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# Report on the Young Activists' Summit #1 Let's Get to Know Each Other in Lublin

*SUMMARY OF WORKSHOPS AND THE ANALYSIS OF EVALUATION  
SURVEY RESULTS*



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## Introduction

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The #1 Let's Get to Know Each Other in Lublin – Young Activists' Summit was held on 20-22 January 2023. The event was initiated by the Youth City Council of Lublin as part of the project entitled "Youth for the Young – the Activities of Lublin's Youth to Integrate Youth Circles", co-financed by the European Union as part of the Erasmus+ Programme, and became part of the agenda of events organised to celebrate Lublin as the European Youth Capital 2023.

The report includes a summary of contents generated mainly by four workshop groups, responsible for the following spheres: Volunteer Work, Co-governance, Mental Health, and the City Each group worked using a different method, but all of them were striving to work out conclusions concerning the needs, the problems, the solutions and youth engagement methods. The second part of the report is a summary of an evaluation survey distributed during the Summit.



Photo: a press conference preceding the Summit; representatives of the Youth City Council and City of Lublin authorities.



## The idea of the “Youth for the Young” project and the Young Activists’ Summit

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The Young Activists’ Summit was aimed at integrating socially engaged young people who pursue various activities across Poland. The event was organised by the Youth City Council of Lublin in collaboration with the Lublin City Office, as the first stage of the project called “Youth for the Young - the Activities of Lublin's Youth to Integrate Youth Circles” which became part of the events organised to celebrate Lublin as the European Youth Capital 2023, implemented thanks to the financial support from the European Union as part of the Erasmus+ programme.



Photo: The participants of the #1 Let's Get to Know Each other in Lublin - Young Activists’ Summit

The three days of the Summit were filled with workshops and discussion panels, and became an opportunity to share experience and raise the awareness of the ways in which support can be granted and how to engage young people in social work. The agenda of the event included, among others, such items as a discussion panel entitled “Youth in Europe – the European Year of Youth – EU’s Activities to Support Youth”, which took up the topic of the



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opportunities that the European Union provides for young people, or a panel entitled “What do the young need from the young?”

During the first day of the Congress, live streaming and a chat were available on Facebook, where Summit participants and those following the event online could ask questions and share their observations. Moderators passed the online questions to the panellists for discussion.

At the Lublin Conference Centre, where the event took place, flipcharts were placed around the building where the participants were encouraged to express their views, ask questions to the organisers or describe their impressions.

**#1 Poznajmy się! w Lublinie**  
Kongres młodych aktywistów i aktywistek

**młodzi dla MŁODYCH**

**20 piątek**

- 09:00 REJESTRACJA OSÓB UCZESTNICZĄCYCH
- 11:00 PANEL DYSKUSYJNY „WITAMY W EUROPEJSKIEJ STOLICY MŁODZIEŻY”
- 12:15 PANEL DYSKUSYJNY „MŁODZIEŻ W EUROPIE - EUROPEJSKI ROK MŁODZIEŻY”
- 13:45 PRZERWA OBIADOWA
- 14:30 PANEL DYSKUSYJNY „CZEGO POTRZEBUJĄ MŁODZI OD MŁODYCH?”
- 16:30 PRZERWA KAWOWA
- 18:00 NETWORKING

**21 sobota**

- 09:00 WARSZTATY CZ. 1
- 11:00 PRZERWA KAWOWA
- 11:30 WARSZTATY CZ. 2
- 13:45 PRZERWA OBIADOWA
- 14:30 WARSZTATY CZ. 3
- 16:30 PRZERWA KAWOWA
- 18:00 NETWORKING

**22 niedziela**

- 09:00 PODSUMOWANIE WARSZTATÓW
- 10:30 PRZERWA KAWOWA
- 11:00 DEBATA O ANGAŻOWANIU MŁODZIEŻY
- 12:30 PODSUMOWANIE KONGRESU
- 14:30 OBIAD

MŁODZIEŻOWA RADA MIASTA LUBLIN

Funded by the European Union

EUROPEJSKA STOLICA MŁODZIEŻY 2023

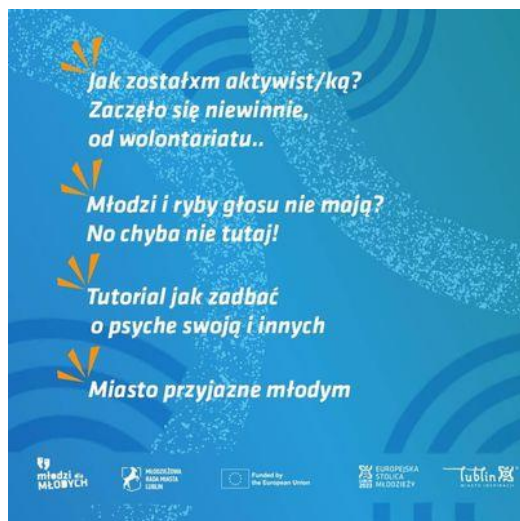
Lublin

Graphics: The agenda of the #1 Let's Get to Know Each Other in Lublin - Young Activists' Summit

As part of workshops held during the event, the participants defined the needs of the youth in four areas – Volunteer Work, Co-governance, Mental Health and the City. Supported by experts from non-governmental organisations, they defined the objectives and the methods of engaging young people in activities covering the aforementioned sectors.



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Graphics: Topics of group workshops

The three-day Summit was concluded with a presentation of materials developed by individual thematic groups, which were further debated jointly by all the project participants.

As regards further stages of the project, local activities have been planned with a view to training and engaging a group of young people.



Photo: Mariusz Banach – Deputy Mayor of Lublin for Education and Care delivering a speech



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Photo: Kamil Konieczny – Chair of the Lublin Youth City Council and Inga Sobólska – Deputy Chair of the Lublin Youth City Council.



Photo: Panellists featuring a discussion panel entitled "Welcome to the European Youth Capital"

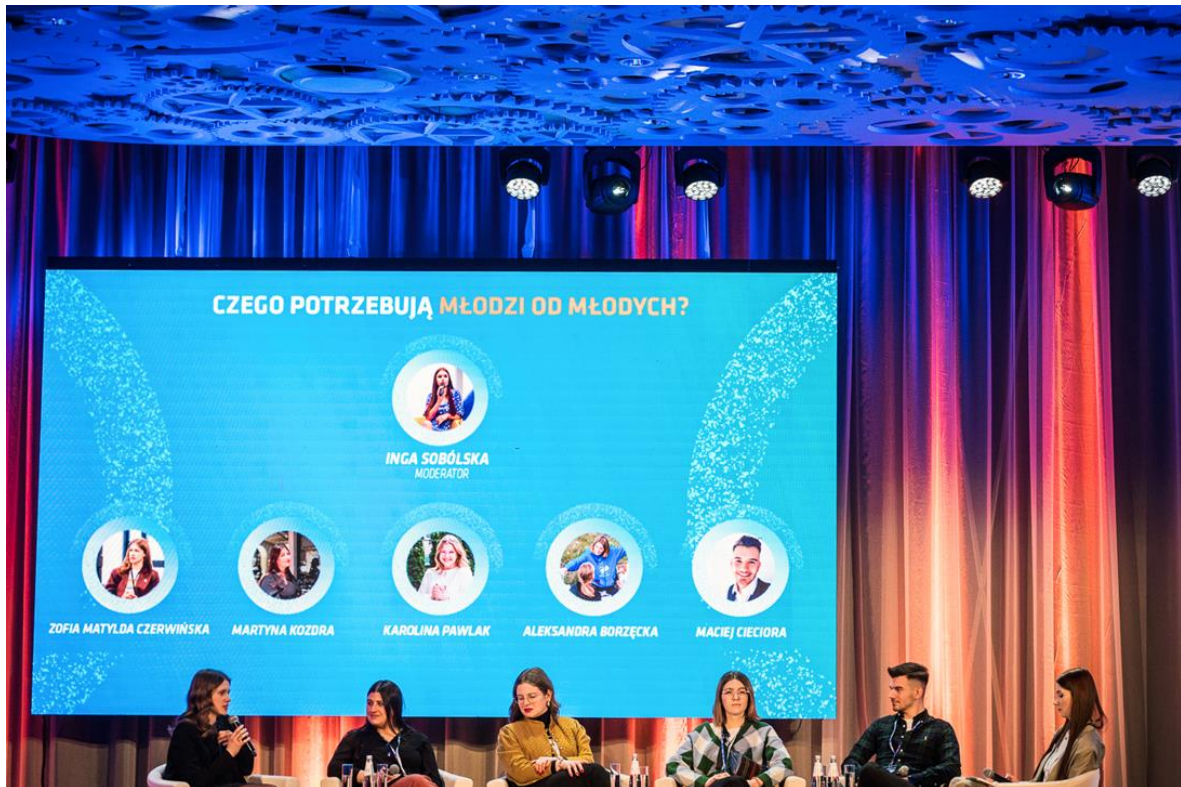


Photo: Panellists featuring a discussion panel entitled "What do the young need from the young?"

## Part I. Summary of the materials prepared by the Summit participants

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### Motivation for action among young people

During two workshops, emphasis was placed on the issues that motivated young people to engage socially. Two workshop groups discussed the topic of motivation.

### Volunteer work

As part of a workshop entitled "How I became an activist? It started off harmlessly, with volunteering ..." deliberations were mostly centred around volunteer work. The group defined what motivated young people to become a volunteer, mentioning such factors as

- self-development, including the discovery/development of soft skills,
- indulging in passions,
- responsibility,
- independence,
- experience (CV, work experience), acquisition of new skills, e.g. organisational skills, acting in emergency situations,





- networking/contact networks,
- sense of agency (a visible effect even in one person, e.g., a smile), results of one's actions,
- the sense of being needed and appreciated,
- benefits,
- getting to know new people, places, situations,
- (a positive) change within oneself,
- establishment of own organisations according to own ideas and beliefs.

## Co-governance

As part of tasks completed during a workshop entitled "Youth and fish have no voice? Not here!", the group participants were exploring the benefits that can be derived from the active participation of youth in governance activities. The workshop was held in the form of a game. The participants of the workshops assumed various roles in a certain kingdom. The possible sources of motivation for the engagement of authorities, citizens and youth were presented to the king who had banned all community-centred activities in the kingdom. The following list is a collection of various types of arguments that the participants used to convince the king to change his decree.

The motivation of authorities to support the social engagement of young people:

- providing "a breath of fresh air" in the activities that are conducted,
- developing the competencies of future adults,
- relieving authorities from certain obligation,
- reducing unemployment,
- promoting the citizens' will to participate in state decisions,
- minimising social unrest,
- increasing the support for authorities and their legitimisation,
- progressive youth accelerating civilisation development,
- providing uniqueness on the international stage,
- warming up the authorities' image,
- providing advisory circles,
- having more funds in business trading,
- savings on education,
- having an increased influence on youth - a chance for indoctrination,
- having a scape goat,
- having an opportunity for evaluation,
- eliminating the risk of civil war.

The motivation on the part of citizens to engage youth socially:

- developing the competencies of young citizens,
- increasing employment opportunities,
- solving the problems of various social groups,



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- possible mitigation of inter-generational differences,
- enhancing social responsibility among young citizens.

The motivation of the youth to engage socially:

- experience,
- development,
- learning,
- sense of responsibility,
- influence on the reality,
- causative power,
- broadening horizons,
- fulfilling dreams,
- meeting other people and getting to know oneself,
- discovering competencies,
- verifying one's competencies,
- integration of the society,
- sharing experience.



Photo: Summit participants – behind-the-scenes conversations

## Problems, needs and objectives of actions

One of the elements of all four workshops held as part of the Summit was to answer the question about the problems and needs of young people. They are divided below by individual workshops, as they are closely related to the subject matter a given group was



working on. The problems and the needs were brought out interchangeably in the work of the groups. Some teams, starting from a conversation about solutions, focused on the problems, while others placed emphasis on defining the needs.



Photo: A snapshot of workshops



Photo: A snapshot of workshops



## Volunteer work

The group holding discussions as part of the workshop entitled "How I became an activist? It started off harmlessly, with volunteering ..." dealt with the context of volunteer work, and as part of this sphere they indicated problems that persons engaged in volunteer work experienced.

The issues that volunteers face:

- stressful situations, e.g., contacts with new people,
- difficult situations, requiring specialist support and resulting in mental strain,
- burnout syndrome among volunteers and activists,
- lack of time,
- work without pay, posing problems if volunteer work requires own funds, e.g. because transport costs are not refunded,
- underestimation or criticism on the part of relatives and friends, school, peer group, but also the people and organisations they cooperate with,
- unfair accusations, e.g., of the theft of money from fund-raising campaigns,
- misuse of volunteers, e.g., by excessive workload, giving them tasks other than those they have volunteered for,
- assessment of individuals through the lens of an "organisation's" bad reputation,
- consequences of engaging in volunteer work, in a specified organisation in a specified circles, e.g., with vulnerable groups,
- stereotypes about volunteering, e.g. work boiling down only to fund raising tasks, the "naiveness" of volunteer work, etc.
- comparison of results by volunteers themselves,
- conflicts within a team, e.g., unfair distribution of obligations, disregard, confrontations,
- closed circles.

The objective the group selected for further work: What should volunteer work be like in the future?

## Co-governance

The participants of the workshop group "Youth and fish have no voice? Not here!" comprehensively explored problems which young people face in the context of their daily life and engagement in community life. The problems that they have identified, in the perspective of the group's work, also contribute to insufficient engagement among young people.



Photo: A snapshot of workshops

What problems affecting engagement do young people need to struggle with?

- politics: using young people for government propaganda purposes, discussing about youth without young people, no “young blood” in decision-making politics, belittling the voice of the young generation and their problems, church interfering in politics,
- daily life: high prices of real properties and living expenses,
- society: deep social divide, no communication, no openness of adults towards youth, discrimination on the grounds of age, clipping young people's wings, belittling the problems of young people,
- social activities: no funds, delayed formalisation, too much bureaucracy for youth activities, no sense of agency, no information about development and activity opportunities (in particular in small towns and villages),
- healthcare, including mental health: disregarding mental health, no access to psychological and psychiatric counselling, shortcomings of the healthcare system,
- education: the education system, no system-based sex education, no respect for pupils’ rights, Catholic religious instruction at schools,
- law: a legal system for sexual abuse, penal law, ban on abortion,
- ecology: belittling climate issues,
- equality/tolerance: no equal opportunities at the beginning of adult life, transport exclusion, poor gender transition system, xenophobia, violence and hate.



Photo: A snapshot of workshops

Problems which the group has selected for further work and for the purpose of solution development:

- climate,
- mental health,
- education,
- youth engagement (as a method),
- religion.

Selected objective for workshops: increased engagement among young people.

## Mental health

The participants of a group workshop entitled “Tutorial on how to take care of your and others’ psyche”, in the first part of the meeting, analysed various examples of young people who are engaged socially in a smaller or greater extent, based on personas. As part of the tasks, they defined the objectives, needs and problems of the youth. In their further work, they focused on selected problems for two types of persons – engaged and non-engaged ones. The context of their work was mental health.

Young people’s objectives and needs:

- A. a person sceptical about engagement
  - wants to be accepted,
  - is looking for an appropriate group,



- wants to understand people and his/her surroundings,
  - is searching for his/her role,
  - wants to achieve balance,
- B. a volunteer
- wants to be relieved of a part of his/her obligations,
  - assertiveness,
  - wants to make others aware how important volunteer work is,
- C. activist,
- no discrimination of minorities,
  - reproductive rights,
  - raising climate-crisis awareness,
  - anti-discrimination workshops,
  - inter-generational workshops,
- D. a member of the Youth City Council
- establishing a youth organisation,
  - establishing inter-school communications,
  - measures focused on the quality of life in the city,
  - green urban zones,
  - public awareness campaigns for climate,
- E. non-engaged person
- is considering possible career options, for example accounting,
  - a vision of a peaceful life,
  - goes with the flow,
  - gives up to reality (conformism)



Photo: A snapshot of workshops

#### Problems and challenges:

##### A. a sceptical person

- no place for oneself,
- is overwhelmed with obligations,
- is afraid of alienation,
- is internally torn,
- does not know whose expectations to meet, and how to do it,
- comes from a toxic environment,

##### B. a volunteer

- exploited by organisations,
- no time for oneself,
- no appreciation and understanding,
- no development opportunities,
- as a result, relationships with the close ones deteriorate and school obligations and house chores are neglected due to shortage of time.

##### C. an activist

- school-leaving examination,
- glass ceiling,
- alienation,





- family,
- identity crisis,
- the future (fear),
- reactions of other people around them (fear),
- problems at school,
- low attendance,
- teachers' disfavour,
- problems with leaving one's comfort zone,
- as a result of shortage of time and no shared conversation topics, school friendships diminish, and the teachers treat activism as truancy, belittling such activities.

D. a member of the Youth City Council

- burnout syndrome,
- the future - what will come next?
- afraid that he/she will be inactive,
- wants to do something, but does not know how,
- frustrated that ideas fail, and his/her voice will not be heard or appreciated,

E. non-engaged person

- acceptance from peers,
- the future (university education, school-leaving examination),
- social pressure related to the choice of career,
- no awareness of one's own potential and skills,
- in addition, a very small group of friends where he/she belongs due to similar goals and personalities.

The needs of engaged and non-engaged persons selected by the workshop group. In the further part of their work, the group identified solutions for the following needs.

The needs of non-engaged persons:

- acceptance,
- finding one's identity, role and potential,
- determining one's value,
- building a sense of own value and self-confidence,
- dealing with stress and pressure,
- developing critical thinking abilities,
- finding one's group of friends,
- specifying one's career path.

The needs of engaged persons:

- building self-confidence and assertiveness,
- enhancing leadership and team work competencies,



- counteracting the burnout syndrome,
- learning how to deal with pressure and stress, and how to relax,
- the need to be appreciated and understood to receive support from one's own circles,
- building the ability to set adequate goals and manage one's time.

## The City

The participants of the workshop entitled "Youth-friendly city - workshops on creating cities in line with young people's needs" worked in the context of urban life and of how cities cater for young people's needs.



Photo: A snapshot of workshops

The following problems were identified:

- a hardly noticeable voice of youth among the older population,
- a small number of concerts,
- a small number of cultural events (or the need for increased publicity on the part of the authorities),
- no funds,
- hate,
- no cooperation with local authorities,
- no support and understanding,
- burnout and passive approach among young people.



Photo: A snapshot of workshops

#### Identified needs:

- the need for inter-generational integration,
- efficient public transport tailored to the needs of young people,
- a youth centre (a place),
- an integration venue,
- a (public) meeting place,
- interesting events,
- open sports facilities,
- youth culture centres,
- the presence of Coordinator for Youth in local government bodies

The main objective that the group has defined: the creation of cities based on young people's needs.



Photo: Summit participants taking a souvenir photo

## Conclusions from the panel entitled “What do the young need from the young?”, organised as part of the Young Activists’ Summit

The panel featured socially engaged persons from various parts of the country and having diverse interests. They talked about their work as activists, their experience, and about the needs and problems of youth.

The identified needs, problems, and opportunities of support for active youth, mainly in the context of the operations of Youth City Councils and School Students’ Councils:

- the need to establish Youth City Councils,
- activities being too hasty,
- the need for support and care from more experienced persons, serving as an “umbrella” for young people engaged in the work of the Youth City Council,
- the need for step-by-step approach, for testing, enjoying small results and showing young people that this is good,
- not everyone will be able to find their place in the Youth City Council, so it is worth telling them that they can always resign and give their place to someone else,
- support from older friends from a given organisation to younger ones at the beginning of their way, identification of their strengths, and the provision of space for development are valuable,
- insufficient funds for operations, and the need for discounts for organisations,



- the need for support on the part of public offices and schools, e.g., in the scope of supply in gadgets,
- no information where to receive support for one's operations, where discounts or material support may be obtained,
- perception of young people in participatory activities as "mascots" that look nice in photographs but are not necessarily heard,
- very long and difficult process for making the voice of the youth heard, concluded by a praise but characterised by a challenging cooperation on the way,
- the voice of the youth is quiet, and the change of its audibility is very slow,
- for young people to be heard, they also must set an example, so it is important for Youth Councils to act in an ambitious way, and not only settle for photographs with city authorities,
- the need for dialogue, as two parties must be willing to hear what we have to say,
- showing how to find allies so that our voice is heard more vividly,
- Youth Councils are often ineffective in their actions because they have no knowledge of how to act,
- disfavour of school authorities towards school students' councils, hindering their operations,
- the need for information about the legal framework of potential activities to be undertaken by Youth Councils and by young people, such as the resolution-making initiative, youth charter, etc.
- imitation of adult behaviour – Youth Council members should not behave like adults, as young people have the right to behave accordingly.

The problems and needs noted by panel participants in relation to various topics:

- no integration of foreign university students – no knowledge of where to turn, fears,
- the pandemic and the problems of foreigners who were left at universities on their own – from loneliness to lack of funds,
- war in Ukraine – the need to respond to the needs of refugee children and youth – establishment of community centres,
- mental health – a significant proportion of messages and information on the campaigns being implemented reach persons who already have some knowledge of it and are in the right information bubble, and it is necessary to look for new ways to reach other circles, for example memes addressed to Generation Z,
- the need to demonstrate opportunities and solutions, without describing and discussing the problems of psychological support in Poland,
- the need to show young people how to inform their parents about their mental problems, or how to ask another trusted adult for help,
- the need to develop the ability to care for oneself, to slow down, and to let go,
- no respect for one's time,
- the need to develop the ability to say "Stop" and "No",
- life outside activism – If someone is not socially engaged, and has other passions and interests, it does not mean that we should stop keeping in touch with them.

One of the statements closing the panel discussion may serve as a good summary here:



*"What do the young need from the young? Support, not competition, cooperation and interconnections in their activities, and bearing in mind that we have a shared goal to do good."*

## Solutions concerning youth problems

During the workshops the groups were working on solutions to the problems they had identified in given spheres and on the methods to engage young people in activities. Some groups devoted more time to solutions that concerned the challenges they had discussed. In the present chapter, they are divided by the topics of group works.

### Volunteer work

As part of the workshop entitled "How I became an activist? It started off harmlessly, from volunteering...", participants pointed to the solutions to previously defined problems and challenges, and they can be divided into solutions dedicated to volunteers and separate solutions for organisations.

Solutions for volunteers:

- participation in training sessions with a psychologist or supervision,
- ongoing contacts with specialists, e.g. in homelessness,
- recollection of one's motivation in difficult situations, appreciation of one's efforts,
- minding the OHS (time frames, appropriate and clearly defined tasks, safety, the possibility to resign, safe contact – a person watching over the general situation, coordination),
- setting boundaries, knowledge of volunteering rules,
- reflecting on whether my goals are consistent with the organisation's objectives,
- responsibility for the tasks being undertaken in line with one's skills,
- establishment of own organisation,
- knowledge of activist burnout symptoms and relevant response.

Solutions for organisations:

- holding training sessions with a psychologist for organisation members (also from outside the organisation); topics: how to deal with stress, difficult situations, accessibility, group work processes and roles within a team, first aid,
- performance of supervision,
- volunteering as exchange (time for skills, the sense of agency and various benefits – vouchers, gadgets, trips, refund of transport costs, certificates),
- acknowledgements for volunteers,
- development of volunteering rules,
- other institutions should not be relieved of their duties, e.g. volunteers should not serve as interpreters for the Police,
- a coordinator – a person making sure not only that tasks are performed, but also that volunteers are safe,
- maintaining distance between beneficiaries and volunteers.



## Co-governance

As part of the workshop entitled "Youth and fish have no voice? Not here!", young people developed suggestions to solutions to selected problems. During a previous discussion, the group prepared an extensive list of challenges, but selected 5 topics for further work, including:

- climate,
- mental health,
- education,
- religion.

The group also analysed in detail the issue of engaging young people in activities. The material has been presented in the chapter on methods.

Solutions to engage young people in responding to given issues:

### A. Climate

- climate strike,
- events – tree planting,
- educational workshops,
- educational open air games,
- appointment of environmental protection teams at schools,
- separate waste collection bins at schools,
- school garden,
- community fridges,
- publicising the problem on the media,
- boiler filters financed by the state and informational campaigns,
- intentional promotion of renewable energy – informational campaign,
- saving water,
- application of reusable counterparts,
- a climate picnic,
- lectures by experts in ecology at schools and in the public space,
- ever-present green energy,
- Virtual reality "The world in 50 years' time", e.g. an art installation,
- reverse vending machines,
- co-financing for plant-based products.

### B. Education (taking into account NGOs, schools and their communities - students, teachers, parents)

- discussion panels,
- proposed changes to school statutes,
- students' influence on school statutes,
- student and teacher strikes,
- publicising problems in the media,



- (qualified) municipal commissioner for students' rights,
  - holding teachers responsible for violating students' rights,
  - intensifying the activities of school students' councils,
  - cooperation between the Youth City Council and school students' councils,
  - trips and visits to state and local-government institutions,
  - promoting the idea of the School Council,
  - analysing students' (educational) needs,
  - green energy,
  - a "chill out zone" and cooking facilities for students at schools,
  - students' opinions on school life,
  - questionnaires from local governments,
  - development of soft skills,
  - adapting school subjects to contemporary reality,
  - sex education,
  - no number grades,
  - promoting the idea of skill exchange,
  - no grouping in terms of age,
  - referenda.
- C. Mental health
- support groups,
  - school informational campaigns,
  - advertising the support helpline,
  - performing depression tests during classes,
  - developing mental healthcare habits since early years,
  - publicising the problem on national media,
  - a fund to support specialists' work,
  - a list of contacts to organisations specialising in this sphere,
  - contact of school students' councils with school management to provide psychological support,
  - workshops to counteract discrimination and violence,
  - full-time psychologist's position,
  - adapting schools and institutions to persons with special needs, e.g. autism,
  - separating psychologists' work from school life,
  - mental health education for parents.
- D. Religion
- a campaign to raise awareness of the rights of students in respect of signing up for religious instruction classes,
  - the establishment of NGOs aimed at combating illegal school statutes,
  - an information campaign about apostasy,
  - conducting research on the ways religious instruction classes are held,
  - religious studies or introduction to philosophy instead of Catholic religious instruction,
  - promoting departure from the Concordat,





- promoting religious diversity and freedom of religion,
- awareness of celebrations in other religions,
- departure from religious symbols at schools,
- separation of church and politics,
- equal treatment of the church in law,
- ecumenical meetings,
- conscious catechisation of believers.

## Mental health

The group formed during the workshop entitled “Tutorial on how to take care of your and others’ psyche”, seeking solutions, provided a direct response to the needs of two types of persons - engaged and non-engaged ones.

As regards currently non-engaged persons, the following solutions in the sphere of mental health were identified, while their main objective was to encourage engagement:

- activist day,
- online and offline thematic discussion groups,
- youth exchanges,
- family-oriented activities – picnics, family discounts,
- broadcasts in a school radio centre,
- youth centres,
- psychoeducation,
- promoting engagement,
- integrative theme-specific events,
- vocational counselling,
- coaching,
- a campaign for good practices in families,
- healthy relaxation,
- meetings of students and graduates.

As regards currently engaged persons and their needs, the group listed the following solutions in terms of care for mental well-being:

- the Academy of the Future,
- creating safe spaces: clubs, cafés, support groups,
- workshops and campaigns organised at schools,
- finding time for oneself,
- occupational health – building a schedule,
- sharing experience – mentoring,
- open days at an organisation,
- training sessions for teachers and parents,
- appreciating volunteers and activists, e.g. diplomas,
- defining one’s needs and priorities.



In addition to the above, the group analysed the situation of hypothetical protagonists of a case study, and other solutions were found in this context.

Ideas for boosting the self-esteem of an engaged person:

- A. on the part of city authorities:
  - young activists' club,
  - promotion of activism in the city,
  - a gala for social activists,
  - support for engaged persons: financial - fund, patronage, favourable approach from officials,
  
- B. on the part of a peer group:
  - support and recognition of efforts,
  
- C. on the part of schools:
  - workshops during a form teacher period on searching for one's strengths,
  - a training for teachers on how to support students,
  
- D. on the part of families:
  - serious conversations,
  - taking a child out, e.g. to a climate strike event,
  - relationship-building workshops for parents and children,

Ideas to provide support to a non-engaged person:

- A. on the part of families:
  - greater interest from family members,
  - family-oriented films, picnics and events,
  - promotion of joint activities,
  
- B. on the part of schools:
  - organisation of inter-school exchanges,
  - subject and theme-specific clubs, as an opportunity to discover one's passion,
  - school lectures and projects (activist day, meetings with organisation representatives),
  
- C. on the part of city authorities:
  - family picnics,
  - organisation of out-of-school projects – volunteer work,
  - arrangement of discounts for families in public utility buildings – for integration purposes,
  - information billboards – promotion of values,
  - volunteering for students,



D. on the part of a peer group:

- integration trips and group projects – relationship building,
- youth strikes, for example climate strikes,
- influence of colleagues – as mentors in shaping the approach to activism,

## The City

The participants of the workshop entitled “Youth-Friendly City - workshops on creating cities in line with young people’s needs” suggested solutions as part of the problem areas they had indicated, building on the discussed needs.

Solutions:

- public transport: efficient, well-developed urban transport, centred around the needs of young people and diversified (metro, trams, buses), railway and bus stations in one place, the presence of cycle paths, bicycles and scooters available for rental in every city district,
- space for the young: facilities from the young to the young, a youth centre, restricted-access and open integration places, public meeting places, space for youth, a market square with a place for young people, open urban spaces,
- culture: interesting events, youth culture centres, open-air cinemas, a pride wall, meaning a wall where, e.g., a talented young musician may write that he/she loves signing and may express himself / herself),
- sports: open sports facilities, schools with swimming pools (it is crucial that each school has sports facilities to limit discrimination on account of sports),
- politics and co-governance: the presence of a Coordinator for Youth in government bodies, idea wall where residents can anonymously write what changes to the urban space they wish to introduce,
- tourism: information desks where tourists will have a chance to ask for directions,
- greenery: a city should have a lot of green areas,
- free lavatories,
- aesthetics: public waste containers/bins should be suitable for separate waste collection,
- accessibility: playgrounds also for persons with disabilities.

## Methods and good practices in the sphere of youth engagement

The last element of the workshops was to search for ideas for the methods to engage young people in a given thematic area. The participants also discussed good practices. Due to the specific nature of the thematic areas and the work of individual groups, not all of them identified specific methods. The following information has been divided by thematic areas.



## Volunteer work

In the group participating in the workshop entitled "How I became an activist? It started off harmlessly, from volunteering ..." methods, or more specificity guidelines, were identified for measures aimed at encouraging engagement in volunteer work:

- we need to remember that slogans encouraging volunteer work should not be insulting (not even jokingly),
- speak less about the organisation and more about who it is looking for,
- provide specific information about the existing activities of the organisation (specific projects),
- refer to authorities, celebrities,
- specify the tasks to be completed as part of volunteer work,
- provide an opportunity for performing the tasks online,
- provide specific information about the required skills, e.g. foreign language,
- give specific information about the benefits that can be derived from engagement,
- provide multiple communication channels, e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, e-mail,
- note how long a given project or volunteer work is expected to last.

## Co-governance

The workshop group focused on the topic of "Youth and fish have no voice? Not here!" listed methods to encourage engagement. They are presented below, divided by specified categories:

- communication: clear and specific message, speak the language of the young, shorten the distance, empathy.
- motivation: "carrot and stick", use the language of advantages, tangible and intangible gratification,
- equality: take into account excluded persons, provide youth with the sense of safety and belonging, open up to non-engaged persons.
- effects: build the sense of agency, help break up the glass ceiling, provide awareness of change, reduce bureaucracy.

As areas of potential youth engagement, the participants mentioned

- scouting,
- volunteering,
- special interest clubs,
- Youth Council,
- sports tournaments (school activities),
- meetings with NGOs,
- school picnics,
- social media activities,
- conference/congress,
- charity fund-raising campaigns,
- workshops with young activists,



- rainbow Friday,
- political engagement,
- discussion/educational panels,
- hackathons,
- youth participatory budget,
- volunteering base,
- youth centres,
- visits to the parliament,
- meetings with politicians,
- School Students' Councils and integration with Youth City Councils,
- creating a safe place,
- community projects counting towards school grades,
- local government-volunteer cooperation,
- raising awareness of possibilities (scholarships, Olympiads, etc.)

## Mental health

The group working as part of the workshop entitled "Tutorial on how to take care of your and others' psyche" did not identify any youth engagement methods directly, but certain ideas can be inferred from the work related to the solutions to the problems of non-engaged persons. These solutions to a large extent were aimed at enhancing their engagement, including them in activities, and promoting the activist attitude in general. These were:

- activist day,
- online and offline thematic discussion groups,
- youth exchanges,
- broadcasts in the school radio centre,
- youth centres,
- engagement promotion.

## The City

The works as part of the workshop entitled "Youth friendly city - workshops on creating cities in line with young people's needs" resulted in the identification of both youth engagement methods and good practices.

Engagement methods:

- developing own initiatives,
- do not wait, act,
- joint care for oneself and for others,
- mutual respect,
- integration without alcohol,
- financial resources,
- the media,



- support,
- engagement,
- experience.

Good practices related to the activities addressed to youth, youth engagement in activism, and activities affecting the general social welfare:

- Toruń - Camerimage festival (volunteering)
- Gubin - Colourful benches from the residents to the young (repainting benches),
- Chojnice - promoting local artists (a competition in which the winner can organise an exhibition in a given field of art),
- Wrocław - the development of the city office IT system/geoportal, website, improved access of residents to up-to-date information for the first time in Poland; the portal is considered to be one of the best ones in Europe, and students from general and technical secondary schools participated in its development as part of practical training,
- Częstochowa - in vitro subsidies - 40 children a year,
- Wrocław - free transport services for holders of school ID cards, even for students from other cities,
- Starachowice - Pałacyk (youth space),
- Kraków - Association of Kraków Secondary Schools

## Summary of workshops

During the debate that was held after individual groups had presented the results of workshops, emphasis was placed on the following issues:

- volunteer work ethics – a lot has been said about the matter, but no visible measures have been adopted to solve the problems; there is no organisation that would respond to the breach of volunteering rules on an ongoing basis; there are no safe spaces where volunteers can speak freely and provide important information about volunteering in a given organisation / institution;
- volunteer work coordination – raising coordinators' awareness of how to communicate with volunteers; the sense of no dialogue; volunteers feeling that they have not been heard, in particular if it is an individual opinion, coordinators should believe and show that volunteers are important;
- organisation – volunteers recommend organisations where they feel a part of a family, where it is safe and the atmosphere is friendly;
- base – special platforms are recommended, e.g. from Warsaw and Gdańsk, where persons interested in volunteer work can find relevant advertisements;
- cooperation - cooperation with communes was recommended, e.g., in the organisation of harvest fairs or at embassies; it is vital to look for new places for volunteer work, and it is good when organisations encourage and support one another in creating own initiatives, practices, cooperation with business is also recommended (barter services);



- shared decision-making/participation – it is vital for young people to be invited to consultations concerning space (in Sopot, young people informed the authorities that there is no sufficient shading in public spaces and their remarks are taken into account when new tree plantings are planned), or the development of strategic documents (Warsaw, Gdańsk, Lublin);
- City and Commune Offices – examples of offices were provided where communication between young people and officials was facilitated; there are departments with staff members delegated to cooperate with youth, e.g. the Social Communication Centre in Warsaw, and the Office of European Youth Capital Lublin 2023 (including a team bringing together representatives of various departments) or a position at the Lublin City Office Education & Care Department with youth relations as one of the main responsibilities.
- statutes – the subject matter of school statutes and cooperation between school student councils of primary and secondary schools has not been discussed in detail.

Based on the materials developed by the groups during the workshops, it can be said they approached the topics from the perspective of engaged persons. They perceive social engagement as a desired state and seek ideas to activate others. The need for support in their activities and for the sense of appreciation was a significant topic in the discussions of individual groups. Support from peers, family and school circles. Here, the awareness of the value of community work is particularly important. Unfortunately, a lot of participants mentioned opposing experience and situations, where their engagement was treated only as an excuse to have a day off school.

A lot of time was devoted to mental well-being of engaged persons and their safety (e.g., how to respond to hate speech). Both volunteering engagement and work as part of the Youth City Council or School Students' Council are areas which require step-by-step learning, balance, and time for private life. The themes may be a vital development sphere for engaged persons. On the other hand, people organising volunteer activities, or supervising the work of Youth City Councils or School Students' Councils, should bear in mind that it is vital for young people to be provided with work security, the possibility to report problems and to receive appropriate support.

## Part II. The evaluation of the #1 Let's Get to Know Each Other in Lublin - Young Activists' Summit

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The evaluation questionnaire (a link to online form) was distributed on the third day of the Summit and sent by e-mail. The participants of the Summit took part in the survey, representing various Polish towns and cities, i.a., Starachowice, Poznań, Tarnów, Warszawa, Poznań, Skarżysko-Kamienna, Aleksandrów Kujawski, Biała Podlaska, Białystok, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Chojnice, Rzeszów, Słupsk, Kraków, Miedzyrzec Podlaski, Wrocław, Toruń, Biała Podlaska, Cyców (Lubelskie Province), Gorzów Wielkopolski, Gdynia, Sopot, Gdańsk, and, of course, Lublin.



## Needs and solutions

### The needs of young people

To young people, the most important need was to be noticed and heard, which is related to the sense that young people are treated in a serious way and with the understanding that they are needed and important. The needs are addressed directly to adults who should treat the youth as partners, which is the basis for further cooperation.

*"[editorial note: the needs of young people are] being heard, understanding, action, sense of agency."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

The following statements are some of the answers in the context of "the need to be heard":

- not to be silenced by older people;
- be heard and treated seriously;
- the need to be heard and supported by adults;
- to be heard on the media;
- the right to be heard;
- the possibility to state your opinion and the feeling that it matters;
- the need for specifics and the will to cooperate with youth,
- the respect for youth's rights and views.

*"The need to be heard and to have influence on the development of one's own surroundings."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

The need to be heard is also related to the fact that young people want to be included in community life, to have the possibility to actively participate in various spheres of public life: increased share in social participation and decision-making processes. The role of adults (sometimes as experts) is to help them be inspired and understand the issues to be dealt with, yet they should not impose their vision but share knowledge.

Young people feel the urge to take action, and their efforts should not only be noticed but also rewarded. This is owing to the fact that young people wish to develop themselves, receive knowledge, gain new experience, and at times "move up". They occasionally directly expressed needs related to the fact that young people want to have influence in the changing world, to have a chance to take care of their future.

Young people feel the need to establish new contacts, to integrate and to network ("Integrating as part of making up for the lost pandemic time"), to have a sense of belonging and to exchange experience. It is vital for them to maintain relationships with other people, especially those having similar interests. There is also a need for acceptance, tolerance, and "the shattering of divides". The freedom to express one's opinion should be enhanced.

The needs related to psychological support and education in the sphere of emotional intelligence and soft skills are also significant.





Another need young people wrote about in the survey was to simply have fun. It is important to them that a lot of places for the young are established, where they will have a chance to spend time together.

Solutions in response to the needs of youth:

The young people suggest the introduction of certain solutions in various spheres of education, i.e.:

- project development education (getting to know the benefits of project-based learning, getting to know the tools for developing own projects, support from experienced mentors, a place where they will be able to exchange contacts and ideas, and search for new initiatives),
- communication education: creating one's image, building self-confidence, rhetoric,
- workshops on interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, team work skills, and civic responsibility for students, held by experienced and open-minded instructors,
- workshops/courses on students' rights,
- activation meetings for young people, mentoring programmes,
- workshops and courses combined with networking,
- mental health classes,
- sex education,
- more flexible approach to school obligations or inclusion of project-based measures as a form of learning and covering syllabus topics,
- classes for teachers showing them how and where to direct youth to let them develop their interests, and where young people can search for competitions, subsidies and scholarships,
- teachers' education in the sphere of supporting the implementation of student projects and group work methods.

As regards integration and exchange of experience, and also demonstration of one's needs and ideas ("being heard") the following solutions were suggested:

- conducting research,
- organisation of events, e.g. such as the Summit,
- meetings with adults,
- open debates,
- networking events focused on working out solutions to individual problems specified by young people,
- inviting young people to discussions and listening to their needs,
- support in civic initiatives,
- youth festivals,
- creating space for dialogue,
- cooperation with NGOs, Youth Councils,
- amendment to the Act on Local Government Entities and adding a provision about the performance of tasks entrusted by Youth Councils,
- thematic days,



- the possibility to vote for 16-year-old persons,
- providing young people with time on television, in films, social media, in a greater extent than it is currently the case,
- promotion of Youth City Councils, exchange programmes and the ideas of the young people,
- competitions honouring and rewarding outstanding local young activists,
- youth support groups,
- young people's engagement in local and national politics,
- participatory /students' budget in every school financed by the City Office and schools,
- scholarships for engaged students who take part in numerous important initiatives, sometimes at the expense of school obligations,
- events organised by young people for the youth, and subsidies for such events.

*"The engagement of adults in supporting the young, so that young activists are not treated as "ornaments in photographs" or "kids that know nothing and have no experience (although it is often the case that being 18/19 years old, we have more experience than a 50-year-old man whose only experience is membership in the City Council ;)) I believe that authorities that cooperate with youth and young people should talk to city authorities that are not open to young people."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

Another solution in the sphere of fulfilling young people's needs is to create places that are dedicated specifically to them (the establishment of a youth centre, club cafés for young people), where they can develop their passions and have a support group.

In addition, it is vital to introduce solutions related to psychological support:

- the increase in the number of safe places in Poland,
- reviews of psychologists' work, affecting the employment of those who do not perform their duties well or providing additional training to them,
- free psychological counselling,
- launching free and anonymous conversations with a psychologist via, e.g., Messenger.

Free and more effective public transport is also seen as a solution responding to the needs of young people.

### Ideas for joint actions with foreign youth

In the survey, the respondents were asked to describe their ideas for joint activities with foreign youth, e.g., from Ukraine. According to the young people, it is vital to take integrative actions which are also conducted in the form of entertainment. It is also crucial to get to know each other, others' needs, values, culture and language. To this end, it is necessary to provide places where the young can spend time together or undertake a number of actions and, for example, create the International Dialogue Centre.



Suggested integrative actions featuring youth from other countries:

- joint trips,
- cinema,
- joint games, e.g., board games,
- open air games,
- flunkyball - a team game,
- organisation of family evenings,
- joint karaoke,
- playing with children,
- joint workshops, e.g., handicraft classes,
- integration workshops,
- joint integration and inter-school activities,
- inclusive cultural events, notices in two languages,
- interpretation of events into Ukrainian,
- youth exchange,
- cooperation with them and their engagement in joint activities,
- assignment of "mentors",
- support in integration with local community,
- cooperation between youth councils, and other organisations from various countries,
- introduction of foreign nationals in the Youth Council system,
- inviting delegations of persons from Ukraine from Lublin-based schools,
- coherent information bases.

Suggested activities related to getting to know others' cultures and value systems:

- Oxford style debates,
- Ukrainian Days at schools,
- language integration, organisation of language courses,
- meetings allowing the exchange of experience, the creation of various fora,
- support in various forms of participation,
- exploration of cultures, an informational campaign about the properties of Polish and Ukrainian culture,
- a meeting aimed at setting shared goals,
- organising joint activist campaigns,
- challenging stereotypes about foreigners,
- participation in joint campaigns and charity actions for persons from other countries, e.g. donations of food and other products,
- an open space on cultural differences, youth's needs and the conditions in place in a given area, depending on the background.

*"One of the actions I found interesting was the "get-together evening" during which people from Poland could talk about the culture of various regions, while Ukrainians could speak about the situation in their country and whether there are any differences between various parts of the country, etc."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*



*"We prepared joint classes where students could learn foreign languages from one another in simple situations."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

## The evaluation of the #1 Let's Get to Know Each Other in Lublin - Young Activists' Summit from the participants' point of view

### Summit contents

In the evaluation questionnaire, the Summit participants could indicate what they had found most interesting during the event, in an answer to an open-ended question. According to the answers, the most popular views concerned workshops (34 answers), followed by integration in general (18), networking (12), as well as discussion panels and the possibility to meet interesting people (11 answers each). Some respondents listed several categories in their answers. Based on all the answers, it can be concluded that the participants appreciated both the substantive contents (workshops and panels) and the relationship-building part – meeting interesting people, integration and building new contacts.

*"Interesting people, well conducted workshops and an excellent evening networking event."*

*"The possibility to listen to experienced people about their thoughts and advice for us."*

*Statements from the questionnaire*

It was stressed that Summit participants were inspiring and the entire event allowed the exchange of experience.

*"Most of all the workshops that were an opportunity to meet a lot of people willing to engage."*

*"The possibility to exchange experience with other activists, especially those engaged in Youth City Councils."*

*Statements from the questionnaire*

In addition to the elements listed above, in a response to the most interesting Summit elements, the respondents also mentioned good food, great fun, and integration games. There was also an opinion about vital information about young people's mental health.



## Experience derived from the Summit

In the survey, the Summit participants was asked about what they had experienced during the event. Nearly all the respondents noted that they had made new friend (96.2%) and that they had had a good time (92.4%). 72.2% Summit participants stated that they had learnt something new, and 58.2% had found new inspiration. Nearly a half of the respondents noted that they had got to know the city of Lublin (48.1%) and slightly over a half (51.9%) reported that they had learnt about the European Youth Capital 2023. Moreover, the participants added that they had learnt numerous useful and interesting things thanks to group work.

## Feedback from the participants regarding the course of the Summit

In the questionnaire, young people listed things that could supplement the Summit, and what elements could be added in future events. The answers regarded both content-related and organisational matters and the Summit agenda. They can serve as vital guidelines to plan future events.

The following are the respondents' opinions, divided by thematic categories:

### A. Integration

The participants who completed the evaluation questionnaire point to several areas for improvement in this category: it was stated that integration should have been more planned and organised, and it could have taken place on the first day, before and between panels, while as regards the evening integration, it was noted that it could have lasted longer and could have been organised in a bigger venue. There was also a suggestion to use chappelloise dance during integration events, and a guided tour of the city as part of integration. Some respondents noted that there should have been much more integration and networking, that a separate day should have been planned for such events.

### B. The workshop

Suggestions were made that the workshops had been too long, and they should have been held in shorter blocks distributed over longed time spans, or shorter and more versatile and numerous workshops should have been organised. Another proposal consisted in the alternating arrangement of workshops and panels, instead of a day devoted to panels and another day dedicated to workshops. It was noted that an integration activity should also have been performed at the beginning of group work as part of the workshops, and the workshops should have been more targeted and tool-oriented (e.g. basics of Design Thinking methodology). There was also one opinion about the workshop entitled "Tutorial on how to take care of your and others' psyche", indicating that: *"[editorial note: it would have been better to plan] psychology lectures on how to help oneself and others instead of a whole-day project and an hour-long presentation."* Another person made a proposition that a part of the workshops could have been planned for persons who were more advanced in community work and activism. Suggestions were made about the need to apply more innovative forms



of workshops (without any specific descriptions) and to plan a more extensive participation of experts: *"workshops beginning with a conversation with an expert on a given subject-matter, who would provide feedback on the solutions that were developed during discussions."*

### C. The agenda

As regards the Summit agenda, the need for greater dynamics and diversity was noted, along with taking into account space for discussions, instead of using only the forms of panels or workshops, and intermingling these forms. There was a suggestion to include more contents directly related to various forms of activism, case studies of campaigns and improvement in this respect. One of the respondents suggested that theoretical contents from the panel should be reflected in the workshops: *"Everyone should have practical classes on each theoretical issue, as a supplementing activity."* Some participants noted that the Summit as a whole should last longer, while at the same time there were respondents who thought that it should last one day. Mixed opinions were expressed particularly about the first day of the Summit and discussion panels, as some respondents noted that they had been too monotonous, lacking space for discussion between participants and for integration activities or workshops, and that the conversations of panellists had been tiring: *"Discussions were a bit too long, and although they were very interesting, it was difficult to keep focused on them."* On the other hand, there were views according to which there should have been more panels (and guests), and several panels should have been organised simultaneously, so that participant could choose one of them. It was pointed out that the agenda should have provided more space for free statements and discussions.

### D. Technical and organisational issues

In this respect, the most significant issue reported was the need to start the activities later (for example, at 10:00 a.m.) to allow longer sleep. There were also suggestions concerning better organisation before the event: registration, more efficient e-mail information flow, provision of information about the topics of workshops, the panellists and workshop instructors earlier. Free public transport for Summit participants was praised. One of the participants suggested sending a questionnaire about participants' needs before the event, as the results could form the basis for the workshop proposal.

In addition to the aforementioned information about room for potential changes and improvements, there were also views that the Summit was organised in a very good or even perfect form.

In the last point of the questionnaire, the Summit participants could provide additional information. In a large extent they included thank-you notes and expressions of kindness to the organisers' team from Lublin, to volunteers and all those who attended the event.



*"Thank you for the chance to take part in this Summit, it is great experience to me. In fact, I was planning to resign from my work as an activist due to shortage of time, but I guess I cannot give up."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

*"The Summit was really great, so thank you for the excellent atmosphere."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

*"I have not attended such a professionally organised event for a long time."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

The atmosphere of the event, the hotel, workshops and panel rooms, breakfast, and integration events were appreciated, yet at the same time some areas for improvement were indicated: logistics during lunch, delayed information about accommodation, integration. The need to advertise such events more extensively was also noted.

*"The hotel was high quality, and the costs were covered in full, well arranged time frames (except delays); things for improvement: more engaging integration (and a bit longer, as regards the official integration)."*

*A statement from the questionnaire*

The need to provide a quiet place was noted: *"There was no quiet room where we could rest from all the stimuli and calm down, etc."* There was also one suggestion to take care of a more equal gender proportion during the subsequent editions of the Summit. One of the participants suggested that it would be worth implementing a longer project on a similar topic, e.g., summer holiday Erasmus.



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*Photo: A snapshot of Summit participants*