



Report on results of the LISTEN-project: the work in the local action groups.

Introduction:

The information in this report consists of the results that each partner of the LISTEN project has produced through discussions with their respective local action groups during the fall of 2024. The information showcases a compiled overview of the results and how they will be used by the project moving forward. In the annex (at the end of the report), all the original identified results from each partner are gathered.

The process for the work with each local action group has consisted of three steps. According to the work plan, the results of the work in part 1 should be compiled into a report, while the work from part 2 should be utilized directly in the formation of the operational manual of the North Sea. Therefore, only the inputs gathered from part 1 will be showcased in this report, while the results of part 2 will be used when structuring the content of the manual (at the final partner meeting in Faaborg on the 14th–15th of January 2025).

- Establishing the local action group
- Work in the local action groups, part 1 (collecting inputs on local needs)
- Work in the local action groups, part 2 (content of the operational manual of the North Sea)

Definition and mandate of the Local action groups:

The role of the local action groups has been to contribute local perspectives and input to the project regarding current local needs related to the participation of children and young people in each partner location, as well as input for the development of the operational manual. The input from the LAGs will be used in the project's end result to describe the background, needs, and overall structure of the final product. The inputs will also be used to optimize the manual's design and the conditions to reach the target groups of municipalities, regions, and the non-profit sector.

According to the approved work plan of the LISTEN project, each LAG had to include at least representatives from political parties, civil servants, representatives from schools and associations, and representatives under the age of 18 years old (for instance, from organizations that represent children and young people).

Following an agreement with the project's contact point at Interreg North Sea during the fall of 2024, the project decided to lower the requirement for representation from all types of actors mentioned in the work plan in each local action group, as the conditions to include all types of actors have varied. The revised ambition has instead been that the total representation should be ensured overall for all local action groups, instead of in each individual action group.

Establishing the local action groups:

During the fall of 2024, each partner in the LISTEN project involved local actors in their respective regions to establish "local action groups." Due to organizational differences among the partners, which affect factors such as scope and outreach, the compositions of the three local action groups have varied somewhat. At an aggregated level, all types of representatives highlighted in the project's work plan have been included in some way in the various local working groups.

The County Administrative Board of Skåne (Sweden):

Due to its regional scale, the County Administrative Board of Skåne chose to structure their meetings with local actors through several meetings with different constellations and compile the responses afterward. The reason for this was that it would be difficult to organize and ensure even regional anchoring in a single working group.

The local actors that have made up the overarching local action group that the County Administrative Board of Skåne has met in meetings/events are:

- Two high school classes (~41 students) at Ystad Gymnasium (first-year students and third-year students aged 16-19)
- Working committee of Childrens Rights' Forum Skåne (officials from the local, regional, state, and non-profit sectors)
- Youth council of the municipality of Ängelholm (~20 students)
- Attendees (~ 40 individuals aged 12-25) at the Ungdomsting-event (annual youth conference hosted by the Municipality of Lund)
- Youth political parties in the geographical area of Skåne – all parties that are represented in the Swedish national government were asked to contribute, but only two chose to do so.
- Group of internal experts in children's rights issues at the County Administrative Board of Skåne

ADICE (France):

Similar to the situation of the County Administrative Board of Skåne, ADICE's regional outreach also required an approach where local actors could be engaged through different constellations. These two different constellations were:

- Youth professionals interested in issues of participation in democratic life. Participants included project managers and coordinators, youth workers, vocational integration advisors, teachers, local authority representatives, association directors and mobility coordinators. A total of 33 people attended.
- Young people interested in international mobility. Among the participants were young people wanting to volunteer abroad, young entrepreneurs or trainees looking for mobility abroad. A total of 6 people attended.

Faaborg-Midtfyn Kommune (Denmark):

Faaborg-Midtfyn Kommune has engaged and structured their local action group around their local municipality-level context. The local action group has consisted of local politicians, youth representatives, and professionals working in the municipality. These local actors have met continuously during the autumn to discuss the topics at hand.

Work in the local action groups (collecting inputs on local needs):

According to the work plan of the LISTEN project, each LAG was supposed to present a list of five points that need to be developed in their own local/regional area in order to increase the participation of children and young people in society's development for the future during part 1 of the work with the local action groups.



At the project level, all partners also decided to include a couple of additional questions to complement the understanding of how the participation among children and young people looked in the specific local context, what the local actors believed the situation was due to, and what solutions they envisioned to improve the situation. The questions that all partners asked their local working groups were:

- Why is increased participation among children and young people important in your location?
- **Which are the 5 biggest needs, from your perspective, that need to be solved to strengthen participation among young people in your location?**
- What is the reason for why the 5 identified needs exists?
- How could the 5 identified needs be fixed/solved?

The inputs collected for all questions are presented in the report's annex. In the presentation for each partners inputs below, only the inputs specified in the project's work plan will be presented.

The County Administrative Board of Skåne (Sweden):

The five points on needs to be developed, consolidated from the inputs and discussions held with the different local actors that made up the local action group of the County Administrative Board of Skåne, were:

- Perceived lack of impact. Many young people feel their participation is just for show and are uninterested in the topics discussed.
- Low awareness of participation. Both young people and adults lack knowledge on how and when to engage effectively.
- Lack of adult interest. Politicians and officials often don't prioritize young people's opinions, and their input rarely influences outcomes.
- Poor communication channels. Few effective ways exist for local authorities and young people to communicate.
- Exclusion of minority groups. Hard-to-reach minority groups within the bigger group "children and young people" are often left out.

ADICE (France):

The 5 points on needs that to be developed, that was consolidated from the inputs and discussions held with the different local actors that made up the local action group of ADICE, was:

- Strengthening democracy and civic engagement
- Promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities
- Preparing young people for their future responsibilities as citizens
- Encouraging social innovation and new ideas
- Building a fairer, more equitable society

Faaborg-Midtfyn Kommune (Denmark):

The 5 points on needs that to be developed, that was consolidated from the inputs and discussions held with the local action group of Faaborg-Midtfyn Municipality, was:

- Understanding power dynamics when engaging with young people. The language used by politicians, especially in written form, can be challenging and not so inclusive.



- Addressing pseudo involvement and delays from idea to action. Young people often don't see immediate results when they are asked to participate.
- Mobility and difficulties to get around in the municipality. How do we connect with young people that live in remote areas?
- Recognizing diverse resources among young people. Not all young people have the same physical and psychological resources to participate. Uniform expectations from adults can lead to exclusion.
- Increasing knowledge about the history of democracy. Why do we have democracy? Why is it important? "Children and young people" are often excluded in these discussions.

Summary and conclusion:

When analyzed it appears there are a couple of common take aways from the inputs regarding participation barriers gathered across the three partner regions.

A recurring theme is the perceived lack of impact; many young people feel their involvement is symbolic and doesn't lead to real change. This is exemplified by the inputs gathered in Skåne and Faaborg-Midtfyn, where young people often don't see immediate results.

Another common issue is the low awareness and knowledge about participation. Both young people and adults lack understanding of effective engagement and the importance of democracy and civic engagement. Furthermore, there's a noted lack of interest from politicians in young people's opinions and that the language used by politicians can be challenging and not inclusive. Related to this, the inputs also showed that the communication channels between local authorities and young people are often inadequate which calls for better ways to facilitate effective communication and engagement to strengthen the participation of young people.

Finally, the inclusion of diverse groups is also pinpointed as important. All partners gathered inputs highlights the importance of recognizing and including minority groups, ensuring all young people can participate. ADICE builds further on this by also advocating focus on promoting social inclusion and preparing young people for their future responsibilities.

The content of the inputs will be used in the project's final result: the manual for the North Sea region. Especially in the introduction and background section of the manual, where we want to highlight the challenges and perspectives that are important to consider in the context of youth participation. Based on the identified needs, we hope that our good examples (which the project gathered during the spring of 2024) will offer solutions and inspire ideas to overcome the obstacles that currently exists.



Annex

Identified inputs from each location:

1. Faaborg Midtfn Kommune
2. ADICE
3. The County Administrative Board of Skåne

1. Faaborg Midtfn Kommune:

Participants in the LAG that has contributed to the material:		
<i>Specify which organizations/groups within the LAG that has contributed with inputs.</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 16 year old student • The youth coordinator of Faaborg-Midtfn municipality. • Local politician 		
Why is increased participation among children and young people important in your location?		
<i>Specify inputs received from the discussion with your LAG on the topic.</i>		
<p>Children and young people are just as important as everyone else in society. But they do not have a formal place in democracy. They only get a place if we actively do something about it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The municipality is challenged in terms of training, get hold of the young people before they move on. - The young people are the only ones who know how they feel. If the young people do not have a voice, their problems will never come to light (silent knowledge). - Young people are different, adults and stakeholders must listen to ALL young people. - Our municipality is a rural municipality. Who decides? The young or the adults? It would be great if everyone decided together. - Important with youth environments to increase participation. - There is a difference in how well and how much the young people are being heard in different areas of the municipality. <p>The local politician stated that it is important to get the young people's point of view - the adults are not experts - The Children's Act and the child's voice - we need to focus much more on that. Young people are much better at seeking out information than adults are. They grew up with technology and can use it in a different way than we do.</p>		
Which are the 5 biggest needs, from your perspective, that need to be solved to strengthen participation among young people in your location?	Discuss and formulate the reasons for why the five identified needs exists:	Discuss and formulate ideas for how the five identified needs could be fixed/solved:
<i>Specify 5 needs (one in each box) that was pinpointed as most important to solve/work with onwards in the discussions with your LAG.</i>	<i>Specify input from discussions with the LAG on why these needs exists in the partner location.</i>	<i>Specify inputs from discussions with the LAG on how overarching solutions to the identified needs could look.</i>
Power relations you must be aware of when engaging young people. The	Could be because some adults view young people as incompetent because of age. Local politicians forget the young people	- Young people must be helped to find their voice and to take action.



language of politicians is a challenge, especially the written language.	and forget to think about the reality of young people - for example when meetings are scheduled. That can create a credibility problem.	- Competence development of adults in connection with youth involvement (connected with frameworks). Maybe it can be formulated and carried out by young people. Methods for involving young people must be formulated and created.
Pseudo involvement and too long time from thought into action. The young people do not see the results.	There is a contradiction between the democratic body and how quickly the young people want solutions, answers etc. Is mainly because of the political system. The problem could be solved with a purpose description.	Clear purpose description in relation to youth involvement. Running a municipality today is very complex – the broad outlines are difficult to understand. Caring takes up a lot. The task is so big and it is difficult to see through what is correct and what is not. Use purpose descriptions in each case young people are being asked to get involved. This demands concrete and formulated tasks and a specification of what the young people can “have an opinion” about. Take the young people's time seriously. A purpose description will also help with creating a shorter time from thought to action. However, it will be exclusionary, as there will be adults who have decided something before – hence the degree of involvement.
In FMK, mobility is a problem. Is it really the municipality's problem that people choose to settle far out in the countryside? Free buses throughout Funen? . Traffic infrastructure/municipal resources. Resources for children, young people, and their parents. How do we get in touch with the young people who are outside the formal system.	The public transportation is driven by a public company and costs money. Not all young people have parents that are able to drive them.	Free busses.
Not all young people have the same resources, both physical and psychological to participate. When adults expect the same from all young people some may be excluded.	Some young people have lots of resources and some have very few. This is also the case with parents and their ability to help with transport etc.	It should be differentiated and maybe up to the young people themselves how much they would like to be involved. Maybe there should be different tasks to solve when inviting young people to participate. In that case it is up to the individual to decide how much they manage to get involved and maybe more will participate.
There is a lack of knowledge about the history of democracy. Why do we have democracy? Why is it important etc. “children and young people” is systematically left out.	If the young people are to participate, they must know the history and the premise.	Education in democracy and associational life or education. Democracy on the school syllabus. Local politicians out to teach in the schools. Pixi version of how to become a local. Maybe already starting at intermediate level.

2. ADICE:

Participators in the LAG that has contributed to the material:

Specify which organizations/groups within the LAG that has contributed with inputs.

The first LAG to be set up was held with youth professionals interested in issues of participation in democratic life. Participants included project managers and coordinators, youth workers, vocational integration advisors, teachers, local authority representatives, association directors and mobility coordinators. A total of 33 people attended.



The second LAG to be set up was held with young people interested in international mobility. Among the participants are young people wanting to volunteer abroad, young entrepreneurs or trainees looking for mobility abroad. A total of 6 people attended. For both LAGs we created questionnaires with targeted answers to help participants. We put this questionnaire on Mentimeter so that they could answer in an interactive way. We also took notes on the oral responses so that comments could be integrated into the report.

Why is increased participation among children and young people important in your location?

Specify inputs received from the discussion with your LAG on the topic.

According to the participants, it is important to strengthen young people's civic participation in order to reinforce democracy and civic engagement, prepare young people for their future responsibilities as citizens, and foster social inclusion and equal opportunities. To a lesser extent, participants also spoke of the need to encourage social innovation and new ideas, to build a more just and equitable society, and to reduce apathy and political indifference.

Which are the 5 biggest needs, from your perspective, that need to be solved to strengthen participation among young people in your location?	Discuss and formulate the reasons for why the five identified needs exists:	Discuss and formulate ideas for how the five identified needs could be fixed/solved:
<i>Specify 5 needs (one in each box) that was pinpointed as most important to solve/work with onwards in the discussions with your LAG.</i>	<i>Specify input from discussions with the LAG on why these needs exists in the partner location.</i>	<i>Specify inputs from discussions with the LAG on how overarching solutions to the identified needs could look.</i>
Strengthening democracy and civic engagement	Need for more involvement in decision-making and greater awareness of citizenship. Politicians may be reluctant to engage young people when they come to protest	Take young people to visit parliamentary bodies and attend meetings. Create information meetings on citizenship. Create more questioning on themes such as living together, ecology... Set up projects between them and politicians
Promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities	Need to create more partnerships with schools to facilitate inclusion and create more space for exchanges	Create offices or departments dedicated to this theme in high schools, youth organizations and universities. Having classes at school where we can discuss different topics related to citizenship. Encourage young people to learn more about the subject through workshops, games, volunteering, etc.
Preparing young people for their future responsibilities as citizens	Need for more support for initiatives proposed by young people as they do not know that their initiatives can be supported	Facilitate access to information on exchange programs and, above all, facilitate pre-departure procedures. Listening to and concretely implementing proposals and initiatives put forward by youth bodies and groups. Training young people to set up projects
Encouraging social innovation and new ideas	We need to promote citizen projects more, because young people need to be behind them and feel they are being listened to.	Envisage a diploma that would be valued in the search for employment. Set up or strengthen participatory budgets dedicated to projects initiated by young people. Create more citizen projects led by young people.



		Create a fresco around a specific theme linked to citizenship, such as ecology or living together
Building a fairer, more equitable society	Need to encourage more volunteering	Envisage a diploma that would be valued in the job search. Involve young people in a concrete local project. Offer solidarity workcamps in developing countries. Enable young people to talk about their experiences and raise awareness on the subject.

3. The County Administrative Board of Skåne

Participators in the LAG that has contributed to the material:

Specify which organizations/groups within the LAG that has contributed with inputs.

- Two high school classes (~41 students) at Ystad Gymnasium (first-year students and third-year students aged 16-19)
- Working committee of Childrens Forum Skåne (officials from the local, regional, state, and non-profit sectors)
 - Municipality of Lund
 - RF SISU (Swedish Sports Confederation)
 - Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
 - BRIS (Children's Rights in Society)
 - Rättsbarnen (Save the Children Sweden)
 - Municipality of Klippan
 - Municipality of Malmö
 - Malmö against discrimination
- Youth council of the municipality of Ängelholm
- Attendees (ages xx-xx) at the Ungdomsting (annual youth conference hosted by the Municipality of Lund)
- Youth political parties in the geographical area of Skåne (MUF, CUF) – all parties were asked to contribute but only two did.

Why is increased participation among children and young people important in your location?

Specify inputs received from the discussion with your LAG on the topic.

The school students and groups of young people we involved expressed mostly positive inputs on the topic of participation and why participation is important to them. Recurring themes are that the children of today will be the adults of tomorrow, and therefore it is important to also listen to their unique perspectives growing up. They also have very many perspectives as young people on how policies and changes affect them, which should be relevant for the policymakers to listen to. It is therefore important to include young people to influence the society they one day will grow up to live and act within, but also to give the young people of today a chance to learn how knowledge of how different democratic processes on the local and regional level functions.

The different groups of adults we included in the discussions had the same idea as above. However for many within the public sector it is also important to be able to work more with these topics to better comply with the articles of the convention of the rights of the child which was ratified as Swedish law in 2020.



<p>The political representants we have been in contact with (youth parties in our region) also expressed the same picture, but also emphasized on the importance of participation on the personal development of the individual who are engaged. They however also noted that the interest on the topics in today's youth groups in Sweden was very low and it was hard to engage this particular group to become active in their parties.</p>		
<p>Which are the 5 biggest needs, from your perspective, that need to be solved to strengthen participation among young people in your location?</p>	<p>Discuss and formulate the reasons for why the five identified needs exists:</p>	<p>Discuss and formulate ideas for how the five identified needs could be fixed/solved:</p>
<p><i>Specify 5 needs (one in each box) that was pinpointed as most important to solve/work with onwards in the discussions with your LAG.</i></p>	<p><i>Specify input from discussions with the LAG on why these needs exists in the partner location.</i></p>	<p><i>Specify inputs from discussions with the LAG on how overarching solutions to the identified needs could look.</i></p>
<p>Some (or most) young people feel that their participation doesn't matter, that it's just for show. Many also feel they are also not interested in the topics discussed.</p>	<p>Could be because of genuine disinterest on the topics/willingness to participate. But could also be because of how the processes are structured and how the information is communicated. Many are discouraged by the formalities and complicated structures of how public sector operates. Could also be because lacking conversations and knowledge spreading on the topics of participation towards young people but also adults.</p>	<p>More knowledge is one important step, but public sector also plays a vital role in strengthening the trust and engagement of young people on how they act on inputs and concerns from youth groups. If you are asked to participate you would quickly loose interest and faith in the system if you don't feel that your concern is taken seriously/ followed up/ highlighted in the final decision.</p>
<p>Knowledge and information about participation are low. Children and young people don't know how and when they can and should participate in certain topics. Knowledge among adults on how and why to properly engage young people is also low, making it difficult for the adult world to properly engage young people.</p>	<p>Mostly explained in the input and in the explanation above.</p>	<p>More knowledge-rising efforts should be prioritized both towards the youth communities and the adults regarding why participation is relevant. Also, more practical instructions on how children could be able to participate and make their voices heard in different processes would help.</p>
<p>Adults (politicians, policy officials) is not interested in the opinions of children and young people/the subject is not prioritized by them. And if it is, and children are included, its mostly in a part of the processes where the opinions don't really influence the outcomes.</p>	<p>Could be because of a lack of knowledge of how to properly engage young people in maybe sometimes "boring" topics. Could also relate to the fact that elected politicians don't perceive children and young people as voters, which could affect their willingness to prioritize the engagement of this societal group. The ratification of the convention of the rights of the child in 2020 in Sweden has made some organizations more concerned with the topics, but lacking the correct tools and methods the participation of young people in specific topics is not optimally implemented, resulting in lowered trust among young groups on how their participation really matters. If employees are responsible for these topics as a side task it is often not prioritized.</p>	<p>More information and knowledge towards decision makers on how children can and should be involved. Important steps to not disregard when involving children is to adapt the communication to the recipients, explain how the inputs are intended to be used and very importantly to follow-up how the inputs has been utilized/thought of in relations to the final decision. Awareness and remainder towards adults and decision makers that the children of today soon will grow up to be the voters of the future shouldn't be forgotten. Work proactively within organizations on the topics of participation of young people. Successful results depend on how much time the organization can allocate to work with the topics. Having personal that can work on the issues across the whole organization (child rights strategist) has been seen to strengthen the ability of large organizations to prioritize these subjects in Sweden.</p>
<p>There are no or only few good channels for communication between local</p>	<p>Young people are a very broad group and its difficult to pinpoint the correct</p>	<p>Don't be afraid to try new solutions and communicate in several channels. Schools</p>



<p>authorities/politicians/children. Making it difficult for adults to reach out and for the young people to respond.</p>	<p>communication ways to reach them. Public sector in Sweden is not so quick to adapt to new solutions, such as social media usage to gather inputs, which hinders an active and neutral dialogue.</p>	<p>and other institutions who work operationally close to children already is a great place to start. Be where the young people already are, and don't expect them to show up in the conventional settings that are usually used for communicating official decisions and consultations. Starting a youth council or similar won't work for every occasion.</p>
<p>Even though some children can participate, the most problematic issue is that minority groups that are hard to reach within the very broad group "children and young people" is systematically left out.</p>	<p>Certain groups of young people are hardly heard and hard to reach, this could be because of both lacking interest in the specific group to participate, but also because of lacking interest/know-how among adults on involving these certain groups opinions on different issues.</p>	<p>Try to specify which groups of children that must be heard in certain topics and try to reach these in particular (connected to the above input). Decision makers should try to reverse the trend and instead systematically highlight and address these groups that are being excluded in ongoing decisions and events. More knowledge on how to include minority groups effectively.</p>