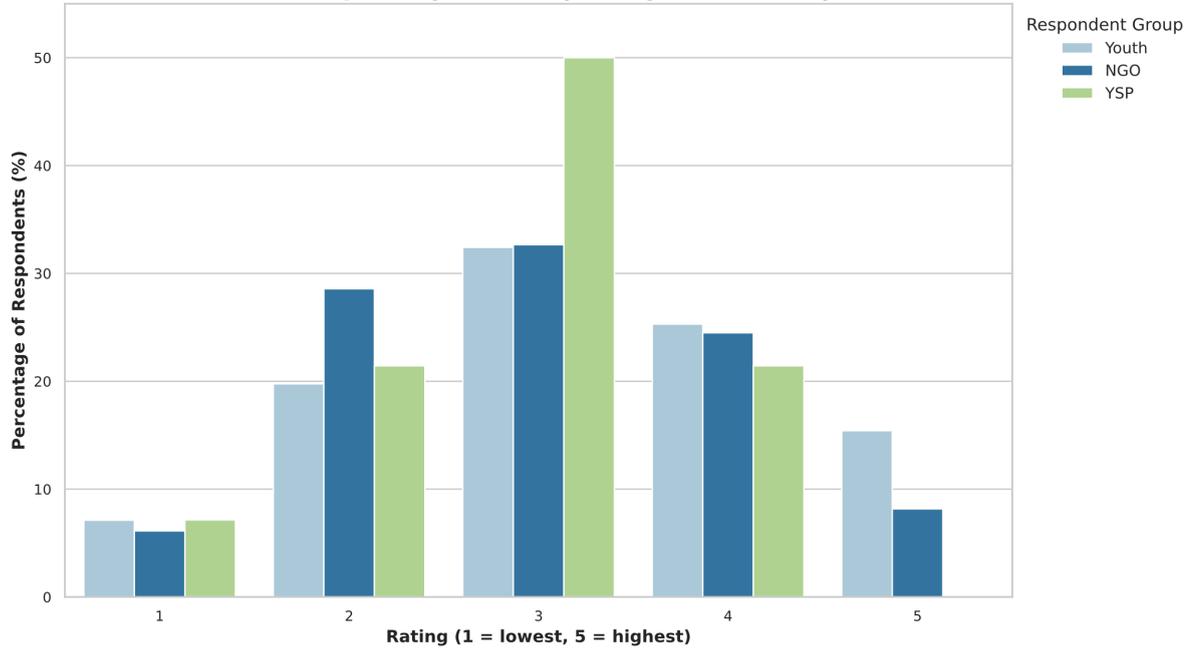
### Creating An Advocacy Strategy Or Campaign Plan



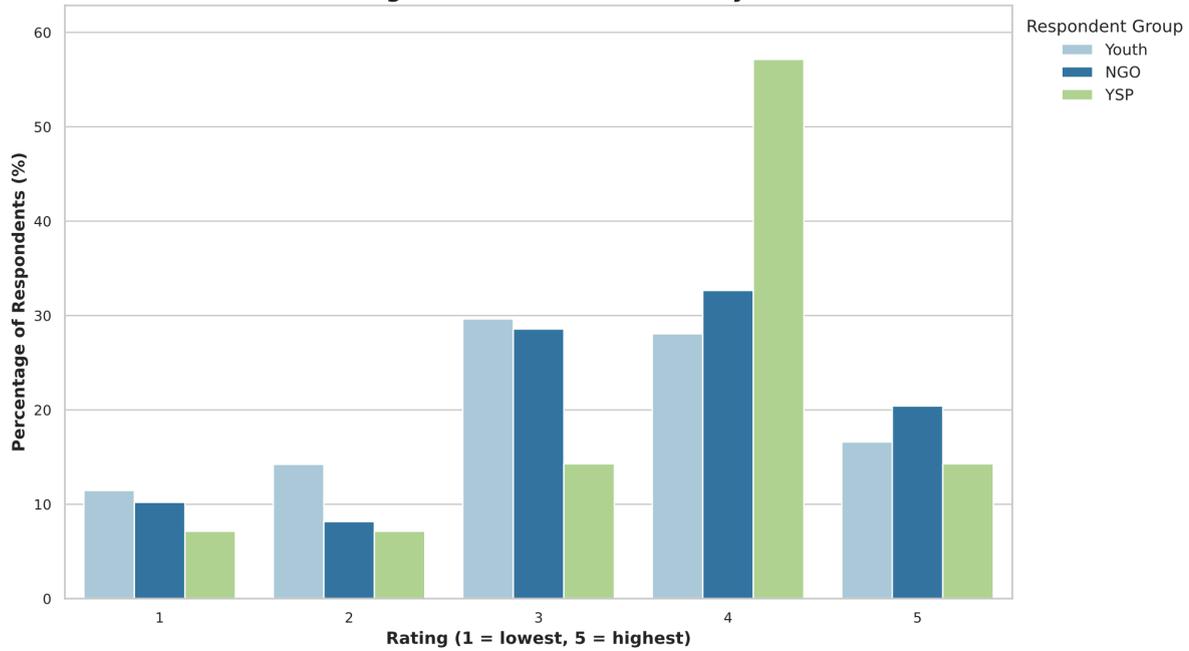
### Communicating Effectively With Policymakers



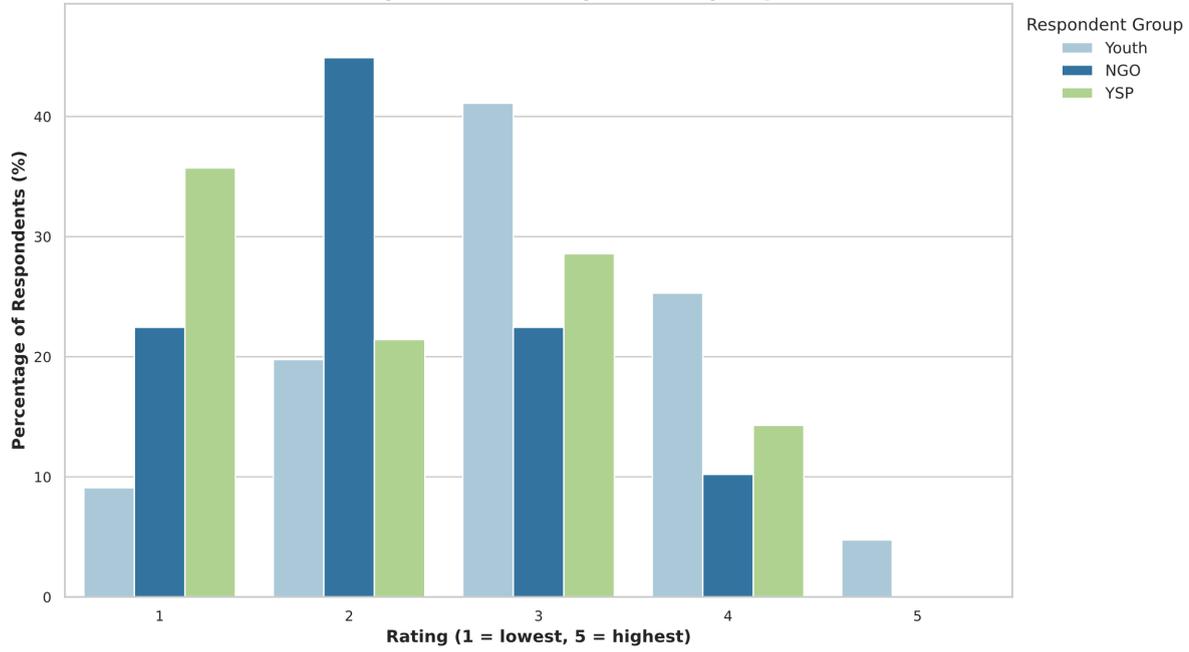
### Public Speaking And Storytelling For Advocacy



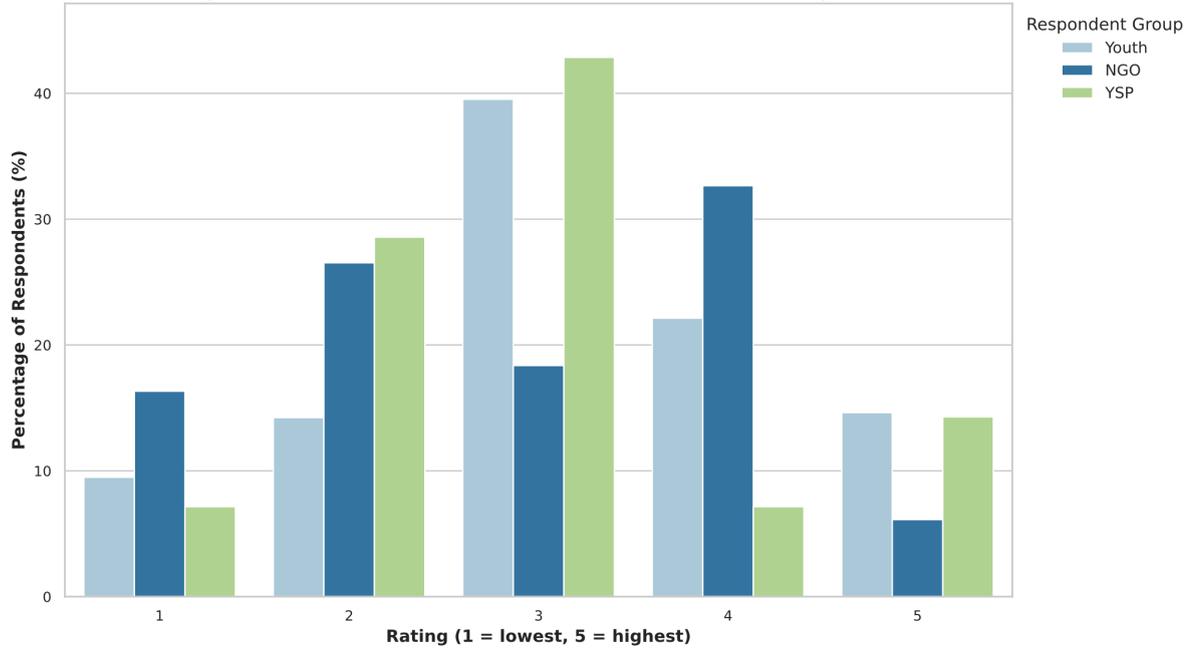
### Using Social Media For Advocacy



**Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy Impact**



**Building Alliances Or Coalitions With Other Youth Or Organizations**

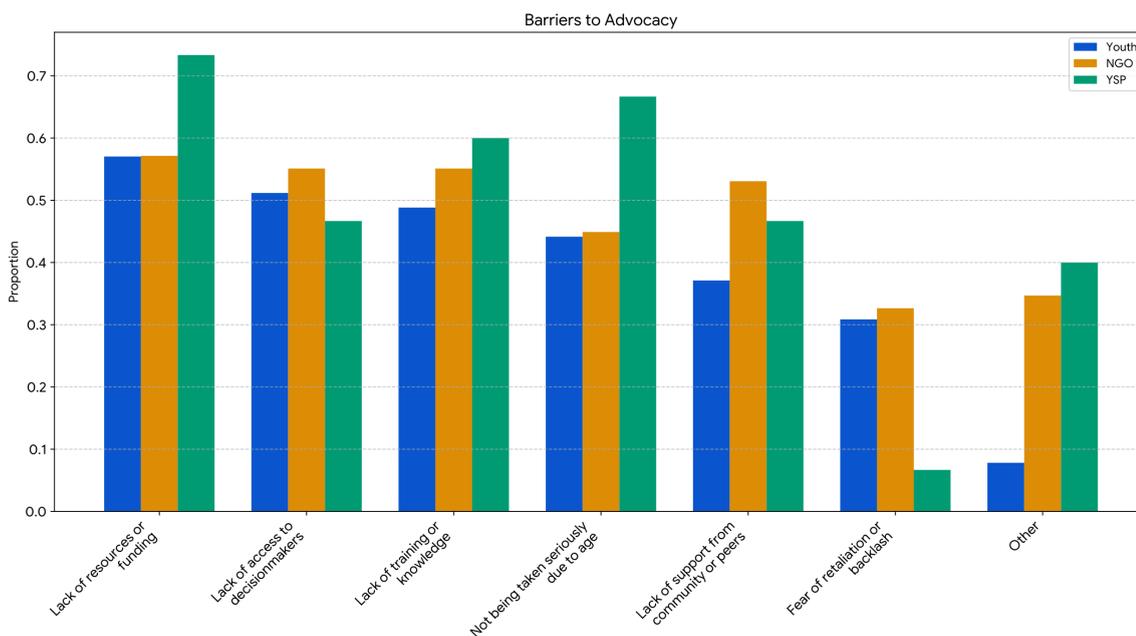


## Overall Trends:

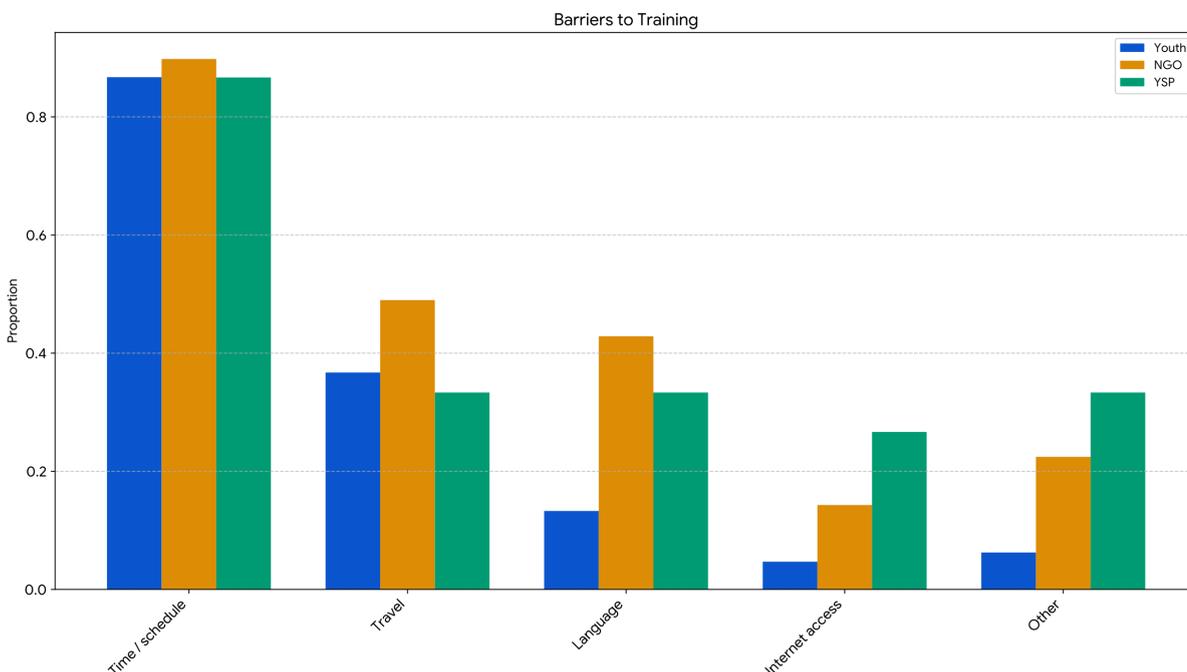
- There is a general tendency to rate skills moderately well (ratings 3 and 4) in most areas, indicating a foundational level of competence. Ratings of 1 and 5 are less common, suggesting a realistic self-assessment without extreme over or under-confidence.
- *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy Impact* consistently appears to be an area where all groups perceive lower proficiency or greater challenges, indicating a universal need for improvement or training in this analytical skill.
- Skills related to modern communication (*Using Social Media for Advocacy, Public Speaking and Storytelling*) generally receive higher assessments, particularly from Youth and Youth Service Providers, possibly reflecting the modern advocacy landscape.
- NGOs and YSPs often show a more spread-out distribution, sometimes reporting higher percentages in lower rating categories (e.g., rating 2) for certain skills. This might indicate a more critical or nuanced assessment from the organisational perspective compared to individual self-assessments by youth.

### 4.5.4 Barriers

In what pertains to barriers encountered in advocacy, the top position across the three respondent categories is *lack of resources or funding*. YSPs perceive very strongly the *not being taken seriously due to age*, as opposed to youth and NGOs, who rate *lack of access to decisionmakers*, and *lack of training or knowledge* higher. The *Other* group highlights internal group dynamic struggles (friction, lack of motivation), external pressure, bureaucracy, lack of support/real power, imposter syndrome.



In what concerns barriers to participating in a training programme, the top contender is *Time/Schedule* with a percentage above 85% for all respondents. The second one, with approximately 40% is *Travel*. NGOs and YSPs consider from their experience that *Language* may be a bigger barrier than youth do (NGOs perceive *Language* as a significantly higher barrier (42.9%) than youth themselves report it to be (13.3%)). This suggests NGOs might be overestimating language difficulties or that the youth answering the survey are already proficient in other languages. The *Other* category includes lack of confidence, social anxiety, logistical barriers (transportation, bureaucracy), lack of interest.

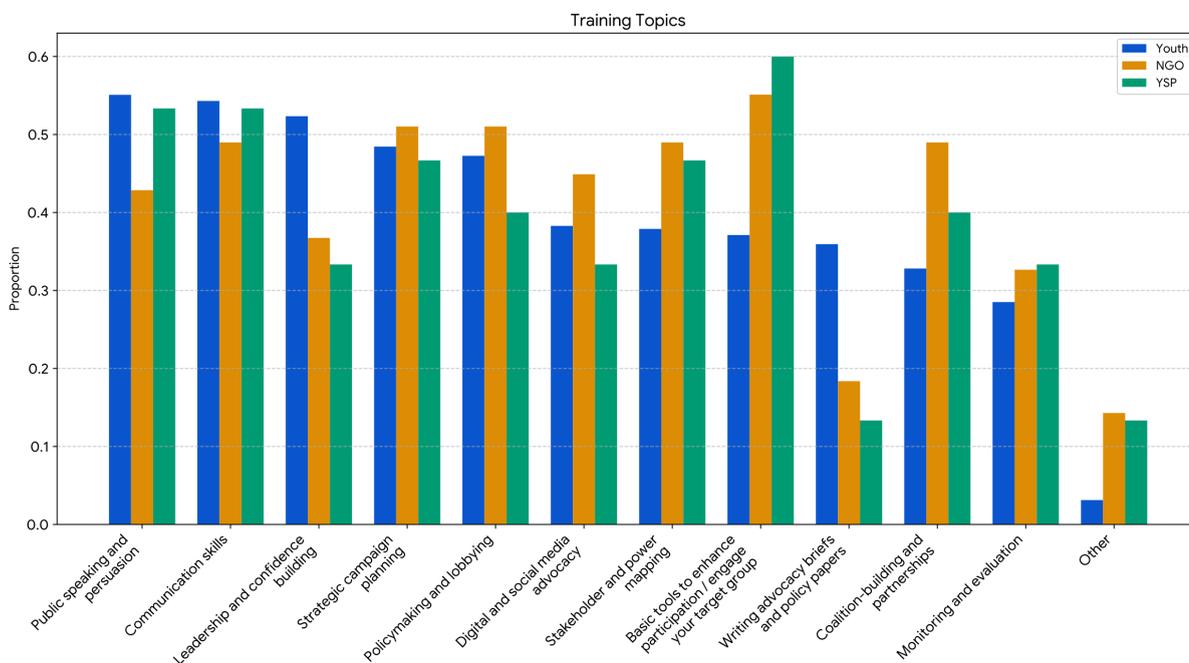


Besides barriers concerning advocacy and training, the respondents were also asked if youth face legal/political constraints in their countries/regions. Only 16.4% of youth respondents said yes (with Italy and Germany reporting highest rates (26% and 25% respectively)). NGO respondents (49% said yes) generally perceive higher constraints for youth than the youth themselves report, particularly in Germany (68% vs 25%), Portugal (60% vs 3.5%) and Hungary (40% vs 15%). 26% of YSP respondents said yes (1 in Spain, and 2 in Germany). Issues highlighted by youth who said yes include political hostility, authorities being hostile towards protests, identity-based discrimination (non-binary people and religious minorities). Issues highlighted by NGO respondents include limited participation of youth in decision-making processes (small issues or just consultation), migrations status, lack of access to policy influencing channels, class-based exclusion (poorer backgrounds/financial disadvantage). YSP respondents highlight public space use restrictions (e.g. in Barcelona), slow, bureaucratic and conservative institutions.

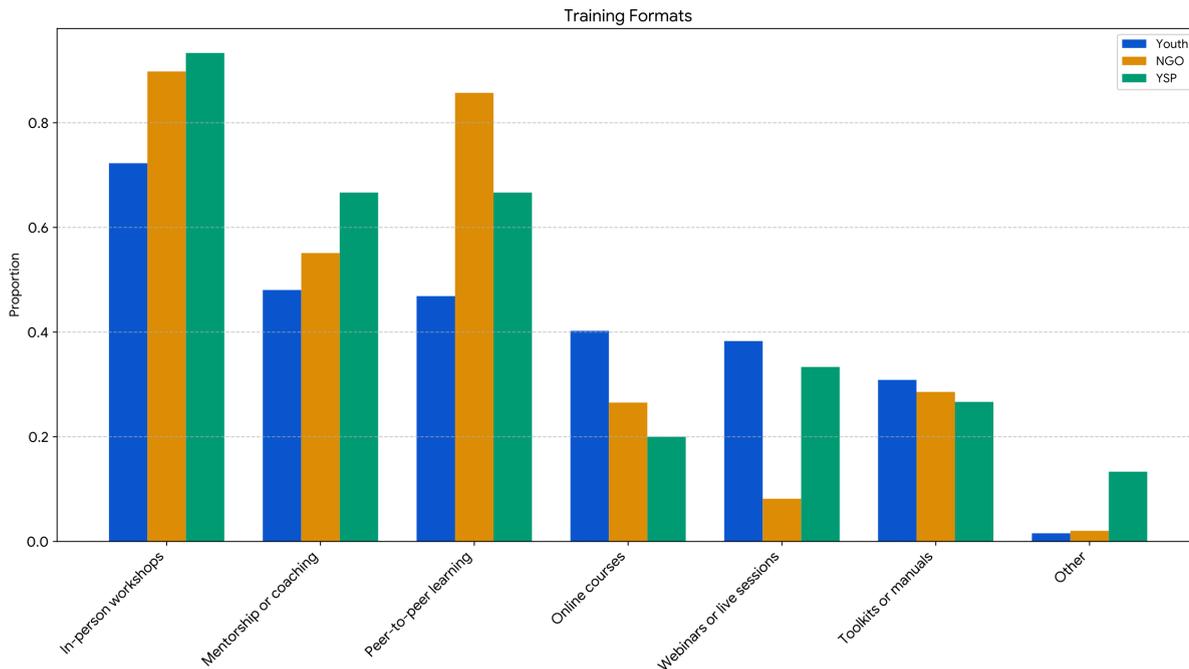
#### 4.5.5 Training priorities

The figure below highlights the distribution of interest for training topics across the three respondent categories. Youth show similar interest in *Public Speaking and Persuasion*, *Communication Skills*, *Leadership Skills and Confidence Building*, followed closely by *Strategic Campaign Planning* and *Policymaking and Lobbying*. NGO and YSP respondents, however, believe youth would benefit most from *Basic Tools to Enhance Participation/Engage Your Target Group* (55-60%). There is a mismatch here; providers focus on participation tools, while youth are interested in soft skills. The largest gap is indeed in *Basic Tools to Enhance Participation/Engage Your Target Group*, which youth prioritise much lower (37.1%) than providers do.

The *Other* group includes topics concerning mental health and dealing with conflicts, fundraising and finding participants, communication with institutions, democracy education.



Regarding **training formats**, all agree that *In-Person Workshops* work best (72 to 93%). NGOs heavily favour *Peer-to-Peer Learning* (85.7%) as a format, whereas fewer of the Youth (46.9%) selected it as a preference. The *Other* category included hybrid events for rural youth and short online videos/toolkits for self-learning.



The youth were also asked if they would like to receive a certificate upon training completion. The overwhelming answer was yes (70%), with 27% saying that it is not important, and only 3% saying no.

## 4.6 Conclusions

The analysis of the survey data brings together perspectives from three distinct groups: young people, NGOs, and Youth Service Providers. While all stakeholders share a strong commitment to youth advocacy, our findings reveal significant nuances in how they perceive the current landscape. A clear pattern emerges: there is no lack of motivation among young people, but rather a lack of accessible structures, practical skills, and confidence to translate this motivation into impact. By synthesising the quantitative data and qualitative feedback, we have identified five central conclusions that define the roadmap for the upcoming training phases:

1. **Motivated but under-equipped youth:** The report indicates that young people are motivated to engage in advocacy but lack the knowledge and tools to do so effectively. This gap needs to be addressed through targeted training programmes.
2. **Need for interactive and inclusive trainings:** Youth work organisations and young people themselves highlight the need for interactive and inclusive training programmes that result in tangible outcomes and provide access to follow-up opportunities.

3. **Barriers to participation:** Key barriers to participation in advocacy and training include lack of resources, time constraints, and travel difficulties. Addressing these barriers is essential for the success of future training programmes.
4. **Importance of Safe Spaces and Mentorship:** Safe, non-judgmental spaces and ongoing mentorship are critical for building confidence and ensuring the success of young advocates.
5. **Discrepancies in perceived needs:** There is a mismatch between the training topics that youth are interested in and those that NGOs and YSPs believe are most beneficial. Bridging this gap will require better alignment and communication between training providers and participants.

#### 4.7 Limitations of the Analysis

This needs analysis is providing important insights for the planning and implementation of training courses within the framework of the Youth Voices Rising cooperation partnership. Although we consider the results to be significant and relevant, we would like to point out the following limitations:

- **Limited Qualitative Data:** The report relies heavily on survey data, which may not capture the full depth of participants' experiences and perspectives. Conducting more qualitative interviews could provide richer insights.
- **Geographical Bias:** The data may be biased towards certain regions, as the majority of responses came from specific countries. This could limit the generalisability of the findings to other regions.
- **Self-Reported Data:** The reliance on self-reported data may have introduced biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses they believe are expected rather than their true opinions.
- **Limited Scope:** The report focuses primarily on the needs and experiences of young people and NGOs involved in advocacy. It does not fully explore the broader political, social, and economic factors that may impact advocacy efforts.
- **Lack of Longitudinal Data:** The report provides a snapshot of the current state of advocacy skills and needs. Longitudinal data would be valuable to track changes over time and assess the long-term impact of training programs.

## 5 Outlook

A needs analysis is only as valuable as the actions that follow it. That's why it became the blueprint for our practical work in Youth Voices Rising. Our research made clear that young people are ready to act, but they are asking for the right tools. They don't want abstract lectures; they want to know how to speak up, how to plan a campaign, and how to deal with decision-makers on an equal footing.

We took this feedback to heart. In January 2026, the International Lobbying Training in Thessaloniki was designed specifically around these needs. Instead of just talking about advocacy, we are practising it. We focus on confidence building and public speaking, the exact soft skills that the survey respondents highlighted as their biggest gaps.

But we also learned that even the most motivated youth need support structures. That is why the Multiplier Training in Bad Liebenzell, Germany (February 2026) focuses on strategies how to implement them. We are equipping youth workers and experienced young people to be the mentors, multipliers and strategists that the young people in our survey asked for. Accordingly, while implementing our Local Lobby Trainings and as local actions emerge, one main objective is to offer ongoing support between the major training events to keep lobby actions on track and to create spaces for peer exchange and collective problem-solving.

In the coming months, participants will transfer these skills into their local contexts, organising their own advocacy trainings and campaigns. This report serves as our baseline for this phase: it defines the standards we aim to meet and the gaps we aim to close. We will continue to use these findings to ensure that our support remains relevant where it matters most.

## 6 Literature & resources

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*In a separate document please find the [survey and interview outlines](#).*