

COUNCE VOICES EU Youth Dialogue

Initial findings from an Evaluation of Young Voices EU Dialogue 2022-2023



Co-funded by the European Union Written and compiled by Jean-Marie Cullen, Dermot O'Brien and Megan Atkinson on behalf of the National Youth Council of Ireland.

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Co-funded by the European Union







ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the young people, youth workers, youth work educators and policy makers who participated in this evaluation. Your enthusiasm and insights are valued and will shape Young Voices - EU Youth Voices into the future.



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Introduction

This report was compiled from the initial findings from an evaluation of the Young Voices - EU Youth Dialogue process in Ireland. The focus of the current EU Youth Dialogue cycle is Youth Goal #10 Sustainable Green Europe and Youth Goal #3 Inclusive Societies under the title "Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe".



Young Voices - EU Youth Dialogue process gives young people aged 15 to 30 and youth work organisations an opportunity to influence National and EU decisions affecting their lives. By using dynamic and innovative approaches in our engagement with young people and youth work organisations we fulfil the objectives of the EU Youth Dialogue. Encouraging participation, promoting equal participation, including diverse youth voices, strengthening young people's political engagement competencies and sense of belonging and ultimately their capacity to be changemakers.

Youth Participation as a Strategic Priority

Young Voices is implemented by the National Youth Council of Ireland in partnership with the Department of Children and Young People (DCDEIY) and the National Working Group on EU Youth Dialogue. It represents a strategic commitment to the principles of youth participation outlined in both national and European strategies.

Prioritising Youth Participation The EU Youth Strategy

In November 2018, a new <u>EU Youth Strategy</u> was adopted by the Youth Ministers in the Council of the European Union 2019–2027. The Strategy focuses on three main dimensions under the titles connect, engage and empower **and encourages** a cross-sectorial cooperation in respect to issues concerning young people. The Strategy includes specific annexes on the EU Youth Dialogue (formerly known as Structured Dialogue) and the <u>EU Youth Goals</u>.

Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue was first constituted in 2010 and it is an evolving model of youth participation with a dynamic approach to how it engages young people. Over the years, it has grown and adapted its model in an ongoing way, always with the objective of promoting young people's capacity to engage in decision making spaces and producing submissions to decision makers through EU structures, the EU Youth Dialogue process, the Council of the EU youth working parties and the council of ministers; and also national structures within the framework provided via Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures National Policy framework for children and young people (BOBF).

The next national policy will run from 2023 to 2028 and will build on the successes of previous strategies in improving outcomes for children and young people living in Ireland. It will involve Government Departments working collaboratively with statutory agencies and services, and the community and voluntary sectors to achieve the five national outcomes outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

BOBF Final annual report here

Young Voices as an Evolving Process

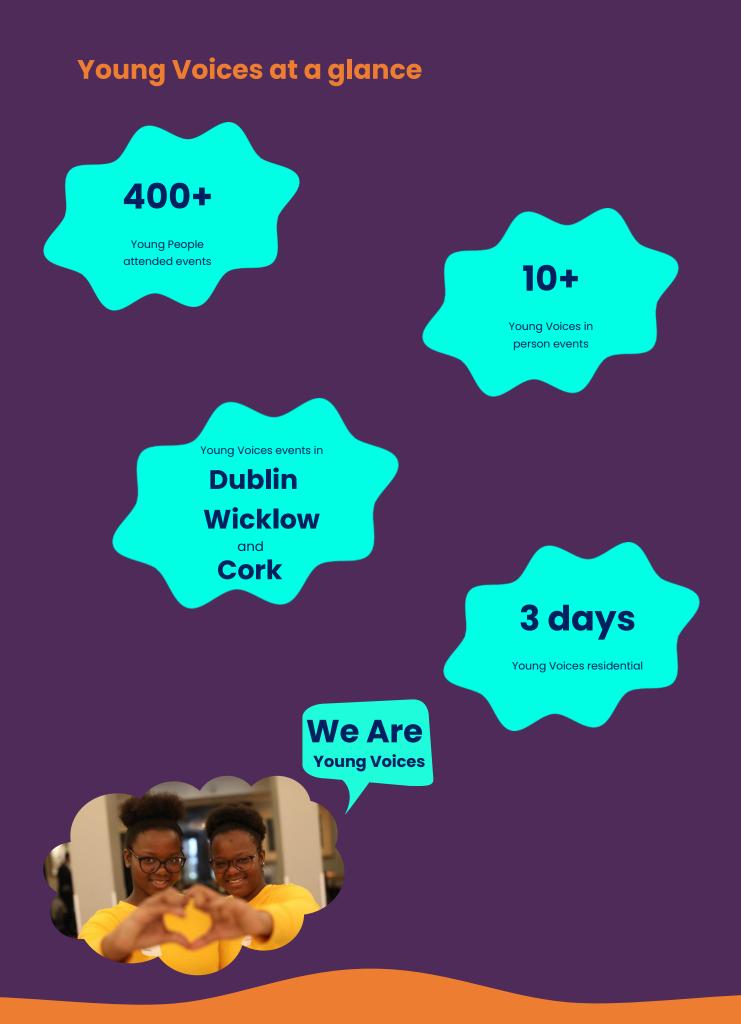
A key part of the Young Voices process involves facilitating youth delegates to attend the EU Youth Conferences along with DCEDIY representatives where they bring forward policy issues, and where their experiences and analysis are combined with young people from across the EU to influence policy at European level.

Within the flow of the 18-month cycle of the EU Presidency, Young Voices works on thematic areas that are impacting on young people across the EU. Young Voices explores the emerging issues by consulting as many **young people as possible and ultimately, proposing actions that might have a positive outcome for young people** at EU and National level.

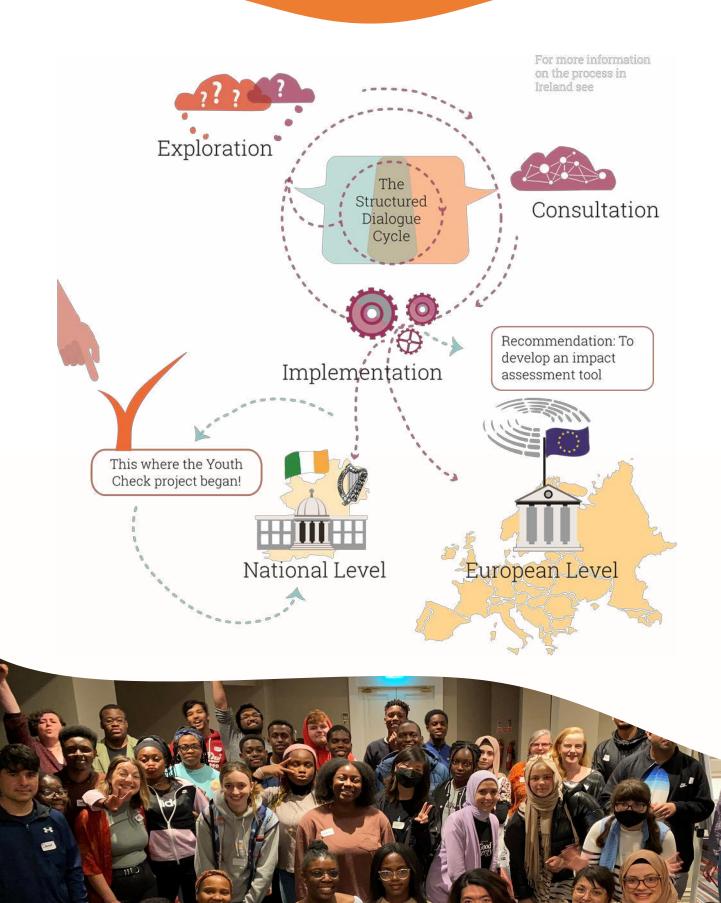
An important feature in the ongoing growth and development of the Young Voices model is the innovative **approach to how we respond to and inform the challenge of supporting the engagement of a diverse variety of young people. Young Voices**¹ offers group meetings, and online consultations, facilitates workshops and dialogue with policymakers, hosts international seminars, delivers tailored residential training courses, and offers one to one **mentoring**.



¹ For more information see the Young Voices page: <u>https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/young-voices/</u>



The EU Youth Dialogue Cycle



The EU Youth Dialogue Process

Young Voices is part of the European Structured Dialogue process that gives young people aged 15 to 30 and youth work organisations an opportunity to influence EU decisions affecting their lives. The EU Youth Dialogue process with young people is managed on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth by the National Youth Council of Ireland. It is overseen by the National Working Group, which includes officials from the DCEDIY, Leargas, youth researchers and experts from the National Youth Council of Ireland. The EU Youth Dialogue Working Group is—a national participation and consultation structure for young people.

It builds on the achievements of past dialogue processes (Structured Dialogue), with the aim of including more decision-makers and young people in the dialogue activities. Particular attention is given to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes and in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy. See Appendix 2 for more information on the planned approach to inclusion in the Young Voices model. It is a flagship youth participation mechanism at EU level aiming to bring youth voice to EU policy making. It serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection and consultation on the priorities, implementation, and follow-up of European cooperation in the field of youth.

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Objectives of the EU Youth Dialogue

The specific objectives of the EU Youth Dialogue are to:

- a) Encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe in line with <u>Article 165 Treaty on the Functioning of European Union (TFEU)</u>;
- b) Promote equal participation between young women and men;

- c) Include diverse voices and to ensure openness to all young people to contribute to policy shaping;
- d) Bring about positive change in youth policy at local, regional, national and European level;
- e) strengthen young people's' citizenship competencies and sense of belonging to the society and the European Union² (National Youth Council Ireland, 2020) (National Youth Council Ireland, 2020).



² See the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) available here.

Reporting

Background

This report details the finding of the EU Youth Dialogue process in Ireland 2022-2023. In Ireland, the EU Youth Dialogue is delivered by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) through the Young Voices programme. The EU Youth Dialogue process is known as Young Voices in Ireland.

EU Youth Dialogue is the European participatory process which, through cycles of 18 months over a priority topic, supports the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and ensures the involvement of young people in the decision-making process in the field of youth in Europe through an articulated dialogue between young people and decision-makers.

The 9th cycle is held under the Trio Presidency France – Czech Republic – Sweden, which started on I January 2022, lasting for 18 months. The thematic priority chosen by the Trio Presidency is: "A Sustainable and Green Europe". The thematic priority is therefore directly connected to the Youth Goals number 3: Inclusive Societies and number 10: Sustainable Green Europe. The aim of the process is to develop concrete recommendations on how to implement these Youth Goals at the European, national, regional and local levels. During the implementation phase of the cycle, these recommendations will be put into practice.

National Working Group

National Working Groups (NWGs) operate at a national level to organise and coordinate EU Youth Dialogue with young people. NWGs bring together decision makers in the field of youth and other policy fields, representatives of youth civil society, experts and practitioners, e.g. youth workers, researchers. NYCI has a lead role for Youth Dialogue in Ireland. Other NWG members include:

- 3 EU Youth Conference delegates (youth representatives)
- 1 government representative from the Department of Children
- 1 national agency representative from Léargas
- 1 EU Youth Dialogue lead Facilitator
- 1 Research representative
- 1 National Youth Council representative

Methodology

The methodologies used in Youth Dialogue consultations in Ireland were:

Training for youth workers:

- In person events with young people.
- Online Core group meetings with young people
- An in-person facilitators training with young people.
- An online training course was conducted by the NYCI with youth workers and youth leaders on the Young Voices Empowerment Deck.
- A residential event with young people.

National Youth Dialogue events:

• Online and in person events

9th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue

NWG Consultation Phase Report

Introduction

This reporting tool is used to National Working Groups the report the findings of their qualitative consultations to the European Steering Group.

Section 1

Overview of NWG

Contact Name: Jean-Marie Cullen

Contact Email: jeanmarie@nyci.ie

Country of Working Group: Ireland

Who was involved in your working group:

Number of youth representatives: 3

Number of government representatives: 2

Number of national agency representatives: 1

Number of experts: na

Other: 2 National Youth Council representatives

Total number of EUYD participants

Number of young people who meaningfully participated in EUYD activities:	234
In this question you should report the total number of young people who 'meaningfully participated in EUYD activities'	
This should include any young people who took part in a physical youth dialogue event, a virtual youth dialogue event, participatory visual methodologies, or any similar activity where the young person is meaningfully participating in dialogue with others for a continued period of time. Young people who only interacted with EUYD by completing surveys, opinion polls, or by leaving short online comments and reactions should not be included in this figure.	

Breakdown of participants

Breakdown of participants		
Gender of young people who participated	Number of males: 82	
	Number of females: 124	
	Number of other gender:9	
	Number of young people who were asked their gender but preferred not to answer ¹ :19	
Age of young people who participated	Number aged under 16:58	
	Number aged 16-18:83	
	Number aged 19-25:74	
	Number aged 26 - 30:14	
	Number of young people who were asked age but preferred not to answer ¹ :	
Number of young people with disabilities ²	Number who identify as not having a disability:18	
	Number who identify as having a disability:129	
	Number of young people who were asked about disability but preferred not to answer ¹ :29	
Ethnicity ³	Number of young people from the majority ethnic group: 60	
	Number of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds:82	
	Number of young people who were asked about their ethnicity but preferred not to answer ¹ :32	
Religion ³	Number of young people from the majority religious group: 46	
	Number of young people from minority religious backgrounds:85	
	Number of young people who were asked about their religion but preferred not to answer ¹ :44	

Sexuality	Number who identify as heterosexual:104 Number who identify as homosexual, bisexual or other sexuality:30 Number of young people who were asked about their sexuality but preferred not to answer ¹ : 41
Rural areas	Number of young people who living in rural or remote areas:17 Number of young people who living in towns, suburbs or cities:56 Number of young people who were asked about their living area but preferred not to answer 1:20
NEET	Number of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET):8 Number of young people who were either in employment or training or education:76 Number of young people who were asked about their employment and education status but preferred not to answer ¹ :35

Breakdown

of participants

A hybrid approach to Youth Dialogue events

As the pandemic evolved, Young Voices did too. We held both face-to-face and online events during this cycle. We see the benefit of a hybrid approach as it allows for wider participation.

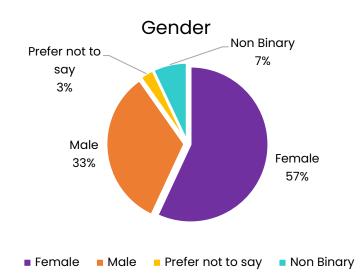
Number of participants

A total of 541 young people participated in the 2022-2023 EU Youth Dialogue process in Ireland.

Gender

In terms of gender, 308 participants were female (57%), 180 were male (33%), 38 participants identified as non-binary (7%) and 15 young people did not disclose their gender (3%) (see figure 1 below).

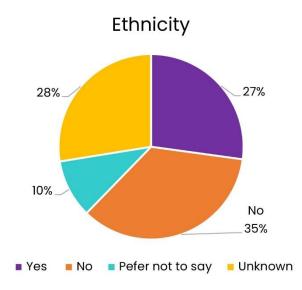
Figure 1



Ethnicity

In relation to ethnicity, participants were asked if they identified as part of an ethnic minority, 190 (35%) said no, 147 (27%) said yes they were minority ethnic and 55 (10%) young people did not disclose their ethnicity, while the remainder is labelled as unknown (see figure 2 below).





LGBTQI+

Participants were asked if they identified as LGBTQI+, 107 said yes (20%), 198 said no (35%), 76 did not disclose (10%) while the remainder is labelled as unknown (28%) (see figure 3 below).

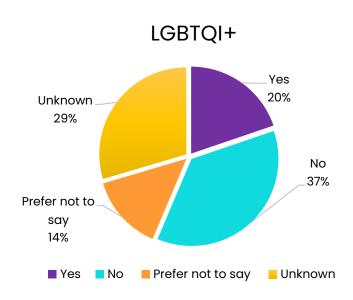


Figure 3

report

Section 2 Guiding questions report

Taking into consideration the guiding questions please report on the key messages from young people in relation to each of the guiding questions. If some guiding questions were not covered by your consultation activities, leave the space blank.

Sub-theme: 1. Information and Education

Guiding question: What are the key features of youth friendly information sources and learning opportunities for young people, on the topic of climate change and the link between climate change and social inequalities? If no such information sources and learning opportunities exist in your country, what should they look like?

Please report here a summary of general trends and information coming from young people.

We need accurate information informative simplified without bombarding and without complicated science.

We need to show that there are ways to contribute that are both big and small.

We need to show that anybody can go from bystander to activist.

We need to amplify the activities of those who are taking action on climate change.

We need to share stories of those who have been affected by climate change.

We need to ask people what they want and need in terms of information and education then we need to create practical workshops with examples step-bystep approach is to taking action. We need positive reinforcement for those who are still doing the action that they committed to in the past to show a sustainable approach to change making not just once off actions.

We need to support and facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

We must always look to multiply or scale up actions.

You shouldn't have to be involved in a big organisation or a climate organisation to do something.

We should prioritise workshops on the circular economy adjust transition and be mindful of the emphasis on individual action as opposed to collective action.

The school curriculum should be brought up-to-date in terms of information and education around climate change.

There needs to be accessible learning opportunities for people with disabilities and there needs to be a lifelong learning approach.

We need to tackle this information, fake news, false information, propaganda and manipulation.

The cast and access to education should not be a barrier for any young person. Where possible learning should be used to lead and peer-to-peer and it should always be inclusive.

We should support thinking outside the box, problem-solving, be future oriented and build capacity for critical thinking.

We should consider technology enhanced learning.

There should be community engagement opportunities.

Young people should be learning about adapting adjusting changing habits for example car ownership and consumption.

Young people should learn how to engage in political systems.

Young people should learn about nature based solutions, regeneration and well-being.

Sub-theme: 2. Action and Empowerment

Guiding question: What successful mechanisms and methods are young people aware of that ensure the needs of their generation are taken into

account in decision-making processes affecting their current life and future? If no such mechanisms exist, what should they look like or what examples from other contexts do you find useful and successful?

Please report here a summary of general trends and information coming from young people.

Young people should join or get involved in organisations such as, Macra na feirme, youth information providers, spunout.ie, students unions, Euro desk, Erasmus plus, local libraries, scouts, guides, eco-UNESCO, youth organisations, NYCI, rediscovery centre, local youth councils, social justice Ireland, Community co-op's, sustainable energy communities and youth activism movements.

Young people should have access to information about campaigns, events, forums so that there are genuine opportunities for them to take action and be empowered.

There should be an action dimension to education for sustainable development which is part of the school curriculum in Ireland.

Young people should have more opportunities to engage with forest schools and outdoor education.

Action and empowerment can happen through digital engagement which can cross borders and foster solidarity and connection.

Young people can find empowerment through intergenerational actions which would foster mutual understanding and build potential to co-create solutions.

We should recognise the impact of the Fridays for future protests and also support and harness the energy that is generated at these events.

Young people should be supported with tools and training that develop their competences around taking action and being empowered. Four example the ladder of accountability is a great tool for giving young people a perspective on how to analyse the actions of those in power.

Structures such as NGOs, the environmental pillar, sustainable development goals networks, EU youth goals, government departments and any entity which plays a role that contributes to a sustainable future should have concrete, meaningful, purposeful and authentic invitations for young people to get involved, to be part of decision-making and to play a role that is validated within the power structure of the entity. Recent examples of positive engagement for young people in Ireland include youth assemblies and national gatherings of young people along with decisionmakers and stakeholders through the National youth Council and other organisations.

Young people from our EU youth dialogue structure have presented proposals to government departments and ministries which has been positive on some level however, there is still work to be done in terms of concrete impacts on policymaking.

Ireland is in the positive position of having a dedicated structure which facilitates consultation with children and young people on behalf of government departments or other large organisations who are interested in hearing the voice of young people and including it in decision-making. This structure is called hub na nóg.

Sub-theme: 3. Governance

Guiding question: How can youthwashing be avoided in youth participation mechanisms, holding decision-makers accountable to what was agreed upon as a result of different participatory activities? If no such accountability mechanisms exist, what should they look like to be successful?

Please report here a summary of general trends and information coming from young people.

Stop using marketing methods to incentivise action, using giveaways and targeted advertising as a tool for engagement is not good practice.

Be wary of the echo chambers developed by algorithms on social media.

Youth washing can also be linked to campaigns which promote bias, stereotypes and prejudice towards those with different views. If structures of power are validating or encouraging young people to mock, undermine, demonise or reject the right of other young people to have their voice heard because they hold views that are not held by the majority that is risky territory. The credibility of structures hosting engagement or participation is important there must be an approach that is inclusive of young people from minority backgrounds or young people with disabilities et cetera.

Young people need to learn how to recognise hidden agendas or political agendas that are not aligned with the values of a sustainable future.

Youth participation must not perpetuate systems of oppression or exclusion that shame, polarise, create stigma or become inaccessible.

Structures of power which invoice participation should be able to show exactly how young peoples contributions or shaping new policies new procedures new approaches and change.

Structures that invite participation from young people should have an approach that promotes listening, caring, is supportive and supports and facilitates meaningful engagement.

There should be support for you to work and you to workers to help build confidence to engage and also support the journey of young people who want to get involved in change making.

Why do young people still think that they are powerless, this question must be answered by those in power.

We must ensure that minority groups are represented in meaningful dialogue.

In Ireland there are 400,000 civil servants at the heart of governance structures what are we doing with them how are we engaging with them or influencing them.

We must facilitate engagement with politicians who are interested or committed to positive change.

We need to take on board the challenge of how to navigate political engagement with election cycles. False promises harm young people's belief in politics, when things are hard at crisis point and urgency is paramount, time is of the essence. If politics betrays young people, the fallout will be significant.

Channels of communication between decision-making structures are global EU national and local level should facilitate engagement in policy-making and it should be evidenced when young people contribute. We should empower advocacy structures to have meaningful engagement with young people on one side and also have impact and influence on policy making at the other side.

"Exhaust the process before you protest ".

It is important to use accessible language and plain English in documents and any form of engagement with young people.

There should be more localised meetings with young people, Townhall meetings, mini citizens assembly meetings. There should be regular meetings with politicians at local level.

It is important to have genuine feedback structures whereby young people can give their view and analysis of the quality of their participation and engagement.

Accountability is critical when it comes to governance for example can we show that when we are developing policy that there is a clear emphasis on the human rights approach, as civil rights approach, and impact assessment on young people of current and future generations.

Sub-theme: 4. Mobility and solidarity

Guiding question: What helps different groups of marginalised young people to take part in different EU-wide mobility opportunities related to the environment?

This question was intended for consultation specifically with marginalised groups of young people. Please identify briefly which groups you held consultation with:

The strongest message around young people taking part in different EU wide mobility opportunities relating to the environment is that without recognising the barriers to participation, this is a very ambitious aspiration.

In order for marginalised youths to participate in a safe and comfortable manner we must prioritise the following.....

Tackling racism, oppression, xenophobia, misogyny, violence against women, systemic discrimination, language barriers, religious intolerance, equal

opportunities, health and welfare, digital poverty, acceptance of ethnic minorities in Europe, housing needs, travel restrictions due to citizenship status.

There is also a need for more youth groups for minority youths to facilitate this type of European mobility activity.

Sub-theme: Access to infrastructure

Guiding question: What key elements of infrastructure (e.g., transportation, housing, services, etc.) need to be accessible to young people in order to support them in living sustainably? How can these key elements of infrastructure work in synergy to support young people in living sustainably?

Please report here a summary of general trends and information coming from young people.

A sustainable future for young people should be built on access to and awareness of the following; eco-farms, organic farming, sustainable building, agroforestry, enhanced cycling infrastructure, investment in the improvement of public transport, I moved to hybrid or electric vehicles, free travel for young people, incentivise and facilitate cycling or walking to work school college, enhanced access to renewable energy options e.g. wind, solar, hydro. We should facilitate and incentivise carpooling.

In our consideration for a sustainable future we must take on board the the current way that society is organised and in particular the impact on the cost of living where it is suggested that sustainable living is only for the privileged. There is a lack of government support and incentives for sustainable living and it seems that sustainable energy options are often only for people from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

A sustainable future should consider the importance of the connection between rural and urban and in particular how we support rural communities to thrive.

We must place adjust transition at the centre of any changes towards a sustainable future.

Offshore renewables are an important consideration for Ireland.

We must promote and fund innovation in science and technology if we want to achieve sustainable living in our future.

We must commit to greening urban spaces.

We must tackle the threat of fast fashion and focus on sustainable fashion.

We must promote and incentivise zero waste lifestyle.

We need investment in the retrofitting of homes for energy efficiency alongside high standards for newbuilds.

In a sustainable future we must support small business which honours the principles of sustainable development.

It is critical that we don't price people out of sustainability.

We must address plastic pollution and air pollution if we have ambitions of a sustainable future.

See the report implementation phase here

See the final conference report here:

EUYD9 EU Youth Conference in Växjö, Sweden. Final Conference Report: Recommendations on Sustainability and Inclusion | Zenodo