

The EUROPEAN YOUTH VILLAGE program

A MODEL BORN IN ROMANIA,
GROWING IN EUROPE

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WHY EYV?

CHALLENGES OF RURAL YOUTH

46% of the Romanian population lives in rural areas.

Moreover, 60% of Romanian youth (14–18) live in rural areas, facing:

- **Limited opportunities, outdated education resources, and poor transportation.**
- **Few safe youth spaces, low support from authorities**
- **Stereotypes and exclusion of diverse groups (Roma, LGBTQ+, youth with disabilities)**
- **Digital divide and lack of mental health services**

Core idea: Rural youth are more than “future farmers”—they are leaders, innovators, citizens.

So the challenge is not just about services—it’s about recognition, trust, and giving rural youth a real voice.



What EYV title is - **in one breath**

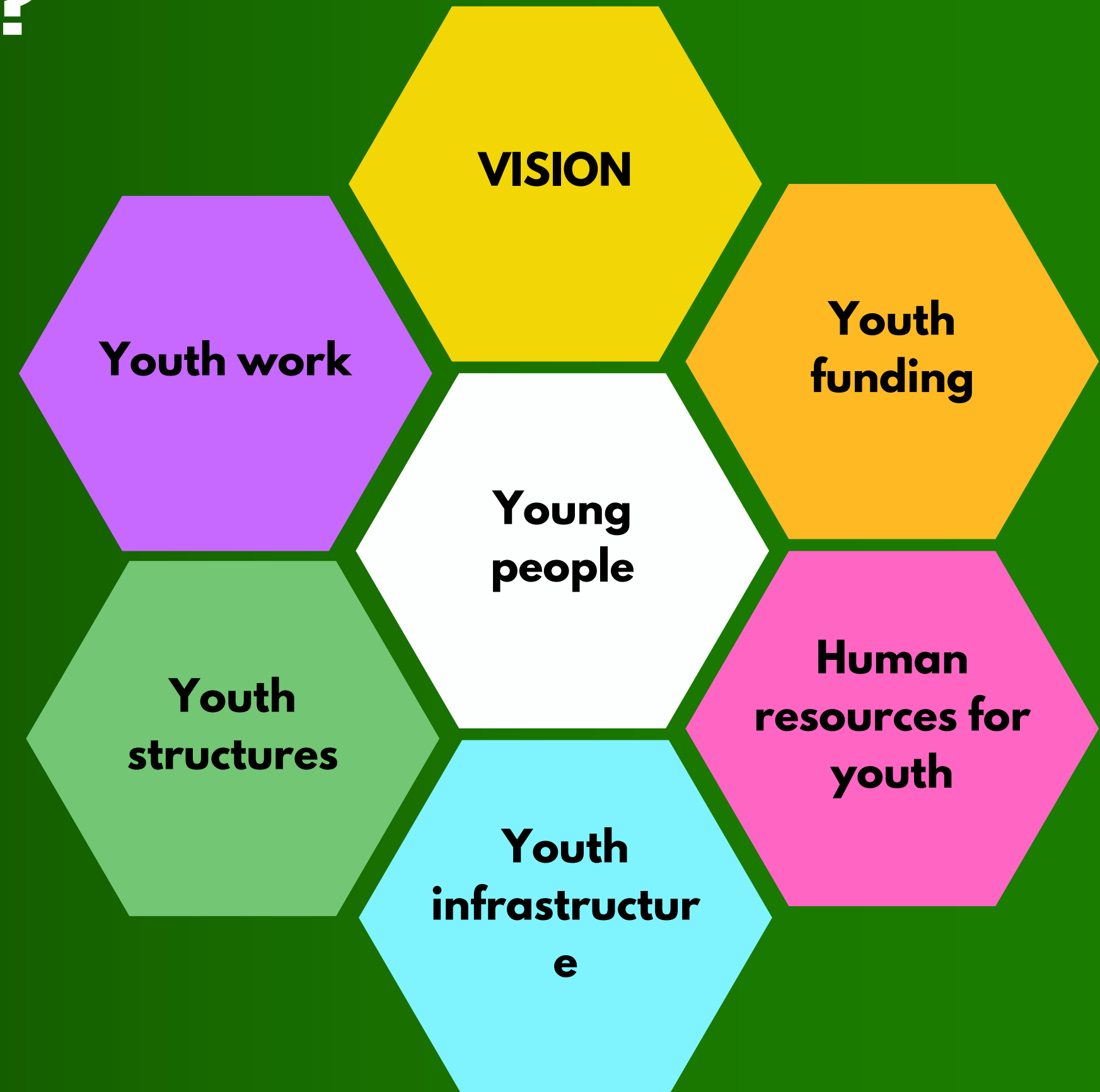
EYV is a nationwide movement that began in 2018 in Romania, aiming to put rural youth at the center of local life. Each year, villages can earn the European Youth Village title through a youth initiative group that commits to a year of youth-led action.

A growing community of over 40 villages has said **yes** to their young people, and 22 of them have received the European Youth Village title to date.



Why **the title** matters?

EYV flips that script: it turns young people from “beneficiaries” into co-creators of the village life and partners to local authorities. That shift—from being managed to being trusted—changes everything.



How **EYV title** works (& why it works)

Three cylinders of the engine (EYV model):

(1) **Permission** – Mandate: youth are trusted to lead.

(2) **Structure** – Support & mentorship (monthly + in-person coaching).

(3) **Signal** – Visibility: local, national, and European recognition.

Call → youth group application + mayor's support → mentoring sprint → jury selection → 1 year of youth-led action plan.



How **EYV title** works (& why it works)

- **Youth-led activities:** festivals, debates, awareness campaigns, hackathons, sports, youth forums, and turning unused spaces into youth centers.
- **Mentorship & training:** leadership, advocacy, project management.
- **Dialogue with local authorities** becomes the norm.
- **Securing funding** for youth-led events.

The EYV National Governance:

- Coordinator (runs the call, selection, and program structure).
- Support system (mentors, training, resources, coaching).
- Visibility hub.
- Guardian of quality (standards, MEL, strategic development).



EYV ecosystem

Beyond the title:

- **Rural Youth Summit & European Rural Youth Summit**
- **White Charter of Rural Youth & Blueprint for Tomorrow**
- **Alumni Network**
- **Rural Youth Awards**
- **Informal Network of Rural Youth (RITM)**
- **The National Day of Rural Youth**
- **Rural Newsroom – media platform for rural youth voices**
- **The EU & Mental Health Promoters Network**



What **changes** because of all this?

More youth step in. EYV villages have involved over 20000 young people in 400+ youth-led actions since 2019, from small meet-ups to large community events. That's not theory; it's practice.

Money and trust flow to youth ideas. Initiative groups secured about 35 solidarity projects worth €270,000+ & from other sources. Funding follows trust, and trust follows visible youth leadership.

Dialogue with authorities becomes normal. Regular, facilitated meetings and public events bring mayors, school leaders, and youth to the same table—and keep them there.

What **changes** because of all this?

The rural youth ecosystem grows. National events like the Rural Youth Summit and the Rural Youth Awards, a growing Alumni Network, and the White Charter for Rural Youth link villages horizontally—so every good practice spreads faster.

Concrete changes at the local level. Young people are solving problems they are facing in their communities.

The program learns. EYV isn't static. Living intervention sharpens the model every year, so it keeps fitting real rural realities—not a textbook.

Why **it matters** for Europe

EYV shows how local youth ecosystems can be built bottom-up.

Contributes to Rural Pact priorities:

- **Making rural areas attractive to young generations.**
- **Empowering local communities to enhance resilience.**
- **Building inclusive and connected rural societies.**



Why **scale EYV**?

It works! Hundreds of rural youth have led consultations, festivals, campaigns, and youth spaces through EYV, strengthening cooperation with local authorities and building leadership skills.

It's needed everywhere. Rural youth across Europe face similar challenges—lack of opportunities, limited spaces, and a weak voice in decision-making—which EYV directly addresses.

It builds trust and participation. EYV normalizes cooperation between youth and municipalities, bringing transparency, accountability, and stronger local democracy.

It creates a movement. A European EYV brand means shared tools, peer learning, joint advocacy, and a stronger voice for rural youth at the EU level.



Reflections

From EYV to Rural Pact:

- EYV demonstrates that rural youth stay and thrive if given recognition, structure, and trust.
- Local authorities learn to see youth as partners, not passive beneficiaries.
- Small resources and trust lead to big changes (youth-led actions bring about visible community transformation).

For Rural Pact actors:

- Embed youth participation standards in rural development policies.
- Scale up the EYV model to create a European network of Youth Villages.
- Invest in mentorship & peer learning for rural youth leaders.

The difference between a quiet Friday night and a youth-led festival is not talent—it's a structure that says YES to young people.

Let's make every village and rural community a place where young people lead, create, and belong.

@europeanyouthvillage

THANK
YOU!

