

SUMMARY

The project 'Give a Way to Youth!' was carried out in rural areas across Latvia to strengthen the culture of democracy and sense of belonging among youngsters. The initiative got inspired by a Norwegian organisation, 'Creatorium', and teamed up with it to replicate and customise their good practices across Latvia.

The project focused on developing the ability of young people to influence decisions in their region and on enhancing the capacity of local governments to involve young people in civic participation. Over 500 children and young adults participated in project activities, including various training opportunities and a 24-hour hackathon which tested 30 ideas.



CONTEXT

Many opportunities available in the countryside are often missed because young people are not aware of them, while knowledge-transfer activities to involve youth in decision-making processes are insufficient. To tackle these issues and empower youngsters to feel confident in initiating activities in their rural areas, the Latvia 4H (Latvijas Mazpulki) organisation set up the 'Give a Way to Youth' project.

Latvia 4H is the largest youth-led organisation in the country, with more than 1 700 active members in 2022. This NGO focuses on non-formal education activities that support rural development in Latvia and attract young people.

Theme(s): Democracy and participation, governance, education and training, youth

Country: Latvia

Organisations: Latvian 4H (Latvijas Mazpulki), non-governmental organisation (NGO), Creatorium, NGO

Start & end date: 10/2020 – 11/2023

Budget: EUR 105 000

Funding sources: European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway grants, Active citizens fund

Website: <https://mazpulki.lv/aif/#Projekta-aktivitates>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068961892467>

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OBJECTIVES

- > Strengthen the culture of democracy in Latvian rural areas;
- > Develop the skills of young people to influence decisions in their localities and carry out their own projects;
- > Increase the capability of municipalities to involve young people in civic participation.





ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

The project carried out 11 interconnected activities, including:

- > **Training sessions** with young people, volunteers and mentors. The methodology was adapted depending on the target group, but all the sessions focused on strengthening the civic participation of rural youth and preparing them for subsequent activities.
- > A one-day **hackathon** bringing together different teams of youngsters to put their training into practice. They worked together to design project ideas in a competition format. In total, 30 initiatives emerging from the hackathon were tested during the period 2021–2023 in different parts of Latvia. Those included activities to promote entrepreneurship among young people and to support social inclusion of vulnerable groups in rural areas.
- > Research activities and monitoring of the process of youth participation. This analysis was key to developing a '**roadmap for youth involvement**', a study that identifies factors facilitating and hindering young people's civic participation.
- > Awareness-raising activities, including a **project campaign** and **film** to explain why the participation of rural youth in decision-making processes is essential for local development.



RESULTS

- > The project involved **537 unique participants**, approximately 420 of whom were children and youngsters.
- > **Twenty youth-led initiatives were fully developed and implemented**, providing young participants with valuable learning experiences in project application and implementation, and contributing to personal growth.
- > Many **young people remain actively engaged** in civic activities after the project's end, by participating in youth competitions and implementing new initiatives.
- > The materials produced by the project, including research, guidelines, and a film, are useful resources providing insights to mentors, local government representatives, and youth workers.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

- > The project's main success is young participants' enthusiasm for taking ownership of their ideas and seeing them through from conception to implementation.
- > Encouragement and trust in the capabilities of young people empowered them to choose and develop their project themes and activities independently, fostering a sense of ownership and creativity, and cultivated a commitment to improving their local communities.
- > Despite challenges to idea implementation following the hackathon, such as funding limitations, participants managed to adapt their projects accordingly, demonstrating resilience and flexibility.
- > Youngsters identified mentorship as a key motivator for successfully implementing their projects, highlighting the importance of support from mentors and peers, including family, friends, and community members.
- > The Covid-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge, disrupting face-to-face events and impacting youth engagement. However, innovative solutions emerged, such as remote sports games, showcasing participants' adaptability and creativity.
- > Engaging with local municipalities to showcase project activities and advocate for increased support for youth initiatives was integral to project success. While each municipality faced unique challenges, progress was evident in fostering youth engagement.

