



VOICE

**GIVING YOUNG
PEOPLE A VOICE**

Photovoice Training Resource

Editor: YES Forum

Author(s): Elie Demerseman, Iliana Petsa

Proofreading: Maggie Nazer

Design: 12bis3

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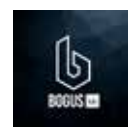
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PREFACE

The current publication is a product of the Erasmus+ funded project “PhotoVoice - Participation & Empowerment in Youth Work” (VOICE), designed and implemented by the YES Forum and partners. The project is focused on using the innovative and creative approach of “photovoice” to empower current and future social and youth workers as well as the young people they work with around Europe. It builds on our successfully implemented project “YourEP” and its follow-up “Europe3E”¹, in which we experimented with the method for the first time. In the “VOICE” project we are further adapting the method to the international youth work context, advocating for its promotion and mainstreaming in international projects and research with young people.

Although local, small-scale projects using photovoice can be found across Europe and worldwide, the “VOICE” project is contributing to a bigger, EU-scale effort to mainstream the method in European social and youth work. We consider that the method is a key tool for the future of the European youth and social work, and we therefore put more emphasis on the dissemination and sustainability of the project’s results and outputs. Thanks to the experiences gained during our “VOICE” project trainings and during previous projects experimenting with peer participatory research methods in youth work, we created the “Photovoice Training Resource” that you are currently reading. This manual also complements the “Creative Video Tutorial”² by placing more emphasis on the the-

oretical background of the method and its incorporation in youth work policy, with a special focus on the European context.

The participants in the “VOICE” project were largely students of social work and young social and youth work professionals, who were supported by experienced staff from our partner youth organizations. The innovative combination of youth organisations, social work students and creative organisations creates an ideal setting for innovative and intercultural practices to emerge and for all participants to develop creative competences and skills. Moreover, by involving further education institutions in this project, VOICE ensures the anchoring of skills shared and competences learned in the project not only within the context of youth work practice, but also in formal youth work education. The sustainability of the results of this project are guaranteed through the production of the current manual, as well as video tutorials, a dedicated webpage and a set of policy recommendations directed towards policy-makers.

1 For more information on these projects: <https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects/>

2 YES Forum, “VOICE - Participation & Empowerment in Youth Work”
Project Website, <https://voice.yes-forum.eu>

INTRODUCTION

“Photovoice”, or “Photos Voicing Our Individual and Collective Experience”, is an innovative creativity-boosting method used to share personal and collective stories supported by photos. It aims to enable people to record and reflect on their community’s strengths and concerns. It also promotes critical dialogue and knowledge production within large and small group discussion of photographs. The method represents a great asset in the effort to achieve further goals, such as research contribution, advocacy and reaching policy-makers in a participatory way. In fact, the method allows everyone, regardless of their skills and knowledge on a given topic, to express themselves by harnessing their own creativity, following a step-by-step process, facilitated by trained professionals.

Photovoice has been used as a tool for participatory needs assessment in different settings, with different target groups and for different reasons. The method was first tested with local women coming from rural China, in order to evaluate the policies developed for them (Burris & Wang, 1997, details in chapter 2). In our case, this manual provides useful insights on the applications of the method in the international youth work context. It is targeted towards youth organizations, youth workers, social and youth work students, and universities, and generally towards all parties interested in incorporating photovoice in their work.

We have therefore developed this guide, which aims to provide readers with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge on the use of the photovoice method

emphasising the international youth work context. Chapter 2 of the handbook builds on the literature review and the theoretical aspects relevant for our topic, following a short historical overview of the method usage in different times and disciplines, with a special focus on projects involving young people. Chapter 3, focuses on advocacy for the use of the photovoice method in international youth work, outlining the benefits that it can offer to youth workers, youth organizations and policy-makers. Moreover, the state of the art for youth work, with an emphasis in European policy, is presented. The last part of the handbook, chapter 4, is a step-by-step guide, which offers a more practical presentation of the photovoice method accompanied by ready-made material to facilitate its use by social and youth workers with their young people in an international context.

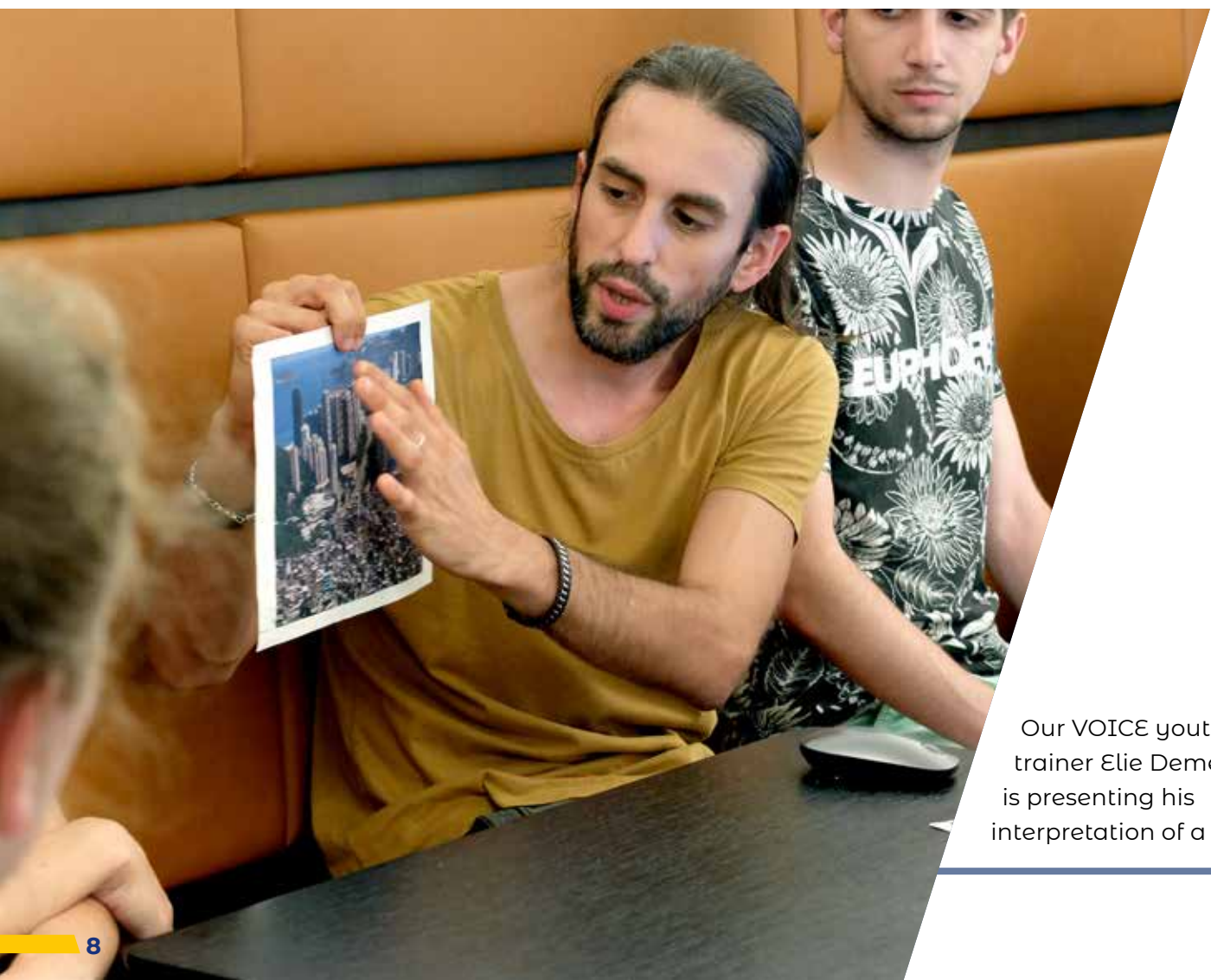


A VOICE participant is taking pictures during the Viareggio training.

CHAPTER 2

THE PHOTOVOICE METHOD: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & PRIOR USAGE

Chapter 2 illustrates in more detail the main insights provided by academic literature on the photovoice method. On a theoretical level at first, photovoice is framed starting from the method's conception and first application in rural communities, to its advantages for application on different occasions and with different target groups, with a special focus on youth. Setting the theoretical basis of the method within the current chapter, chapter 4 later focuses on the more concrete, practical approach, presenting the photovoice step-by-step process and complementing it with ready-made material to support its implementation.



Our VOICE youth trainer Elie Demerseman is presenting his interpretation of a picture.

2.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PHOTOVOICE METHOD

“Photovoice” stands for “Photos Voicing Our Individual and Collective Experience”. The photovoice method is an arts-based, qualitative research method with participatory features (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008), which has been tested in several contexts in the past decades. Through the mainstreaming of smart phones equipped with mobile cameras, photovoice is becoming an increasingly accessible method which nurtures participants’ power to identify and capture their own sense of reality in their communities.

Photovoice usually has three main objectives:

- a) To make voices heard and to enable participants to raise awareness on the issues they face, to advocate for their rights and to exchange information
- b) To engage participants in critical dialogue, to help them gain confidence in their capabilities and their role in society as agents of change.
- c) To reach policymakers and influence political decisions by raising awareness on specific issues.

It is practically a diagnostic **tool for communities** which enables people to bring to the surface issues that are likely to be overlooked and neglected by external to the community individuals and groups. Additionally, visual techniques can provide a means to **self-expression** and can open a window into the photographer’s immediate environment, feelings and perceptions of self (Hubbard, 1994). Hence, photography allows participants’ **voices to be heard**, first **visually**, and then through **oral** interpretations of their photographs. Thus, **narrating photographs** has been shown to promote self-reflection and self-understanding in one’s reality and other people’s lives (qtd. in Bromfield & Capous Desyllas, 2017).

The VOICE participants are collating their pictures during the Vienna training.



2.2.

ORIGINS OF THE TERM “PHOTOVOICE”

The term “**photovoice**” was developed drawing from three sources, as described in Wang and Burris (1997):

-
- a) the theoretical literature on education for critical consciousness, feminist theory, and documentary photography;
 - b) the efforts of community photographers and participatory educators to challenge assumptions about representation and documentary authorship and
 - c) [our] experience articulating and applying the process in the Ford Foundation-supported Yunnan Women’s Reproductive Health and Development Program” (p.370).

The aforementioned sources are vital for our discussion, as they all have been contributing a distinctive characteristic to the photovoice method. Freire has been an advocate of “critical pedagogy”, an educational approach that challenges the traditional roles of both teachers and learners. Through this method, he rejects passive learning and focuses on actively involving learners in the creation of knowledge. Freire explains that dialogue between “oppressed” voices is a means to bring together common concerns, raise them to a point that make people question their own reality and equip them to bring change upon their lives (Freire, 1970). A tool he used to in-

itiate dialogue between the learners was the visual image in the form of drawings and photographs (Freire, 1973).

The feminist theory and practice bring in the discussion the element of inclusion of seldom heard voices. Initially focused on the women’s voices falling under biased criticism, it extends to any sort of bias on the participatory research (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Documentary photography is as said: “the things to be said in the language of pictures” (Stryker qtd. in Burris & Wang, 1997). Photographers have been documenting their own perception of reality for years. There have been efforts to involve different populations to use the the cameras to reflect on their reality by using, however, the angle of the photographer and capturing what they want to see. In an effort to challenge the directorial role of the photographer, several photographers and educators managed to involve specific population groups, of different age and backgrounds, in taking photographs that express their own angle and which are to be used in order to reach policy-makers in their communities (qtd. in Burris & Wang, 1997).

The VOICE participants are brainstorming on research questions and common themes.

2.3. APPLICATIONS OF THE PHOTOVOICE METHOD

2.3.1. Photovoice and Research

Qualitative research has nowadays expanded to include arts-informed methods, so as to portray voices, stories and experiences that are traditionally silenced or marginalized in the usual textual data collection and analysis methods (Knowles & Cole, 2008). The incorporation of arts in research leaves a margin for creative expression of individual and collective experience through the use of a variety of genres: literary techniques (e.g. fiction, autoethnography), performance (e.g. dance, theatre), visual arts (e.g. painting, photographs, collage), new media (e.g. video, blogs), etc. This type of research employs diverse ways of knowing and experiencing the world (Finley, 2011). Visual arts, and the photovoice method in particular, bring a new perspective in terms of representation and interpretation of data.

As a participatory peer research method, photovoice focuses on enabling participation and action through a “reflective cycle, whereby participants collect and analyse data, then determine what action should follow” (Baum et al, 2006, p. 854). The method is community-based, flexible and can serve different purposes (community mobilisation, needs assessment, process and outcome evaluation from a participatory perspective) (Catalani & Minkler 2010; Wang & Burris 1997). Due to the active role played by the participants during the whole process, the traditional relationship between the researcher and the participants is challenged; instead the participants become researchers themselves .



2.3.2. Why Photovoice?

The overriding question is why photovoice should be considered as an effective research method, and eventually be selected among the variety of qualitative methods available. According to Wang & Burris (1997), the use of the photovoice method is intended to serve the purpose of bringing a community's needs in the spotlight through a number of distinctive contributions:

- a)** It extracts knowledge originating from a vital source of expertise, which is not affected or directed by the researchers needs.
- b)** It utilizes a powerful means of communication, the visual image, which is more powerful than words.
- c)** It is accessible to all, as long as they can use a camera, as it does not presume the ability to read or write.
- d)** It facilitates the sampling of various social and behavioural settings a researcher may have not chosen themselves.
- e)** The use of cameras may increase participants' motivation, pride and sense of ownership over their photographs.
- f)** It reaffirms and redefines the needs of a given society.
- g)** It brings the ideas of multiple members of the society into the discussion.
- h)** It provides immediate and tangible benefits to the participants and their communities.
- i)** It brings both needs and assets to the surface.
- j)** It stimulates social action.

Undoubtedly, like all methods, photovoice may encounter some limitations. Most importantly, with participants being in charge of the photographs they shoot, they will inevitably prioritize shooting pictures that would mostly make sense for them and their communities. Choosing to show a picture while choosing to "conceal" another one proves that this selection is based on personal judgement and, therefore, produces a subjective result. However, as giving people the means to express how they conceive their reality is the aim of the whole process, subjectivity is not necessarily negative. Besides, this is a common limitation, as all methodologies are designed, implemented and evaluated by human beings, and thereby subject to their current beliefs, preferences, and perceptions (e.g. whether a question is chosen to be inserted in a survey questionnaire or not).

2.3.3. Photovoice Method Application

Researchers have used photovoice with various population groups, in different settings and in a variety of fields, including anthropology, social work, sociology, education, and nursing (Dyches, Cichella, Olsen, & Mandelco, 2004). It is a tool mainly used in societies from which outsiders do not have a clear picture. Since the method's development, and up to now, researchers have employed participatory research designs to provide tailored solutions to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and to em-

power them by giving them a voice (Fleming et al., 2009; Murray, 2006).

Initially, Burris and Wang utilised the photovoice method for participatory needs assessment. In their study local women from villages in Yunnan (China) were selected as participants because their population group was facing educational obstacles and socio-political exclusion. The local women were trained in photography, and were asked to select the photographs that better described their community's needs, to discuss them in groups, and to identify the overarching issues, themes or theories (1997). This application of photovoice aimed to correct possible faulty assumptions that could lead to inappropriate interventions within the community of interest, and stemmed from the understanding that policies and programmes designed by outsiders in order to address internal issues, may not overlap with the needs considered crucial by the population itself. In

this case the method was found effective as a “tool to redress the inadequate theory on which programs may be based” (Burris & Wang, 1997).

Using photographs as a voice for social change has been tracked in literature with regards to various marginalised populations such as older adults (Killion & Wang, 2000), homeless groups (Morrell, 2007; Killion & Wang, 2000), adults with learning disabilities (Booth & Booth, 2003), immigrant adolescents (Streng et al., 2004), persons living with HIV/AIDS (Rhodes et al, 2007), economically and ethnically diverse communities (Wang & Pies, 2004).

Since its birth, the photovoice method has spread beyond participatory research and contributed to give a voice to marginalized populations in diverse ways (in advocacy and other campaigns) as highlighted in Chapter 4.

2.3.4. The facilitator's role in Photovoice

In general, the role of the facilitator, is to guide an activity to ensure that it evolves smoothly. An “ideal” facilitator is committed to improve individuals' ability to work together efficiently, to provide the information needed for the activity and ensure that the participants will be able to solve future problems, without being dependent on the facilitator's help (Schwartz, 1994). In most cases the role of the facilitator is neutral. In photovoice, the facilitator is expected to have adequate knowledge of photography, knowledge of the political/ social reality he or she is positioned in, as well as knowledge on community-based work. Supportiveness and respect to different personal aesthetics and photography styles are also significant (Burris & Wang, 1997).

Similarly, when the facilitator is involved in research and/or projects with youth, who in most cases lack experience over participation in the political sphere and the decision making-process, both a structured educational approach and a based-on trust relationship shall be sought.

Chapter 4, when addressing the step-by-step process on which photovoice relies, raises attention on the main facilitation tips a new photovoice facilitator should be aware of to effectively implement the method.

2.4.

PHOTOVOICE METHOD APPLICATION WITH YOUNG POPULATIONS

Photovoice has been frequently used with children, students and young populations in participatory youth and research projects. They fit adequately in the “marginalized” population groups spectrum, as being part of these age groups most often corresponds to lack of status and power to influence decisions that affect them. To that end, Photovoice has been successfully implemented with young people in different contexts, e.g. in culturally diverse classrooms (Chio & Fandt, 2007), with junior high school students about their school (qtd in Burris & Wang, 1997), with adolescents from multi-ethnic communities in after-school programs (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004), with female social work students in multicultural classrooms (Bromfield & Capous- Dessylas, 2017), etc.

Typically, conducting research following traditional research methods with young participants may be inhibited from several factors such as lack of motivation, low self-esteem and power imbalances between the adult researchers and young people (Lushey & Munro, 2015). Also, children and young people are found to be reluctant to show discord or dissatisfaction during interviews conducted by adult researchers, which means that responses can be non-sincere and, therefore, findings may be biased (Fine & Sandstrom, 1998). The photovoice method and its non-conventional peer research approach, brings more balance in terms of “power” into the relationship between the researcher/educator/youth worker and the participant. The incorporation of art in social work and

education can potentially enhance the experiential dimensions of learning and assist students to generate knowledge (Glover-Graf, 2000).

In the last few years, young people’s views have received more recognition, and thus a considerable effort to involve young people in decision-making and policy development has been made. As policy makers are not regularly provided with diverse input from populations coming from various backgrounds, researchers, social workers and educators have the task to create opportunities for young people to raise their voices.

A number of researchers, social workers and educators have claimed that using photovoice in youth projects has a great potential as it gives young participants the tools and skills to exercise an active role in their society. While making use of the skills they acquired, shooting their own photographs and guiding the research/project creates a feeling of pride, increases self-esteem and, especially for children and adolescents, assists their identity formation, further adding to their empowerment (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). It is a process which allows participants to “explore awareness of personal and professional self”, and also awareness over important social issues, with the possibility to generate ideas and action for social change (Bromfield & Capous- Dessylas, 2017, p. 509)

Two topics, however, appear to pose some issues during the implementation of the photovoice projects. First of all, as already discussed in section 3.2., young people often overlook the most “concerning” aspects a researcher/social worker/educator would expect to see. Another challenge may be the possibility of creating unattainable expectations about what young people are

able to do in terms of influencing policy. As argued by Strack et al., it is of utmost importance that the researcher/educator plans the process of dissemination of young people’s research findings as early as possible, in order to make sure that interested parties will show up and listen (2004).

2.5. METHOD APPLICATIONS IN THE YES FORUM

In the “Europe3E” project YES Forum and its partners experimented for the first time with the photovoice method with young people coming from various backgrounds, including a majority of “underprivileged youth” or, as the Erasmus+ programme calls them, “young people with fewer opportunities”. The young participants were invited to receive photography training, learn more about EU politics, use their cameras in order to respond to a research question, discuss altogether their results and extract themes, and finally organise an exhibition so as to disseminate their photographs and their messages to a larger public. By using the photovoice method the young participants sustained high motivation and creativity throughout the research process, while bringing issues of concern for their generation to the surface.

Overall, the use of photovoice was a great asset in the context of the YES Forum social work: it provided a framework allowing young people facing diverse obstacles to participate in the EU Civil Dialogue, and

to express their own personal messages towards the EU institutions. Importantly, the photovoice method supported them in turning their individual experiences and standpoints into a shared, collective narrative supported by powerful visual storytelling.

Drawing on our experience from this successful photovoice method implementation, we deem that the method should be largely used in social & youth work. Our work during the VOICE project is translated into a step by step, well-structured training manual to be used by youth workers, especially those involved in international youth work.

PHOTOVOICE AND THE EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK POLICY

3.1. PHOTOVOICE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL & YOUTH WORK CONTEXT

Firstly, we should clarify that when talking about youth work, we are covering any activity “of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually” (Council of Europe, n.d.). Such initiatives are based on non-formal and informal learning processes and are delivered by youth workers, either voluntarily or under employment contracts. Through youth work young people are involved in activities that facilitate their active participation and engagement, their enhanced inclusion in their communities and their involvement in decision-making.

Photovoice offers numerous benefits for research, as well as the conduct of activities for active engagement and participation involving the young population. Social and youth workers can greatly benefit from the method. As it is flexible and adaptable to different contexts, photovoice is likely to keep young participants motivated and active throughout the whole process and build bridges with youth for a better recognition of their concerns. The young people, on the other hand, may enjoy this method of collective production of knowledge, express their thoughts freely and raise

important questions that will further reinforce their critical thinking.

As this manual shall be used as a guide for social and youth workers involved in international youth work, it is important to illustrate how the photovoice method can be incorporated in international cooperation youth projects. The term “international youth work” describes the youth work involving youth workers and young participants coming from various national backgrounds. As explained by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, in the European cooperation projects context the concept “international youth work” stands for: “Work ... done together with international colleagues, often using a foreign language as a lingua franca, in a value-driven context, ..., mainly in a residential setting, ..., and with a link to the wider political context (European or global)” (n.d.). Whether it is used in European cooperation or mobility projects, the method can be adapted accordingly to accommodate the needs of each activity. Considering that the particular manual is a result of a European Cooperation project, the emphasis is mainly given to the specific context.

Learn more

We often see the terms “European Union (EU)” and “Europe” being used interchangeably. However, these two words express two different things. The term “Europe” is used to describe the geographical continent. On the other hand, the term “European Union” describes the political union created by a number of countries located in Europe. Thus, several European countries are not part of the European Union.

For more information on the EU’s member-states, structure and competencies, visit the website: https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en

In the above-described context young people coming from different social, political and national backgrounds are brought together to exchange opinions and reflect on topics that are important for them and for their future in Europe and beyond, with facilitation offered by social and youth workers. The peer participatory research and the use of arts through the photovoice method can effectively and enjoyably facilitate such international and intercultural dialogue among them. Photovoice, therefore, could be used to create an alternative “lingua franca” for young people to communicate and connect by narrowing down linguistic obstacles within intercultural groups, and engaging them in meaningful exchanges. Through the use of photovoice participants are enabled to express themselves, individually and in groups, on the topics of interest, while critically reflecting on and working towards possible solutions to their concerns. While sharing their views on Europe and the EU, they are likely to expose preconceived ideas and identify stereotypes they have possibly adopted. To that end young people can be empowered to go beyond what they think they know, and embrace a wider array of voices coming from the personal stories and experiences of the individuals involved in the process.

As previously stated, the photovoice method is flexible and adaptable to different contexts, effectively providing ground for group discussions on various possible topics, including ones that may be complex, distant, and frequently misunderstood such as social inclusion within Europe and the European Union. To that end it is critical to highlight its efficiency and applicability in social work involving marginalised groups. A huge benefit of the method is that it generates inclusion of young people facing challenges which lead to their social, political or economic exclusion inside their communities within the different European countries.

Last but not least, the method gives youth workers and practitioners the opportunity to broaden their knowledge concerning new methods and tools to raise young people’s political awareness and knowledge. Once social and youth workers learn “how to photovoice” practically, they are able to adapt accordingly and apply it in a peer-learning context with their local youth, as well.

3.2.

ADVOCATING FOR PHOTOVOICE SUPPORT AND PROMOTION IN EUROPE

3.2.1. Photovoice for Youth Participation in the European Context

The EU aims to maintain a peaceful union of people who share the same values and work towards achieving common goals. Those predefined goals are constantly fine-tuned in order to capture the needs of the people of this union. Thus, for the European Union construct to work efficiently and create solutions to real problems of everyday people, constant input is necessary. As history has shown, political regimes need input legitimization from their citizens, especially in times of crises such as political, social, economic or healthcare emergencies.

In the EU context input legitimization is mainly provided through civil society's feedback to the institutions. Direct and indirect lobbying towards the institutions, or in other words advocacy activities with the intention of influencing decisions made at all policy levels, guarantee a certain level of access to the policy-making process. Civil society groups represent, advocate and act as a communication channel for specific groups of the population, giving them indirectly the opportunity to be part of this process. In our case civil society groups representing young people in Europe may bring their concerns in the political arena through several routes with open dialogues, stakeholders' meetings, campaigns, policy papers and publications among the most frequent means employed. Even when these routes provide

rich material to policy makers, they are still frequently distanced from the reality of marginalised youth.

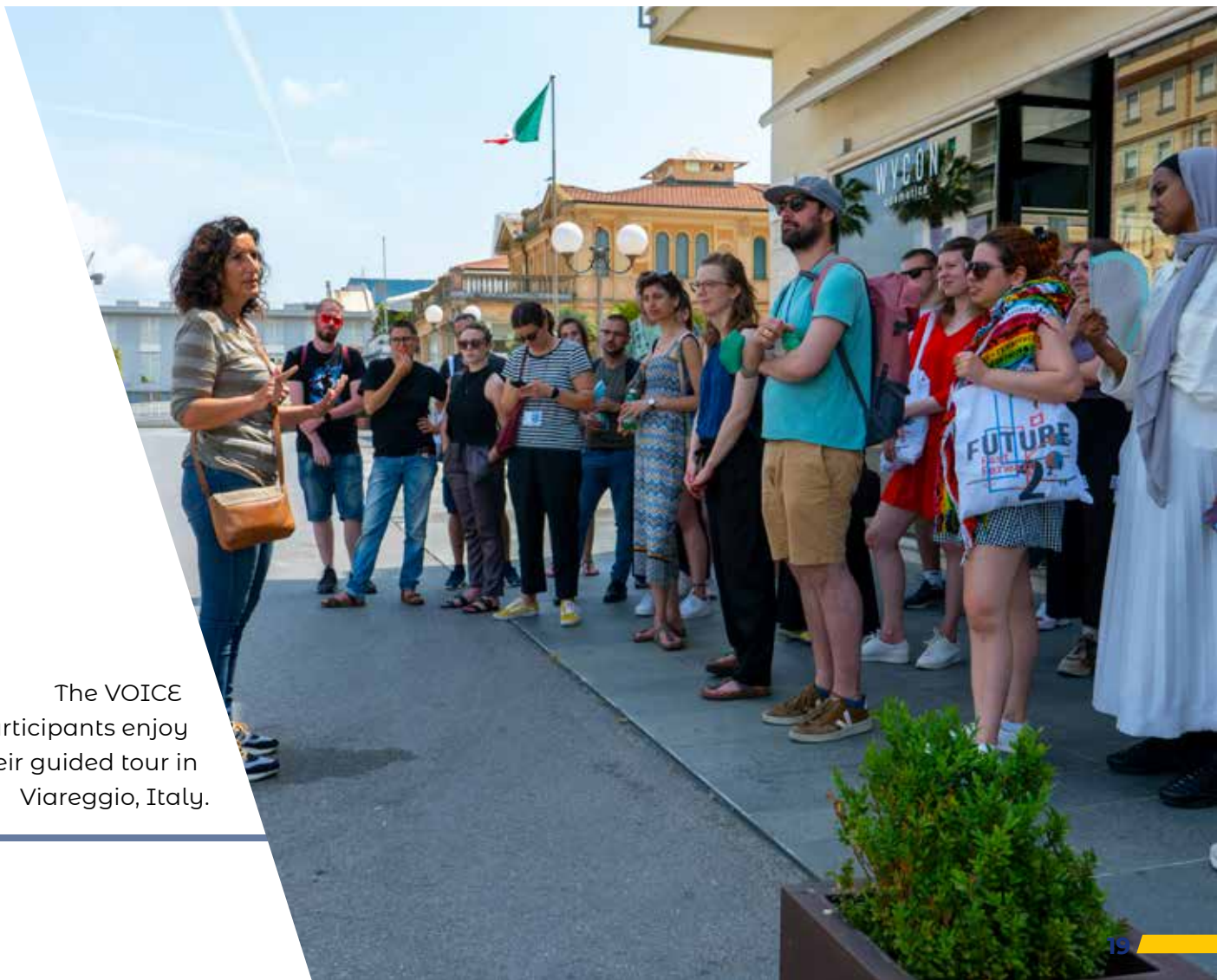
In the last years the EU has been trying to listen more carefully to what youth has to say - either indirectly, as described above, or directly, by meeting with young people themselves. Initiatives like the "European Youth Dialogue", the "Conference on the Future of Europe", the "European Youth Event", and other similar initiatives, bring together young people, youth stakeholders and policy-makers for meaningful exchanges, in order to shape the future together. Building on young people's feedback, institutions strive to accommodate their ideas into youth policy.

Yet again parts of the population will not be included in this process, due to lack of access to information, mobility, linguistic competences, etc. While, for example, young students in higher education institutions who have already experienced an Erasmus+ exchange are the usual audience participating in the EU civil dialogue initiatives, those "other" young people whose voices are still not heard remain difficult to reach.

Organizations working with and for young people in order to enhance their social inclusion share a common goal and interest: to make the voices of as many young

people heard. Following the general direction of the EU towards activating and empowering young people to become active citizens and agents of change in their communities (Commission, 2018), youth organisations need to assume the role of providing young people from various backgrounds with non-formal education opportunities that will further cultivate their sense of participation and citizenship, their critical thinking and creativity. Due to the nature of the funding programmes themselves under which these activities are financed and promoted (Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, etc.), and thanks to the youth organisations' immediate contact with young people coming from various backgrounds, creative ways for a larger inclusion in participation and active citizenship is expected.

Considering the crucial role played by the civil society organisations, as well as youth workers, regarding the inclusion of young people from various backgrounds in their activities, it is important to ensure that the methods employed to maximise their voices are designed accordingly to fit the target group. As explained in 3.1., the flexibility of the photovoice method minimises linguistic barriers and incorporates both the individual and the collective experiences of young people from around Europe (and beyond). To that end, the implementation of the method can guarantee larger inclusion, and therefore a broader range of young people benefitting from each project/ activity.



The VOICE participants enjoy their guided tour in Viareggio, Italy.

To sum up, both entities designing international activities for young people's active participation and citizenship, and policy makers should adopt and recognize photovoice as a trustworthy method as it can:

- Bring marginalised youth's voices into the policy-making discussion, ensuring better targeted policy making.
- Demonstrate vividly and without prejudice the issues young people face in their local, mainly, but also national, European and international contexts.
- Prove that no matter their social, economic and political background, youth organisations, youth workers and Europe as a whole are listening, enhancing young people's sense of belonging and European citizenship.
- Bring extra legitimization to the political constructs in place by reaching population cohorts that policy makers would not reach effectively otherwise.
- Efficiently reach and creatively engage various young target groups: from teenagers, to tertiary education students to NEETs³.
- Encourage further participation in the social and political life, proving that voicing opinions and experiences cannot be a benefit of a few.
- Contribute to greater impact through attractive visual story-telling, and reaching multiple population groups, besides the ones directly involved already.

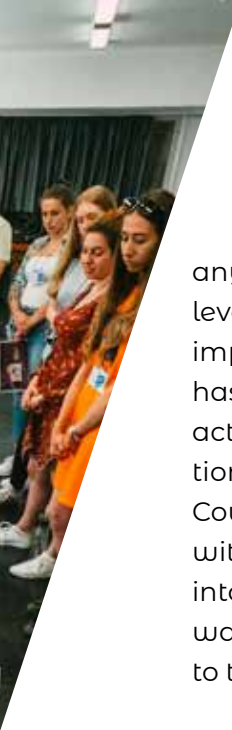
³ "NEETs" stands for "not in employment, education or training". For more information:

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/neets>



3.2.2. The Photovoice method in the 21st century Youth Work

Youth work is conducted by a diverse range of institutions, organisations and people, either individually or in teams. Admittedly, some countries may have longer traditions of professional youth work compared to others, with qualified staff and a structured national and local youth work approach, or long-established voluntary youth work structures (Council of Europe, n.d.). Some countries may have established youth work as part of their social welfare provision, while others may not recognise youth work as a "profession", but treat it as volunteering (Council of Europe, n.d.). In



any case, at the European policy-making level the recognition of youth work and the improvement of its conditions by countries has been supported through numerous activities, recommendations and conventions. Both the European Union and the Council of Europe provide member states with recommendations to be incorporated into their national youth work policies, always on a voluntary basis, and according to their pre-existing national rules in place.

The Council of Europe and the European Union through its SALTO-YOUTH⁴ resource centres have been doing an important job for youth work and youth workers throughout the past years. As youth is undoubtedly a priority group for the future of Europe, several efforts have been made to professionalise the youth work sector. Recognizing that youth work is an area requiring high professional competences, the SALTO-YOUTH supports and works towards capacity building for youth workers and trainers. More specifically, through the “European Training Strategy”, the EU supports the competence development of youth workers to work internationally and to support young people via learning mobility projects (SALTO, n.d.). In this context, the “Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally” was developed as a tool to be adapted according to the specific realities and target groups. In general, it is addressed to youth workers, educational staff and trainers who organise international mobility projects and organisations and institutions that develop training strategies for youth workers.

Taking a close look at this competence model, it is clear that it is a highly adjustable model based on recommendations,

in which key concepts that have already been explored and associated with the “photovoice” method are included. For example, we may find competences connected to guaranteeing diversity in participation, adjustment of learning methods to target groups, using non-verbal communication, etc. Nonetheless, the “Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally” lacks emphasis on the importance of arts and creative expression in youth work, leaving outside-the-box methods such as photovoice.

Considering the numerous benefits of the photovoice method in youth work, policy-makers should take some further steps into mainstreaming the use of more creative, participatory methods in the international youth work context. Even if “photovoice” is only a strand of a larger category of arts-based, peer participatory research methods, policy-makers, first at the EU level, and then through recommendations in member states, can make a formal reference to this type of methods in their existing documents. Possibly adopting a more welcoming attitude towards artistic means of expression, built outside the traditional key-words based policy papers, would further inspire more thorough research and practical experimentation with the method by a larger scope of interested parties. Especially for social and youth workers and organisations experimenting with innovative and creative youth work approaches, it would be vital to have access to more resources provided by policymakers on the topic through the usual EU platforms (e.g. SALTO, European Youth platform, etc).

4 For more information on SALTO-YOUTH work and structure : <https://www.salto-youth.net/about/>


HOW TO USE PHOTOVOICE – STEP-BY-STEP METHODOLOGY AND TOOLBOX

While the previous chapters focused on the theoretical background supporting its use in diverse settings and highlighted the opportunity it represents in the framework of EU youth policies, chapter 4 will now address the most practical needs of newcomers into the world of photovoice.

We will start with a look at the concrete purposes the method can serve, which stakeholders can benefit from using this method, and what “pros and cons” must be considered before deciding on utilising photovoice.

The following section will provide a general overview of the step-by-step method, stressing upon the concrete unfolding of a photovoice exercise.

Finally, this overview will introduce the last but most practical section, taking a closer look at each step, and highlighting the key aspects a photovoice facilitator should consider when planning a photovoice activity. In this section the new “photovoicer” will be equipped to handle this powerful tool by accessing outlines of activities accompanied by ready-made material.



The VOICE participants
enjoy their guided tour
in Viareggio, Italy.

4.1.

WHAT AND WHO IS IT FOR?

To understand what makes photovoice an efficient answer to many stakeholders' difficulties when it comes to inclusion, it is important to remember its main characteristics. As a community-based, participatory, qualitative research method combining photography with grassroots social action, photovoice relies on the following key features:

- **Visually-based:** it uses photography as an accessible tool and rich visual support for the creation of collective meaning;
- **Participatory:** its participants are not passively answering questions but actively co-constructing all aspects of a photovoice project (defining a topic, collecting raw data, interpreting it, disseminating it), becoming “co-researchers”;
- **Qualitative Research:** it allows to collect data expressing individual & collective representations and perceptions of reality, providing rich subjective material to co-interpret and turn into more objective results;
- **Social Action:** the resulting knowledge, including impactful visual material and narratives, is used to inform and impact policy-making towards positive social change.



4.1.1. The diverse purposes Photovoice can efficiently serve

As a method of reflection and reporting which facilitates the formulation of collective messages and gets them across by using photographs, photovoice has progressively been used in more and more diverse settings, going far beyond its original purpose as a participatory research method.

Its original features make photovoice especially well-suited for the inclusion of marginalised groups in the public sphere: it is a way to give a voice to communities who usually remain excluded from the political sphere, because political frameworks and policies do not offer them an adapted space to express themselves on issues of common interest.

The VOICE participants are discussing the characteristics of a „good picture“, with the guidelines of our creative partners.

Photovoice is therefore a perfect match for stakeholders pursuing the following objectives:

Participatory qualitative research: the “core mission” of photovoice is to give a key role to marginalised groups in academic research in the social sciences, alleviating the diverse biases brought by non-participatory methods, and putting a strong emphasis on efforts to impact policy-making through the dissemination of the resulting knowledge.

Example: American researchers examined how first-generation, low-income college students make sense of their career development process during their first year at university. Photovoice was employed to collect visual data and accompanying narrative texts providing a rich data set created by students during their transition to college. The authors highlighted how “images as the driving form of expression allowed students for whom the language of academia can feel alien to articulate complex aspects (...)” (Jehangir et al., 2019).



Consultation method: photovoice helps to bring insights into a specific situation, theme or social issue by giving a direct voice to the people who experience them.

Example: The YES Forum itself first applied photovoice to facilitate the self- and collective expression of its member organisations' young people on a topic which very often feels too complex, distant, and misunderstood, Europe and the European Union. Participants answered the very open question "What does Europe mean to you?", providing insight into the lives of marginalised youth in several EU countries, their perceptions of Europe, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the area⁵.

Needs-assessment/Monitoring/Evaluation tool: photovoice is an effective way to allow the beneficiaries of a future public policy or private initiative to identify and communicate their concrete needs without a filter, and/or to assess the changes made by such interventions during or after their implementation.

Example: The creators of the photovoice method themselves first used it as a needs-assessment tool to empower rural women in Southwest China, offering them an accessible way to express their daily work and health realities and to influence policy-making. The photos for instance pushed policymakers into starting child-care services for these women after seeing children playing alone without supervision (Burriss et Wang, 1997).

Advocacy tool: photovoice is also perfectly adapted to help participants to agree on key messages and promote them through attractive visual story-telling, for instance by feeding a Social Media campaign with authentic input.

Example: Photovoice was used as a strategy for empowering students to advocate for changes to a campus smoking policy in the United States, providing "an effective platform for students to successfully advocate for the relocation of ashtrays that were in violation of the policy" (Seitz C. et al., 2012).

Empowerment tool: photovoice can also allow a community to gain insight into its own situation (e.g. strengths & weaknesses, obstacles & opportunities) and solve issues that it faces as a group. While empowerment is very often a "side-product" of the use of photovoice for other purposes, it can also be its main focus!

Example: Social work educators led a classroom project in which they used photovoice as a pedagogical tool to enhance personal and professional self-awareness among female, Muslim, social work students in an intercultural classroom setting located in the Arabian Gulf (Bromfield N. & Capous-Desyllas M., 2017).

⁵ For more information, check the Europe3E (Europe through Young Eyes: Explore, Exchange, Exhibit) project here: <https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects>

4.1.2. Who can benefit from it?

As a result, photovoice is a perfect match for stakeholders pursuing any of the above-mentioned objectives and working towards the inclusion of marginalised communities into the public sphere.

These encompass in particular:

- **Researchers & Students** in the social sciences
- **NGOs in youth & social work**
- **Activists** raising awareness on specific issues (whether formally grouped as NGOs or informal groups)
- **Practitioners** in specific professional fields such as public health (e.g. clinicians aiming at providing adapted solutions to specific situations)
- **Educators**
- **Policy-makers** seeking direct, authentic input from the citizens they serve
- **Community members** aiming at improving their community themselves



4.1.3. Photovoice “Pros & Cons”: Advantages & Disadvantages compared to traditional methods

A question remains: why is photovoice so well-suited to the exact listed purposes and stakeholders in light of the characteristics highlighted in this section’s introduction? Here is a detailed glance at the diverse advantages these features enable in our field!

Advantages to participants themselves:

- **Increased skills & knowledge on photography** and its use for social change
- **Improved critical thinking**
- **Increased collaborative/collective expression skills** (how to collectively define and agree on a message)
- **Increased knowledge of one’s own community** (e.g. strengths & weaknesses, needs, skills & experiences to be shared ...)
- **Improved confidence in participants’ ability to engage in self-advocacy** (raising their voice in other settings)

Advantages to reach the researcher/facilitator’s goals:

- **Adaptable method:** photovoice is easily implementable in diverse settings and timeframes.
- **Accessibility:** photovoice has a low – if any – threshold to participate, as no skills are required at the start, not even in photography. Photography itself, through its visual essence, helps to overcome many obstacles to self-expression by stimulating participants’ reflections without the need to put words on their ideas at first.
- **Suitable for any topic when verbal communication is less adapted:** photovoice helps to address taboo or emotional topics, as well as opinions on abstract concepts and topics. It can be viewed as an “alternate way of knowing”.
- **More relaxed, open bond:** the method helps to involve participants who would feel uncomfortable with or even wary of more formal settings.



- **Engaging, Active, Fun:** as it is more interactive and dynamic than traditional methods, photovoice improves participants' engagement and motivation. Typically, nobody has a passion for writing policy recommendations ... so using photography is a perfect alternative!
- **Visual results:** photovoice provides powerful material for communication, especially if advocacy is involved. Images have more influence than words, as they trigger more direct and emotional reactions.
- **Empowers participants & reduces biases:** as participants are put on an equal footing with the research/facilitator, photovoice reduces the usually problematic "power imbalance" which can result in biased results and lower engagement among participants .

Disadvantages:

Despite its many assets, photovoice is not a "one-size-fits-all" solution! Interested parties should consider the following disadvantages ahead of using the method.

- **Nor for large-scale projects or samples:** photovoice is adapted to small groups, and not initiatives targeting larger groups. Typically, photovoice does not fit in quantitative research, and can complement but not replace a consultation aiming to reach 1000 participants.
- **Time-consuming:** conducting many short interviews in a day makes data collection a lot quicker, while the "ideal" photovoice process involves organising several meetings with participants over some period of time. Moreover, going through a photovoice process itself can be easy and straightforward, but can also involve time-consuming „outreach work“ to involve the desired target group.
- **Not all participants are comfortable with taking pictures with a personal aspect:** while photovoice helps addressing taboo or emotional topics, it is not always a perfect match for 100% of the participants, and sometimes direct one-on-one conversations may lead to deeper results even if requiring more time to build trust.

The VOICE participants are presenting their interpretations of some pictures.

- **User-friendliness of photovoice can lead to its misuse:** in research especially, photovoice may be tempting as a ‘quick-and-easy’ replacement for long-term ethnographic engagement, but does not necessarily lead to results of an equal quality and validity if the research/facilitator does not carefully plan their methodology. In other words: photovoice is not just about taking pictures and talking about them.
- **Validity of findings may be questioned:** photovoice faces the same obstacle as qualitative research in general when it comes to how it could be perceived, but even more so due to the visual and participatory components which contribute to the method’s perception as “less rigorous, too frivolous”.
- **Policy-makers may be cautious about accepting results:** for the same reasons, some “power brokers” targeted by a photovoice project may simply reject its results. “Old-style” politicians may listen more easily to more formal channels, such as formal, written policy recommendations.



4.2. STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS & FACILITATION: GENERAL OVERVIEW



PHOTOVOICE

=

Photos
Voicing Our Individual and
Collective Experience

In addition to adding up to a nice acronym, this straightforward summary of photovoice begs the question: How does one concretely use photos to turn individual experiences into a collective message?

To provide a general understanding of what a “photovoice path” means practically, this section lays down the basic steps the method relies upon to achieve its purpose. It also highlights general principles crucial to keep in mind when planning this pathway in its entirety.

This overview, in turn, allows us to focus on each of the steps in greater detail in the next and final sections.



4.2.1. The essence of a “Photovoice path”

A photovoice project can be broken down into the following main steps:

1. Preparing a Photovoice project
2. Preparing Participants to Photovoice
3. Research Question: Development & Discussion
4. Fieldwork – Taking Photographs
5. Selection Process
6. Dissemination / Photovoice Exhibition

1. Preparing a Photovoice project:

Before reaching out to participants, a researcher/facilitator planning to use photovoice must first consider the specifics of their own context – Does photovoice fit into a broader framework? Is the topic already set as a consequence? Is the timeframe limited by a deadline? – and adapt their general plans accordingly.

2. Preparing Participants to Photovoice:

Before they are invited to express themselves on the selected topic through photographs and group discussions, participants must be prepared. This preparation covers three main aspects:

- Introducing the Photovoice method: How does photovoice work? In what context will these participants' contributions fit it?
- Building trust within the group: The traditional ice-breakers, name-games and other non-formal methods are a must-have to foster team-building, and make sure participants are comfortable with each-other before they start sharing on personal issues!
- Getting familiar with photography: No need to make participants professional photographers and artists. However, introducing key aspects in photography can stimulate their creativity and help them to turn their ideas into compelling visual messages.

3. Research Question – Development & Discussion:

The starting point of a photovoice process begins with the formulation of a “Research Question”.

First, participants are involved in designing the Research Question to ensure that it is relevant to their personal experience and its exact meaning is agreed upon by all participants. If the context “mandates” a specific topic (e.g. photovoice fits in a broader research project), participants



are at the very least involved in choosing its exact wording, to avoid an “outsider” influencing them through the phrasing of the question itself. If the context allows more or even complete freedom in the choice of topic, involving participants in this early stage guarantees that the selected topic and resulting question are meaningful to them and not based on misleading assumptions!

Then participants go through a dedicated session providing them with time and an adapted setting to think of their personal answers to the Research Question. The focus here is on formulating individual answers, i.e. answers expressing every single participant’s views. Participants can however discuss their personal answers in order to stimulate each other’s individual reflections and brainstorm about how to express these answers through photographs.

4. Fieldwork – Taking Photographs:

Participants are prepared and accompanied through the “fieldwork” allowing them to take photos which convey the ideas they have come up with in the previous stage. The researcher/facilitator is mostly in charge of providing them with the right setting to do so, e.g. the time and place providing opportunities to take the pictures participants have planned.

5. Selection Process:

Participants write down “captions” or annotations to accompany their photographs, detailing and making explicit what they want to communicate through them.

They share their individual photos and accompanying stories with the rest of the group, and then discuss the resulting stories and messages: Are there common themes? What is important to the group?

Finally, as a result of these discussions participants select a few photos only, focusing on the ones which most – if not all of – the group can relate with and agree upon. To that end, the final pictures and stories constitute a common answer to the Research Question. In this way the results of photovoice, including both pictures and narratives, express not one individual’s story, but rather a group message.

6. Dissemination / Photovoice Exhibition:

In the end, the participants use their results – the final pick of photos and narratives – to reach out to the “power brokers” who have the means to influence their life. This dissemination phase is a crucial part of all photovoice projects, as it is essential to guarantee its positive social impact: the sharing of thoughts and opinions with decision makers allows to share what is important to participants and advocate for change on the selected topic.

This is usually done through the organisation of a Photovoice Exhibition inviting policy-makers and other stakeholders to meet the participants and discuss their results. However, this dissemination of results can be adjusted to the photovoice project’s context: for instance, the “power brokers” are not necessarily politicians depending on the topic, and a public photo exhibition is not always the best way to engage them!

4.2.2. General Tips

While the next section will draw attention to the important aspects when planning each step of a photovoice project, the following should be carefully considered when designing the general layout of any photovoice process.

Beware the risk of tokenism:

Make participation actually participatory!

“Tokenism” is the practice of making a superficial effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups, only for the sake of appearances. These efforts towards inclusion typically stop at including members of a marginalised community within a project, without giving them that much of a say in its design or results, and without further considering their specific needs. For example, a gender-balanced workplace does not mean women will not face any form of sexual harassment without dedicated policies to tackle the issue.

In the case of photovoice, participants should be involved to the largest possible extent in all of its stages: this includes not only gathering data (i.e. taking pictures and annotating them), but should start with the Research Question development, and go beyond with the interpretation/analysis of the results (i.e. through group discussions singling out emerging trends and themes among photos, detailing and adjusting annotations), as well as their dissemination (i.e. participants should contribute to planning the Photovoice Exhibition and host it themselves).

However, the described steps represent the “ideal photovoice” process, and can be adjusted depending on diverse constraints (e.g. participants’ availability, health condition, potential turnover).

Adapt to your aims:

Using photovoice in the context of academic research, for instance, requires a much more rigorous analysis process than the one implemented if the aim is to empower participants.

Within **an academic research** project the rigour of your analysis process is capital to the validity of your findings. Therefore, you will have to carefully structure this analysis process, record it, and plan a longer process overall (e.g. to identify themes / codify results in a first instance, then use them to check whether they are relevant in a second instance, adjust themes/codes if they appear to be less relevant than expected in a third instance, etc).

When photovoice is used for a purpose other than academic research, the methodology remains important to guarantee stakeholders will not question the representativeness of participants’ results, but expectations are naturally lower than when conducting academic research. Recording your participants’ discussions to back your findings could then prove a smart strategy.

Using photovoice with the “younger youth”:

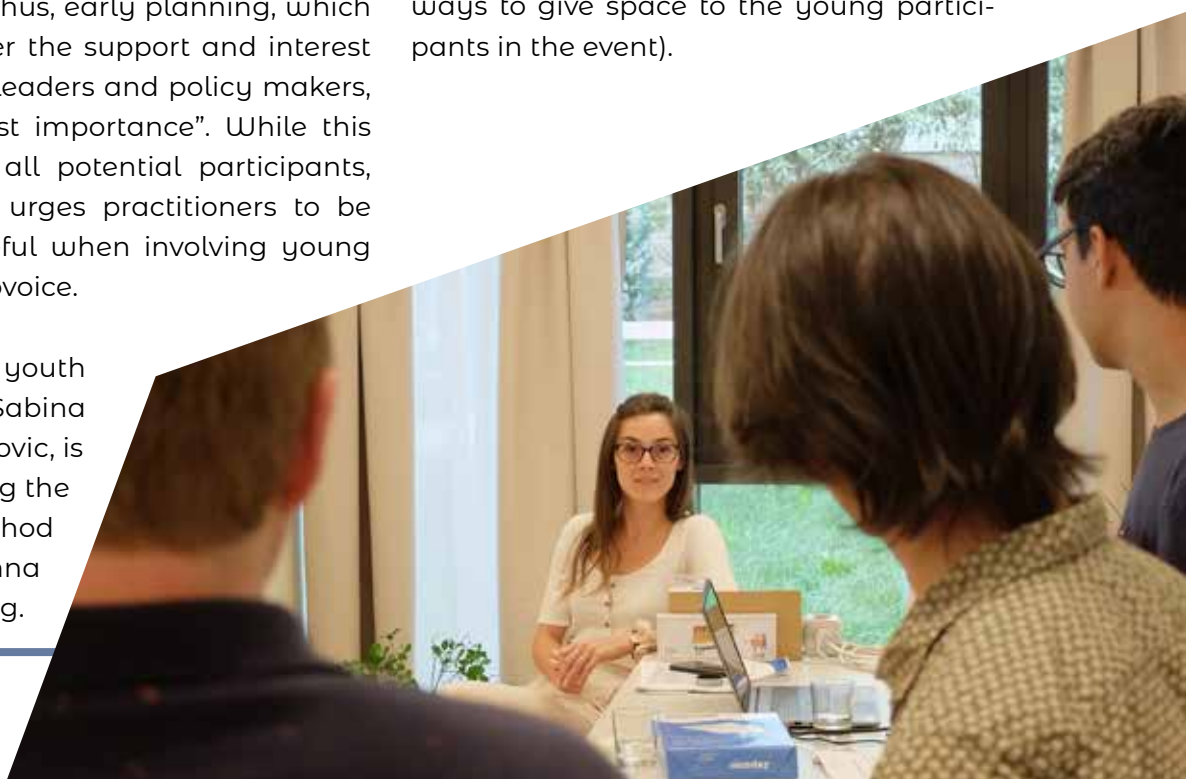
Even as we narrow it down to the usual European Union definition of youth as “people between the ages of 13 and 30”, youth remains a very large and heterogeneous group. Besides the “obvious” specifics such as getting parental consent for their involvement or accompanying them during outdoor fieldwork, using photovoice with young people below 18 years old requires additional precautions in several regards.

Whether they have started their transition to adulthood or not, young people are in a more “vulnerable” position than older generational cohorts as they are in the process of growing up as citizens and forming the perceptions of politics which will determine their future civic engagement – or lack thereof. As highlighted by Strack et al. (2014) “photovoice has the potential to create the negative outcome of raising hopes but failing to inform policy or rally public concern. Such a situation could leave participants feeling more hopeless and unempowered than when they started the program. It is imperative that concerted actions be taken to prevent this negative consequence. Thus, early planning, which strives to garner the support and interest of community leaders and policy makers, is of the utmost importance”. While this holds true for all potential participants, this argument urges practitioners to be especially careful when involving young people in photovoice.

Our youth trainer, Sabina Suta-Islamovic, is introducing the photovoice method in the Vienna training.

It is important to avoid creating too high expectations about what young people are able to achieve in terms of influencing policy. For a truly participatory process photovoice participants should be involved in planning and holding a final dissemination event, typically a Photovoice Exhibition. However, it is important to keep in mind that most youth lack connections to the larger community, and therefore rely on the influence of “connected” adults to target and attract a relevant audience (Strack R. et al., 2004).

Younger participants will, moreover, need additional support in preparing their involvement in such an event: yet, this does not mean that someone should speak instead of them! To that end, a facilitator working with younger participants will need to dedicate more time to the planning of their final photo exhibit, and especially to the preparation of participants themselves (e.g. making them comfortable with public speaking if relevant, training to present a photograph to an “adult outsider”, exploring alternative and adapted ways to give space to the young participants in the event).



4.3.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS & READY-MADE MATERIAL

Building on the general understanding of how a photovoice project unfolds provided in the previous section, this final part focuses on each stage of its step-by-step process.

To make it as easy and straightforward as possible for aspiring photovoice facilitators to implement the method for the first time, each step is detailed as follows:

- **Objectives:** Explanations highlighting the expected outcomes of each step;
- **Facilitation Tips – What to consider:** Remarks drawing attention on what specific factors to consider when planning and facilitating each step, as well as to adapt to one's aims, context and target group;
- **Activities Outlines:** Suggested activities for each step, providing both step-by-step instructions and ready-made material to implement them (e.g. pre-filled PPTs and worksheets).

In relation to the Activities Outlines, please note that:

- **Prerequisite Knowledge:** As this entire guide addresses the needs of academic scholars in the social sciences, as well as youth & social workers interested in using photovoice in their own context, the following pages highlight and detail aspects specific to photovoice, and

provide only summaries in relation to youth & social work. This is done with the assumption that the reader has at least some previous experience and expertise in setting youth/social projects (e.g. recruiting participants, building trust with them, identifying relevant stakeholders).

- **Ready-made Material:** The accompanying material is provided in English, each piece in its original .pptx or .doc format to ease translation and modification to suit one's needs. All downloadable material is signalled by the symbol⁶:



Timing: The suggested timing for all activities is suitable for groups of 10 to 20 participants. It is the minimum time-frame required to achieve a step's objectives, although dedicating additional time when possible is advised to allow deeper discussions and richer results. With the suggested minimal timing, a full photovoice process (excluding a final Photo Exhibition) can fit into 1.5 days with the following agenda as an example:

⁶ All resources are permanently available in a single pack at the following URL:

<https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects/voice-project/>

Day 1	9H-10H	Preparing Participants to Photovoice Introducing the Photovoice Method
	10H30-12H	Preparing Participants to Photovoice Getting familiar with photography
	13H-14H	Research Question: Development
	14H30-16H	Research Question: Discussion
	16H-18H	Fieldwork – Taking Photographs
Day 2	10H-12H	Selection Process



The VOICE participants are presenting in groups their collective interpretation of some pictures.

Step 1 – Preparing a Photovoice Project

Objectives

Adapting the whole process to your purpose, constraints and opportunities.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Aim & Objectives:** Your final goal & measurable outcomes along the way.

Aims refer to your general intention, your “final goal”, while objectives refer to the steps to take to reach this goal, the concrete outcomes contributing to reaching it.

e.g. Aim “Raising awareness about youth poverty in my city” – Objectives “Gathering 15 testimonies from unprivileged youth; Organising a public exhibition with 40 guests; Reaching out to local politicians”

- **Time:** How much time can you spend with participants? How often? Do you have a deadline?

The profile of participants will radically impact the whole process, e.g. unemployed young people will be easier to gather on a regular basis than working parents, so a longer time frame is needed in the latter case.

The deadline depends mostly on your purpose: you may have no specific deadline and be able to plan a long-term project, or you may have less of a margin if you are using photovoice in a context imposing a deadline, e.g. a thesis submission or a public consultation.

Generally speaking, these factors will lead you to strike your own balance between a short, small-scale photovoice exercise completed over two days and a long-term photovoice project with sessions scattered over several months.

- **Participants:** Who is your target group? How can you gather a representative group?
- **Facilitator:** How many can facilitate the process? How much support do participants need?

These two factors will influence the size of the group you can work with: while a single facilitator can support about 10 participants with no special needs, the best balance is 1 facilitator for every 5 participants needing extra-support due to specific needs (e.g. social barriers, health problems, disabilities, cultural differences)⁷.

It is essential for facilitators to think about the possible challenges that their target groups could face when working with photovoice. This influences

⁷ If you are working in the framework of an EU-funded project, you can potentially receive additional financial support to fund your efforts towards inclusion.

the set-up of all workshops, group size, materials used, etc. Think of your target group: Where might their challenges lie? What might you need to adapt to their needs?

- **Locations:** Where is your venue? Does it provide opportunities to take meaningful pictures? If not, where else can you lead participants?

- **Material:** Do you need to provide cameras? Can you print pictures “instantaneously”?

There are several options such as using the participants’ smartphones, using cameras your organisation might have, borrowing cameras or buying single use cameras.

Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity-strategy>
the website: https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en

Step 2.1 – Preparing Participants to Photovoice – Introducing the Photovoice Method

Objectives

Getting participants familiar with Photovoice, your own aims, and building trust within the group.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Team-building:** Do participants know each other already? Know the facilitator(s)? How much team-building do they need depending on their profile?

A group in which participants already know each other (e.g. students in the same class) can dive in photovoice itself much more quickly than total strangers, of course, but even in such a case it is important to build trust and

confidence with the facilitator(s) to make sure participants feel comfortable enough to express themselves openly during the photovoice exercise.

Moreover, as photovoice is especially adapted to marginalised groups, this aspect of participants’ preparations is all the more important if you are working with participants with special needs. Use your “youth & social worker

toolbox” to help participants feel comfortable and confident enough to share personal stories with each other despite their potential difficulties, such as social obstacles (e.g. interpersonal difficulties, social anxiety, lack of self-confidence, fear of group speaking).

- **Presenting Photovoice:** The step-by-step process should be presented, as well as your own aims & objectives, to make sure participants understand what they are contributing to.

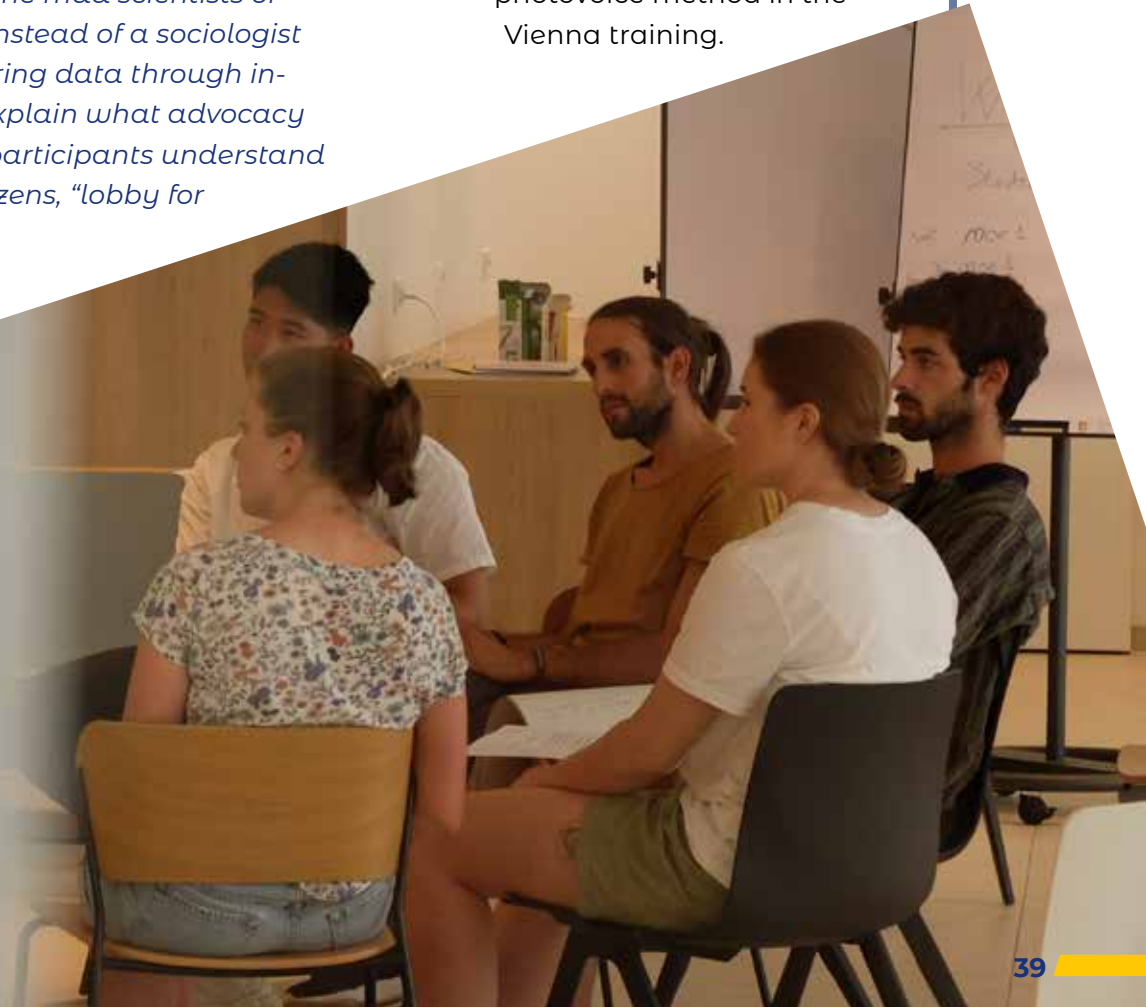
Besides the step-by-step method and the aim of its use, a group which is already familiar with what research or advocacy mean, for instance, will need less explanations than a group which is not familiar with what these concepts entail.

For instance, it might be useful to “demystify” research with participants who may imagine mad scientists or Indiana Jones instead of a sociologist carefully gathering data through interviews, or to explain what advocacy means so that participants understand they can, as citizens, “lobby for themselves”.

- **Ground rules:** Is there any need to highlight specific rules, due to your participants' profile, a sensitive research topic or anything else?

Besides the obvious yet important rules such as punctuality, you may need to put more emphasis on some specific rules depending on your topic: with a sensitive/divisive topic such as gender for instance, it is advised to spend more time discussing “Free Speech vs Respecting each other” to foster the right conditions for sharing ideas and personal stories freely, to make sure participants do not censor themselves out of fear of being judged by others.

The VOICE participants are getting familiar with the photovoice method in the Vienna training.



Activities Outlines

Theme: Team-building

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 30 min

Setting: Chairs arranged in U-shape to leave enough space in the middle

Material: Printer, Cameras or Smartphones

Step-by-step instructions:

You can pick any of the following “photo-related ice-breakers” to use team-building as an opportunity to start discussing photography as well.

“The most striking picture I have ever seen”

1. Before your meeting, ask each participant to find the “most powerful” picture they can think of personally and send it to you.

It can be any kind of picture: something they remember from history books, a picture which made a strong impression on them in the news or in their Social Media feed, a photograph they saw in a local photo exhibit ... or even one of their own!

Alternatively, you can plan some time at the start of your meeting to let participants reflect about this picture with your support.

2. Print all participants' selected pictures (A4 format at least).

When meeting, ask each participant to show and present their personal choice to the rest of the group in a few minutes. You can use the following guiding questions to help them, or facilitate discussions after each picture is presented.

- What can you see in this photo?
- Why did you choose this photo?

- Where did you / might you find this photo?
- What do you think the photographer wanted to show or tell? Why?

“Picture me”

Before or at the start of your meeting, ask participants to take a picture in which they don't appear but which represents them (e.g. their home, a hobby, something which symbolises their fashion style, musical taste etc) and to share it with you and only you, not with the other participants.

Print the resulting pictures and randomly distribute them to the group, one picture per participant.

Then ask participants to try to find the person the picture represents!

“Moody Pics”

Likewise, at the start of your meeting, ask participants to take a picture which represents their mood, but in which they don't appear, nor any human face so that the exercise is not too easy and can lead to funny or surprising results.

Set a time limit (e.g. 15min) to make it a challenge as well!

Then gather participants and ask each of them, in turn, to show their picture. Other participants must first try to guess what the picture expresses. Then the photographer can reveal the truth!

Comments:


Beyond these photo-related ice-breakers, you can of course rely on your favourite ice-breakers to build confidence and trust within your group!

Theme: Presenting Photovoice

Group size: Any

Duration: 30min

Setting: Any

Material: Projector, PPT "Step2.1_IntroducingPhotovoice.pptx" 

Step-by-step instructions:

Make sure you cover all the following aspects through a simple presentation:

- Your own organisation and yourself
- Your aims with using photovoice: What will the participants' results contribute to? How are they going to be used?
- How does photovoice work?
- How long will your photovoice process take?

Keep some time for Questions & Answers to adapt to your participants, and focus on aspects they are the least familiar with (e.g. What is a public consultation? What is advocacy?).

Comments:

To introduce the photovoice method, you can also use additional resources such as the short video-tutorial available on voice.yes-forum.eu

Theme: Setting ground rules

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 20min

Setting: Any

Material: Flipchart, Sticky notes, Pens & Markers

Step-by-step instructions:

To build trust, a feeling of co-ownership within the group, and to foster a greater commitment to these ground rules, it is better to ask participants to set their own rules together. To do so, you can rely on the following basic activity.

- 1.** On a flipchart, simply write, visibly, “Ground Rules”.
- 2.** Give 5 minutes to participants to write the rules they personally need to be respected to feel at ease within the group. They should write each rule on a different sticky note.
- 3.** Ask a first participant to place their sticky notes on the flipchart and briefly explain them.
- 4.** Then invite each participant to add their own sticky notes where they think it makes sense on the flipchart, and explain any rules not already present.

Typically, many participants will spontaneously agree on “Being on time”, leading to many sticky notes showing how important that rule is for the entire group.

- 5.** Conclude by adding any important rules which have not been covered yet.

Comments:

In regard to the specific needs of a photovoice project and besides the universal “Be on time” and such, you should make sure to include:

- Confidentiality: never disclose who said what outside of the group
- Listen to each other and give each other enough time to speak up
- Respect differences in opinions: “We agree to disagree”
- No right or wrong answers, “as long as they are yours!”

Step 2.2 – Preparing Participants to Photovoice – Getting familiar with photography

Objectives

Participants are better able to express messages through photography, and to take quality pictures.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Participants:** How familiar are they with the basic features of a camera and/or smartphone already? With art and conveying messages through it?

With younger participants, a facilitator can skip the most basic aspect of using a camera (e.g. turning a camera on/off, zooming in/out) while it may be necessary to dedicate more time on this topic with older participants.

Moreover, students in an art school will most likely not need an intro to the creative aspects of photography (symbolism, using colours, textures etc), while students in middle school will need a stronger emphasis on that aspect.

- **Technical aspects:** What minimum resolution do you need to achieve your aims? Can you rely on participants' own material (e.g. smartphones) or should you provide cameras?

Setting some technical limits and providing basic photography tips is important to foster participants' creativity, but finding a balance is important: too much emphasis through a "full-scale photography class" may on the contrary stifle creativity, for instance by leading participants to focus on aesthetics and technicalities instead of their own message!

- **Media Consent:** It is ethically and legally a crucial topic and your "Media Consent Form" should be presented as early as possible, highlighting that you need it from (1) the participants themselves in order for you to use their photos for dissemination and (2) anybody appearing (i.e. being recognizable) on any of their pictures.

Our creative partner Robin Höft from Framework is collecting material for the VOICE video-tutorial.



Activities Outlines





Theme: Getting familiar with photography

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 1H30

Setting: Chairs arranged in U-shape to leave enough space in the middle

Material:

- Projector
 - PPT “Step2.2a_IntroducingArts&Technics” 
 - Option A: Printed pictures exemplifying diverse aspects of photography (Sample “Step2.2b_IntroducingArts&Technics_PicsSelection” ) OR Participants' own printed pictures (to build upon the activity “The most striking picture I have ever seen” if used earlier)
 - Option B: Printed “Photo Challenges” (Template “Step2.2c_IntroducingArts&Technics_PhotoChallenges” )
 - Media Consent Forms for all participants (Template “Step2.2d_IntroducingArts&Technics_MediaReleaseForm.docx” )
-

Step-by-step instructions:

In 1H30, you can organise your session as follows:

- 1H: Pick and go through one of the “Introduction to Photography” activities listed below. You can use a combination of them if you have more time, as they address different aspects!
- 15min: Do a “Quality Check” with participants, discussing the minimal technical requirements you are aiming for (e.g. resolution, format);
- 15min: Provide explanations about the Media Consent Form and gather the participants' signatures.

Option A – Intro to Photography: “What do we see?”

This activity is perfect to reflect upon the possible discrepancy between “What the audience sees” and “What the photographer wanted to say”.

- A set of pictures is laid on the ground or on a table, and the group gathers in a circle around them.

The pictures can be drawn from participants' submissions (if you used the activity “The most striking picture I have ever seen” earlier), or stock pictures illustrating various aspects of photography (a sample is available along with the downloadable material).

- Participants take 2 minutes to look at the photos, observe them carefully, in silence.
- Split participants into small working groups of 3-4 participants each.
- 20min, Choosing & Discussing Photos: Each participant finds their own picture (if applicable) or the picture they like the most. Participants discuss together:
 - ▶ What can you see in this photo?
 - ▶ Why did you choose this photo?
 - ▶ Where might you find this photo? (e.g. in a restaurant? a magazine? ...)
 - ▶ What do you think the photographer wanted to show or tell?
 - ▶ How can you tell what the photographer meant?
 - ▶ How, where and why are photographs used in our societies?
 - ▶ What impact do photos have compared to other media? (e.g. text, video, movies ...)
- 20min, Sharing time: Each working group presents its answers in a few minutes, allowing some time for spontaneous reactions and reflections from fellow participants.

Each group should focus on the questions “What do you think the photographer wanted to show or tell? How can you tell?” and “Where and why do we use photography in our modern societies?”

- 10min, Debriefing: Conclude the session by going through a few remarks, stressing upon the following key message (the downloadable PPT provides more detailed bullet points): *Photovoice is not just “artsy”, but uses photography to convey messages, and that is why writing a narrative is important to us, to avoid any misinterpretation!* Option B – Intro to Photography: “Photo Challenge: Elements of a good picture”

Option B – Intro to Photography: “Photo Challenge: Elements of a good picture”

This activity helps to draw the attention of participants on the various technical and artistic aspects they can play with to convey their messages.

- Split participants into small working groups of 3–4 participants each.
- 5min, Instructions: Each working group gets a different assignment or “challenge” among the 5 following ones:
 - ▶ Posed/unposed: Take some photos of a person posing. Then, take some photos of people who don’t know that you are photographing them. What are the differences?
 - ▶ Feelings in photos: Participants receive a list of words describing emotions – happy, sad, angry, excited, etc. Set a time limit & ask participants to take pictures that convey or symbolise the feelings (one or more).
 - ▶ Angles: Take the same picture from three different angles.
 - ▶ Colours, Patterns, Textures: Take three pics that focus on (1) Colour, (2) Pattern, (3) Texture.
 - ▶ What’s that? Set a time limit and ask participants to take an image in which it is hard to tell what the subject / object in the photograph is. Participants have to guess what the image is.
- 20min, Photo Challenge: Participants get some time to achieve their challenge.
- They are invited to try multiple times, until reaching the “most impactful” result, and then use any remaining time to reflect upon a simple question: What does it change compared to a “normal” photo?
- 20min, Sharing time: Each working group presents its “final artwork” and “main take-away” in a few minutes, allowing some time for quick and spontaneous reactions.
- 10min, Debriefing: There is no need to analyse all features in great details. The participants are presented and invited to consider the following aspects in the following days, the rest is up to them!
 - ▶ Foreground Vs Background / Depth of a picture
 - ▶ Main subject / Focal point
 - ▶ Colours, Shapes, Patterns & Textures

- ▶ Camera angle / Point of view
- ▶ Proximity / Distance to the main subject
- ▶ Landscape Vs Portrait formats
- ▶ Lighting Vs Shade
- ▶ Symbols
- ▶ Feelings in photos

“Quality Check”

Using the provided PPT, simply go through the dedicated slides.

Invite participants to check their cameras or smartphones' settings and features while you cover them.

Media Consent Form

Present your Media Consent Form and explain that not only for ethical reasons but also because of legal requirements, you need:

- Signed forms from the participants themselves to allow you to use the photographs they will take;
- Signed forms from anybody who can be recognized in their photographs later on, which includes them if applicable, as well as any “outsider” they photograph.

This is a perfect time to draw their attention to the facts:

- They will need to get the consent of anybody who can be recognized on their future pictures, otherwise you will not be able to use them;
- They can find alternative solutions to cope with this obstacle, such as:
 - ▶ To use each other as models to avoid having to get the consent of “non-participants”;
 - ▶ To avoid photographs allowing the recognition of a specific person, e.g. focusing on hands, having people turn their back to the camera, photographing big crowds or using symbols to express a message instead.

The provided template abides by the European Data Protection Guidelines, so you can use it as it is if you are located in an EU country.

Comments:

Finally, you can also train the photographers' eye of your participants with other short and easy activities such as:

- **“Tips & Tricks by the pros”:** Invite a professional photographer or “skilled” amateur photographer to meet the group and provide their own basic tips on how to take quality pictures with a basic camera or smartphone. Alternatively, you can also use the PDF “Photo Tips & Tricks” provided among the downloadable “Additional Resources Pack”⁸ written by VOICE Creative partners to provide their own professional advice!

These tips & tricks can cover the basic technical settings to pay attention to (e.g. resolution, auto-focus, lighting etc), as well as the “Dos & Don'ts” (e.g. do not face the sun, etc).

- **“Using Symbols – Visualising a VIP”:** Hand out the name of a well-known person to each participant or in smaller groups. Don't tell the others though!

Each participant or group makes a list of this VIP's characteristics and then chooses five that best represent him or her.

The participant or group then takes photos that represent these characteristics. They choose the best photo for each characteristic.

Each participant or group then presents the photos to the others who must try to guess who the VIP is!

- **Visit a local photo exhibition:** Why not organise a field trip in your city to explore a local photo exhibit?

Check what's happening in nearby museums, art galleries, cultural NGOs or even the town hall! On-site, participants can discuss:

- ▶ How is the photographer using colours / shapes / lighting / lines?
- ▶ Which angles is the photographer using? Why?
- ▶ What does the photographer want to show with his/her photos?
- ▶ What makes these photos special?
- ▶ How do the photos make you feel?

⁸ <https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects/voice-project/>

Step 3.1 – Research Question: Development

Objectives

Phrasing the exact Research Question with Participants to:

- Make it as relevant as possible: a participatory process from the very start ensures your Research Question is as relatable to participants as possible;
- Achieve richer results: the **“insider’s knowledge”** of participants as co-researchers, if involved in framing the Research Question, facilitates an enhanced understanding of the topic;
- Reduce the researcher’s bias: participants will not be influenced by your own wording if they decide how to phrase the Research Question.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Purpose of Photovoice:** Is your topic imposed by your aims and/or context? How much margin can you afford?

If Photovoice fits in a larger research project or if you are using it to contribute to a public consultation for instance, the general topic is most likely already set and non-negotiable, but your participants can still phrase their own Research Question on that basis.

You may also “start from scratch” and involve participants in choosing the general topic first, and turning it into a precise Research Question afterward. This is especially adapted if you are using photovoice to empower a community: this first step can involve them in narrowing down a topic which is meaningful to all of them.

- **Constraints:** How much time can you dedicate to an early brainstorming session about the Research Question?

In case of a short, small-scale photovoice exercise, you may not have enough time to give entire freedom on the choice of topic to your participants. In that case, it is advised to pre-select a topic, and focus your participants’ efforts in phrasing the Research Question on that basis.

In a longer-term photovoice project it is, on the contrary, worth dedicating a longer session to this brainstorming phase. Participants will feel more engaged if they can comfortably discuss the topic to be discussed and the wording of their Research Question.

Activities Outlines

Theme: Brainstorming on Themes, Topics & Research Questions

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 1H30

Setting: Room arranged in 4 Working spaces with tables (4 groups of 5 participants)

Material: Projector, PPT "Step3.1_ResearchQuestionDevelopment.pptx" 🌐, Sticky notes, Flipcharts, Markers & Pens

Step-by-step instructions:

1. 30min, Word Storm exercise

Select a rather general question inviting participants to think of topics that are important to them and to the members of their communities, such as "What themes impact and/or interest youth in your own community?".

If your topic is already established due to your aims and/or context, phrase the question accordingly, while allowing as much space as possible for participants' answers.

- **15min, Broad Brainstorming:** Individually, participants write their answers as keywords, one sticky note per word!

They should write anything popping up in their mind for now: nouns, adjectives, verbs, concepts, expressions, activities, places ...

Participants place their sticky-notes-answers on a shared flipchart (2 or 3 flipcharts taped together may be necessary with a large group) wherever they want: the messier, the better for now!

- **10min, Sorting Out:** Participants are split into working groups of 4-5 each, and given a minute to observe the messy sticky notes.

One after the other, each group comes to the flipchart and can move sticky notes as they please. They have up to 2min to switch anything they want, but 2min only!

- **5min, Finding Trends:** Usually at this point a few "clusters" emerge without any need for more precise instructions.

If everyone agrees, the four “biggest” clusters become a theme of a different working space.

2. 15min, Gathering Research Questions ideas:

Each Theme-Working Space gets a blank flipchart.

Participants are free to move from theme/table to theme/table to write any questions popping up in their minds on sticky notes and place them on the dedicated flipchart.

Questions can be phrased in any way for now, no need for perfect “Research Questions” yet!

3. 45min, Sorting out the best Research Questions

- **5min, Introducing the “Perfect Research Question”:** Present the basic guidelines on what makes a perfect Research Question and keep the dedicated PPT slide projected for the rest of the activity.

To lead to meaningful answers and pictures, a good Photovoice Research Question should be:

- ▶ Personal (includes the word “you”)
 - ▶ Open-ended (can’t be answered by “Yes” or “No”)
 - ▶ Clear & specific (not open to confusion/misinterpretation)
 - ▶ Relatable (linked to participants’ personal lives)
- **20min, Back in the working groups participants analyse** the previously suggested questions, group similar questions, select the ones they can relate the most with, and turn them into perfect Photovoice Research Questions, respecting the provided guidelines.

The facilitator checks on groups from time to time to support them.

- **20min, Group presentations:** Within a maximum of 3-4min each group presents the questions they found most interesting and provide motivation for their choice.

You now have a large set of potential Research Questions, congratulations! Participants should now agree on the one they want to answer through photovoice: a consensus may spontaneously emerge, otherwise a final vote may be necessary.

Comments:

- If your topic is already established due to your aims and/or context, or if you can't dedicate as much time as needed to this step, you can start from "2. Gathering Research Questions ideas" and reduce the session to 1H.
- Annex 2 of this handbook provides an example of the outcomes of a brainstorming session, answering the broad question "What themes impact and/or interest youth in your own community?"

The session was led with an international group of students, and the resulting themes, topics and (sample) questions are therefore relevant in the context of international projects.



Step 3.2 – Research Question: Discussion

Objectives

- Participants understand the Research Question, and get a common understanding of it.
- Participants reflect about their personal answer(s) to the Research Question.
- Participants imagine pictures expressing their personal answer(s) and plan the fieldwork.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Rephrasing the Research Question:** Participants should understand the question in their own words before trying to answer it, and agree on its detailed meaning to some extent.
- **Critical Thinking:** Participants should be allowed time to think about their personal answer(s) to the Research Question.

“(…) agree on its detailed meaning to some extent” ... and “to some extent” only! You should indeed avoid too big of a discrepancy in how participants understand the question to guarantee the coherence of future results. On the other hand, identifying and exploring diverse understandings of a concept can be of interest using photovoice!

e.g. “Gender” as a topic will most certainly not allow a common understanding within some groups (e.g. sex vs gender, nature vs nurture); in such cases, illustrating diverse understandings or perceptions makes the use of photovoice especially rich.

We aim for a wide diversity of individual answers at this point, not collective ones yet. However participants can discuss their ideas together: this can stimulate their personal reflections, help them to find how to phrase them, open their mind to new ideas, etc.

- **How to convey answers through pictures:** Participants should be allowed sufficient time to imagine pictures to express their answer(s) through.

While the focus remains on individual answers, collective brainstorming is relevant and helpful as long as it does not influence the original answers.


Activities Outlines

Theme: Research Question – Individual Reflections

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 1H30

Setting: Room arranged in 4 Working spaces with tables (4 groups of 5 participants)

Material: Projector, PPT “Step3.2_ResearchQuestionDiscussion.pptx” , Flipcharts, A4 Paper, Markers & Pens

Step-by-step instructions:

For this step and all following photovoice sessions, participants are split into 4 Working groups of 5 each, and each group goes through the remaining steps together from beginning to end.

20min, Discussing & Developing the Research Question

- The focus is, at first, to make sure that all participants understand the Research Question and that the participants within each Working Group share a more precise common understanding. This “detailed common understanding” can differ between Working Groups, and forms a part of their collective answer already.
- **5min: The Research Question is presented** to all participants. They are also reminded about the general context in which their photovoice results will fit into.
- **15min: Each Working Group gets the same challenge to rephrase the Research Question** in such a way that all words are replaced but the rephrased question keeps the meaning of the original one. Some guiding questions can bring their attention towards:
 - ▶ Language: Do you all understand each single word? Can you easily find a synonym? If not, list any words which are unclear.
 - ▶ Meanings & Interpretations: Are there any words with several interpretations? Which ones, which interpretations? List all of them!
 - ▶ Is the question constructed in such a way to allow for interesting answers? Is it too broad or too narrow for you?

- ▶ Now, rephrase the original Research Question in such a way that only one interpretation, yours, is possible! (e.g. “Europe” can be defined as “countries in the European Union” or “the European continent”)

The facilitator checks on each Working Group on a regular basis, and invites them to write their final “rephrased Research Question” on a flipchart shared where the original Research Question is already written.

1H, Individual & Collective Brainstorming

For the remaining hour each Working Group focuses on coming up with individual draft answers to the Research Question, imagining ways to express these answers visually, and planning their fieldwork accordingly (e.g. researching relevant places to take their planned photos, etc).

Stress upon the fact that these are first draft answers: more aspects and ideas will probably come to them over the next few hours, and this is actively encouraged. So while plans are being made, make sure to stay flexible!

The facilitator should first explain that (1) during the following steps, the timing is more a suggestion than a requirement, and each group can navigate the steps at their own pace, (2) participants are encouraged to use the Internet to research anything that can help them (e.g. checking a map of the neighbourhood to plan pictures, etc), (3) participants should keep notes on their answers and ideas for pictures for the later field trip, (4) there are no right or wrong answers!

- **15min, Individual reflections & Critical thinking:** At first, participants reflect on their personal answers to the Research Question without discussions within the group. They are asked to come up with at least 3 different answers, knowing that they will present these to their fellow group members (i.e. meaning they should keep notes, doodle, if necessary, etc).
- **20min, Group exchanges:** Participants in each Working group now share their own answers. Each has a few minutes to provide explanations, and the group members are invited to ask questions which can help the presenter to provide detail or further reflect on their answers.
- **20min, Group Visual Brainstorming:** Participants think together of ways to convey their personal answers through photographs. Each participant thinks about their personal pictures for now, but all participants can help each other come up with ideas and concrete plans.

These reflections should lead to a basic “Fieldwork plan” listing:

- What pictures to take (scenes to arrange, settings/building/landscapes to find, etc.)

- Where and when to take them (near the venue, in the city, during the dedicated session or later to use a night setting, ...)
- What details to pay attention to (e.g. colors, number of people, patterns, angles, lighting, ...).

Participants are encouraged to keep the notes they have taken with them from then on to write down any new ideas, as well as have their plans handy during fieldwork.

Comments:

In a longer-term photovoice project participants should be invited to come up with as many answers to the Research Question as they can think of. They will have time to reflect on which answers feel more important to them and which can lead to the best pictures.



Step 4 – Fieldwork – Taking Photographs

Objectives

Participants get time and an adapted setting to take pictures conveying their message(s).

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Timing:** How much time can participants spend taking pictures? How many pictures should therefore be their aim or limit? Can you organise several rounds, or just one?

If your context allows it, it is encouraged to plan several rounds of fieldwork. That way, you can meet with your group after each round for a debriefing: participants can exchange about their prior results, discuss how to improve them, exchange new ideas, and generally inspire each other before going on another field trip to take more and/or better pictures.

This also allows participants to experiment with the aesthetic and technical aspects of photography and to gain confidence in their own creative skills, which fosters better results in the long-term.

- **Location:** Where will participants take their pictures? At the venue, in another adapted area, in their free time, at home?

- **Logistics & Security:** What support will participants need? Do they need transportation? Somebody to accompany them?

Both questions are closely related to the participants' profile, and especially their age and/or special needs. e.g. Minors will need to be accompanied while adults can be set entirely free. Adults with health issues or handicaps may need support depending on their situation.

- **Instructions:** It is useful to provide a "Fieldwork Checklist" with reminders on the general instructions (e.g. number of pictures, deadline), technical requirements (e.g. resolution, format) and basic photography tips (e.g. Using symbols, composition, colors).
- **Data Protection and Media Consent:** Participants must be reminded that they will need to get signed Media Consent Forms from anybody who can be recognized in their photographs, which will otherwise not be usable for legal reasons.




Activities Outlines

Theme: Fieldwork

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 2H

Setting: Outdoor

Material: Projector, PPT “Step4_Fieldwork.pptx” , , Printed Worksheets “Step4_Fieldwork_Checklist.docx” , Printed Media Consent Forms (Template “Step2.2d_IntroducingArts&Technics_MediaReleaseForm.docx” ), Cameras or Smartphones

Step-by-step instructions:

Gather all participants for brief reminders and instructions, before everybody goes their separate way during the fieldwork. Make sure you cover:

Instructions:

- Set a time limit for the fieldwork and, if relevant, a meeting point to conclude it and go through the next step;
- Set a maximum number of pictures per participant. Taking more pictures than this limit remains allowed of course, but participants should then pick their “final selection” before the next step. The more pictures you allow, the more time you will need during the next step!
- Invite participants to check the notes they took during their reflections, and expand them if new ideas or details come to them during the fieldwork;
- Remind participants that they are taking personal pictures for now. They can stay as a group or form pairs to help each other and enjoy roaming the city together, as well.

Quality Check: Remind participants about the basic technical requirements they should keep in mind, especially the resolution of their pictures.

Media Consent: Make sure all participants are aware that they must get a signed Media Consent Form from anybody whose face is recognizable on their pictures.

If relevant to you, ask participants to send their photos to you work email: the next step will be much easier if you can print their pictures in advance!

Hand out a “Fieldwork Checklist” to help participants remember this information.

Comments:

If your fieldwork is organised outdoors and participants are not supervised, provide them with a city map, just in case!

Step 5 – Selection Process

Objectives

Facilitating a process to turn many individual answers into collectively relevant ones.

Specific Steps & Objectives:

- **Individual Selection & Caption:** Participants sort out their own pictures, pick the most relevant ones, and annotate these to explain what they mean to them;
- **Sharing Individual Selections & Personal Stories:** In their working groups participants present their final picks to each other, and discuss them. This helps contextualize the pictures, and trends or themes among pictures may already become apparent;
- **Coming up with a final, collective selection:** Participants face a whole set of individual pictures-answers, cluster them using categories of their own choosing, make a final pick, and collectively write more detailed captions.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Facilitator’s Role:** Even though this is true for all steps, the role of the facilitator is even more important here to stimulate group discussions, and one facilitator for each working group is advised if possible. *The selection process is a vital part of photovoice, and very often the most lively and engaging step for participants. It is an important opportunity for them to share their work and to learn from each other.*

Depending on their profile, participants may spontaneously engage in in-depth discussions. Very often though, even with participants with no “special needs”, participants will focus on presenting their personal pictures, each in turn, without exploring what they mean to the other participants, what similarities and differences can be found among them, etc. The facilitator is, therefore, a key part of the process,

in order to generate deeper conversations and lead participants to focus on the collective aspects of the presented pictures.

- **Keywords: Selecting – Contextualizing – Categorizing**

The dedicated session should lead participants to go through these steps.

Selecting: Choosing photographs that most accurately reflect the group's needs, assets, or common answers to the Research Question (i.e. several participants can relate to the same picture, several pictures express the same mes-

sage). It is important to highlight that this process is not about making all participants happy by keeping pictures by all participants, for instance.

Contextualizing: Writing annotations, narratives which tell stories about what the photos mean, to avoid misinterpretations by the future viewers.

Codifying: Identifying issues, themes, theories which emerge from the whole set of pictures, as a way to ensure that a collective message emerges, and not just a sum of all individual answers.



Activities Outlines

Theme: Selection process

Group size: up to 20 participants

Duration: 2H

Setting: Room arranged in 4 Working spaces with tables (4 groups of 5 participants)

Material: Projector, PPT "Step5a_SelectionProcess.pptx" , Printed Worksheets "Step5b_SelectionProcess_Worksheet" , Printed photos resulting from the fieldwork, A4 Paper, Markers & Pens

Step-by-step instructions:

Each Working group gathers one more time to go through the last step of the photovoice process together.

This step guides them through the selection process, starting from their many individual pictures to end up with a handful which express the group's collective answer(s) to the Research Question.

Hand out printed "Selection Process Worksheets" with all instructions to working groups

before **starting**: as they will go through several consecutive steps, this will help them to make progress at their own pace.

10min: Individual Selection & Caption

The process starts with individual reflections, to let the participants prepare to present their 2 chosen pictures to their working group later.

Individually, participants have a look at their 2 selected pictures and write down keywords to explain their meaning. They can answer to:

- What do we see in the picture?
- What does this represent? What do you want to say?
- How does this answer the research question?
- Do you want to change anything about this? If yes, what and how?

30min: Sharing individual selections

Participants present their favourite pictures to their group, explain and discuss.

- Participants present their 2 pictures one after another, using their keywords to narrate the pictures' story, meaning, context, how they thought about it, their relation to their own life, etc.;
- Other participants are invited to ask questions, share their reactions, as well as whether they relate to these pictures or not;
- All participants can now add their own keywords to the keyword list for each picture, if everybody agrees with them;
- Each participant has about 5-10min to present their selection and discuss them.

In the end, each Working Group should have a maximum of 10 pictures with draft annotations (i.e. the keywords) which at this point continue to reflect personal answers and preferences.

20min: Categorising pictures

Participants make space on their table and start organising the pictures, while discussing the place for each as follows:

- Participant 1 places their first picture anywhere on the table, leaving enough space for the following ones;
- In turn, the rest of the participants add their remaining pictures one after the other, and the group briefly discusses picture locations, considering the following aspects:
 - ▶ Do pictures look similar or very different?
 - ▶ Do they share similar keywords?
 - ▶ Do they tell similar or unique stories?

20min: Coming up with a final, collective selection

Each group selects a final pick of 3 pictures out of their whole set.

The selected pictures should be the ones which resonate most among the group as a whole: Do they all agree on some photo-messages in the whole set? Do some make sense to most of them despite their diverse backgrounds?

Participants should spend time discussing these questions: this step is crucial, to turn diverse individual viewpoints into a collective answer!

Some tips:

- Groups can focus on “clusters”: choosing 1 picture per cluster/group/category: in each of these groupings, which picture can all/most of the group relate to?
- If there are too many clusters, the groups can focus on the bigger ones.
- If there are only a few clusters, groups can pick 2 pictures among the bigger ones

40min: Contextualising – Writing the pictures’ stories

- At this point each working group should have 3 photovoice pictures, each already accompanied by keywords.
- The aim is now to have these keywords make sense by writing full sentences that connect the keywords to reveal the pictures’ meaning! Participants should arrive at this point together as a group (instead of individually) to make sure the resulting stories make sense to all participants.

Tip: A good starting point is to begin with “In this picture you can see ...”.

After completing this process, gather each working group’s selection of pictures and accompanying narratives. You can now:

- Invite each working group to present its work to the others directly, if time allows it;
 - Keep these exchanges for a future photovoice exhibition to plan with the participants: each working group will have specific messages to communicate to the external guests. And this exhibition will turn into an opportunity for participants to compare their results on the spot!
-

Comments:

- **Number of pictures:** These outlines limit pictures to 2 per participant at the start of the selection process and 3 per working group at the end to fit into a limited time-frame. If you can afford spending more time on this step, including more pictures can lead to richer discussions and results!
- **Message > Aesthetics:** If the discussions focus on the aesthetic and technical aspects of the photographs only, the facilitator should step in to remind participants that within photovoice priority is given to the message expressed by the pictures, and not how beautiful they are.
- **Digital Alternative:** If your selection process is organised right after the fieldwork, you may not have time to print all participants’ pictures. An alternative solution could be to provide each working group with a laptop, ask participants to upload their pictures so that they can all comfortably look at them, and open a blank PPT file to “categorise” the pictures (i.e. it is easier to move pictures around on a blank slide, and group them or keep them apart).

Benefits: the suggested approach is both more environment-friendly than printing all pictures, and time-saving as participants can type their annotations so that there is no need to waste time deciphering bad handwriting later on!

- **Facilitator’s Role:** As already mentioned, working groups will very often focus on individual aspects of their pictures and need the help of a facilitator to switch to a more collective focus. Ensuring a dedicated facilitator for each working group is ideal, otherwise make sure you visit all groups during the early stages of their discussions to generate deeper exchanges through simple questions such as:

- ▶ Why did you choose this photo?
- ▶ What do you want to say? How does it answer the Research Question?
- ▶ What do the other participants think? Do they agree with the message? Why or why not?
- ▶ Do you want to change anything about this? If yes, what and how?

- **Photovoice in Academic Research – Specific Remarks:** Social science research analysis methods provide a further level of understanding and, if you are using photovoice in the context of academic research, will also require several extra-steps.

The rigorous analysis methodology required in academic settings implies the need to:

- ▶ Record and transcribe group discussions during the Selection Process for later analysis;
- ▶ Analyse the visual results alone, if relevant depending on your specialty (communications, psychology, etc.);

The type of analysis should fit the intended goal of the research project:

- ▶ Qualitative content analysis will likely be the most appropriate in social science and due to the nature of results;
- ▶ Within the academic literature in English, a relevant and well-explained methodology is described by Jehangir et al. (2020), whereby a “categorical aggregation” is applied to their photovoice results by involving participants themselves;
- ▶ Always critically reflect about the limitations of your photovoice results (e.g. small sample, participants turn-over);
- ▶ Discuss your findings vis-à-vis theoretical knowledge and current research applied to the same topic / Research Question using other methods (e.g. quantitative).

Step 6 – Dissemination / Photovoice Exhibition

Objectives

Participants reach out to relevant stakeholders and inform them of their findings to influence decision- and policy-making towards positive social change.

Facilitation Tips – What to consider

- **Guests:** Who are the power brokers necessary to invite to bring about change?

Who exactly you should invite depends on the topic you have focused on: who can influence the outcome in this area?

The main categories involve:

- ▶ *The broader community participants belong to, in order to learn about itself and prompt further collective action;*
- ▶ *Policy-makers designing policies which impact your participants in regard to your topic: you can then target specific roles (e.g. the rapporteur on a relevant draft bill) or a political institution in general;*
- ▶ *The academic community to inform current and future research;*
- ▶ *Members of diverse media for a wider impact;*
- ▶ *The general public, if you are raising awareness on a specific social issue;*
- ▶ *Practitioners in a specific professional sector.*



- **How can they be engaged** with your results in order to trigger the necessary change process?
- **What information** will they need to do this? What are the best ways to share that information with particular audiences?

- **How can participants contribute** to reaching out to these power-brokers?

Organising a Photo Exhibition with your participants' results is a typical way to reach out to the relevant audience, and this can involve your participants as "hosts" presenting their pictures to the guests.

There are many alternative ways to achieve dissemination, however! Depending on your general purpose, you can consider:

- ▶ *Direct in-person outreach: meeting a key policy-maker with your participants;*
- ▶ *Open communication, such as a Social Media advocacy campaign, for instance*
- ▶ *Writing a "Policy Paper" to suit the formal habits of policy-makers, while making the most of your visual results to effectively catch their attention.*



LIST OF AVAILABLE READY-MADE MATERIALS

Chapter 4 includes Outlines of Activities which are accompanied by ready-made material, provided in English, each piece in its original .pptx or .doc format to ease their translation and modification to suit the reader's own needs.

All downloadable material is signalled by the symbol 📄, and a full pack is available at the following URL: <https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects/voice-project/>

To help you find your way among these diverse pieces, here is an overview of all available material:

<p>Step 2.1 – Preparing Participants to Photovoice – Introducing the Photovoice Method</p>	<p>PT Instructions: Step2.1_IntroducingPhotovoice.pptx</p>
<p>Step 2.2 – Preparing Participants to Photovoice – Getting familiar with photography</p>	<p>PPT Instructions: Step2.2a_IntroducingArts&Technics.pptx</p> <p>Set of Copyright Free Pictures: Step2.2b_IntroducingArts&Technics_PicsSelection.zip</p> <p>Photo Challenges Worksheet: Step2.2c_IntroducingArts&Technics_PhotoChallenges.docx</p> <p>Media Consent Form Template: Step2.2d_IntroducingArts&Technics_MediaReleaseForm.docx</p>

Step 3.1 – Research Question: Development	<p>PPT Instructions: Step3.1_ResearchQuestionDevelopment.pptx</p>
Step 3.2 – Research Question: Discussion	<p>PPT Instructions: Step3.2_ResearchQuestionDiscussion.pptx</p>
Step 4 – Fieldwork – Taking Photographs	<p>PPT Instructions: Step4_Fieldwork.pptx</p> <p>Fieldwork Worksheet: Step4_Fieldwork_Checklist.docx</p>
Step 5 – Selection Process	<p>PPT Instructions: Step5a_SelectionProcess.pptx</p> <p>Selection Process Worksheet: Step5b_SelectionProcess_Worksheet.docx</p>



LIST OF RELEVANT THEMES, TOPICS & SAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following list is a result from brainstorming sessions held with international participants to identify areas of common interest between youth in diverse national and local settings.

They are provided as examples of themes and more precise topics that can inspire other groups along with sample Research Questions.

Nota Bene: This list serves as a starting point, and is not meant as a final and fully comprehensive set of research questions. It was compiled after conducting 90-minute brainstorming session with different groups, and is hereby offered as an example of a collective work product following a group brainstorming activity. The list can also showcase how participants can be involved in phrasing their own Research Questions in the framework of a photovoice project.

LIFESTYLE

Entertainment

Sports, Theatre, Music, Football, Art, Travel, Gaming, Drugs & Alcohol, Parties, Events

How do you feel about addictions?

What are your expectations regarding your work/life balance?

Friends & Relationships

Love, Sex, Belonging to a group, Identities, Connection, Social Media

How often do you need to meet your friends and family?

What can you learn out of other people's lifestyles?

How do your children affect your lifestyle?

How do you find a good balance between work and your private life?

How do you experience loneliness within yourself and in your own environment?

Material needs

Fashion, Money, Technology, Sustainable lifestyles, Safety, To look cool

What do you need to be happy?

What do you like and not like in your job?

What makes you feel bad or good about the job market?

What makes you feel autonomous?

FUTURE

Social Issues

Peace, Climate change, Lack of inclusion, Women's emancipation, Extremism, Racism & Fascism, Employment, Human rights, Civil rights

What can you do at your own level to improve inclusion?

Personal Development

Happiness, Awareness, Independence, Thinking & Planning the Future, Not knowing what I want, Drugs Impact, Finding a Purpose

How can going to college improve your finances and awareness?

How does your health depend on your happiness?

What do you do for your mental health?

How can a psychologist help with your mental health?

Enablers & Obstacles

Wifi Connexion, Health, Finances, Politics, Stability, College, Culture, Career, Future Job Prospects, Unemployment, Lack of Income

In what ways do you think politics can bring independence?

Do Social Media influence your psychological stability?

WELLBEING

Social Justice

Equality, LGBTQIA+, Respect, Reducing stereotypes and cultural prejudices, Refugees, Social integration, Gender equality, Women's rights, Abortion right, Covid-19,

What are you willing to do to bring change in our society?

To what extent do you feel affected by global warming?

What do you think can be done to create a more inclusive society?

How did your life change through the Covid-19 pandemic?

What support do you wish you had received to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic?

Personal Development

Living up to social expectations, Social Performance & Pressure, Fitting in, Friends, Family, Mental Health, Health, Motivation, Loneliness

How is your mental health affected by Social Media?

How do you fit into your society?

How can you improve your mental health?

What impacts the decisions you make in your life?

How important is family for your wellbeing?

How did Covid-19 affect youth?

What does mental health mean to you?

How do you take care of your mental health?

What are some barriers preventing you from receiving healthcare services?

What could motivate you to live a healthy lifestyle?

How do you feel in your own skin & body?

When, where, with whom do you feel included or excluded? Safe or unsafe?

Politics

Decision-making, Citizenship, Democracy, Globalisation, European Union, Being heard by my Government, Environmental Activism, Ukrainian War, Representation, Youth Political Participation

What does peaceful coexistence in a diverse society mean to you?

How do you feel after you voted in an election?

What does the government need to do to earn your trust ?

How can the EU benefit you and your community?

Material needs

Labor, Inflation, Job, Food, Nutrition, Housing Crisis, Urban, Environment, Digital World, Money Problems & Modern Poverty

How does inflation affect youth if it goes on?

How can healthier food improve your life?

What do you need to make the right decision for you in the labor market?

CRITICAL EDUCATION

Social issues to discuss

Equality, Global warming, Wild nature, Gender equality, Work, Homeless people, LGBT+ discrimination, War, Inequalities, Social Classes, Sexism, Woman empowerment, Climate change

What does discrimination mean to you?

How do you think a world without discrimination would look like?

Focus on Human Rights & Gender Equality

Abortion, Feminism, Teenage Pregnancy, Gender Inequality, Gender Diversity, Inclusion of Migrants, Inclusion of Disabled People

To what extent do you think that doctors have the right to refuse performing abortions?

To what extent do you feel European cities are inclusive of gender diversity?

What perceptions do you think native people have on migrants in the EU?

Obstacles

Cultural expectations, Stress, Fears, Loss, Bullying, Abuse, Violence, Pressures, Conspiracy theories, Ideological conflicts, Close-minded School System, Dropping out, Learning Gaps, School Segregation

How does bullying affect LGBTIQ+ experience of high school students in your opinion?

What can you as a teacher do about bullying?

Obstacles

Cultural expectations, Stress, Fears, Loss, Bullying, Abuse, Violence, Pressures, Conspiracy theories, Ideological conflicts, Close-minded School System, Dropping out, Learning Gaps, School Segregation

How does bullying affect LGBTIQ+ experience of high school students in your opinion?

What can you as a teacher do about bullying?

Enablers

Teachers, Guidance, Sex education at school, Access to & Quality of Education, University

What does education mean to you?

What influenced you to study?

How is school segregation an issue in your community?

How do you think a teacher's practice can improve gender equality in classrooms?

What do you think school can do for you to achieve your dream job?

To what extent do you as a student perceive the influence of school in your life?

EXAMPLES OF PHOTOVOICE RESULTS

As part of the VOICE project, in May and July 2022 young students and youth & social workers from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands were trained to become Photovoice facilitators themselves.

They studied the theoretical aspects underlying the Photovoice method and, as part of a “hands-on” learning experience, they also went through their very own Photovoice process as participants.

You can check our full Online Exhibition at voice.yes-forum.eu! While being the VOICE participants’ own contribution to the European Year of Youth, these results also showcase how effective Photovoice is in facilitating self- and collective expression, and to what kind of authentic and impactful outcomes it can lead to!

Below are a few extracts of these results:



“How do you imagine your European utopia in 20 years?”

22-25 May 2022, Viareggio, Italy



“How would you describe the life of a young person in Europe to an alien?”

4–6 July 2022, Vienna, Austria





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PROJECT & PARTNERS



YES Forum, EU

yes-forum.eu

Contact: Annett Wiedermann,
annett.wiedermann@yes-forum.eu



ÖJAB, Austria

oejab.at

Contact: Sebastian Frank,
sebastian.frank@bpi.ac.at



Framework Filmagentur, Germany

framework-film.de

Contact: Robin Höft,
robin@framework-film.de



SolidarityWorks, Bulgaria

solidarityworks.eu

Contact: Maggie Nazer,
maggie@solidarityworks.eu



Semperia Films, Bulgaria

semperiafilms.com

Contact: Katerina Borisova,
katerina@semperiafilms.com



Jongerenwerk Barkema & De Haan, Netherlands

jongerenwerk.com

Contact: Gwen Birza,
gwen@jongerenwerk.com



Frissekom, Netherlands

frissekom.nl

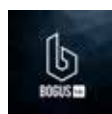
Contact: Jeroen Van der Meulen,
jeroen@frissekom.nl



Zefiro Società Cooperativa Sociale, Italy

cooperativazefiro.it

Contact: Mirco Trielli,
mirco.trielli@gmail.com



BOGUS Lab, Italy

boguslab.com

Michele Bellana,
michele.bellana@boguslab.com



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