

## The project « URBAN CITIZEN Y » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Today's young people will be the key generation of our cities in 20-30 years. WHAT IF WE BUILT LONG-TERM URBAN DEVELOPMENT AROUND YOUNG PEOPLE?

The aim of this project was to develop a framework for urban youth ecosystems with the active co-creation of youth, which serve the sustainable long-term development and envisioning of the future of European cities.

The project's objectives were:

- to involve active young people and youth workers from the cities of Braga, Maribor, Thessaloniki, Cluj-Napoca, Varna, Novi Sad and Amiens in a creative exchange of experiences, thoughts and ideas in a European context,
- to create a framework for the gathering of youth workers from cities with a good record regarding youth participation and youth policies in a creative process of identifying, analysing urban challenges regarding young people leading to practical and pragmatic solutions,
- to contribute to the improvement of urban youth ecosystems from all around Europe through a pool of solutions addressing the 5 key topics of the project.

The project involved 7 European Youth Capital cities: Braga (PT), Maribor (SI), Thessaloniki (GR), Cluj (RO), Varna (BG), Novi Sad (SR) and Amiens (FR).

The main output of the project is the **Guidelines for Better Urban Youth Ecosystems**, a pool of 45 ideas and solutions for European cities.

**7 events have been carried out within this project:**

### **Event 1 – CITIZEN Y CONFERENCE**

**Participation:** The event involved 113 citizens, including 8 participants from the city of Braga (Portugal),

8 participants from the city of Maribor (Slovenia), 8 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (Greece), 8 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (Romania), 8 participants from the city of Varna (Bulgaria), 8 participants from the city of Novi Sad (Serbia) and 65 participants from the city of Amiens (France).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Amiens (France), from 02/03/2020 to 03/03/2020.

**Short description:** The CITIZEN Y CONFERENCE (opening event) hosted 5 thematic panels regarding the 5 initial topics of the project. Each panel hosted a lead panellist while other 4 panellists joined in addressing the specific topic concerned. Each panel lasted for 90 min., with 20 min. lead introduction, 4x10 min. contributions from panellists and 30 min. for a Q&A session. The event was streamed online. However, we need to remark that the emerging COVID-19 pandemic put a pressure already on the event as cases were emerging in our location, around Amiens, France.

### **Event 2: HAPPY CITY CONFERENCE**

**Participation:** The event involved 69 citizens, including 6 participants from the city of Braga (**Portugal**), 5 participants from the city of Maribor (**Slovenia**), 6 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (**Greece**), 37 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**), 4 participants from the city of Varna (**Bulgaria**), 5 participants from the city of Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and 6 participants from the city of Amiens (**France**).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**) and online, from 12/11/2020 to 13/11/2020

**Short description:** How do young people feel in Europe's cities in 2020's pandemic crisis? We discussed the report based on our Happy City Survey that we conducted in partner cities, current or former European Youth Capitals, in order to see how these cities faced the COVID-19 pandemic, and how the youth there feels about their city and the way they handled the crisis. Compared to our original approaches, the COVID-19 pandemic created a context for partners to reconsider how we can approach a framework for youth friendly cities. Hence, our topics addressed the issues called TOWARDS DIGITAL, PARTICIPATION IN CRISIS and CITIES.YOUTH.FUTURE. We believed at that point that these three issues are the most important ones on the topic of cities and young people.

### **Event 3: HAPPY CITY: YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC**

**Participation:** The event involved 72 citizens, including 5 participants from the city of Braga (**Portugal**), 5 participants from the city of Maribor (**Slovenia**), 5 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (**Greece**), 42 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**), 5 participants from the city of Varna (**Bulgaria**), 5 participants from the city of Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and 5 participants from the city of Amiens (**France**).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Maribor (**Slovenia**) and online, from 22/09/2021 to 23/09/2021.

**Short description:** During November 2020, the first Happy City Conference addressed how the situation of young people in European cities has changed in the special context of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic is not yet over, European cities had the chance to reshape their reality while vaccinations are also moving ahead. However, some effects are here to last for several years, maybe even a decade. What has changed, what is different and how can cities and young people move forward together? **Happy City: Youth After the Pandemic** addressed the topics of mental health, future perspectives, and cities of the future shaped by young people. We had the perspective of decision-makers, experts, senior executives, and youth leaders from local and European level while trying to find proper answers to future actions.

### **Event 4: YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC: FUTURE OF WORK**

**Participation:** The event involved 61 citizens, including 4 participants from the city of Braga (**Portugal**), 4 participants from the city of Maribor (**Slovenia**), 35 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (**Greece**), 6 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**), 4 participants from the city of Varna (**Bulgaria**), 4 participants from the city of Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and 4 participants from the city of Amiens (**France**).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Thessaloniki (**Greece**) from 08/04/2022 to 09/04/2022.

**Short description:** The aim of the **YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC: FUTURE OF WORK** event was to discuss the FUTURE OF WORK, EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP for young people in Thessaloniki, Greece and in Europe. We met together with youth workers from the cities of Braga (Portugal), Maribor (Slovenia), Varna (Bulgaria), Cluj-Napoca (Romania), Novi Sad (Serbia) and Klaipeda (Lithuania) in a creative setting. The situation of young people in European cities has changed in the special context of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic is not yet over, European cities had the chance to reshape their reality while life starts to reach a new kind of post-

pandemic normality. However, some effects are here to last for several years, maybe even a decade. What has changed, what is different and how can cities and young people move forward together?

### **Event 5: YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC: ONE EUROPE**

**Participation:** The event involved 61 citizens, including 5 participants from the city of Braga (**Portugal**), 5 participants from the city of Maribor (**Slovenia**), 5 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (**Greece**), 8 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**), 4 participants from the city of Varna (**Bulgaria**), 40 participants from the city of Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and 5 participants from the city of Amiens (**France**).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and online from 12/08/2022 to 13/09/2022.

**Short description:** ONE EUROPE was the message in the framework of which we debated urban issues like IMAGINING youth friendly quarters / RECREATING communities through creativity and music / BUILDING climate-friendly cities. We reconnected in Novi Sad during the European Year of Youth and let's show the way shown by young people for the future of our European cities. And not the least, let's show that being European is not just our version, your version or their version, but it is really only ONE version. It is one Europe. 'Youth After the Pandemic' travels to Novi Sad, a vibrant city, former European Youth Capital and current European Capital of Culture, a place which might not be inside the EU, but it is a de-facto connection point between East and West. It is a European meeting point.

### **Event 6: YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC: FUTURE GREEN CITIES**

**Participation:** The event involved 58 citizens, including 4 participants from the city of Braga (**Portugal**), 4 participants from the city of Maribor (**Slovenia**), 4 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (**Greece**), 6 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**), 32 participants from the city of Varna (**Bulgaria**), 4 participants from the city of Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and 4 participants from the city of Amiens (**France**).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and online from 12/08/2022 to 13/09/2022.

**Short description:** "YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC: FUTURE GREEN CITIES" aimed to address how young people can participate in co-creating and sustaining green cities as a major element of their current and future health and well-being. Young people are the engine of all cities in Europe! Varna is one of the most youthful cities in Bulgaria! For this reason, young people must participate in building the vision for our city. During the event in-person and online participants had the chance to work on developing new project models and ideas as parts of the collection of ideas for European cities in building youth friendly environments.

### **Event 7: CITIES. YOUTH. FUTURE CONFERENCE**

**Participation:** The event involved 120 citizens, including 57 participants from the city of Braga (**Portugal**), 12 participants from the city of Maribor (**Slovenia**), 8 participants from the city of Thessaloniki (**Greece**), 9 participants from the city of Cluj-Napoca (**Romania**), 12 participants from the city of Varna (**Bulgaria**), 12 participants from the city of Novi Sad (**Serbia**) and 10 participants from the city of Amiens (**France**).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Braga (**Portugal**) and online from 29/09/2022 to 30/09/2022.

**Short description:** Cities are the places where most innovation is happening in the world. Youth in

cities are the generation that will define the essence of our future reality in Europe. CITIES. YOUTH. FUTURE hosted three discussions on the HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, on the LEARNING AND PERSPECTIVES and on the AGENCY AND PARTICIPATION of young people in European cities. It also hosted the launch of a vision for 2050 for cities achieved with today's young people. Beyond participants on behalf of partners, the event hosted health and education experts, city representatives, active urban youth ecosystem development practitioners and youth representatives from Europe, too. The event was hosted in a hybrid format.

## **OUTCOMES**

Complementarily to states and international organisations, cities and urban communities are at the core of leading humanity out of a climate crisis while keeping a human, fair, innovative society alive and having a constant forward-looking approach towards new generations.

Urban communities transcend a physical context and are defined by a human perception of connectedness and affiliation towards urban areas nurtured by a strong digital existence. The year 2050 is a milestone for cities and urban communities in understanding the impact of past events of the 21st century (including its crises) in preparing for the challenges of the next 50 years. Youth health and well-being, learning and perspectives, agency and participation are put at the core towards providing prosperity and a high quality of life in urban communities on medium and long-term.

Beyond the activities and events of the project, we managed to contribute to the creation of a future vision of cities through young people. We were also able to involve additional 12,500 young people through two surveys and studies which captured the perception of young people about their cities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the project, we were seeking to create new ways on engaging young people in urban development processes while enhancing their European identity, through projects promoting multicultural, open, and inclusive approaches, and an entrepreneurial attitude. The work of partner cities might seem to be oriented only towards youth, but we consider that our approach is horizontal. Through this broad partnership of European Youth Capital cities, we also create a context of diversity which highlights the very essence of Europe: a community based on diversity, equality, and freedom.

Furthermore, through the creative process in activities, ownership of the results was broadened, and people engaged directly in the co-creation process will have a higher motivation to contribute to the dissemination and implementation of various solutions locally, contributing indirectly to the promotion of European values and principles, too.

The architecture of the project enabled an intellectual work and process which delivers scalable results on European level, too. While Europe is diverse, some of the solutions to our challenges can be adapted if a core method is established and it is also well adapted to local realities. This project will provide this approach and will provide large scale access to results in an easy-to-understand, and easy-to-adapt format.

Regarding intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and combating the stigmatization of various social groups, most of the cities came to this project with a background facing similar challenges. Working with young people and youth workers will allow us to address these aspects openly and to put a special horizontal emphasis on these aspects.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on our project. However, it also provided a context for developing a new array of proposals and project ideas and models which can be used by all European cities in rebuilding their communities. Our slogan became YOUTH AFTER THE PANDEMIC, which highlights the importance of focusing on young people during these times.