



ICYE

Decolonise Together – Advocating for Youth Engagement

Brussels, Belgium

14.07.-18.07.2025



CONTENT

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Participant List

Workshop Programme

Minutes from each workshop day

Annex 1: Workshop Evaluation Results

VENUE

Generation Europe Youth Hostel

Brussels, Belgium

MINUTE TAKER

Simone Værnhøj Sørensen

FACILITATORS

Anja Stuckert (ICYE IO)

Camila Manique Silva Ferreira (ICYE Brazil/YEC)

Lucie Layaz-Carrasco (ICYE Switzerland/YEC)

Mariela Ortiz Suarez (SES)

Nicole Latorre (VASE/YEC)

GUEST EXPERTS

Pamela Osmani (QUEST)

Giada Martin (Alliance)



OVERVIEW

Continuing the path of several previous projects aimed at decolonising the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement, this advocacy training brought together 20 participants from 18 different countries representing various IVS networks (CCIVS, ICYE, SCI) to refine and carry out a concrete advocacy plan.

The meeting took form as a 5-day workshop on building the skills needed to advocate for more equitable funding, power relations, and distribution of resources in the field of volunteering. The ICYE Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) took the lead on getting participants up to speed on the existing policy papers and advocacy work in two online preparation calls.

As guest speakers and as a part of a networking strategy, our new partner organisation, the democratic education network called Quest, and the IVS network Alliance, both through their representatives, provided valuable inputs on advocacy. In further preparation, participants learned strategic communication skills, like storytelling, petition writing, how to structure a policy document and public speaking.

While Day 4 was packed with in-person advocacy meetings with relevant European stakeholders, the final day allowed for reflection and the compilation of lessons learned.

The group in the end sent suggested changes to the existing advocacy asks of the European Youth Forum (YFJ), which target the European Commission's Multi-Annual Funding Framework 2028-2034. This tangible experience in advocacy work will be taken forward into future advocacy work within the framework of our strong coalition of young advocates for decolonising IVS.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS:

Albanoi Retkoceri	SCI	Kosovo
Alp Aliyev	Viaje a la Sostenibilidad	Spain
Andreia Esteves	Quest	Belgium
Camila Manique Silva Ferreira	ICYE YEC	Brazil
Carina Herlo	VIA	Netherlands
Catherine Muguto	ZWA	Zimbabwe
Dempsey Alariao	Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency	Philippines
Gemma Solans Rodriguez	SCI and IFM-SEI	Spain
Guila Elisabetta Castellani	ICYE Italy	Ireland
Hana A.	INEX SDA	Czechia
Julia Kanas	CCIVS Youth Committee	Poland
Kati Lehtroos	ESTYES	Estonia
Lucie Layaz-Carrasco	ICYE Switzerland	Switzerland
Marco Cantarella	SCI	Italy
Nicole Latorre	ICYE YEC	Ecuador
Nour El hoda Fares	ICYE YEC	France
Simone Værnhøj Sørensen	ICYE IO	Germany
Sava Vracar	Young Researchers of Serbia	Serbia
Tanya Amaranta Möller Forastieri	SCI	Sweden
Téophane Patel	Woodcraft Folk (UK) and IFM-SEI	Belgium, France

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Day 1	Monday 14th of July
Time	Topic
09.00 – 10.15	Welcome Presentation of participants Workshop objectives and agenda House Rules and Safe Space
10.15 – 10.30	The ICYE Youth Engagement Committee (YEC)
10.30 – 11.00	Break
11.00 – 12.30	What are we talking about: - Advocacy and young people - Advocacy with a decolonising lens - Interview: Erasmus+, ESC, the MFF
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 16.00	Discussion with Pamela Osmani from our partner Quest: the Dos and Don'ts of advocacy work with the European institutions
16.00 – 16.30	Break
16.30 – 16.45	Grapheazy – let us talk
16.45 – 17.00	Evaluation
19.00 - 21.00	Intercultural Evening

Day 2	Tuesday 15th of July
Time	Topic
09.00 – 09.15	Recap of day 1
09.15 – 10.30	Strategic communication: a) Public speaking
10.30 – 11.00	Break
11.00 – 12.30	Strategic communication: b) Storytelling c) Petitions and letter writing
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	Understanding our policy asks – our policy paper to decolonise EU funding mechanisms
15.00 – 15.30	Break
15.30 – 17.00	Activity on policy paper - continued

Day 3	Wednesday 16th of July
09.00 – 09.15	Recap of Day 2
09.00 – 09.45	Prepare for session with Giada – what do we want to know
09.45 – 11.00	Interview with Giada Martin, Communications and External Affairs Manager of Alliance (online)
11.00 – 11.30	Break
11.30 – 12.30	Our advocacy strategy: what do we want to achieve
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	Preparation of the meetings with the experts from the European Parliament
15.00 – 15.30	Break
15.30 – 16.45	continued

Day 4	Thursday 17th of July
Time	Topic
09.00 – 11.00	Preparation of the meetings
11.00 – 12.30	Meeting with Camille Odent, Policy Assistant DG EAC and Erasmus Student Network
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.30	Discussion with Fausto Zaccaro, assistant to MEP Benedetta Scuderi
15.30 – 16.00	Break
16.00 – 17.30	Discussion with Laur Mihai Amanolesei, trainee with the CULT Committee
19.00 - 21.00	Dinner at Recyclart (Rue de Manchester 13)
Day 5	Friday 18th of July
09.00 – 09.15	Recap
09.15 – 10.30	Analysis of the meetings
10.30 – 11.00	Break
11.00 – 12.30	Next steps – how to continue the advocacy work
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	continued
15.00 – 15.30	Break
15.30 – 17.00	Final workshop evaluation

DAY 1: 14.07.2025

MORNING SESSION

1. Introduction to the workshop

Anja welcomed everyone to the Decolonise Together- Advocate for Youth Engagement workshop .

Passport exercise: Participants filled in each others 'passports' with information on where they come from, their organisation, their favourite food, a book they are reading, a place they like and a message they want to share. They then presented themselves and their 'passport' to each other.

Mariela presented the programme of the week.

Our safe and brave space:

Anja explained what a brave space could look like: it acknowledges different power dynamics. Creating a brave space helps us to be vulnerable and challenge ourselves and others in our thinking. Everyone brings their own valid knowledge. Everyone has their own perspectives and biases. We question ourselves and don't believe that we know *the truth* - we can agree to disagree. Participants then agreed on the workshop rules:

- Open mindness
- Listen assertively
- Intersectional approach
- Don't impose on others
- Be mindful
- Be punctual
- Mobile phones on silent



DAY 1: 14.07.2025

MORNING SESSIONS

2. Building a common ground - DecolonizeIVS!

Mariela then introduced DecolonizeIVS! - advocating for change and explained what youth advocacy entails. She gave examples of youth movements/ protests for political change, like “Estallido Social” in Chile, “Ni Una Menos” in Argentina, #EndSARS in Nigeria, pro-democracy demonstrations in Hongkong and the Fridays for Future movement in Sweden.

In the activity Take a Stand, participants then discussed several aspects of advocacy, highlighting why it is important for young people to advocate for their topics.

Anja then shared a presentation on how a decolonial approach to advocacy work seeks to negotiate power asymmetries by incorporating alternative forms of knowledge and normativity.

3. Interview

Mariela then interviewed Thomas Aubineau, a trainee at the European Parliament to gather his insights into the organisation of the European institutions. He explained that it is an important year, as the European Commission is presenting the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) on Wednesday (the EU budget for 2028-34) which the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union will discuss in the next months and need to approve.



Thomas explained that the MFF will define the framework for the funds, including what funds are available for youth organisations. As the negotiations are happening in the next months, it is still possible to advocate for new structures, how the funds will be distributed, or who can access them.

A challenge is that conservative and right wing parties now have a majority in the European Parliament.



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

showing people that there are new ways to look at an issue and that change is possible.



CHANGING POLICIES

influencing governments and leaders to write laws needed to bring about change as well as providing funding needed to put it into action.



CHANGING PRACTICE

offering new ways to do things so that positive change can take place in people's lives.

DAY 1: 14.07.2025

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

4. Presentation from Pamela Osmani from Quest

Pamela, Policy Assistant, explained that Quest is a network based in Brussels that connects pioneer schools and organisations from 27 countries to promote change in education. Their work focuses on democratic, inclusive, and sustainability education.

She shared in her presentation some dos and don'ts from her experience of advocating for change in the European learning landscape, highlighting e.g.:

- the importance of engaging in every stage of the policy cycle,
- to cultivate strategic relations with MEPs,
- advocate collectively,
- ground asks in lived experiences and
- giving the right information to the right person at the right time.



5. YEC session

At the end of the afternoon, Nicole and Lucie presented the composition and work of the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee and the main objectives of their action plan:

Goal 1: Engage young people before, during, and after their volunteering abroad.

Goal 2: Ensure the active participation and engagement of youth at different levels of the ICYE Federation.

Goal 3: Decolonise the narrative and language on volunteering in the ICYE Federation.

INTERCULTURAL EVENING

In the evening, the group organised an Intercultural night where everyone brought snacks that represented their country or community.

DAY 2: 15.07.2025

MORNING SESSIONS

After an amazing, performative summary of the last day, we started planning our messaging for the meetings with the external guests.

1. Creating a communication strategy

The participants discussed the order of how to build a strategy: Goals, objectives, audiences, formats, messages, implementation, evaluation.

Mariela then presented key communication objectives: Learning, community strengthening, media engagement. To share findings/ knowledge with specific people.

Public speaking

Before the online presentation from the YEC member Cor Encabo, the participants participated in a practical activity facilitated by Lucie on having to sell an object to others in the group.

During the following presentation, Cor highlighted the basics of public speaking and what this means for our advocacy work. She explained that advocacy work is not only about speaking skills but also the art of active listening.

Storytelling

Nicole Latorre, YEC member, explained what story-telling is about and how it can be used to connect the decision makers with the lived experiences of young people. Participants highlighted in the discussion that in the advocacy work a combination of narratives/ stories and evidence based data is important.

The idea of storytelling in IVS is to try to deconstruct the narratives of volunteering and develop new ones!

Petition writing

Anja presented information about what to take into account when developing a petition. For tips on how to write a successful petition, she recommended the website <https://www.change.org/petition-guides/create-a-petition>.

The participants then assessed different petitions and looked at the headlines, the images, the demands and decide what they felt positive and negative about the petition.

DAY 2: 15.07.2025

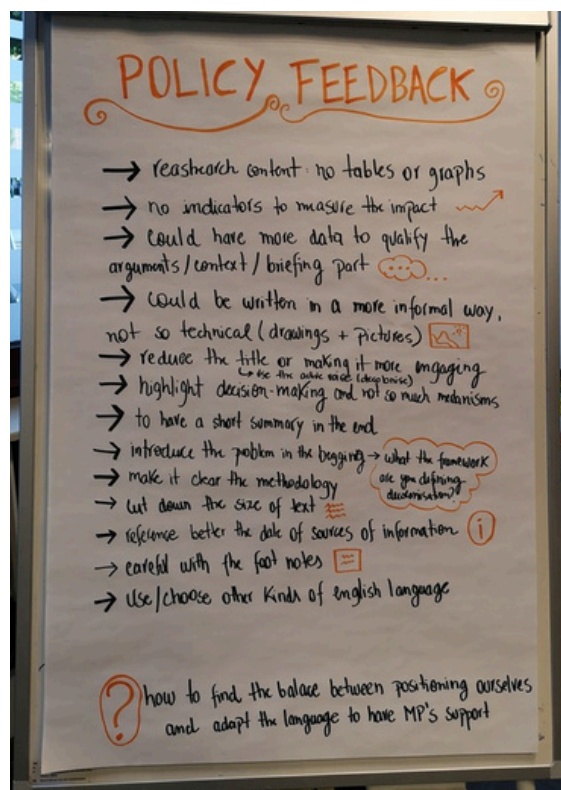
AFTERNOON SESSIONS

2. Revising our DecolonizeIVS! policy paper

The participants were divided into groups and went through a checklist to revise the policy paper.

Feedback on the policy paper included:

- the title could be more concise/catchier, like e.g. “empower youth by decolonizing funding”
- include a summary at the beginning
- include more illustrations, tables, graphs to make it more visual
- add dates for the references
- use British English consistently.



3. Preparing the meetings

Based on the communication with several MEPs and Commissioners from the European Commission (EC), only two Members of Parliament (MEPs) had responded and offered a meeting with one of their assistants. Additionally a trainee from the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) had also agreed to talk to the group.

The rest of the afternoon, the participants started to prepare these meetings by first researching more about the two MEPs and the CULT Committee. The groups also started to define the agenda for the sessions and the questions they want to ask.

The group preparing the meeting with the assistant of MEP Sabrina Repp, found information on Instagram about her pro-Israel stance. This generated a deep debate about the meaning of establishing a political relationship with her, as the group were mainly pro-Palestinian. Finally, it was collectively agreed to send an email cancelling the meeting with Repp's assistant.

DAY 3: 16.07.2025

MORNING SESSIONS

1. Giada Martin on youth engagement and advocacy.

In the online interview Giada Martin, Communications and External Affairs Manager of Alliance, shared about her own journey in IVS and communications and her work in the European Youth Forum (YFJ). She highlighted that advocacy work is not only about money but connections and bringing in new perspectives. When asked how Alliance decolonises their communication, she responded that the IVS movement in general lacks strong communication strategies and guidelines that include a decolonised perspective. When asked about which language to use in our advocacy work, Giada explained that it is more important to show the things we are doing and to provide concrete examples.

Her advice on how to challenge the financial structures, was to stay informed, to be present in the different political levels, to partner with others, to connect with the local context, to use the existing structures - MEPs have a duty to listen to EU citizens. Additionally to EU funding, it is key to diversify fundraising efforts and develop strategies to reach out to individual donors and other funders, like ethical enterprises. Regarding the MFF proposal, she has the impression that the National Agencies will push to maintain the funding for youth. She also believes in the power of the European Youth Forum.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

In the afternoon, the groups further prepared the meetings for the next day.



DAY 4: 17.07.2025

MORNING SESSION:

1. Meeting with Camille Odent

In the morning, the participants had a talk with Camille Odent, Policy Assistant Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). She had formerly been part of the Erasmus Student Network and worked as Blue Book trainee in the Commission on the topics of youth and education. When asked about this traineeship, she explained that you apply online through the [Blue Book portal](#), get shortlisted, wait for a phone call and get to choose between positions. A limited number of places are also allocated to non-EU nationals in specific Directorates-General or Services. From smaller EU countries it is easier to get accepted because of lower application numbers. Key is to have international educational experience and civil society engagement.

Regarding the negotiations of the MFF, she highlighted that the different directorates (DGs) take the basis of the former budget and see what they want to add and adjust accordingly. The EC also talks to diverse stakeholders to analyse the impact of the funds. The group shared that in their advocacy work they want to strengthen youth organisations in other countries as well and get funding for that. Camille sees this as tricky, as such a demand touches both on the foreign affairs and education agenda. As DG work in silos, it is difficult to combine EU-external and internal questions.

What is important for the EC, is the more citizens influenced by a policy, the bigger the political priority. Regarding who the group should address, she mentioned stakeholders from the cabinets, the commissioners for policy questions and the policy advisors responsible for the implementation of programmes.



DAY 4: 17.07.2025

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

After lunch, the group met first with Fausto Zaccaro, assistant to the Italian MEP Benedetta Scuderi, and Laur Mihai Amanolesei, trainee with the CULT Committee.

2. Meeting with Fausto Zaccaro

To start the meeting, Guilia and Nour shared their own experiences on decolonisation and how it impacts IVS. Fausto then shared that he did an Erasmus exchange in 2017/18 in Riga/Latvia. He shared that Benedetta Scuderi is a member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and a substitute in the CULT Committee and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

The group then shared about what Decolonise IVS is about and the policy asks developed in the programme. Fausto then explained the changes the EC is proposed for the new MFF - including a decrease in programmes from 50 to 16, with competitiveness and defense at the centre. For Erasmus+, the EC is proposing to include ESC while eliminating the youth chapter and its 3 key actions, including the corresponding earmarked funds of 10,3% of the Erasmus+ budget. This will hugely impact who will be able to access Erasmus+ funding and give universities with their resources and technical expertise a presumed clear advantage over youth organisations. The envisaged simplification and keeping the focus broad, will make it easier to later derail and to change the focus. Already there is a shift from citizenship, inclusion, etc. to skill development.



DAY 4: 17.07.2025

Fausto believes that the MEP will come up with a strong position against the EC proposal. This means that the Council of the European Union, i.e. the members states, will play a key role in the negotiations with the EC. He recommends to focus our advocacy efforts more on the National Agencies and national ministries of education and youth and also include our asks to decolonise the funding structures. He finished with a positive note, that the young people are not alone in this and that there are still strong democratic forces in the European Parliament.

3. Discussion with Laur Mihai Amanolesei

After the break, the group met with Laur Mihai Amanolesei, trainee with the CULT Committee and a published poet. In the CULT Committee he has been working mostly on promoting fair, inclusive and safe sport environments. The discussion also sparked concern among participants about how to use the word decolonisation in advocacy work, as many politicians may resist this conceptual framework. He shared that decolonisation is hardly discussed in the European institutions and recommended to always analyse well the target group before using words like 'decolonise EU funding,' while at the same time not shying away from the topic itself.

Before the EC proposal is discussed, the different Committees will develop their proposals. For this the CULT Committee will organise different events with stakeholders to get their feedback. The YFJ is one of these stakeholders.



DAY 5: 18.07.2025

MORNING SESSIONS

1. Next steps in our advocacy work

In the morning, the group collected the feedback from the meetings with the external guests and then divided into three groups to work on the objectives, audiences, messages and activities for the advocacy work that will follow the workshop.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

After lunch, the working groups presented their results. As objectives they wanted to ensure that the European Youth Forum takes decolonisation into consideration when advocating on the MFF; to strengthen awareness and collaboration among youth organizations at national and international level with a decolonial perspective and to decolonise the funding mechanisms of the Erasmus+ programme by including a dedicated chapter on non-EU youth organisations with a dedicated earmarking of a minimum 5%.

The groups identified the following audiences as potential partners or stakeholders:

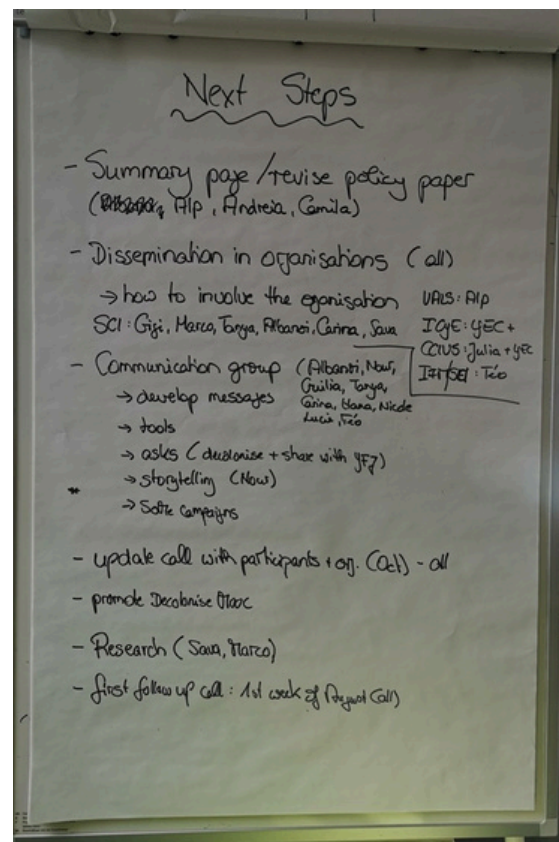
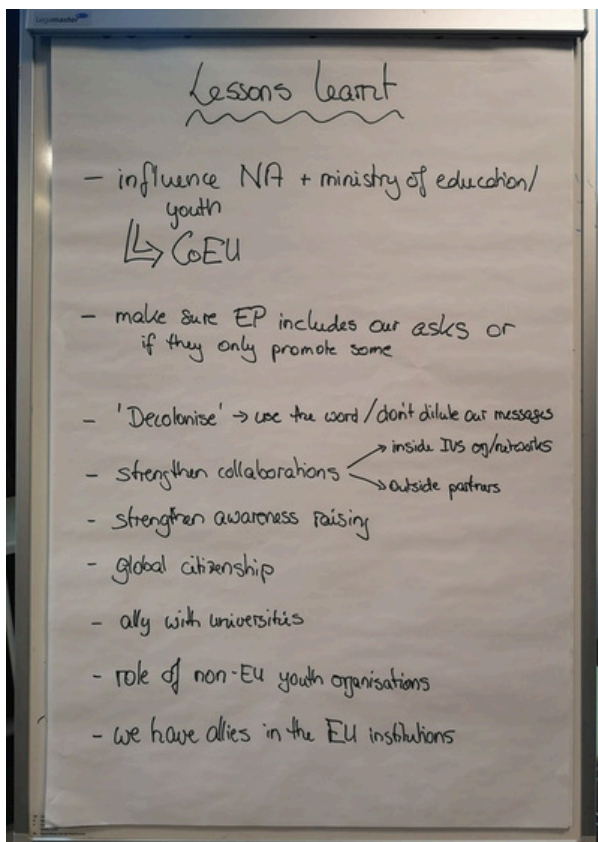
- IVS organisations: CCIVS, SCI, Alliance, ICYE members,
- External partners: YFJ, AISEC, Erasmus+ Student Network, youth-led and community-based organizations in the Global South,
- Target groups for the advocacy work: CoEU, NAs, national ministries of education and youth.

Proposed activities included: advocacy meetings, events to raise awareness, social media and storytelling campaigns, petitions, more research to back up the asks, intercultural dialogues.

The group then discussed the next steps which included revising the policy paper with the feedback from the week, dissemination about the MFF proposal and our planned advocacy work in our own organisations, to set up a communication group to work on messages, campaigns and to promote the Decolonise IVS MOOC.

The next online meeting is scheduled for the first week of August with another online call in October with the organisations to update them on the advocacy work and the advocacy activities as well as strengthening their engagement. In the first week of August, CCIVS is also organising a call with the IVS networks to define joint advocacy activities.

DAY 5: 18.07.2025



2. Final evaluation and goodbye

At the end of the workshop, the participants filled out the online survey together and gave in-person feedback on the workshop. In the feedback round, the conflict that the group had had among them was also discussed and recommendations on how to deal with disagreements, different opinions and the ways to mitigate these were shared. It was highlighted that uncomfortable and challenging discussions are part of our journey to decolonise our organisations, our mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. All agreed that this journey on decolonisation also includes standing in solidarity with all the struggles in the world without compromise when human rights are violated, like currently in Palestine.

ANNEX 1: WORKSHOP EVALUATION

The participants provided the following feedback on the training:

19 of the 20 participants answered the survey.

Out of a scale of 1= disappointing and 5= awesome, 16 evaluated the training with the value 4 or 5, while 1 was disappointed and 2 rated it as average. 15 participants had joined in at least one of the preparation calls, the majority of those in both. All feel they have benefited from the workshop, with the majority of 85% saying they benefitted a lot or a good deal. Key learning identified included:

- How to advocate for our cause and to have a potential impact on the decision-making process in EU institutions
- The importance of doing your research well before advocating
- How European institutions function
- The importance of partnerships for advocacy work
- The importance of strategic communication, public speaking & negotiations and petition writing and how to adjust your advocacy messages according to the target groups
- The importance of decolonising our work
- The importance of diversifying resources to not be so dependent on European funding
- About group dynamics and emotional intelligence

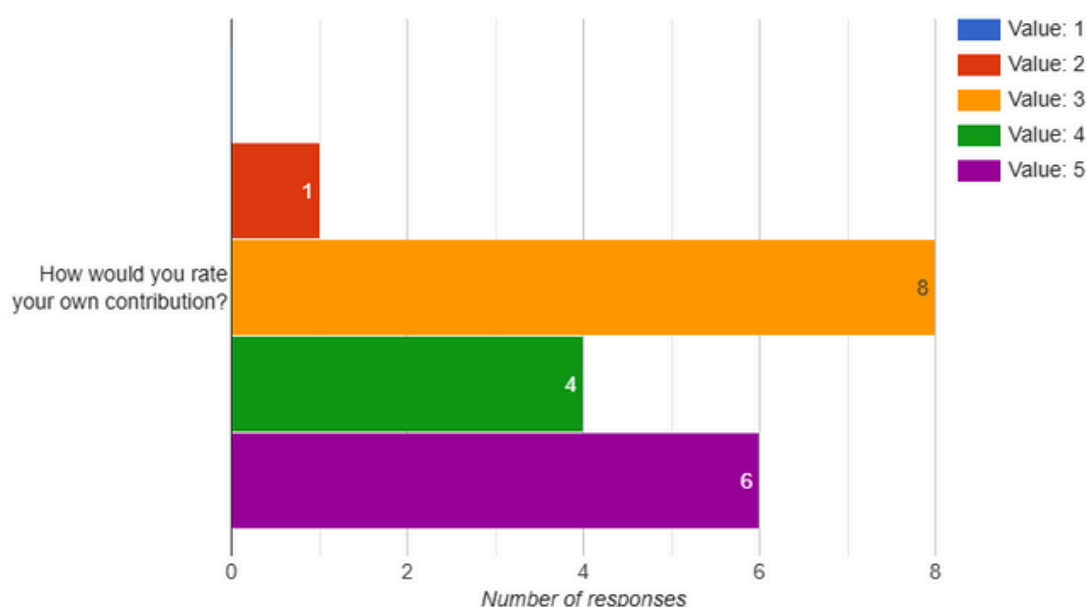
"I learned a lot about what advocacy is and how it is done."

Asked for their favourite part of the workshop, the respondents shared that they enjoyed the session on communication tools, the discussions with the different guests, the presentation from Quest and working with the participants in smaller groups.

"This training for me was an amazing space for not just learning but putting into action the learnings we got. In the meantime, working with this multicultural groups allowed me to understand different perspectives and ways to see the world, which I consider to be really enriching."

ANNEX 1: WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Participants rated their own contributions from 1 - very little to 5: a lot as shown in the graphic.



Asked about what they felt was missing and their overall comments, they mentioned that they would have needed a deeper discussion into colonialism and decolonisation at the beginning, more time to work on the policy paper, less online sessions, learn how to create digital advocacy materials (video, pictures, designs), more debates on what “indigenous” means, the fights and movements that exist today and how do we organise politically. One participant felt a visit to the European Parliament should have been organised and another missed an impartial facilitation from the trainers.

While some felt that the workshop was very well structured and there was sufficient time for everything, others felt the agenda was too flexible and time management was lacking and they would have like more space to build online content for the advocacy work.

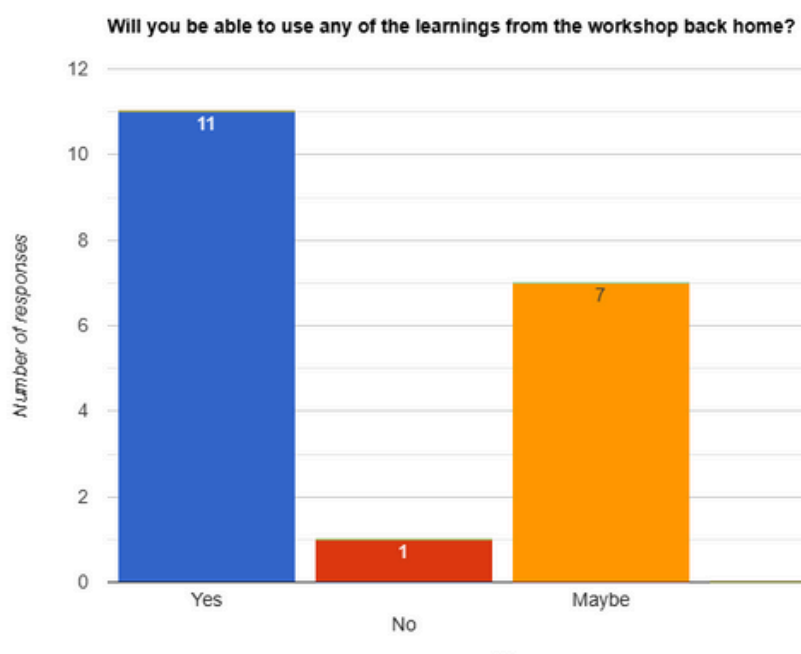
Especially the discussions with Fausto Zaccaro, assistant to the MEP and Camille Odent, from the DG EAC as well as the presentation from Pamela Osmani from Quest were highlighted as those session from guests that were most informative and interesting.

ANNEX 1: WORKSHOP EVALUATION

13 participants appreciated the methodological mix while 2 rated it as inspiring and 4 were neutral.

Most of the participants felt that they will or probably will be able to use the learnings from the workshop.

While 16 of the participants felt comfortable or mostly comfortable, one person did not and two felt there were power differences between participants from the EU and from outside.



"I did feel comfortable, listened to and valued for my opinions and contributions."

"I felt distant and disconnected from a part of the group, as I feel we have different priorities and interests, including when it comes to advocacy and how/what to advocate for."

When asked whether they felt that their understanding of youth-led advocacy improved, on a scale of 1= no significant change to 5= very significant change, 14 participants rated their change as significant or very significant.

While one participant did not feel motivated to continue working on youth-led advocacy in the IVS movement and one was not sure, nine are somewhat motivated and 8 are very motivated.

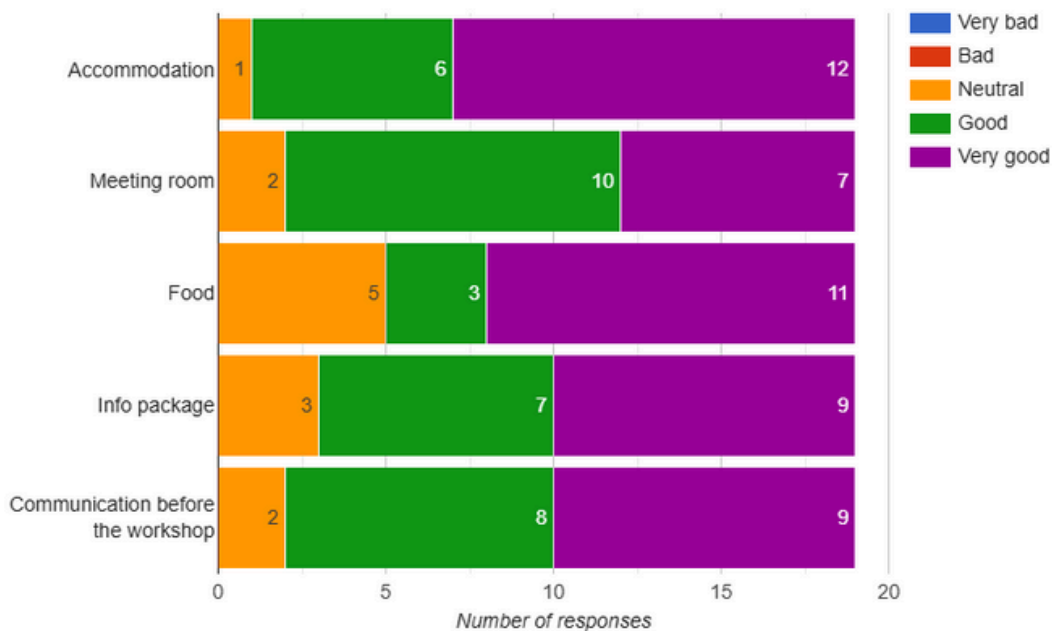
"Decolonise our mind could put us in uncomfortable situations, but could be a way to open new paths for paths for real solidarity."

"It was such a great moment to learn more about advocacy, youth engagement and public policies. To have the decolonised perspective was also a really important part to guide our position and actions."

ANNEX 1: WORKSHOP EVALUATION

The following main obstacles to continue participating were identified: time as many have other commitments and being involved in other activities, targeting the right people, the difficult political climate in Europe with right-wing parties gaining more influence, working together only online, engaging more people to join the cause

Regarding the logistics, the feedback was mostly positive.



From a facilitation perspective, working with the group was a deeply enriching experience, even though much of the workshop was shaped by discussions surrounding the cancellation of the interview with Sabrina Repp's assistant and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We recognize that working from an intercultural approach—particularly within a decolonial framework—means that global conflicts inevitably inform our conversations. In this context, we believe it is increasingly important to have tools and strategies for conflict management, as well as for facilitating inclusive, constructive dialogue where no voices are silenced or left out.

For the facilitators, this was also a space for learning. We responded to the concerns of several participants and adapted the agenda accordingly, placing a greater emphasis on the emotional and group climate. This meant creating more space for open conversation and reflection, even if it required setting aside some of the originally planned activities. We strongly believe that to work well, we must feel well, and this understanding of the group's needs is reflected in the results of the final survey.

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through the European Youth Foundation

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