

# Youth Voices from Rural Europe

## Evaluation report

**CONNECT-R**  
Connecting rural  
youth with the EU

[ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus](https://ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus)

**Erasmus+**  
Enriching lives, opening minds.

**Youth**



# Introductory remarks

The "Youth Voices from Rural Europe" event took place on May 12 and 13, 2026, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg as part of the European CONNECT-R project.

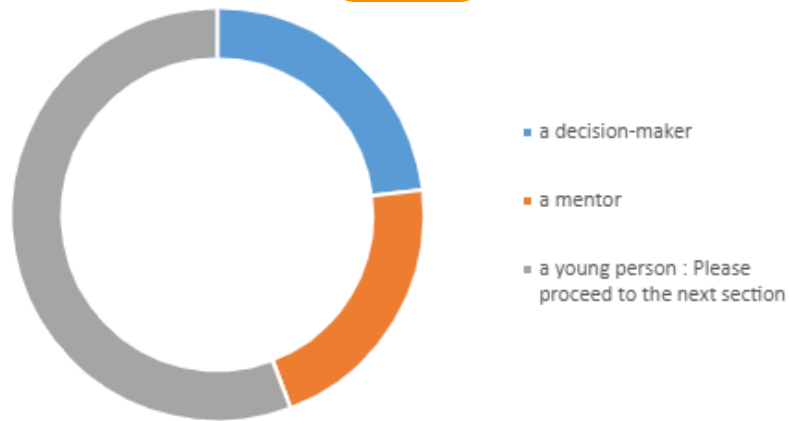
This evaluation aims to gauge participant perceptions, identify the event's impact on young people and adults, and inform the planning of future editions.

## **Data collection :**

- Online questionnaire
- Distributed throughout June 2026
- Targeted at all participants (young people, accompanying persons, decision-makers, partners)
- Excluding the organizing team (coordinators and service providers)
- Participation (52 respondents)

# Respondent profile

## Profile



**More than half of the respondents are young people**, ensuring that the evaluation primarily reflects the experiences of the project's main beneficiaries. The participation of mentors and decision-makers also allows for a multi-perspective view of the event.

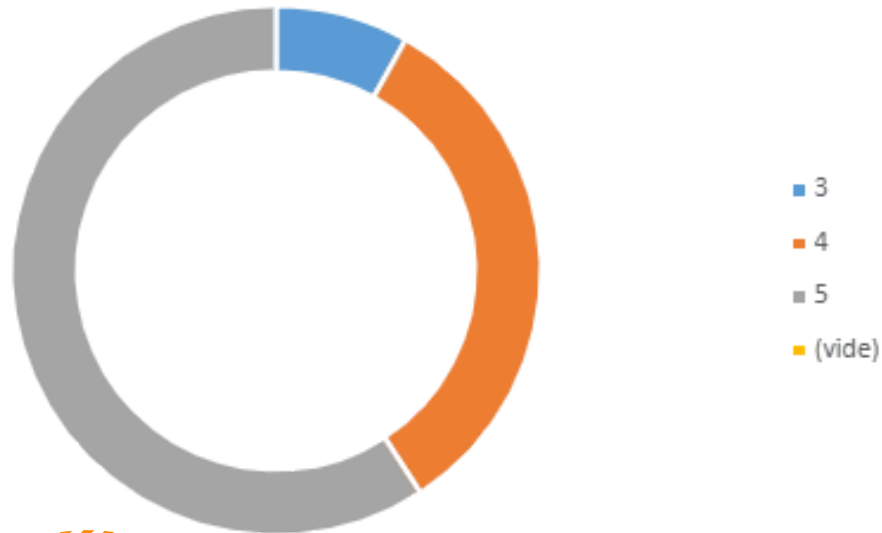
## Sexe



**Women make up a slight majority of the respondents**, providing a diversity of viewpoints in the analysis of the results.

# General assessment of the event

## Overall assessment of the event



Average:

**4.51 / 5**

92% of respondents rated the event a 4 or 5.

This score **reflects a particularly high level of satisfaction.**

The vast majority of participants gave a rating of 4 or 5, demonstrating a very positive perception of the event as a whole.

# Living place



# What matters most for young people in rural areas

This section explored the elements that participants consider **essential for quality of life and attractiveness in rural territories**.

Overall, the responses reveal a strong attachment to local communities, combined with high expectations regarding accessibility, opportunities and participation.

Overall, these results confirm that rural attractiveness cannot be reduced to infrastructure alone.

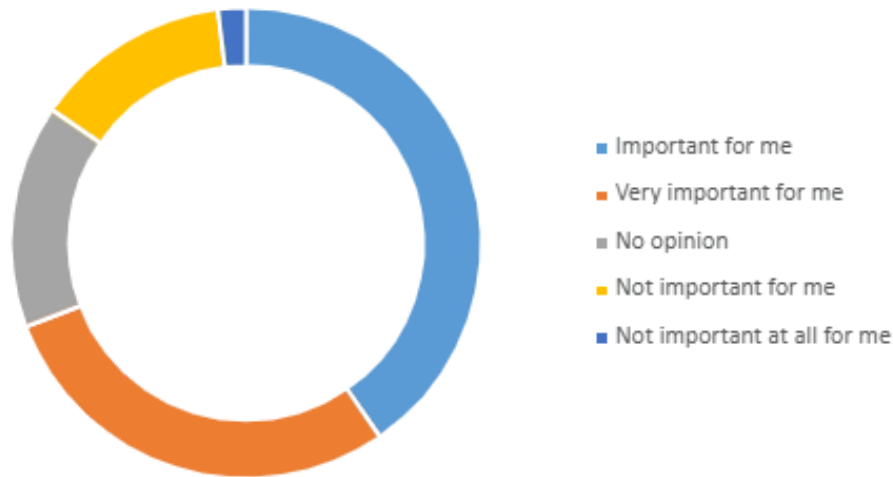
For participants, an attractive rural territory combines:

- strong social ties;
- accessible mobility;
- cultural and sporting opportunities;
- local food systems;
- and opportunities to participate in local decision-making.

These dimensions are closely aligned with the recommendations co-developed during Youth Voices from Rural Europe and reinforce the relevance of the CONNECT-R approach, which seeks to strengthen both youth participation and the vitality of rural territories.

# A strong attachment to local roots

My family lives in this same area



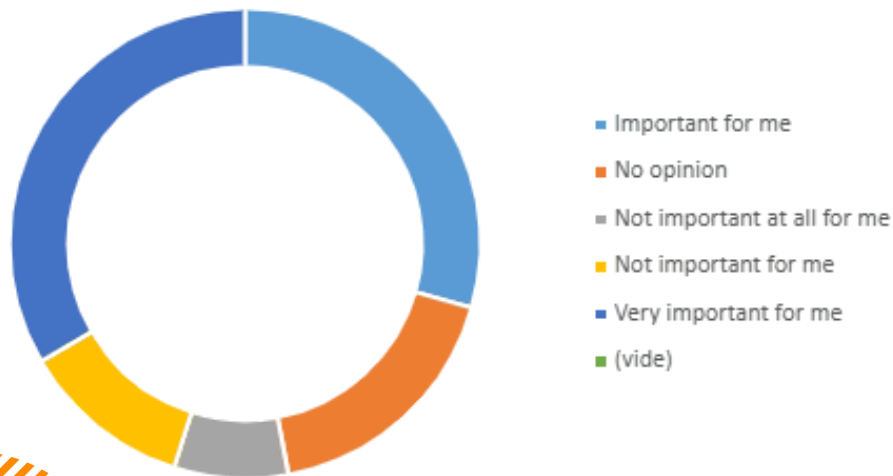
**More than two thirds of respondents consider living close to their family to be important or very important.**

This result highlights that rural youth do not necessarily aspire to leave their territories permanently. Family and local social networks remain an important anchor for many participants.

This finding echoes several recommendations developed during the event, which emphasised **the need to make rural territories more attractive for young people** rather than encouraging them to leave.

# Accessibility remains a key condition for rural attractiveness

## Availability of train connections



Public transport is identified as another major priority. **A large majority of respondents consider access to train connections important or very important.**

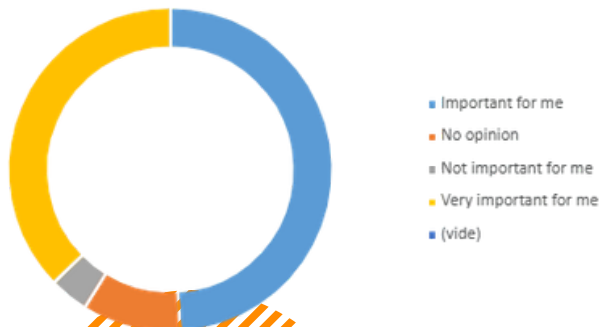
This confirms one of the strongest messages emerging from the Youth Advocacy: mobility is not simply a transport issue but **a prerequisite for accessing education, employment, leisure activities and European opportunities.**

# Rural areas should offer opportunities, not only services

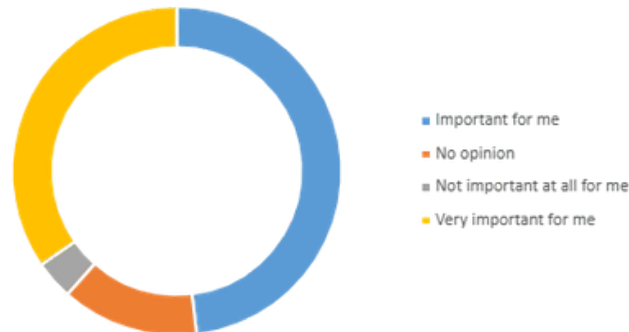
Participants also attach great importance to access to **sports facilities, cultural activities** and **locally produced food**.

These responses suggest that young people value territories capable of combining quality of life, local identity and opportunities for personal development.

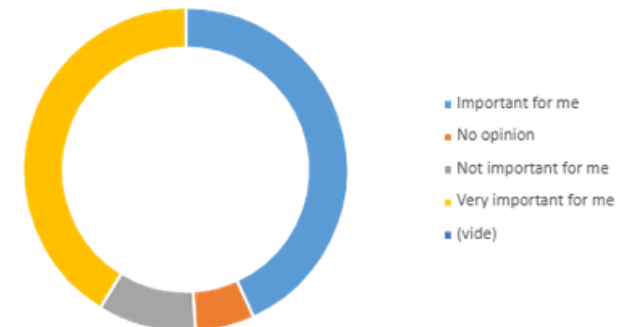
Opportunities for sport diversity



Opportunities for regular culture events

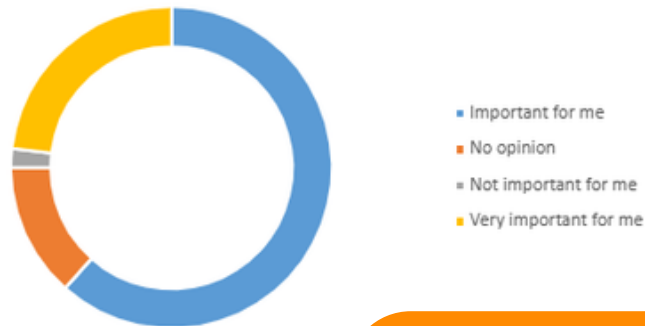


Food is produced locally in the territory

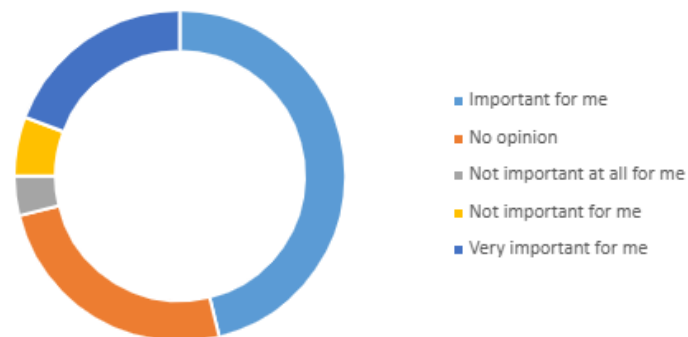


# Participation begins locally

Most decisions about the territory are made locally



Good access to politicians and other decision makers



One particularly interesting result concerns governance. Most respondents consider it important that **decisions affecting their territory are taken locally**.

Similarly, **access to politicians and decision-makers is largely perceived as important**, although opinions are more diverse on this point.

These findings resonate directly with the philosophy of the CONNECT-R project. Young people do not only express expectations regarding public services; **they also wish to live in territories where dialogue with decision-makers is possible and where they can contribute to local development.**

# Life experience



# A generation already engaged in community life



This section explored the participants' previous experiences related to community life, culture, sport and civic engagement.

Overall, the responses reveal a population that is already **relatively active in local life**. While experiences vary depending on the topic, the results suggest that many participants were already **familiar with collective engagement before attending the event**.

The results suggest that **the participants did not arrive as complete newcomers to community life**. Many already had experience of collective activities, local organisations or civic participation.

Youth Voices from Rural Europe therefore builds upon existing forms of engagement by offering participants **a new scale of participation: the European level**. Rather than initiating engagement from scratch, the event strengthens existing experiences **by connecting them to dialogue with decision-makers, intercultural cooperation and democratic participation**.

# Strong participation in community and cultural life

## Playing sports in a club

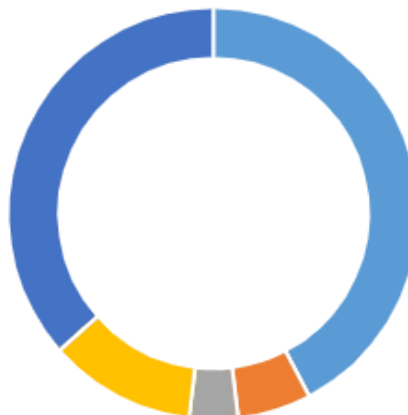


- Already experienced
- Few experienced
- Never experienced
- No opinion
- Often experienced

The majority of respondents reported **previous experience in sports clubs and cultural activities**. These findings highlight the important role played by local organisations in creating opportunities for young people to meet, cooperate and develop a sense of belonging.

**Such experiences are often the first step towards broader forms of civic engagement.**

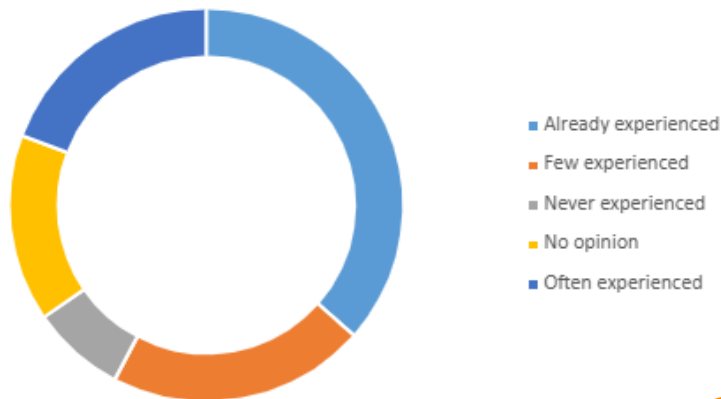
## Go to cultural event



- Already experienced
- Few experienced
- Never experienced
- No opinion
- Often experienced

# A significant level of civic awareness

## Take part in politics on a local or national level

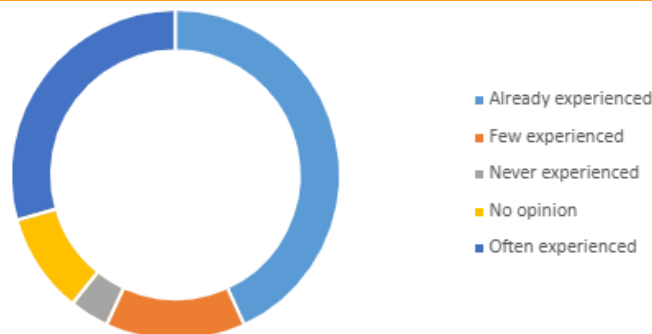


Another noteworthy result concerns participants' familiarity with local democracy.

Most respondents indicated that they **already know the names of elected representatives in their municipality**, while a majority had also already participated - at least once - in local or national political activities.

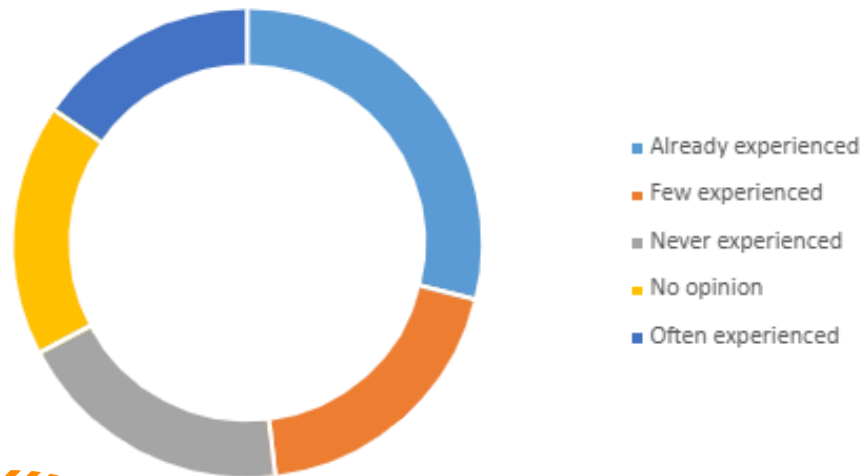
Although only a **smaller proportion reported frequent participation**, these results suggest that civic engagement is not unfamiliar to many of the participants.

## Know names of elected representative in my municipality



# Diverse personal backgrounds

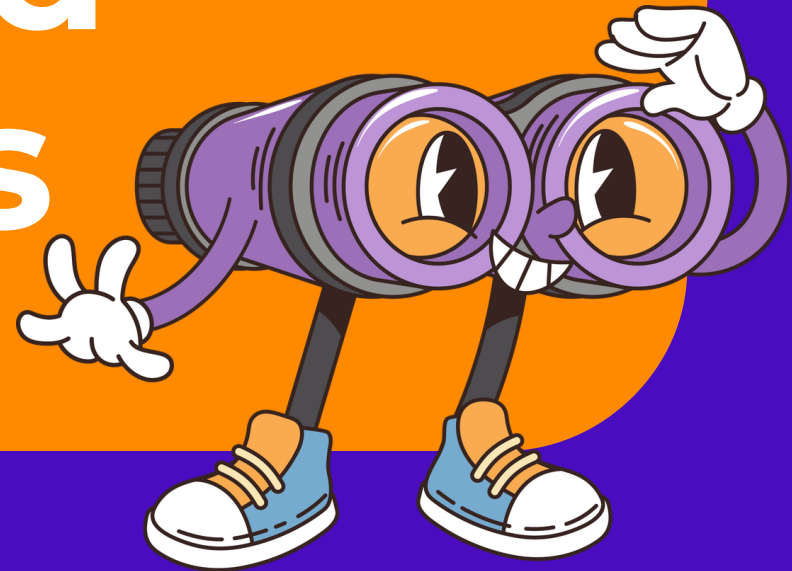
Living in the city



Experiences of living in a city are much more varied. While some participants had **already lived in an urban environment**, many had only limited or no experience.

This diversity reflects the richness of the group brought together through CONNECT-R, where young people from different rural realities and personal pathways are encouraged to exchange perspectives and learn from one another.

# Observed changes



A young woman with long dark hair and a red flower crown is smiling and resting her chin on her hands. She is sitting at a conference table with a microphone and a water bottle in front of her. Other people are visible in the background, also seated at tables.

# An event that encourages participants to see themselves as actors of change

This section explored the **perceived changes experienced by participants following Youth Voices from Rural Europe**. Rather than measuring knowledge acquisition alone, the questions focused on changes in perceptions, attitudes and confidence to participate.

Across all five indicators, a clear trend emerges: most participants reported that **the event had influenced the way they think, engage and perceive their own capacity to contribute to society**.

Overall, the evaluation suggests that Youth Voices from Rural Europe did not simply provide information about European democracy. It created an environment in which participants experienced participation, **reflected on their own role within society and developed greater confidence in their ability to contribute to change**.

The most significant outcome is therefore not a single change in knowledge or opinion, but the gradual strengthening of participants' perception that their voice matters and that they can play an active role in shaping the future of their communities.

# A shift in perspectives

My opinions on what is important has changed



A majority of respondents indicated that the event had changed, at least to some extent, their views on what they consider important. **While most described this evolution as "a little", a significant proportion also reported a more substantial change.**

This suggests that the discussions, encounters and recommendations encouraged participants to reflect on their own priorities and the challenges facing rural territories across Europe.

# Looking differently at one's own territory

How I look at my territory has changed



Participants also reported a renewed perspective on their local communities.

For many, the event highlighted both the strengths and the challenges shared by rural territories across Europe. By exchanging experiences with peers from different countries, **participants were able to place their own territory within a broader European context.**

**Rather than seeing local issues as isolated, many recognised common challenges and opportunities for collective action.**

# Greater confidence in taking part in discussions

How I take part in discussions has changed



One of the strongest outcomes concerns **participation in dialogue.**

A large majority of respondents felt that the event had positively influenced the way they contribute to discussions. This finding is particularly significant given the participatory nature of the programme, which encouraged young people to debate, negotiate recommendations and engage directly with decision-makers.

**It suggests that the experience strengthened participants' confidence to express their ideas in collective settings.**

# Strengthening the feeling of being able to make a difference

How I think I can have an influence has changed



Another key finding relates to participants' sense of influence.

**Most respondents reported that the event had increased their belief that they can have an impact on decisions or on their community.**

Although these changes are often described **as gradual**, they directly reflect one of the central ambitions of the CONNECT-R project: strengthening young people's power to act (*pouvoir d'agir*) by creating meaningful opportunities for participation and dialogue.

# Better understanding decision-making processes

My understanding of decision-making processes has changed

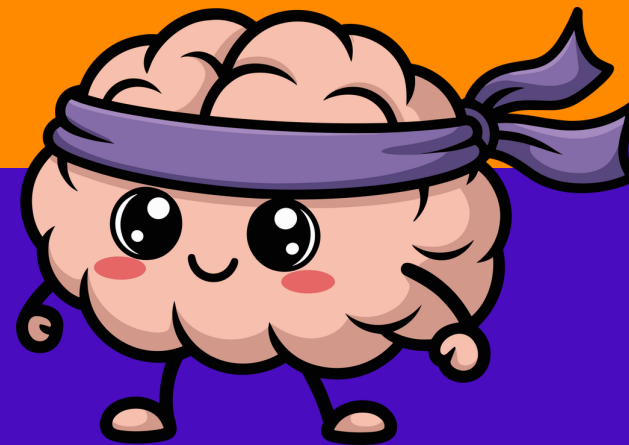


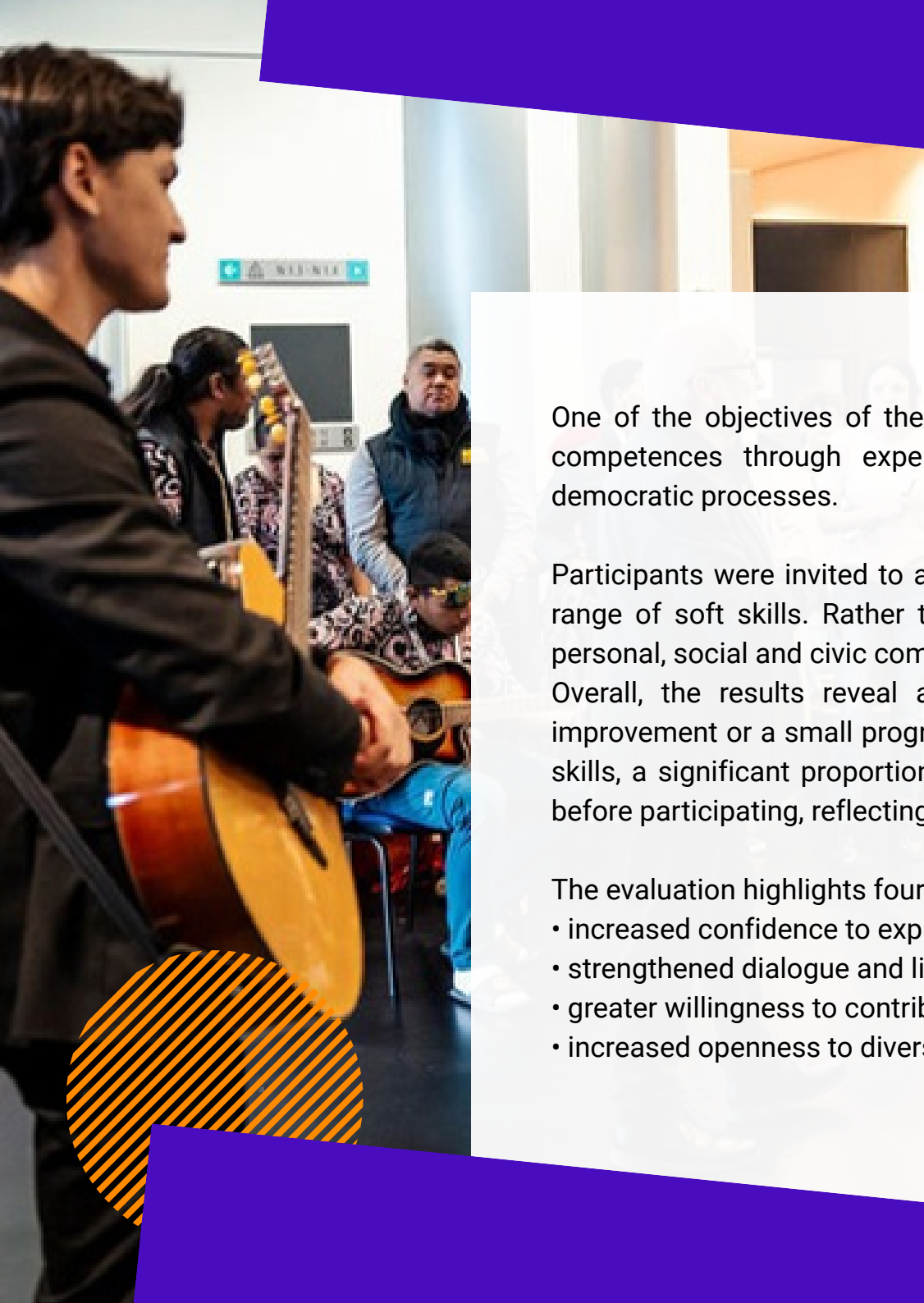
Finally, participants also reported an improved understanding of how decisions are made.

Meeting representatives from local, national and European institutions, discussing recommendations with decision-makers and discovering different governance levels appear to have contributed to a clearer understanding of democratic processes.

This result highlights the educational value of combining civic learning with direct interaction between young people and public authorities.

# Soft skills development





# Development of soft skills

One of the objectives of the CONNECT-R project is to strengthen participants' transversal competences through experiential learning, intercultural dialogue and participation in democratic processes.

Participants were invited to assess how the event had contributed to the development of a range of soft skills. Rather than measuring technical knowledge, this section focuses on personal, social and civic competences that are essential for active citizenship.

Overall, the results reveal a consistent trend: most respondents report either a clear improvement or a small progression across the different competencies explored. For several skills, a significant proportion also indicate that they already mastered these competences before participating, reflecting the engagement profile of many participants.

The evaluation highlights four major impacts of the event on participants' soft skills:

- increased confidence to express ideas;
- strengthened dialogue and listening skills;
- greater willingness to contribute to collective action;
- increased openness to diversity, cooperation and democratic participation.

# Strengthening self-confidence and self-expression

I express myself without feeling destabilized by criticism



One of the strongest outcomes concerns participants' confidence in expressing themselves.

Many respondents report feeling more comfortable sharing their opinions, asserting their choices and taking their place within a group.

This finding is particularly meaningful given the participatory design of the event. Throughout the two days, participants were invited to debate, negotiate recommendations, speak in front of their peers and interact directly with decision-makers.

The results suggest that these situations created a supportive environment in which participants could progressively gain confidence in their own voice.

I take my place in a group based on what I am capable of doing



I express my ideas without seeking to impose them



I communicate easily with new people

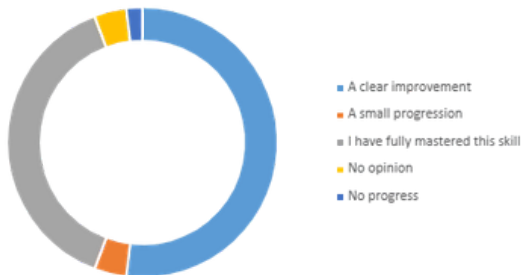


I dare to assert my choices and opinions



# Learning through dialogue

I listen to the opinions of the people around me

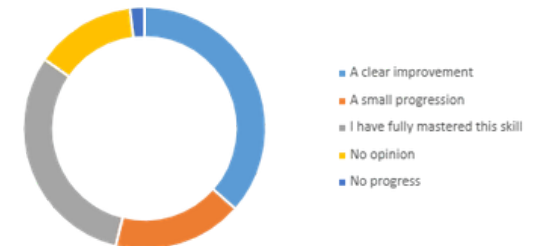


The evaluation highlights significant progress in participants' ability to engage in constructive dialogue.

Beyond expressing their own ideas, respondents report improvements in listening to others, accepting different viewpoints and adapting their communication according to the people they interact with.

These findings reflect one of the core principles of the project: democratic participation is built not only on speaking, but also on listening and co-constructing solutions.

I choose the right means of communication depending on the person I am addressing



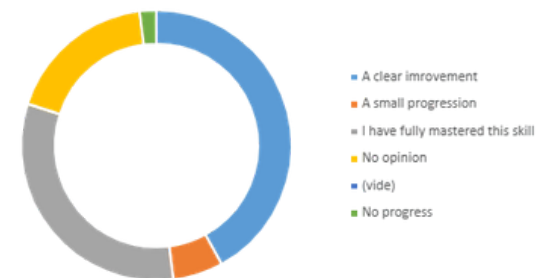
I accept opinions different from my own



I am expanding my network of contacts by integrating new people

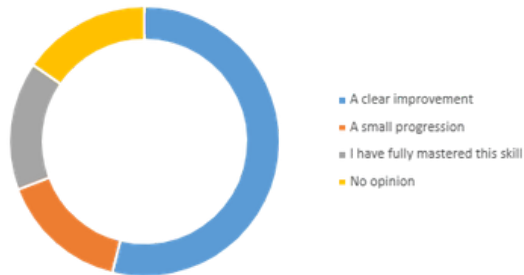


I am interested in others



# Becoming active contributors

Before acting, I analyze the situation

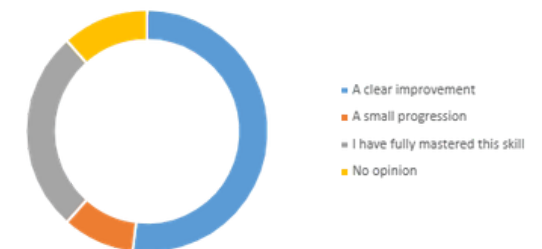


Another important result concerns participants' capacity to take initiative.

Many respondents indicate that the event strengthened their willingness to analyse situations, make proposals and accept new challenges.

These competences are closely related to the concept of power to act, which lies at the heart of the CONNECT-R project.

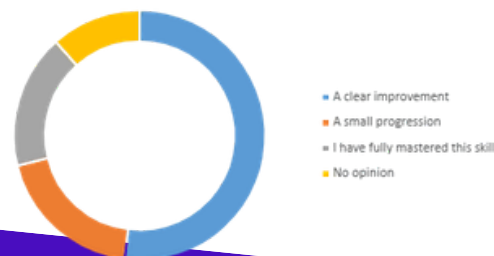
Before agreeing to do something, I make sure I fully understand what is expected of me



I actively participate in the change by making proposals



I am creative (I have ideas and I imagine different ways of doing things)



I accept challenges (I agree to perform actions that I am not used to doing)



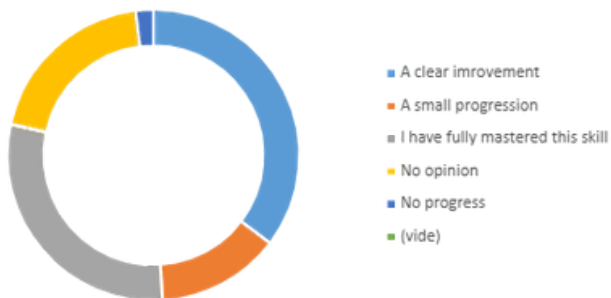
# Working collectively

Participants also report positive developments regarding collaborative work.

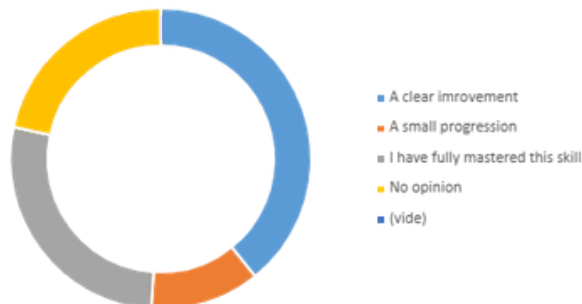
The results suggest increased awareness of the importance of collective decision-making, shared responsibility and cooperation in achieving common goals.

This outcome reflects the collaborative nature of the event itself, where recommendations were negotiated collectively before being presented to decision-makers.

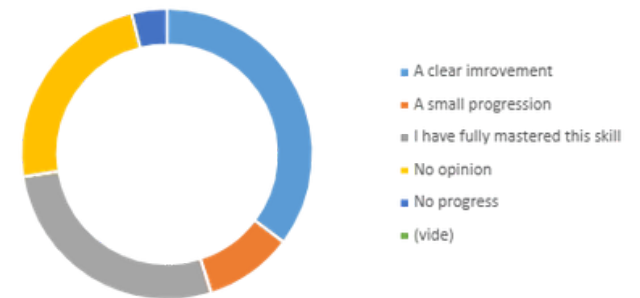
I participate in the group's activities to achieve a common goal



I encourage decisions made by several people



When i'm in a group, i put the collective interest before my own



# Openness to change and diversity

Change (the unknown) doesn't scare me; I welcome it positively

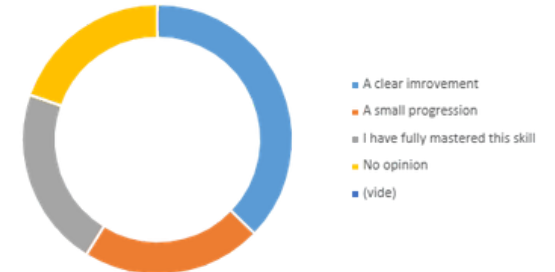


The event also appears to have strengthened participants' openness towards diversity and change.

Respondents report greater confidence in engaging with unfamiliar situations and recognise the value of diverse perspectives.

These competences are particularly relevant within a European context, where intercultural dialogue and cooperation constitute essential dimensions of citizenship.

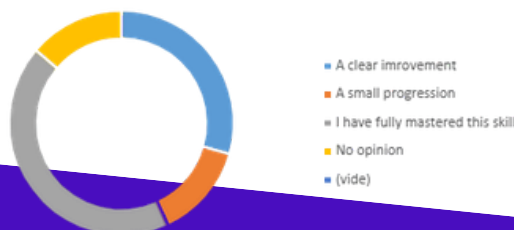
I don't hesitate to venture into the unknown



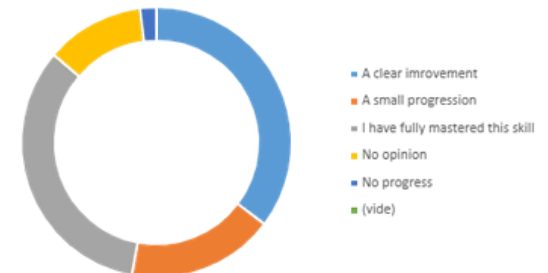
I understand the reasons for the change



I am aware of the diversity of the people around me (values, ways of doing things, ways of thinking...)



I am enriched by the diversity that surrounds me

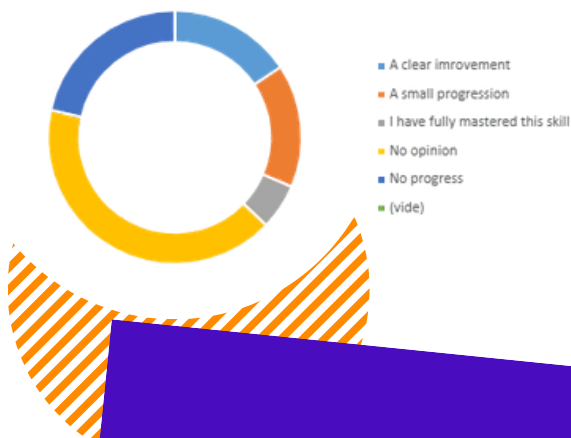


# From participation to public speaking

In conclusion:  
I spoke in the hemicycle



In conclusion: I was the  
spokesperson for the advocacy  
effort with decision-makers



The final two questions explored participants' involvement in the public speaking phases of the event, namely speaking in the hemicycle and presenting the advocacy recommendations to decision-makers.

The results show a relatively high proportion of "No opinion" or "No progress". These responses should not be interpreted as a lack of impact, but rather as a reflection of the event's organisation. Participants attended the event as national or territorial delegations, generally composed of around ten young people. During the plenary sessions, each delegation designated one or two spokespersons to present the group's work and contribute to the debates on behalf of their peers. Similarly, the presentation of the final advocacy to decision-makers was entrusted to nine volunteer young people, each representing one of the nine recommendations adopted collectively during the event.

While only a limited number of participants took on these public speaking roles, the recommendations presented were the result of a collective process involving all delegations. The spokespersons therefore carried the voice of the wider group rather than expressing individual positions.

This distinction highlights an important aspect of democratic participation: not every participant speaks publicly, but every participant contributes to the collective construction of the final message.

# Event logistics



A photograph of two women walking in a modern, brightly lit hallway. The woman on the right is wearing a yellow t-shirt and blue jeans, gesturing with her hands as if in conversation. The woman on the left is wearing a striped t-shirt and dark pants. Both are wearing lanyards with ID badges. The background shows a curved wall and large windows.

# A well-received organisation with clear areas for improvement

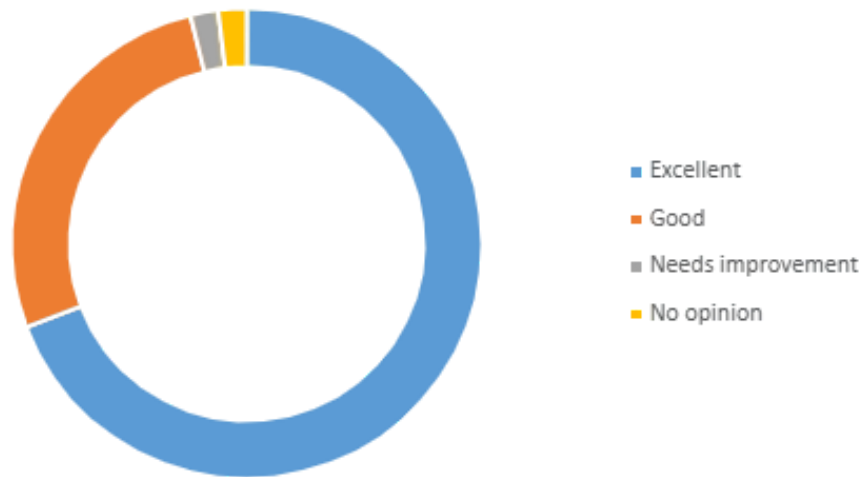
This section explored participants' perceptions of the event organisation, including the venue, programme, preparation, logistics and practical arrangements.

Overall, the results show a high level of satisfaction across all organisational aspects. Most respondents rated the different components of the event as either "Good" or "Excellent", confirming that the logistical framework successfully supported the educational and participatory objectives of the project.

Overall, the evaluation confirms that the organisational framework successfully supported the project's educational ambitions. The European Parliament, the quality of the programme and the diversity of participants created a highly appreciated learning environment. The main areas identified for future improvement relate to increasing opportunities for young people's direct participation during plenary sessions and continuing to refine the logistical arrangements supporting such a large international event.

# An exceptional venue reinforcing the European dimension

Location: European Parliament, Strasbourg



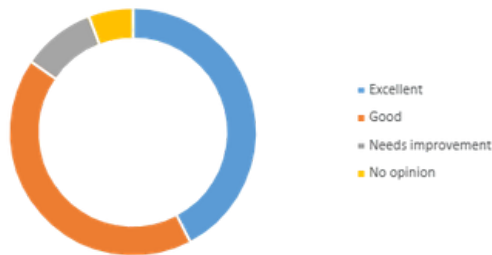
The choice of the European Parliament in Strasbourg was particularly appreciated by participants.

Almost all respondents rated the venue as Good or Excellent, making it one of the highest-rated aspects of the evaluation.

Beyond its logistical qualities, hosting the event within a European institution gave concrete meaning to the participants' work. Presenting recommendations in the hemicycle and meeting decision-makers in this symbolic setting significantly strengthened the educational impact of the experience.

# A compact programme balancing intensity and engagement

## Program: Voting and meeting with decision makers

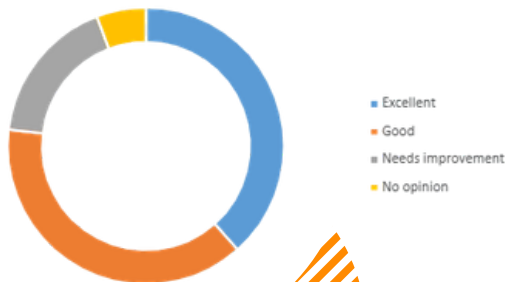


The overall programme also received very positive feedback. Participants particularly valued the combination of:

- collaborative work within delegations,
- democratic voting procedures,
- intercultural exchanges,
- and direct dialogue with decision-makers.

This confirms the relevance of combining experiential learning with opportunities for civic participation.

## Duration: 2 half-days, schedule



The two half-day format received an overall positive assessment, with a large majority of participants rating the duration and schedule as Good or Excellent.

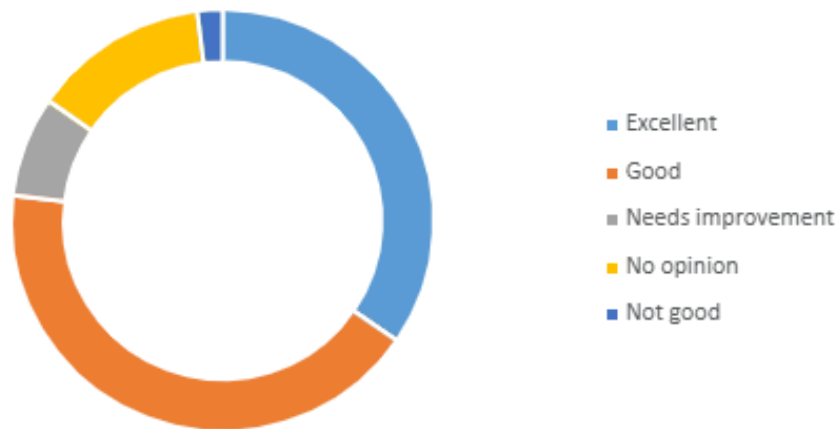
At the same time, nearly one in five respondents felt that the programme could be improved in terms of timing. This feedback suggests that, while the event successfully combined a wide range of activities within a limited timeframe, the schedule was perceived as particularly dense by some participants.

Given the ambition of bringing together more than 200 participants, combining workshops, intercultural exchanges, advocacy drafting, democratic voting and dialogue with decision-makers within two half-days inevitably required a sustained pace.

For future editions, this feedback invites reflection on how to preserve the richness of the programme while allowing more time for exchanges, informal networking and individual participation.

# Preparation and participant resources

Preparation booklet: Approach, information, outline of recommendations



The Participant Handbook and the methodological resources were generally well received.

These documents provided a common framework for the delegations and facilitated the preparation of recommendations before arriving in Strasbourg.

A small number of participants nevertheless identified opportunities to further improve the clarity or accessibility of the preparatory materials, particularly for first-time participants or delegations requiring additional support.

# A large-scale European event

Number of participants (120 young people, 200 participants), delegations (+20), recommendations (+30)



- Excellent
- Good
- Needs improvement
- No opinion

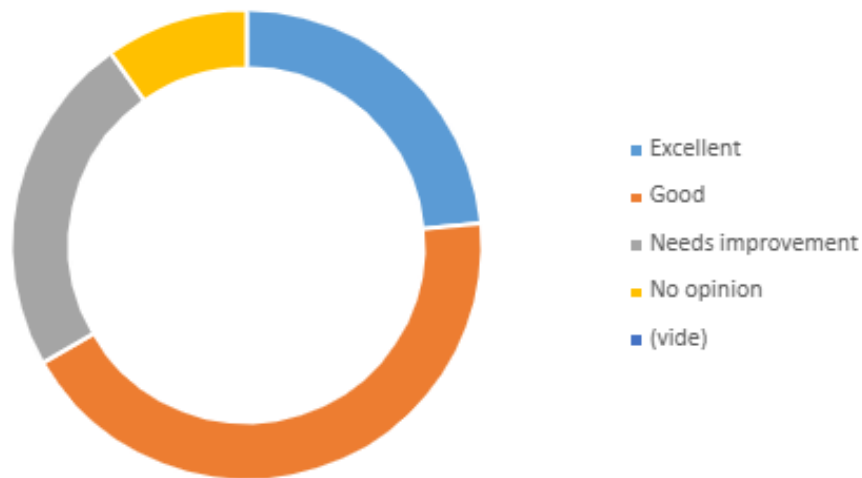
The event brought together around 200 participants, including approximately 120 young people, representing more than 20 delegations and producing over 30 recommendations.

Participants generally appreciated the diversity of delegations and the richness of the exchanges generated by such a large European gathering.

This diversity was recognised as one of the project's major strengths.

# Giving young people enough space to speak

## Speaking time for young people



The item receiving the most mixed feedback concerns speaking time for young people.

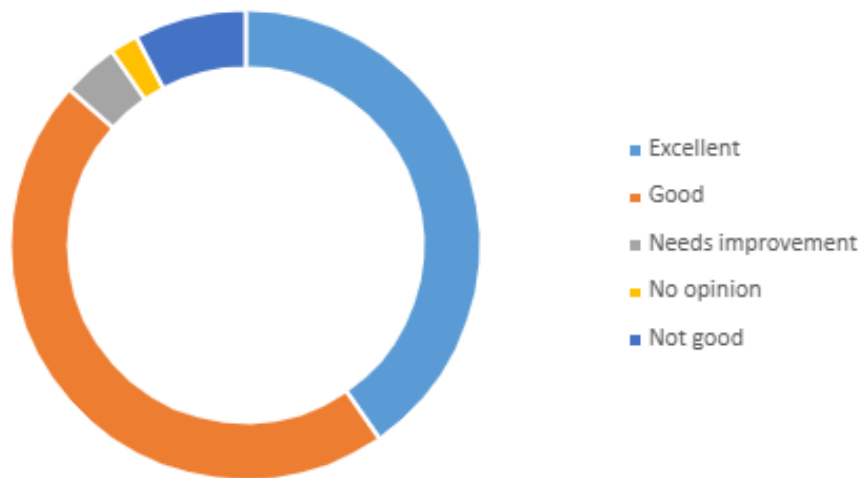
Although a majority considered it satisfactory, several respondents expressed the wish for additional opportunities for more participants to speak during the plenary sessions.

This result should be interpreted in light of the event format. Young people worked collectively within delegations before appointing spokespersons to present their common positions during the debates and the advocacy session.

Future editions could nevertheless explore additional formats allowing an even broader diversity of voices to be heard.

# Communication and multilingual exchanges

## Language and translation



Language support and interpretation were also positively evaluated.

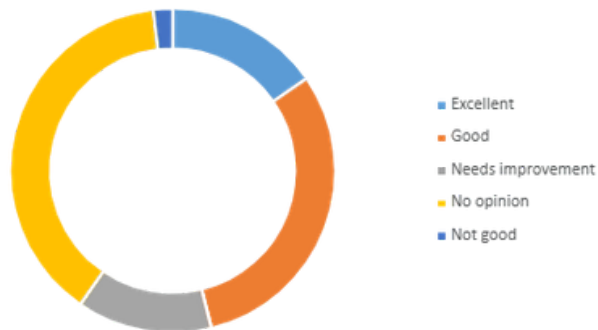
The multilingual environment represented an important challenge given the diversity of participating countries, yet the vast majority of respondents considered the arrangements satisfactory.

Some comments nevertheless suggest that further improvements could continue to enhance communication between delegations.

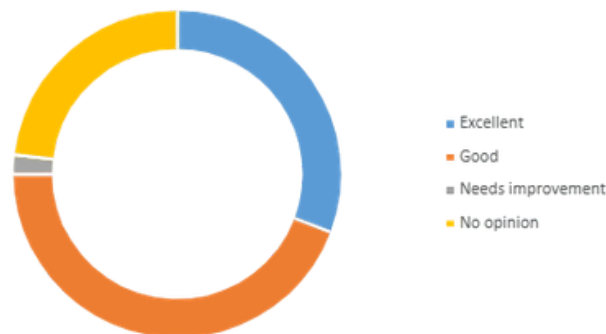
# Additional organisational aspects

The interview sessions, coffee breaks and remote participation system were generally well received. The relatively high proportion of "No opinion" responses concerning remote participation reflects the fact that many participants attended exclusively on site and therefore did not directly experience the online system. Coffee breaks received slightly more mixed feedback, suggesting opportunities to improve informal networking spaces during future editions.

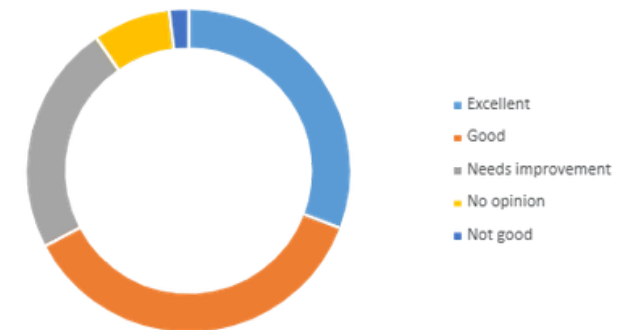
Remote participation system



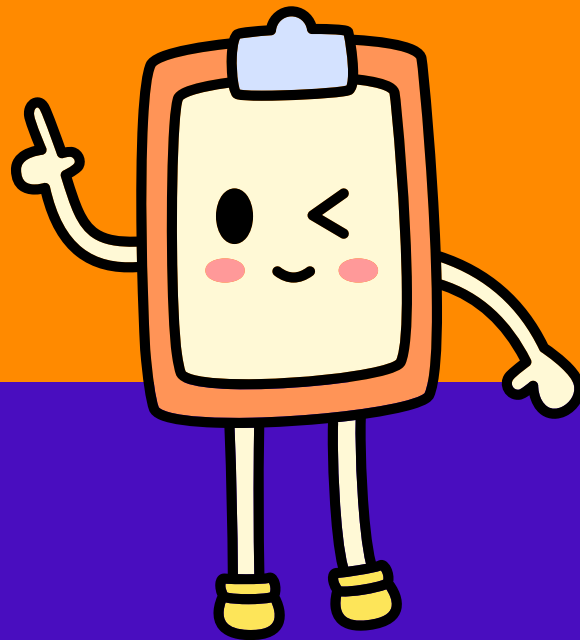
Interview setup: Team, questions, filming



Coffee breaks



# Workshops



A man with glasses and a lanyard is looking down at a document on a table. The document has some text and a logo. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

# Supporting adults to strengthen youth empowerment

This section concerns the workshops attended by mentors, educators, directors, board members and decision-makers during the event. Their purpose was not only to share knowledge, but also to encourage participants to reflect on their own role in supporting young people's participation and capacity to act.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the workshops successfully met their educational objectives. Participants largely considered the content relevant, inspiring and directly connected to their professional or voluntary responsibilities.

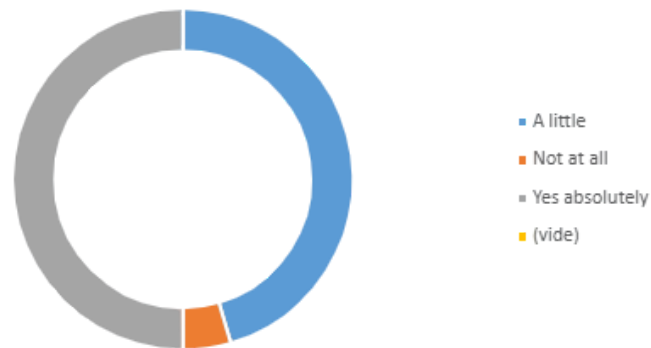
The workshops confirmed that supporting young people's participation also requires supporting the adults who accompany them.

Beyond providing new knowledge, they created opportunities for educators, administrators and decision-makers to reflect collectively on their practices, share experiences and identify concrete ways to strengthen young people's power to act.

The evaluation confirms that empowering young people also means empowering the adults who support them. By combining youth participation with dedicated learning spaces for educators and decision-makers, CONNECT-R contributes to building a shared culture of participation across rural Europe.

# Relevant themes responding to current challenges

Did you feel the topic of the workshop was appropriate, timely, and relevant?

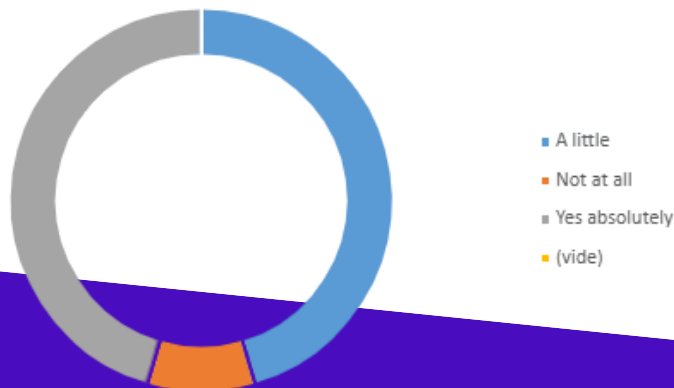


Participants overwhelmingly considered that the themes addressed during the workshops were appropriate, timely and relevant.

Most respondents also reported that the workshops enriched their thinking and encouraged an active commitment to supporting youth empowerment.

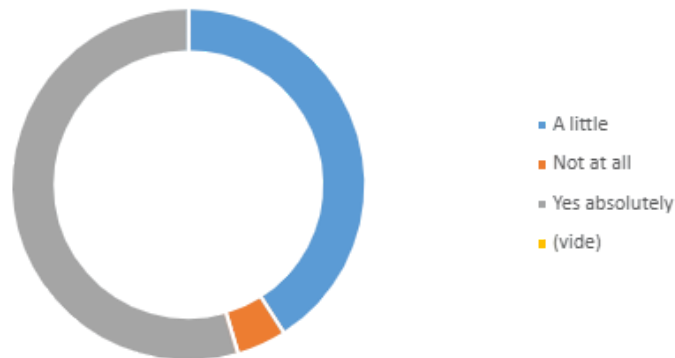
These results suggest that the proposed content responded to concrete needs expressed by professionals and decision-makers working with young people in rural areas.

Did the workshops help you enrich your thinking ?



# A pedagogy based on reflection and participation

Were you already familiar with the concepts discussed by the speakers ?

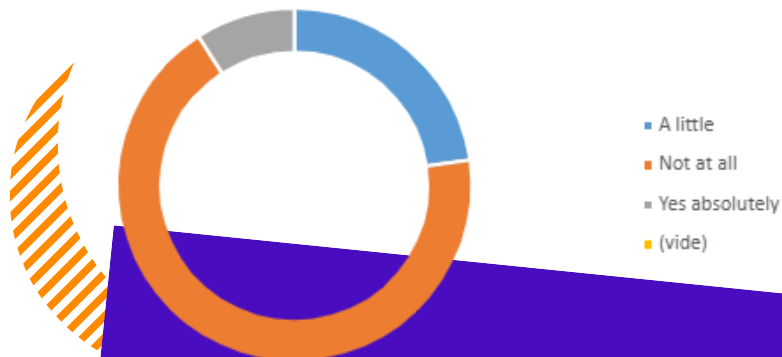


One particularly interesting result concerns participants' familiarity with the concepts discussed.

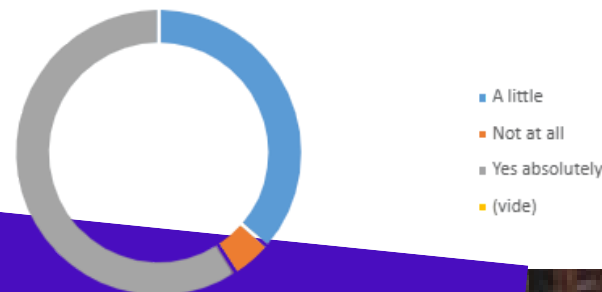
The responses show that the workshops gathered both participants already familiar with the topics and others discovering these approaches for the first time. This diversity enriched the discussions and encouraged the sharing of experiences between participants with different backgrounds.

Only a small number of respondents reported feeling uncomfortable during the workshops. Given that several activities invited participants to question their own practices, emotions or professional postures, this result appears consistent with the educational intention of creating spaces for reflection while maintaining a supportive environment.

Was there a moment that made you feel uncomfortable



Did the event offer approaches adapted to people (rhythms, participation, experimentation) ?



# Strengthening a collective commitment

Did the content support an active stance to act in favor of youth empowerment?



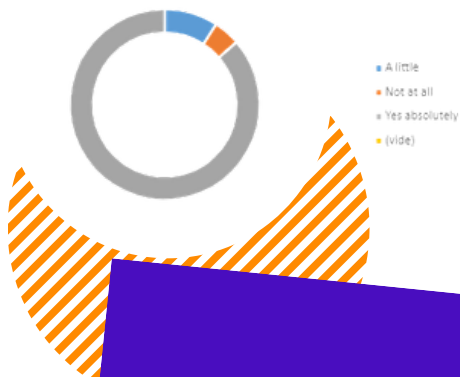
The workshops also appear to have reinforced participants' willingness to continue supporting young people's participation.

Respondents largely agreed that the event:

- promoted dialogue and cooperation between young people, families, educators, partners and decision-makers;
- proposed approaches adapted to different ways of learning and participating;
- contributed to supporting social, environmental and territorial transitions;
- encouraged curiosity and the desire to continue learning;
- promoted inclusion and respect for diversity.
- 

Particularly noteworthy is the very positive assessment regarding cooperation between stakeholders. Participants strongly recognised the event as a place where different actors could meet, exchange experiences and build common perspectives around youth participation.

Did the event promote exchanges, listening, participation and cooperation between the actors (young people, families, team, partners)?



Did the event contribute to supporting the transitions (social, environmental, territorial) in a responsible manner?



Did the event encourage learning, curiosity or inspire a desire to continue training?



Did the event help to include all people and reduce inequalities or discrimination?



# Looking ahead

Would you like to be contacted again for the next steps ?



Finally, a majority of respondents expressed their interest in remaining involved in the continuation of the project.

This demonstrates that the workshops were not perceived as isolated training sessions but rather as the beginning of a broader collective dynamic aimed at strengthening youth participation within MFRs, rural territories and European cooperation projects.

# CONCLUSION



The conclusions of this evaluation are clear: Youth Voices from Rural Europe was more than an event — it was a collective achievement.

The results speak for themselves: a very high level of satisfaction, strengthened confidence and soft skills, a renewed attachment to rural territories and a growing belief that young people's voices matter. But these outcomes will only reach their full meaning if the advocacy travels further.

The advocacy presented at the European Parliament will only become a reality through your commitment on the ground. These recommendations now belong to each of you: young people, adults and elected representatives. It is by carrying them back to your local communities, meeting the decision-makers of your territories — municipalities, local authorities, regional partners — that the 9 recommendations will be transformed into concrete action for rural youth across Europe.