

Stand Up for Your Cause!

Training Curriculum on Advocacy Strategies for Young People



Youth Empowerment
for a Stronger Europe



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Context

This training curriculum was developed within the framework of the **YES Project (Youth Empowerment for a Stronger Europe)**, an Erasmus+ funded European project bringing together five organisations working with and for young people in the Czech Republic (Caritas Czechia), Slovenia (Caritas Slovenia) and Finland (Caritas Finland), as well as across Europe (Caritas Europa and YES Forum). The curriculum is specifically part of Work Package 3, which focuses on strengthening young people's capacity to actively participate in civic and democratic life. It responds to a growing need to equip young people and youth professionals with practical tools to engage with decision-making processes and advocate for issues that affect their lives and communities.

The curriculum offers a practical framework for understanding how local, national, and European decision-making processes work, and how young people can engage with them effectively. It builds on previous project outputs and complements them by moving from identifying societal challenges to actively influencing policies and systems.

Objectives of the training

To equip young people and youth work professionals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to effectively build advocacy campaigns and implement these on a local, national and European level.



Duration

This curriculum is structured for a three-day training, with around 6 hours daily, but it can be flexibly divided by Unit. The training flow is organized in 5 main units, plus a study visit.

Target Group

This training curriculum provides trainers with a structured flow for three-days training (approximately 6 hours per day – excluding breaks) aimed at young people and youth workers alike. It is designed to enhance their knowledge and awareness of advocacy and campaign building at the European and local level and to engage young people in these subjects. This curriculum can be used in conjunction with the Training Curriculum on Social Innovation and the EU developed as part of the first training.



Training Flow

Overview: Training on Advocacy Strategies	
Duration	3 days for full training, or use units individually
Group Size	10-40 participants
Target Group	Young People and Youth professionals
Expected Outcomes	
By the end of the training, participants should feel confident in their ability to plan and implement their own advocacy campaign at local, national and/or EU level.	



Units	Contents	Duration
Unit A: Introduction to advocacy and identifying an advocacy issue	- What is advocacy and how am I connected to it? - Differentiation to activism and lobbying - Which problem to work on? - Working with examples	2h
Unit B: Linking my topic to policy-making (local and EU-level)	- How does policy-making at local, national and EU-level work? - Where is my topic discussed politically? - Which political stakeholders are important for my advocacy campaign? - Stakeholder matrix	2h

Unit C: Making an advocacy plan	- Presenting and learning from examples - Roles in advocacy - Self-directed work	4h
Unit D: Using Photovoice for advocacy	- What is photovoice? - How to use it to advocate for your cause	2h
Unit E: Practicing your advocacy	- Exercise “I couldn’t agree more” - Presentation of advocacy plans - Making a road map	2h
Extra: Study Visit	- Getting inspired by the work of other active citizens, organisations and institutions advocating for change	2h+

UNIT A: Introduction to advocacy and identifying an advocacy issue

- What is advocacy and how am I connected to it?
- Differentiation to activism and lobbying
- Which problem to work on?
- Working with examples

Learning Objectives

- Setting the tone for an engaging, fun and safe learning environment during the training.
- Making sure the participants are comfortable with each other, establish a positive group atmosphere.
- Knowing participants expectations of the training as well as prior knowledge on the subject.
- Knowing what advocacy is and how to differentiate it from other forms of political involvement.
- Strengthen participants ability to identify and analyse a problem that can be addressed through advocacy.

Duration	Methodology	Material
20'	Welcome and introductions of trainers (5'). Presentation of house rules, training rules and safeguarding policy (10'). Overview of the training (5'). <i>The introductory session can be shortened and adjusted according to prior knowledge of the group. If you are using this curriculum after the Training Curriculum on Social Innovation and the EU, include a recap of the previous training here. Usage of memes and fun digital content can break the ice when talking about seemingly dry content such as training objectives, recap, and rules.</i>	Presentation slides

30'	Get to know each other 1. Connect and exchange your sticker 10' a. Each participant chooses three stickers from the ones present at their table. b. Then they stand up and find someone to exchange their stickers with. Whenever a partner is found, they introduce themselves with their name, organisation and talk about their sticker discussing the meaning of the sticker for them. c. The round is repeated three times until each participant has exchanged all their stickers. 2. Why We're Here 10' a. Everyone receives a sticky note and a pen to reflect on their expectations. b. The prompt is "What do you hope to learn by the end of this training?". The question is read out loud and presented through a PPT slide. c. Participants take a few minutes for silent writing and then call their cards on a wall. 3. Agree or Disagree? 10' a. Three sides of the room are designated in the following way: I agree, I disagree and I am unsure. Participants stand up. b. The trainer reads a series of statements and at each statement, participants will need to move to the side of the room according to their answer (agreement or disagreement). c. The content of the statement goes from more general youth and fun ones to advocacy-related topics. <i>This exercise allows trainers to gauge prior knowledge of the group in the field of advocacy and find out how comfortable participants are sharing their opinions.</i>	Stickers, sticky notes, flipchart, pens, presentation slides
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35'	Short introduction to advocacy This session is designed to transform the abstract concept of "advocacy" into a tangible set of tools for participants. The trainer opens by grounding the term in its Latin origin, <i>advocare</i> (to add voice), shifting the perspective from "complaining" to "calling out for support." <u>Exercise (10'): What comes to your mind when you think of advocacy?</u> To jumpstart engagement, participants are asked to brainstorm with their neighbours about their understanding of advocacy, using flipcharts to brainstorm. A few groups are asked to share their discussions. <i>Engaging in small groups first allows participants who are not comfortable speaking in front of a group to share their opinions, too.</i> The trainer goes on explaining how advocacy looks like in their own lives, moving beyond the stereotypes of just protests to include art, media, and even daily conversations. <u>Continuum Exercise (15'):</u> The trainer introduces a spectrum ranging from confrontational (left) to consensus-seeking (right) advocacy. Participants then stand up, form small groups, and are handed cards featuring real-world examples—such as Banksy’s street art, university position papers, or labour strikes. They must discuss and physically place these cards along the "A" to "D" line on the floor, sparking a debate on different types of advocacy.	Presentation slides with concepts, explanations and images; 8 cards as examples of confrontational and consensus-seeking advocacy; 2 pieces of paper, one marked “A” and one marked “D”
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The basics of advocacy (presentation) (10'):

In the final segment, the trainer provides a clear vocabulary for these tactics, distinguishing between the "Public Stand" (Activism), the "Loud Game" (Campaigning), and the "Quiet Game" (Lobbying). The distinction between activism, campaigning and lobbying is explained, at times exemplified through the advocacy work of a real-life NGO.

The session emphasizes that advocacy is a fundamental human right and a "watchdog" for democracy. Moreover, the trainer provides a short overview of the different stages of the policy cycle. By the end, participants see that even small local projects can scale into systemic change, leaving them with the empowering reminder that no advocate is too small to make a difference.

35'

Identifying & analysing a Topic

The trainer explains participants will be working on their chosen topic (e.g. housing or mental health) in small groups throughout the training. Participants are reminded of their topic or choose a topic/group to join now (5').

Please refer to the curriculum on Training Curriculum on Social Innovation and the EU for more detailed ideas on how to choose an issue to advocate for.

Participants then gather in their group around flipcharts to discuss the following questions (30'):

1. What topic will you be working on? Are you thinking of a certain aspect or the broad topic? Write your topic on the flipchart.

	2. What do you not know/understand yet about your topic? Where can you get more information? Collect questions in one corner of their flipchart. You can add to them throughout the training. During self-directed sessions, take time to research the answers. <i>If your group has the chance to do study visits at part of the training, the following question can be added:</i> 3. What inspired you from the study visits that you would like to use in your own advocacy campaign?	
	Additional resources - YES Project (2025): Training Curriculum on Social Innovation and the EU - EU Academy European Solidarity Corps Advocacy training https://academy.europa.eu/courses/advocacy/view?title=advocacy The policy cycle: - Plan (2022): An Advocacy Toolkit, p. 73. https://planusa-org-staging.s3.amazonaws.com/public/uploads/2022/03/FY22_YAG_Toolkit_PIUSA_FF_smlr.pdf	



UNIT B: Linking my topic to local, national and EU policy-making

Learning objectives

- Have an overview over the EU institutions and how the policy-making at EU level works
- Have an overview over local and national policy-making processes
- Understand who is responsible for my advocacy topic, how to go about reaching out to EU, national and local policy makers and where to target an advocacy campaign to.

Duration	Methodology	Material
60'	Linking my topic to EU level policy-making <u>Presentation</u> (45'): This presentation is critical for the participants to understand how the EU shapes their topic and how they best can make their voices heard. The presentation should include an overview of the key EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of the EU) as well as the competences of the EU – especially in the areas regarding the advocacy topics chosen. The role of the committees and the different roles within them (e.g. Rapporteur, Coordinator) should be presented. The Policy Cycle at EU level can also be introduced here. An overview of the key sources for finding out what is on the EU agenda long-term (e.g. Strategic Agenda of the Council), annually (e.g. Commission's Work Programme), and what is currently in work (Legislative Observatory) is helpful to introduce, too. The presentation can be rounded off by highlighting youth-specific initiatives such as the EU Youth Dialogue, European Youth Week, European Youth Event, Youth Policy Dialogues. Including quiz questions and research tasks help to break the presentation into different shorter sequences. See <i>additional resources</i> at the end of this unit for more in-depth information.	

	<u>Introduction stakeholder matrix (5'):</u> Present to the group: A stakeholder matrix helps you identify who is interested in your topic, who you should get in contact with and who is opposed to you. The stakeholder matrix consists of four fields helping you identify key players as well as such with low priority. For details, see <i>additional resources</i> at the end of this unit. <u>Group work: Stakeholder Mapping & Policy Analysis (15'):</u> • Which stakeholders at EU-level are important for our advocacy campaign? • Which current EU policy can I link my campaign to?	
60'	Linking my topic to policy-making (local and national levels) <u>Presentation (10'):</u> Starting from the political system you know best (e.g. the country you live in), present to the participants the basic knowledge necessary to successfully bring their topics to policy-makers attention. Points to cover include: Which topics are decided locally? Which on a regional/national level? How does the process work? Where to latch an advocacy campaign on to? <u>Introduction stakeholder matrix (5'):</u> Present to the group: A stakeholder matrix helps you identify who is interested in your topic, who you should get in contact with and who is opposed to you. The stakeholder matrix consists of four fields helping you identify key players as well as such with low priority. For details, see <i>additional resources</i> at the end of this unit. <u>Group work (40')</u>	Presentation slides. Flipcharts or paper for group work. Markers and pens.

	• Where is my topic discussed politically? • Which political stakeholders are important for my advocacy campaign? • Which current political programmes, laws, plans can I link my advocacy campaign to? • Fill in Stakeholder matrix <u>Reflection:</u> Short spotlights from the groups: how are they doing? (5')	
	Additional resources Understanding EU institutions: - YES Forum: Raising EU Awareness through accessible Documents for Youth. Infographics. https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects/ready-raising-eu-awareness-through-accessible-documents-for-youth/ Current EU plans: - Commission's Annual Work Programme: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategy-documents/commission-work-programme_en - European Parliament's Legislative Observatory: https://oeil.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en EU & Youth: - European Youth Portal https://youth.europa.eu/home_en - European Youth Event: https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/en - EU Youth Strategy: https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en The policy cycle: • Plan (2022): An Advocacy Toolkit, p. 73. https://planusa-org-staging.s3.amazonaws.com/public/uploads/2022/03/FY22_YAG_Toolkit_PIUSA_FF_smlr.pdf	

Local and national policy:

- UK Parliament: Have your say. How to get your voice heard by Parliament.
https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/common-s-information-office/leaflets/7165_cpt_pt_have-your-say_digital.pdf

In German:

- Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder-und Jugendbildung e. V. (BKJ): Advocacy-Arbeit in der Kinder-und Jugendhilfe. Wirkungsorientierte Handreichung.
<https://www.bkj.de/publikation/advocacy-arbeit-in-der-kinder-und-jugendhilfe-wirkungsorientierte-handreichung/>
- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2014): Kommunalpolitik verstehen: für junges Politikverständnis.
<https://collections.fes.de/publikationen/ident/fes/10667>

Stakeholder Matrix:

- European Youth Forum (2022): Advocacy Handbook, p.15-16. www.youthforum.org/files/230524-AdvocacyHandbook-150x240mm-digi_2023-05-25-092834_prmy.pdf



UNIT C: Making an advocacy plan

This unit is the longest unit and the core unit of the training. Ensure enough breaks for participants between sessions.

Learning objectives:

- By the end of this Unit, participants can identify a campaign topic and develop a concrete advocacy plan.
- By the end of this Unit, participants understand what makes a successful advocacy campaign
- Participants practice presentation/speaker skills.
- Young people learn about the different roles in an advocacy groups and choose which role fits them better.

Duration	Methodology	Material
60'	Skills for campaigning: Examples and brainstorming ideas <i>Important note: This part needs prior preparation: Ask participants to prepare 5min presentations beforehand (before the training or the previous day) of successful advocacy campaigns. If needed, provide them with a template, guiding questions or other materials such as flipcharts that they can use for presentations.</i> Inspirational input: Young people and youth professionals from the different partner organizations present successful examples of youth advocacy campaigns (5 minutes each) followed by a short Q&A (5minutes each) (50'). Participants then reflect in groups: the advocacy groups brainstorm which activities from what examples could work for their own campaigns (10').	
45'	Skills for campaigning: Advocacy roles The trainer introduces Advocacy roles (5'). The trainer explains the different roles needed for a team (Researcher, Speaker, Writer and Implementer). Then participants move into groups based on the role they are most interested in to learn about specific toolkits and guides under the assistance of an expert trainer (40').	

	● Researchers: Focus on data, laws, and checking if sources are credible. ● Speakers/Networkers: Focus on meeting decision-makers and working with the media. ● Writers: Focus on the "Message House" and elevator pitch. ● Implementers: Focus on SMART goals, activity planning, and managing risks	
90'	World Café Participants then rotate to share the skills and results they gathered in their specialist role during the previous session in a World Café style. Self-directed Group Work Session Campaign Planning Groups come back together to build their advocacy plans. They use the information they've gathered, with trainers available for support.	
90'	Self-directed Group Work Session Campaign Planning: continued	
	Additional Resources by Role ● Researcher <i>UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide</i> (Background & Context, p. 15-18) and <i>European Youth Forum Advocacy Handbook</i> (Step-by-step guide, p. 13-14). ● Speaker / Networker <i>UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide</i> (Networking & Digital Engagement, p. 28-50), <i>PLAN Advocacy Toolkit</i> (Meeting Decision Makers, p. 76-78), and <i>European Youth Forum Handbook</i> (Media, p. 21-23). ● Writer <i>Caritas Youth Advocacy Toolkit</i> (Message House, p. 21-32), <i>PLAN Advocacy Toolkit</i> (Good Messaging & Pitches, p. 54-56), and <i>European Youth Forum Handbook</i> (Writing Guide, p. 17-20). ● Implementer <i>European Youth Forum Handbook</i> (Planning & SMART goals, p. 13-53), <i>UNICEF Youth</i>	

Advocacy Guide (Engagement Spaces, p. 35-36), and
PLAN Advocacy Toolkit (Managing Risks, p. 61-62).

UNIT D: Using Photovoice for advocacy

Learning objectives:

- By the end of this Unit, participants know what Photovoice is, and how it can be used in advocacy contexts.
- Participants have tried out different ways to creatively take photos.
- Participants have some first experience of using photography to express their opinion on the issue they are advocating for.

Duration	Methodology	Material
2h	Using photovoice in advocacy <i>This is a short introductory session to photovoice. For a more detailed training on the photovoice method, check the materials in the additional resources section at the end of the unit.</i> <u>Introduction: What do you see? (30mins)</u> Lay the pictures out on the floor or across tables. Tell participants: "Choose a picture that speaks to you in some way & stand next to it. Make a small group (ideally 3-4 people)." (10mins) Discuss: (15mins) - What can you see in this photo? Why did you choose it? - Where might you find this photo (in a restaurant? A magazine? ...) - What do you think the photographer wanted to show or tell? How can you tell? - How, where and why are photographs used in our societies? Debrief (5mins): Important points to consider:	A varied selection of A4 printed photos, professional shots of landscapes, portraits, architecture, social situations, ... at least 10, more if more than 10 participants

- Photographs attract the attention way more efficiently than text, can induce a wide range of emotions and therefore have a bigger impact on individuals. We spend our days looking at small pics on our phones, big pictures still have a different impact.
- A photo without any caption can be very powerful but also leaves a wide margin of interpretation to the viewer, so there is no guarantee a specific message will be conveyed this way, hence the importance of adding captions in Photovoice to convey the desired message. There are other instances which demonstrate that pictures alone are not a guarantee of getting the desired impact: most of the time, advertising adds text to be more explicit, and even in photo exhibits the displayed photographs usually have a legend or at least a title to provide some clues.

Presentation of the method (10 mins)

Present the definition of photovoice, its core features, history and contexts for use. Highlight its use as an advocacy and empowerment tool. *Find resources for this in the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this unit.*

Photography basics (30mins)

Go through the most important elements of a good photograph, e.g.:

Perspective /Depth of the picture

Point of view

Lines and patterns

Black and white vs. colour

Colours and lighting

Conveying emotions

Also talk about using symbolism in photos.

Give the participants some small tasks to do to practice this, e.g.: Take a picture of an object from three different points of view; take a picture of people interacting, then of them posed;... (15mins)

Debrief and ask about their experiences. Did it encourage them to be more creative?

	<u>Presentation of the process (5 mins)</u> Present the photovoice process to the group and explain that you will be using this now to think further about their advocacy topics. <u>Photovoice Exercise (1h)</u> Present the research question to participants. “What do you want to tell people about [insert advocacy topic]?” - <u>5min, Individual reflections & Critical thinking:</u> Reflect on your own personal answers. Write down some key words. - <u>30min, Fieldwork:</u> Go out and take 1-2 photos to illustrate your answers. Add a short caption using guiding questions provided. - <u>20min Share Individual Selections:</u> In small groups, present your pictures to each other, and discuss these. Are there any common trends/themes? <i>Find a more in-depth description for this proces in the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this unit.</i> <u>Next steps (5mins)</u> Present how in a real photovoice process, participants would cluster pictures using categories of their own choosing, make a final pick and write more detailed captions collectively. Also present what to keep in mind when presenting these results to others: Who to present to? How? Where?	
Additional Resources	- YES Forum: VOICE Photovoice Tutorial, Online Exhibitions, Project Website: https://voice.yes-forum.eu/ - YES Forum: VOICE Handbook in English, Bulgarian, Dutch, Italian and German: https://www.yes-forum.eu/our-work/projects/voice-project/ (under “photovoice training resources”)	

UNIT E: Practising your advocacy campaign

Learning objectives:

- By the end of this unit, participants will feel more confident when presenting their arguments for their advocacy cause, also to people with differing opinions
- They will have practised presentation skills
- They will have created a clear roadmap for their campaigns and know how the group will communicate moving forward.

Duration	Methodology	Material
30'	<u>Exercise: "I Couldn't Disagree More"</u> The objective of this activity is to help the Young Advocates to strengthen their advocacy skills by practicing how to handle opposing viewpoints. The trainer introduces the exercise as a way to "stress-test" ideas. Participants are asked to work individually to write down one core message or belief about the issue they are tackling (5') Participants stand up and find a partner from a different working group. One person reads their statement out loud. The partner must immediately respond by saying, "I couldn't disagree more..." and then provide arguments against that statement. After five minutes, the trainer signals for the pairs to switch roles. (10') <i>Variation: It may be easier for participants to go together in small groups for this exercise.</i> The trainer brings the whole group back together to discuss the experience. Participants reflect on what they learned about their issue, which arguments caught them off guard, and what evidence they need to gather to be better prepared for real-world critics. (10')	

60'	<u>Presentation of advocacy plans</u> Every advocacy group presents for five minutes their campaign plan on a flipchart page in front of the rest of the participants (30'). After each presentation, approximately five minutes are dedicated to peer feedback and critical remarks from the trainers. (30').	Flipcharts
30'	Closing session The trainer presents the timeline for the implementation phase. Participants look at the key milestones for their local activities and campaigns to ensure everyone knows what needs to happen and when. (10') The trainer reminds participants of ways they will keep in touch after the training and where to get support. E.g. a platform like Discord can be used to stay in touch. Participants discuss how they will use the platform to share updates, ask for help, and stay connected. (10') Groups sit together to list their immediate "To-Do" items. They decide who is responsible for each task and set deadlines for their first local campaign actions. (10') Summary of the Roadmap: Phase 1: Finalizing the advocacy plan. Phase 2: Launching local campaign activities. Phase 3: Monitoring progress and sharing results	
	Additional Resources - Plan (2022): An Advocacy Toolkit, p. 77. https://planusa-org-staging.s3.amazonaws.com/public/uploads/2022/03/FY22_YAG_Toolkit_PIUSA_FF_smlr.pdf	

Extra: Study visit

Learning objectives:

- Peer learning opportunities
- Getting inspired by the work of other active citizens, organisations and institutions advocating for change
- Learning about different approaches to advocacy work, examples of successful campaigns and advocacy campaign design options
- Get inspiration about possible challenges in campaigning and how to overcome them

Duration	Methodology	Material
10'	Short presentation of study visits The trainer introduces the study visit(s), presenting briefly the organisation's work. The trainer presents the objective of the visits to participants: to draw inspiration for the design and implementation of their advocacy campaigns.	Presentation slides with logistics instructions
120'	Visit organisations Organisations visited should fit the profile of the training and be inspiring for the participants. Initiatives lead by equally young people are especially interesting. Get in contact in due time and make sure the places visited not just present their work, but also leave space for questions and discussions – with all the participants and informally afterwards. If visits are not feasible, try inviting organisations to your training venue, instead!	
	Additional Resources - Try local NGO registers, and ask around in your network for recommendations - Ask the young participants beforehand if they know initiatives/organisations they would be interested in visiting	



Imprint



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