



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Research report

Deliverable D4.2

Project title: Story Tours Alternative Routes - STAR

Grant Agreement Number: 2023-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000161553

Action Type: KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth

Date: 31/01/2026

Deliverable 3.1		Local tour-laboratory organised	
Work Package		Voices up: Advocacy and research	
Deliverable Lead		CENTER FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE ASSOCIATION	
Dissemination level		Public	
Contractual delivery date		31/01/2026	
Actual delivery date		31/01/2026	
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Project website		www.sci-italia.it/STAR	

This publication has been produced with the support of the partner organisations involved in the STAR – Story Tours Alternative Routes project. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, national authorities, or any funding body. The findings and recommendations presented are based on research conducted within the project framework and are intended to contribute to policy dialogue and the development of youth work practice.



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Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology (the “Tour-Laboratory”) as a high-impact non-formal education instrument for youth development and community engagement. The research draws on mixed methods, including a participant survey, organisational interviews, and youth focus groups conducted across multiple European and EU-accession contexts, including Albania and Serbia. The findings demonstrate that the EWT methodology generates measurable educational, civic, and social outcomes while simultaneously responding to key national and regional policy priorities.

The central problem identified by the research is systemic. Although the EWT methodology has proven highly effective at grassroots level, it remains largely excluded from formal youth, education, and cultural policy frameworks. This lack of institutional recognition and stable financial mechanisms confines implementation to short-term project cycles, limits scalability, and places the long-term sustainability and quality assurance of the methodology at risk. As a result, a youth work practice with demonstrable public value remains structurally underutilised.

Youth engagement and pedagogical effectiveness were exceptionally high, with **93.9 percent** of participants reporting satisfaction with their experience. Competence development outcomes were equally strong: **87.5 percent** of participants reported improvement in digital storytelling skills, and **75 percent** reported increased confidence in leadership and teamwork. Beyond skills acquisition, the EWT methodology demonstrated a distinctive civic and social impact. More than **81 percent** of participants reported deeper understanding of local context and social inclusion, and **62.5 percent** indicated increased motivation to engage with local social issues. These findings confirm that the methodology not only supports learning, but also cultivates civic agency and social awareness.

Qualitative evidence further shows that the EWT methodology operates as a place-based community intervention. Educational walking tours created new spaces for dialogue, enabled the documentation of oral histories, amplified marginalised narratives, and supported the reinterpretation of public spaces as sites of memory, identity, and social reflection. Across all contexts, the methodology proved adaptable, engaging effectively with sensitive local themes such as migration, social inequalities, political histories, and cultural heritage.

Taken together, the findings establish the Educational Walking Tour as a functioning youth work instrument that already delivers outcomes sought by public policy: competence

development, active citizenship, inclusion, and community participation. The principal limitation identified by this research is therefore not methodological, but institutional.

To address this gap, the report advances an integrated policy framework centred on four strategic pillars:

1. **Formal recognition and quality frameworks** to anchor EWTs within youth, education, and cultural policy and to establish professional and ethical standards.
2. **Sustainable financing mechanisms** to move EWTs from precarious project funding to multi-annual public support structures.
3. **Cross-sector integration** to embed EWTs within education, culture, tourism, and local development systems.
4. **Community and stakeholder empowerment** to preserve the grassroots, participatory nature of the methodology while strengthening organisational capacity and youth leadership.

Implementation of this framework constitutes a strategic investment rather than a new expenditure. For EU Member States and accession countries alike, formalising the EWT methodology provides a concrete pathway to operationalise the European Youth Strategy, particularly its pillars of Active Citizenship, Digital Transformation, and Social Inclusion. It also supports national youth strategies, civic participation agendas, and territorial development priorities.

By acting on the evidence presented, public authorities and donors have the opportunity to transform a proven practice into a sustainable public asset. Formal recognition and strategic integration of the Educational Walking Tour methodology would ensure that its documented benefits extend beyond isolated initiatives, enabling youth organisations, communities, and institutions to continue empowering young people as active contributors to inclusive, resilient, and democratically engaged societies.

Introduction

This chapter establishes the context, problem statement, research rationale, and structure of the report, guiding toward the evidence-based findings and policy recommendations.

Context and Background

The STAR Project (Social Transformation through Alternative Routes) is grounded in the critical role non-formal education plays in fostering youth agency, digital literacy, and community cohesion. Specifically, the project piloted the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology—also conceptualized as a "Tour-Laboratory"—as a tool for engaging youth in the co-creation of local narratives, particularly those related to social, historical, and often marginalized contexts. This research addresses the persistent challenge faced by youth work: translating its proven, high-impact results into formal policy recognition and sustainable funding.

Policy Context and Strategic Rationale

This research is anchored within a critical European policy context: the ongoing commitment to the European Youth Strategy (2019-2027) and the strategic goal of regional harmonization with EU best practices, particularly in the accession countries of Albania and Serbia. The report is thus situated not only as a study of youth work effectiveness but as a contribution to the national agenda of EU alignment.

The findings seek to demonstrate that the EWT model is a highly efficient, proven mechanism for delivering measurable results in Active Citizenship, Inclusion, and Digital Transformation—pillars central to both the EU Youth Strategy and the national development goals of all partner countries.

Problem Statement and Research Mandate

While the practical success of non-formal methods is high, a systemic gap exists between local impact and national policy recognition. The identified gaps in youth engagement and non-formal learning and how educational walking tours and digital storytelling—to foster local engagement and address gaps in youth participation can address the problem of youth and inclusion

The professionalisation and sustainable resourcing of Non-Formal Education (NFE) remains a critical challenge across Europe and its neighbouring regions. While NFE methodologies are proven to bridge skill gaps, they frequently suffer from a lack of formal recognition and support, a systemic issue that contributes to broader youth disengagement.

The Problem is twofold:

1. Lack of Formal Recognition: The EWT methodology, like many grassroots youth initiatives, operates without formal legal or institutional recognition, leading to its exclusion from stable public funding and quality assurance frameworks.
2. Sustainability Risk: This lack of recognition renders the methodology unsustainable, forcing high-impact programs to rely on short-term project cycles.

Identified Gaps in the Project Context (Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Italy, Spain, Jordan):

- Low Civic and Social Participation (Western Balkans): In countries like North Macedonia, a significant majority of youth describe themselves as socially inactive citizens, with an overwhelming 80% feeling they cannot influence governance, leading to a pervasive sense of distrust and powerlessness. Similar gaps in support for local youth initiatives exist in Albania.
- Skills Mismatch and Brain Drain (Serbia, WB): Despite recent efforts to improve digital infrastructure in Serbia, a crucial challenge remains: the disconnect between the skills acquired by young people and the demands of the labour market. This mismatch, coupled with a lack of job-relevant competencies, fuels the "brain drain" phenomenon, with a significant percentage of the Western Balkan and Jordan population considering leaving their home countries for better opportunities. The focus, therefore, must shift from basic digital *access* to advanced digital *application* in meaningful civic contexts.
- Marginalisation and Exclusion (EU Partners): For the partner countries in the European Union (Italy and Spain), youth work is increasingly called upon to foster inclusion and challenge discrimination against vulnerable groups, particularly migrant communities. The traditional lack of methodologies to create genuine, empathetic interaction remains a barrier to true social cohesion.
- Policy Recognition Deficit: Fundamentally, these challenges are compounded by a lack of policy structures that formally recognise the skills and social capital built through NFE activities, resulting in them being undervalued and under-resourced

The **Research Mandate** is to close this gap by:

- Providing robust **evidence based** on the EWT's effectiveness in youth development and community impact.
- Developing **actionable policy recommendations** that secure the formal recognition and long-term sustainability of the methodology.

The remainder of this report is structured in 7 chapters plus introduction and methodology as follows: **Chapter 1** provides the contextual and problem analysis, including the conceptual definition of the EWT and the country-specific statistical rationale. **Chapter 2** brings the contexts of the participating countries, **Chapter 3** presents the empirical findings from the collected data. **Chapter 4** synthesizes this evidence into a cohesive policy argument. **Chapter 5** presents the actionable recommendations for all stakeholders, and **Chapter 6** provides the final conclusion and vision for sustainable replication, and the last one, **Chapter 7** the Literature

Research Methodology

Research Goal and Objectives

The primary goal of this research is to move beyond documenting project activities by providing a robust, evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology for youth development. These findings are leveraged to develop specific, actionable policy recommendations for the formal recognition and sustainable resourcing of youth work at the local and national levels, with a strategic focus on alignment with the EU.

Proposed Research Questions

The research is guided by a tiered set of questions designed to move systematically from empirical observation to policy formulation:

Primary Research Question

How effective and impactful are educational walking tours as an innovative methodology for youth development?

Secondary Research Questions

1. In what specific ways do educational walking tours enhance core competencies (e.g., leadership, digital skills, civic engagement) and social inclusion among disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth in partner countries?
2. What is the impact of the EWT methodology on local communities, particularly regarding cultural preservation, grassroots dialogue, and the reinterpretation of public space?

3. What are the key policy and structural barriers currently preventing the full recognition and resourcing of youth work methodologies, such as educational walking tours, at the local and national governance levels?
4. What specific, measurable, and achievable policy recommendations (e.g., funding mechanisms, formal accreditation) can be derived from the project's evidence base to advance the recognition of youth work?
5. How do the STAR project's results and methodology strategically align with existing national and EU youth strategies (e.g., European Youth Goals) to validate its replicability and sustainability?

3.3 Research Design and Methods

The research employed a Mixed-Methods Participative Case Study approach. This design was chosen to ensure maximum rigour by combining the statistical generalizability of quantitative data with the contextual depth and explanatory power of qualitative data, which is essential for developing nuanced policy recommendations.

- **Interviews with Organizations and Youth Workers:** (Conducted: 19 Interviews from 6 countries). These interviews were critical for gathering high-level, strategic insights into policy gaps and proposals for improvement. To assess the impact across three levels—youth, organization, and community—and to identify the systemic policy and structural barriers (policy context, gaps, and proposals) directly from implementing partners. Used as the primary source for policy recommendations.
- **Focus Groups with Participants who took part in exchange activities (training and YE) :** (Organized: 7 focus groups, with approximately 48 participants in total). As a crucial qualitative method, the focus groups captured the subjective experiences of youth and youth workers, allowing for a direct assessment of the content, activities, and overall impact of the training in terms of empowerment and learning outcomes. The aim was to capture the subjective experience of participants during the tested activities and capacity buildings. This provided in-depth contextualization on *why* specific skills were learned, which activities were most impactful, and how participants perceived the shifts in their civic engagement. Used to enrich and explain the quantitative survey findings.
- **Semi-Structured Survey** with Young People (18 -30) who took part in any of the project activities at local and international level : The structure of the overall research indicates the need for this method to gather broader data from young people across the six partner countries, measuring self-reported changes in core competencies (leadership, digital skills, inclusion) and overall satisfaction. It is important as it would provide a necessary quantitative dataset to complement the in-depth, qualitative findings from the interviews and focus groups, lending statistical weight and reach to the project's findings for wider policy recognition. There is an

online semistructured survey with 39 young people from Albania, Italy, Spain, North Macedonia, Serbia and Jordan. Used to validate the qualitative findings and establish the empirical basis for policy advocacy.

- **Desk Research:** This method was essential for identifying "What policies exist... regarding tour guiding in both traditional and alternative tourism" and youth work, and anchoring the project's final recommendations in the existing policy framework. Implicit in the organizational interview structure, desk research is essential for establishing the foundational context of the project. By identifying "What policies exist... regarding tour guiding in both traditional and alternative tourism" and "What gaps or shortcomings remain", this method ensures the project's findings are anchored in the existing national and local policy framework. It is effective because it allows the project's final recommendations to directly target and strengthen the current policy framework and address specific challenges that negatively affect alternative tour practices.

3.4 Limitations of the Study

As with all applied and practice-based research, this study presents certain methodological limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the quantitative survey and qualitative instruments rely primarily on self-reported data. Participants' assessments of learning outcomes, civic engagement, and skill development may therefore be influenced by social desirability effects or subjective perceptions. While this is a common feature of non-formal education research, it may lead to partial overestimation of impact.

Second, the overall sample size, particularly for the online survey ($n = 39$), remains relatively limited and cannot be considered statistically representative of all young people in the partner countries. The findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than generalisable to national youth populations.

Third, participants in the study were already engaged in youth work and project activities, which may introduce a selection bias. The sample reflects motivated and active young people rather than disengaged or marginalised youth who are less likely to participate in international programmes.

Finally, the research was conducted across diverse national and local contexts, with variations in institutional environments, implementation modalities, and socio-cultural conditions. These contextual differences may influence both programme delivery and participant perceptions.

To mitigate these limitations, the study employed a mixed-methods design, triangulating survey data with organisational interviews, focus groups, and desk research. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings across multiple countries strengthens the validity and reliability of the conclusions. The results therefore provide a robust evidence base for policy-oriented analysis, while acknowledging the need for further large-scale and longitudinal research.

CHAPTER 2 – CONTEXTUAL PROBLEM ANALYSIS

This chapter establishes the contextual and systemic foundations of the research. It analyses the structural challenges shaping youth development across the partner countries, with particular attention to youth socio-economic vulnerability, the institutional positioning of youth work, and the evolving tourism policy landscape. It further introduces the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology, as operationalised through the STAR project, as a conceptual and practical framework designed to operate at the intersection of youth development, non-formal education, and alternative tourism.

The chapter serves three analytical functions:

- (1) to situate the research within current socio-economic and policy realities;
- (2) to identify cross-country structural patterns and gaps; and
- (3) to provide the conceptual grounding for the empirical findings and policy analysis that follow.

2.1 Systemic Challenges in Youth Development

Across Europe and neighbouring regions, youth development systems are shaped by a convergence of structural pressures: persistent youth unemployment and NEET levels, declining trust in institutions, and growing concern over youth disengagement from civic and community life. While most partner countries have adopted comprehensive youth strategies and youth guarantee mechanisms, implementation gaps remain pronounced—particularly in the translation of policy ambitions into accessible, applied, and locally rooted youth development instruments.

At the same time, tourism policy in all examined contexts increasingly promotes diversification toward sustainable, cultural, and alternative tourism models. However, these frameworks remain largely disconnected from youth policy systems and youth work infrastructures. As a result, an emerging sector with strong educational and civic potential operates in parallel to youth development policy, rather than as an integrated component of it.

The following country profiles illustrate how these systemic tensions manifest at national level.

In 2024, **Albania** continued to face significant youth inclusion challenges. Youth unemployment remained high (approximately 25%), and around one quarter of young people were classified as NEET. Surveys and youth assessments further indicate low levels of institutional trust and limited participation in formal decision-making processes. Albania's National Youth Strategy 2022–2029 establishes a comprehensive policy vision focused on participation, employability, and active citizenship; however, youth work remains weakly

institutionalised, with limited formal recognition, fragmented delivery mechanisms, and high reliance on short-term, project-based interventions.

Tourism is a growing strategic sector, and tour guiding is regulated through formal certification and licensing frameworks. While alternative tourism segments (eco-tourism, community-based tourism, hiking and cultural routes) are increasingly promoted, they remain governed primarily through tourism and environmental regulations. Youth development objectives, non-formal education approaches, and youth work methodologies are not structurally embedded within tourism frameworks, leaving educational and youth-led tourism initiatives situated between policy domains.

Serbia's youth context is characterised by continued labour-market vulnerability, with youth unemployment exceeding 22% in 2024 and persistent NEET levels. Although Serbia adopted a new National Youth Strategy (2023) and formally recognised “youth worker” as a profession, young people remain underrepresented in decision-making processes and community governance. Youth work structures exist, but their institutional anchoring, resourcing, and territorial coverage remain uneven.

Serbia's tourism legislation clearly regulates tour guiding and tourism services through licensing, professional examinations, and formal registries. Alternative tourism activities are legally subsumed under general tour guiding and tourism service frameworks, with additional sectoral obligations (e.g., safety, consumer protection, protected areas). Despite the growing relevance of rural, cycling, and cultural tourism, there is limited formal linkage between tourism development policies and youth policy instruments, resulting in weak integration of youth work and non-formal learning approaches within alternative tourism systems.

In 2024, **Italy** recorded youth unemployment of approximately 21.8%, alongside one of the highest NEET rates in the European Union. While labour-market reforms and the Youth Guarantee framework aim to strengthen transitions from education to employment, regional disparities and structural barriers persist. Italy lacks formal national recognition of youth work as a distinct professional field; youth work is primarily implemented through regional, municipal, and civil-society mechanisms, without a unified statutory framework defining professional standards, roles, and sustainable financing models.

Tourism is a highly institutionalised policy field and a central economic pillar. National strategies emphasise sustainable, cultural, and experiential tourism, with strong promotion of alternative tourism models such as slow tourism, heritage routes, and rural tourism. However, these frameworks largely prioritise destination development and economic value creation. Systematic integration of youth participation, non-formal education, and youth

work methodologies into tourism policy instruments remains limited, reinforcing the sectoral divide between youth development and alternative tourism agendas.

Spain continues to face acute youth labour-market challenges, with youth unemployment around 27% in 2024 and persistently high NEET levels, despite major national investments through the Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021–2027. Youth participation and inclusion are supported through national institutions such as INJUVE and the Youth Council of Spain, yet youth work governance is highly decentralised. Professional recognition, quality standards, and funding mechanisms differ substantially across autonomous communities, producing uneven access to youth work services and innovation.

Tourism policy, framed by España Turismo 2030, prioritises sustainability, diversification, and higher-value tourism experiences. Alternative tourism—cultural itineraries, creative tourism, and nature-based routes—is strongly promoted, particularly at regional level. Nonetheless, these strategies remain predominantly economic and territorial in focus, with limited formal incorporation of youth work methodologies or non-formal education objectives. Youth engagement in alternative tourism therefore remains largely dependent on isolated initiatives rather than embedded policy design.

North Macedonia recorded youth unemployment of approximately 30.3% in 2024, with skills mismatch and NEET prevalence continuing to shape national youth policy priorities. The National Youth Strategy 2023–2027 and Youth Guarantee mechanisms aim to improve education-to-employment transitions, youth participation, and local youth services. Although governance structures such as municipal youth offices and youth councils are formally established, youth work remains insufficiently institutionalised as a professional and policy field, relying heavily on time-bound civil-society projects.

Tourism policy aligns closely with EU accession and regional development priorities. National strategies emphasise diversification toward eco-tourism, cultural heritage routes, and rural tourism. Despite this strategic orientation, implementation focuses primarily on infrastructure, promotion, and market positioning. Youth development goals, non-formal education tools, and community-based youth methodologies remain weakly integrated, leaving educational and experiential tourism formats marginal within both youth and tourism policy frameworks.

Jordan's youth labour market remains under severe strain, with youth unemployment exceeding 40% in 2024 and high NEET prevalence, particularly among young women. The National Youth Strategy 2019–2025 positions youth participation, citizenship, and employability as national development priorities, supported by Ministry of Youth programmes and employment incentives. However, youth work remains primarily

programmatic rather than institutionalised, with limited codification of professional standards, competencies, or stable financing mechanisms.

Tourism is a cornerstone of Jordan's economic strategy and is governed by the National Tourism Strategy 2021–2025, which explicitly promotes sustainable, cultural, and eco-tourism. Community-based tourism, heritage circuits, and nature tourism are prioritised as tools for regional inclusion. Despite this, youth development objectives and non-formal educational methodologies are weakly embedded within tourism policy instruments, and educational tourism remains insufficiently articulated as a cross-sectoral field.

Cross-Country Synthesis

Across all examined contexts, a consistent structural pattern emerges. Youth strategies increasingly prioritise participation, inclusion, and employability, while tourism strategies promote diversification toward alternative and experiential tourism. However, these agendas remain institutionally disconnected. Youth work continues to suffer from weak formal recognition, fragmented governance, and unstable resourcing, while alternative tourism policies largely evolve without systematic youth development or non-formal education components.

This produces a persistent implementation gap between policy ambitions and applied, youth-centred practice. Specifically, there is a shortage of stabilised, place-based, non-formal methodologies capable of simultaneously supporting youth employability, civic engagement, and community development at the intersection of youth policy and alternative tourism.

2.2 The Educational Walking Tour

Methodology: Conceptual and Practical Framework

The Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology, as operationalised through the STAR project, is conceptualised as a **non-formal, place-based youth work approach** situated at the intersection of experiential learning, civic participation, and alternative tourism. It is grounded in the hypothesis that immersive, community-embedded educational practices provide a missing operational layer between youth policy objectives and local-level implementation.

EWT is defined as a methodology that moves beyond traditional tourism and information-based guidance. It positions young people as active researchers, narrators, and facilitators of local realities, engaging directly with communities, social issues, and lived experience. The approach integrates experiential learning, storytelling, and digital tools to transform urban and local spaces into environments for critical reflection, skills development, and civic engagement.

Core Conceptual Components

The EWT methodology is structured around five interrelated pillars:

1. **Non-formal and experiential learning:** Learning is generated through direct engagement with communities, spaces, and narratives rather than classroom-based instruction.
2. **Youth participation and agency:** Young people co-design, facilitate, and evaluate tours, positioning them as producers of knowledge rather than passive recipients.
3. **Place-based education:** Local environments become pedagogical spaces through which history, social dynamics, and community challenges are explored.
4. **Social inclusion and dialogue:** EWTs prioritise marginalised voices and lived experience, supporting intercultural understanding and countering stereotyping.
5. **Digital integration:** The methodology incorporates digital storytelling and immersive technologies to extend learning, documentation, and dissemination.

Expected Contribution to Youth Development and Youth Work Systems

At individual level, EWT supports the development of transversal competencies (communication, leadership, teamwork, digital skills), strengthens civic awareness, and increases confidence and employability-relevant capacities. It further facilitates reflective learning processes linked to empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility.

At system level, EWT functions as an applied youth work instrument capable of operationalising youth participation strategies, linking youth development with community engagement, and embedding non-formal education within alternative tourism contexts. Its replicability and adaptability position it as a potential building block for structured youth work frameworks and cross-sectoral policy instruments.

The STAR project was implemented through a multi-country consortium comprising SCI Italy, SCI Catalonia, CID North Macedonia, VCV Serbia, PVN Albania, and SSD Jordan. Activities were structured around two interlinked phases: capacity-building and pilot implementation.

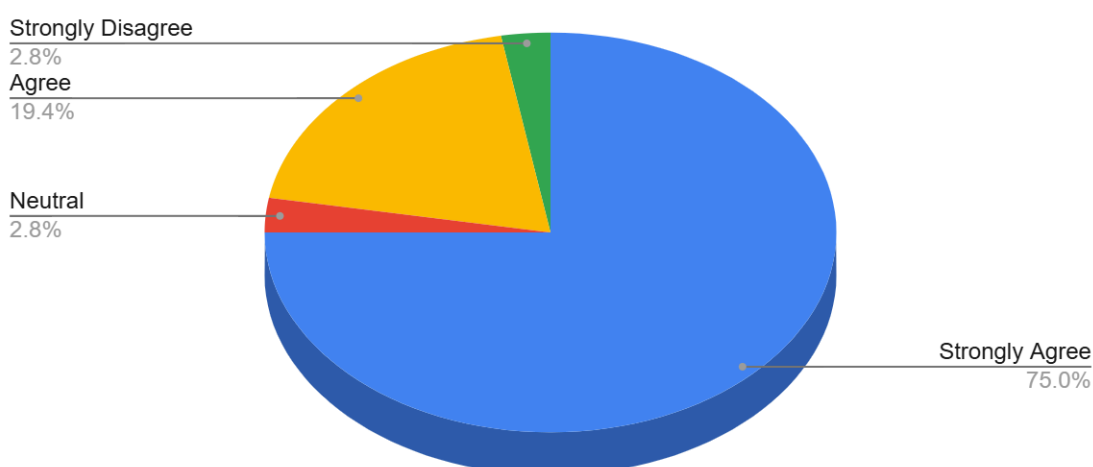
Four thematic transnational trainings focused on leadership development, walking-tour facilitation, storytelling and digital tools, and research and advocacy competencies. These were complemented by two pilot Educational Walking Tours in Rome and Barcelona, centred on migrant and marginalised communities. The pilots served as applied laboratories in each of the 6 countries for testing the methodology and generating empirical evidence. The results of these activities form the evidence base for the findings, analytical assessment, and policy recommendations presented in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Key Findings on the Effectiveness of the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) Methodology

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the STAR project’s participatory research, drawing on the youth survey, organizational interviews, and focus groups. The results confirm that the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) “Tour-Laboratory” methodology delivered high levels of youth engagement, measurable skill development, and meaningful civic outcomes, while also influencing participating organizations and local communities. Throughout, quantitative survey data are integrated with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive analysis of patterns, tensions, and implications. In summary, participants reported exceptionally high satisfaction with the experience and a strong connection to local context, even as some specific skills (like leadership and digital storytelling) showed room for further growth. These results lay the groundwork for the policy gap analysis in Chapter 4, underlining where policy recognition and support are needed to sustain and upscale this effective youth work methodology.

*Figure 1: An overwhelming 94% of surveyed youth **were satisfied** with their overall experience in the educational tour. The majority strongly agreed that the project was worthwhile for their personal or professional development, as illustrated by the distribution of satisfaction levels.*

Overall Satisfaction: "Overall, I am highly satisfied with my experience participating in the educational tour and the related activities."



3.1 Interpreting the “Tour-Laboratory” Concept in Practice

One of the first findings is that partner organizations embraced and redefined the “Tour-Laboratory” concept far beyond a standard guided tour. In each country, the concept was implemented as a dynamic, collaborative educational process rather than a conventional tourism activity. Several common interpretations emerged, emphasizing co-creation, experiential learning, and community dialogue:

- **A Space for Co-Creation:** Partners defined the tour-laboratory as a participatory *working process* where a broad variety of people co-create the tour content. It was conceived as “a workshop, a co-working space, and a laboratory” for collective storytelling rather than a one-directional tour. This meant youth and community members were not just an audience but active contributors, embodying the project’s ethos of youth participation.
- **Learning Through the City:** The tour-lab was viewed as an opportunity to experiment, learn, and generate knowledge through exploring the city itself. Rather than simply guiding participants, organizations focused on *learning by doing* – using research, dialogue, and reflection on-site in the community as the educational process. As one coordinator explained, it created a space to “learn from the place itself by walking, listening to stories, and interacting with the environment”.
- **Connecting Space with Memory:** A key aspect was linking physical places with collective memory and local narratives. This storytelling approach meant the tours highlighted hidden or marginalized histories of each location. Through walking and listening to personal stories tied to specific sites, young participants connected their own experiences to the broader community story, reinforcing their sense of belonging to those places.

Implementing this innovative concept required translating “tour-lab” in terms stakeholders could understand. Initially, some local stakeholders associated the word “tour” only with tourism, underscoring a potential misconception. However, partners reported that stakeholders became receptive once the educational and co-creative nature was explained. In one case, even though the concept was new, “local stakeholders were interested in this concept” and did not find it difficult to grasp. This suggests that clear communication and early engagement helped in positioning the EWT approach as youth work rather than tourism.

Local Context Adaptation: Each national team adapted the tour-laboratory to their unique political, cultural, and spatial context, demonstrating the methodology's flexibility. For example, in Albania the content had to navigate sensitive topics like historical resistance, migration, and feminism, requiring careful facilitation and ethical sensitivity. In Serbia, a polarized political climate meant the tour was deliberately designed to encourage dialogue without deepening divides. Meanwhile in Jordan, the approach was guided by the area's rich heritage and collective memory, tapping into the community's identity as a learning resource. In Italy, the team addressed social inequalities and gentrification in Rome by showcasing "a city of social struggle" often overlooked by traditional tourism. Similarly, Spain's team aimed to reveal a side of Barcelona beyond the gentrified tourist image. These examples illustrate that the local context was not an obstacle but rather the driving force shaping each tour's narrative. The EWT model proved capable of tackling contested or sensitive narratives (from migration to political conflict) by grounding the experience in local realities, thereby making the tours highly relevant to participants' communities.

Creative and Logistical Challenges: Implementing the co-creation process was not without challenges. Partners encountered logistical hurdles such as managing time and schedules for outdoor activities, obtaining permissions for certain tour stops, and coordinating groups in dynamic urban environments. These practical issues highlighted the need for strong planning when taking educational activities out of the classroom and into the city. Additionally, teams faced intellectual challenges: helping young participants structure complex historical and social information into clear, accessible tour content. Balancing emotionally difficult topics (e.g. war memories or migration stories) with safe and respectful facilitation was another critical challenge that required youth workers to exercise advanced skills in moderation and ethics. Despite these difficulties, partners noted significant creative successes. Notably, the process benefited from participants' personal backgrounds: youths' own stories and perspectives improved the tours by linking personal narratives to the collective community story. One team described that the creative process worked "super well", as young people's engagement and personal input enhanced the final tours. This outcome underscores that, even though managing a co-creative, non-formal learning experience in public space is complex, it yields rich results when youth take ownership.

In sum, partners across all contexts consistently reframed the EWT not as a typical tour but as a "laboratory" for experiential learning and co-creation. This process-oriented interpretation – focusing on local relevance, youth participation, and collective storytelling – is central to the methodology's success. It demonstrates that the value of the EWT lies not only in the tour event itself but in the empowering process of researching, dialoguing, and creating together. This finding is important going forward, as it suggests that any policy framework should recognize the EWT as a form of non-formal education and youth

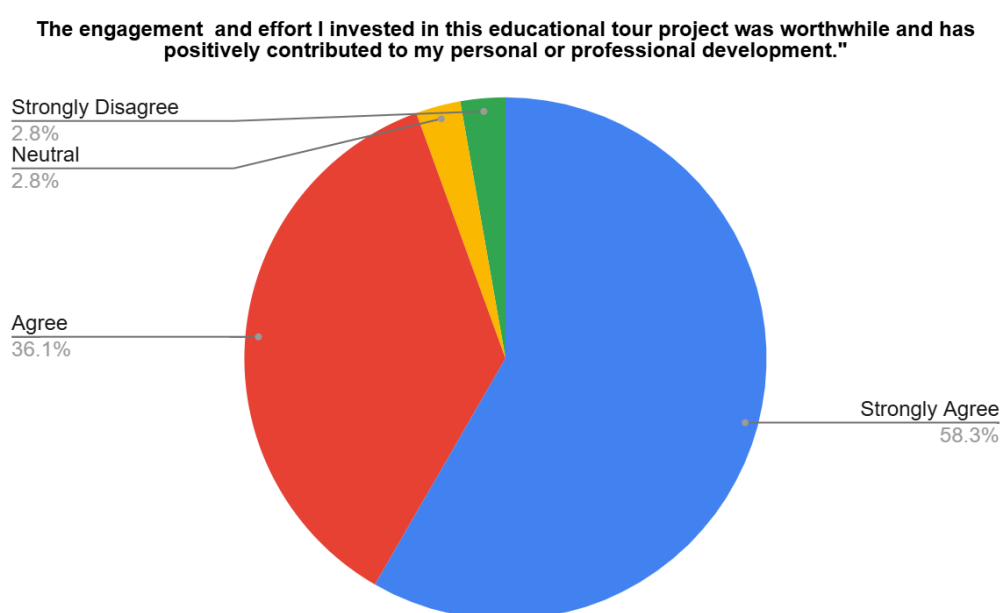
engagement (rather than tourism), highlighting its flexibility to address local issues and foster civic participation.

3.2 Youth Development and Skill Acquisition

The EWT “tour-laboratory” proved to be an effective educational framework for youth, resulting in measurable gains in both soft skills and hard skills, and bolstering participants’ confidence and empowerment. Survey responses provide strong quantitative evidence of these outcomes, while interviews and focus groups offer insight into how and why these skills were developed. This section examines key skill-development findings – including participants’ self-assessed improvements, the value they place on these skills for the future (employability), and areas for further growth.

High Engagement and Perceived Value: The vast majority of participants felt deeply engaged in the project and found the experience valuable for their personal growth. Nearly all respondents agreed that the effort they invested was “worthwhile” for their development. As Figure 2 illustrates, about 94% of youth either agreed or strongly agreed that participating in the tour-lab contributed positively to their personal or professional development. This extremely high level of endorsement indicates that the EWT methodology succeeded in capturing youths’ interest and time in a meaningful way.

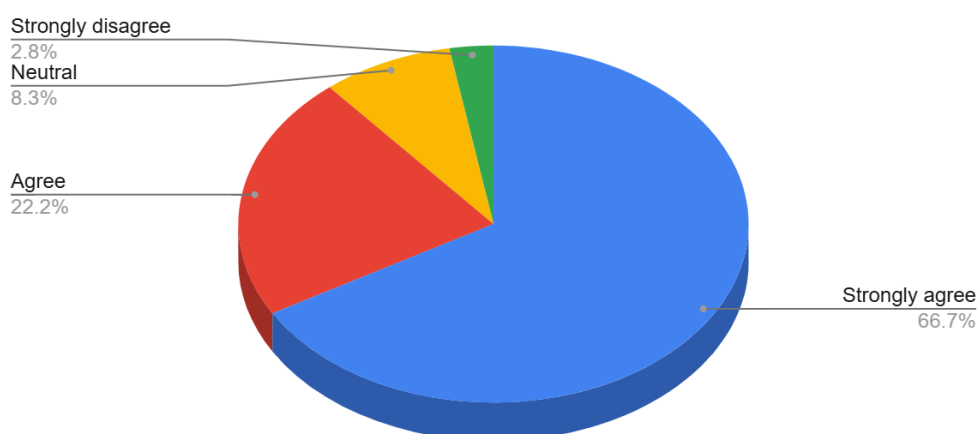
Figure 2



Participants viewed the hands-on format as more rewarding than traditional learning: indeed, 88.9% indicated that the *co-creative, hands-on approach* made the learning experience more valuable than a conventional classroom lesson (Figure 2). The fact that so many young people preferred this experiential methodology underscores its pedagogical strength in engaging learners who might not thrive in formal education settings.

Figure 3: Nearly 89% of participants found the hands-on, co-creation approach of the tour-laboratory more valuable than a traditional lecture or class, confirming the high pedagogical value of experiential, participatory learning.

Tour Format Value: "The hands-on, co-creation approach of designing the tour made the learning experience more valuable than a traditional lecture or classroom lesson."



Improvements in Digital and Leadership Skills: A core objective of the STAR project was to help youth acquire practical skills like digital storytelling and teamwork. Survey results show a majority of participants did improve these skills, though the degree of confidence in improvement varied. For example, 86% of respondents overall agreed (to some extent) that their ability to use digital tools for storytelling had improved as a result of the project (Figure 4). Likewise, approximately 89% indicated gains in leadership and teamwork confidence (Figure 5). However, it is notable that the subset of participants who fully endorsed these improvements – i.e. those who *strongly* agreed their skills had “significantly improved” – was more limited (around 38–42% for digital skills, and about one-third for leadership/teamwork skills). In interviews, youth workers observed that some participants were initially less confident in these areas and that a short pilot project can only begin to build such competencies. This suggests that while the trend in skill gain is positive for most youths, many participants felt there was still room to grow further in leadership and digital storytelling abilities. One youth worker reflected that young people “not only learned new content but also developed confidence, leadership, and a sense of responsibility toward the

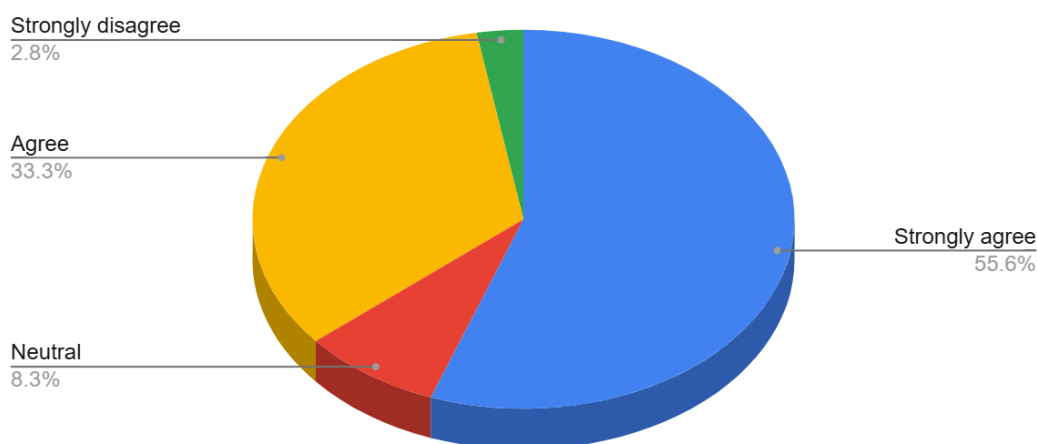
stories they shared”, highlighting the qualitative dimension of these skills. At the same time, the moderate self-assessment of skill gains (with fewer than half feeling *strongly* confident in their new digital or leadership skills) signals a desire among participants for deeper or longer training in these areas. It implies that extended programs or follow-up activities might be needed to translate initial skill acquisition into full confidence and mastery.

Figure 4: Digital Storytelling Skills – Distribution of responses to “My skills in using digital tools for storytelling have significantly improved.” Most participants noted some improvement, with ~39% strongly feeling a significant skills boost. A considerable portion agreed more modestly, suggesting many youths saw improvement but still hoped to develop further.



Figure 5: Leadership & Teamwork Skills – Distribution of responses to “I feel more confident in my ability to take initiative and work with a team after the tour.” While the majority experienced increased confidence, only about one-third gave the strongest affirmation, indicating that truly transformational gains in leadership may require more sustained engagement.

Leadership & Co-creation: "I feel more confident in my ability to take initiative and work with a team (leadership/teamwork skills) after participating in the tour-laboratory process."



Qualitative insights on skill gains reinforce these survey findings. Youth workers across partner organizations consistently reported that participants gained a range of practical and soft skills through the process. As one Albanian team member observed, youths learned “how to tell stories, work in teams, communicate better, and use digital tools”. Similarly, a Jordanian participant summarized the experience: “Yes, we learned how to tell stories, work in teams, communicate better, and use digital tools” (emphasizing the same set of skills). Such testimonies underline that the EWT nurtured *transferable skills* like communication, collaboration, and digital content creation – competencies that are highly relevant to both civic life and employability in the modern labor market. In addition, partners noted growth in more cognitive and attitudinal skills: critical thinking and creativity were frequently mentioned. The long-term impact, as described by one Spanish youth worker, is to foster *critical citizens* – experiences like this tour can “equip youth to actively participate in their communities” by enhancing their critical thinking, creativity, and civic engagement. This emphasizes that beyond technical skills, the methodology cultivates a mindset of agency and critical reflection among young people, preparing them to be active, responsible citizens.

Empowerment and Ownership: Another significant outcome was the sense of empowerment and ownership youth felt through the co-creative process. Focus group discussions revealed that participants took pride in creating the tours and gained confidence from having their voices heard. For instance, in Spain, youth reported becoming “more confident, curious, and engaged” as they took ownership of storytelling initiatives. The act of contributing their personal narratives and ideas made them stakeholders in the project. This empowerment is also reflected in how participants connected personally with public spaces: the greatest success, one group noted, was seeing how *their own backgrounds and*

experiences could shape and improve the tours. In other words, the project validated young people's lived experiences as valuable contributions to community narratives. By linking personal stories to the community story, the EWT model fostered a stronger sense of belonging and personal investment in local heritage.

Moreover, engaging with complex local history required youth to exercise and develop intellectual skills. Youth workers commented on how participants learned to simplify and communicate complex topics to the public, which built their capacity for research and critical thinking. As one Albanian facilitator noted, a key challenge was helping youth “structure complex historical and social topics in a clear and accessible way” – a challenge they largely overcame through guidance and practice. Mastering this not only improved their content understanding but also their confidence in public speaking and facilitation.

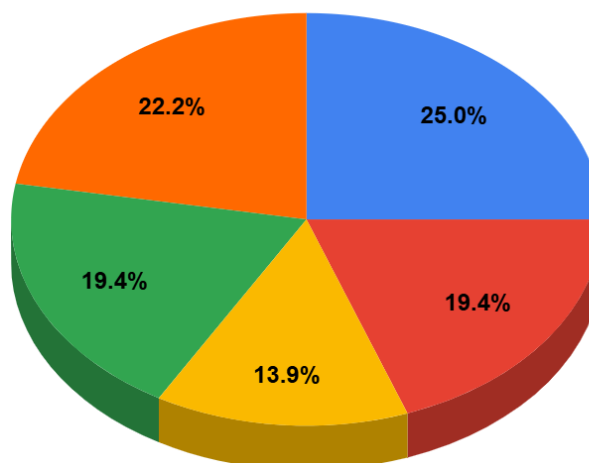
Priority Skills for the Future: The survey asked young participants which single skill or learning outcome from the tour they believed would be most useful in the next five years – a proxy for which competencies they personally value for their future education or career. The results (Figure 5) show a clear preference for critical thinking/research skills (25%) as the top anticipated asset, followed closely by teamwork and project coordination (22.2%). Digital storytelling and content creation was the next most selected (19.4%), tied with deep understanding of local inclusion issues (19.4%), and followed by non-formal education facilitation skills (13.9%). This ranking reveals that participants prioritize a mix of cognitive skills (critical thinking/research), collaboration skills (teamwork), and digital content skills for their futures. Notably, the more contextual or social awareness outcomes (learning about local inclusion issues) were slightly less commonly chosen as “most useful,” even though, as discussed in Section 3.3, those were areas of very high agreement in the survey. In other words, youth overwhelmingly *agreed* the tour taught them about local history and inclusion (see Section 3.3), but when forced to pick the single most valuable outcome, many gravitated instead toward skills that might be more broadly applicable to their academic or professional life (like critical thinking or digital creation). This suggests that while social/contextual learning was appreciated, participants view technical and soft skills gained during the project as particularly transferable to future opportunities (education, jobs, civic projects). It may also indicate a desire among youth for even more development in those technical and professional skills areas, as they recognize their value for employability.

Figure 6: Most Valuable Skill for the Next Five Years – Participants selected the single skill or outcome from the tour they expect to be most useful in their near future. Critical thinking and research emerged as the top choice (25% of respondents), followed by teamwork/project coordination (22%) and digital storytelling/content creation (19%). Understanding of local inclusion issues and non-formal facilitation skills were also valued by

many (19% and 14% respectively). This distribution reflects youths' emphasis on both cognitive and technical skills for their future.

Most Valuable Skill: "Which specific skill or learning outcome from the tour do you believe will be most useful to you in the next five years?"

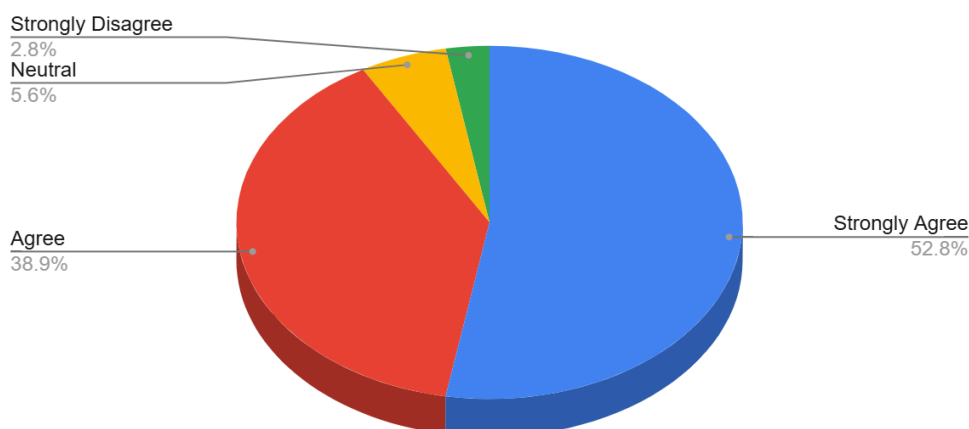
- Critical Thinking/Research
- Digital Storytelling/Content Creation
- Non-formal Education/Workshop Facilitation
- Understanding of Local Inclusion Issues
- Teamwork & Project Coordination



Continued Application of Skills: Importantly, participants intend to carry forward what they learned beyond the project itself. A striking 91.7% of survey respondents expressed that they would like to apply the skills and knowledge gained through the EWT in their future educational, professional, or personal activities (with over half strongly affirming this ambition).

Figure 7 Skills for future application

Future Application: "I would like to apply the skills and knowledge (storytelling, digital, inclusion) I gained in future educational, professional, or personal activities."



This finding speaks to the sustainability of the learning outcomes – youths are not treating the tour experience as a one-off event, but rather as preparation for ongoing engagement. Many participants see the digital, storytelling, and civic skills they practiced as tools they can reuse in new contexts (for example, creating other community projects, enhancing their studies, or engaging in local initiatives). From an employability perspective, this willingness to apply skills suggests that the project increased youths’ confidence, personal and interpersonal skills, in the relevance of what they learned, potentially improving their readiness for future jobs or community leadership roles. As one youth worker in Italy put it, the educational walking tours “center the learning process, which means helping youth grow, open new perspectives, and broaden horizons”. The data indeed show that horizons were broadened – not only did participants gain concrete skills, but they also developed the motivation and vision to use those skills proactively in the future. This bodes well for the longer-term impact of the STAR project on participants’ personal development and employability. It also highlights a need: if youth are eager to continue applying these competencies, providing follow-up opportunities, mentoring, or advanced training (for instance, more in-depth digital storytelling workshops or leadership roles in community projects) would help sustain momentum.

Finally, it is worth noting that while the overall skill outcomes were positive, the areas of comparatively lower self-assessed improvement (leadership and digital storytelling) point to an important tension. These are precisely the skills that many youth identified as high-value, yet they felt only partially developed within the project’s timeframe. This tension implies an opportunity for program refinement: future iterations of the tour-laboratory could allocate more time or resources to deep skill-building in leadership and digital media, ensuring that participants not only value these competencies but also achieve a higher level of mastery. In essence, the STAR project succeeded in planting the seeds of multiple skills and inspiring youth to use them – the next challenge is to cultivate those seeds into full-grown capacities, something that ongoing youth work and supportive policy can facilitate.

3.3 Civic Engagement and Social Inclusion Outcomes

Beyond individual skills, the EWT methodology demonstrated a powerful impact on participants’ civic attitudes, community engagement, and sense of social inclusion. The tours functioned as a catalyst for youth to connect with local issues, appreciate community diversity, and feel motivated to contribute to social change. This section discusses how the project influenced young people’s understanding of inclusion and belonging, as well as their intention to engage in civic action, supported by both survey evidence and qualitative insights.

Deepened Understanding of Inclusion and Local Context: The participant survey confirms that one of the strongest outcomes of the tour-laboratory was raising awareness about local social issues and diversity. An overwhelming 83–85% of respondents agreed that the tour taught them important new information about their local community’s history, context, and inclusion (see Figure 8 for local history/context learning). Specifically, 81.8% agreed or strongly agreed that the experience significantly deepened their understanding of social inclusion and diversity in the community (Figure 9), and an even slightly higher proportion (84.8%) said they learned a great deal about the *local history and context* of the area. These high levels of agreement indicate that the EWT met its core social educational objective: participants came away with greater knowledge of the place they live in and heightened awareness of issues of inclusion, exclusion, and cultural heritage. In focus groups, youths often mentioned being surprised by the “invisible” histories and perspectives uncovered during the tours. For example, one young person reflected on how the tour shed light on narratives “that go further than the typical... touristic representation” of the city, revealing the *intercultural richness* and human stories that conventional tours ignore. By engaging with topics like migration, gender, minority rights, and social struggles on the ground, participants developed a more critical and empathetic understanding of their community’s fabric.

Figure 8: Learning about Local Context – After the tour, ~86% of participants agreed they gained important new knowledge about their locality’s history and social issues. This strong result affirms the EWT’s effectiveness as a tool for contextual and place-based learning.

Local History/Context: “The educational tour taught me new, important information about the history and/or social issues of the area we focused on.”

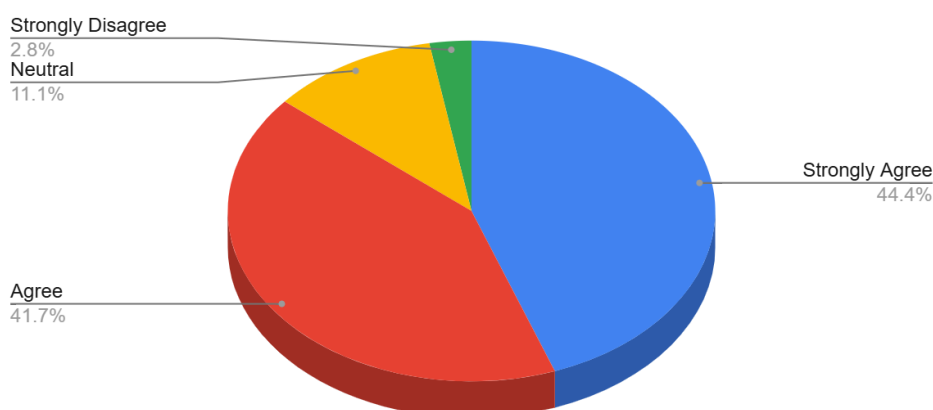
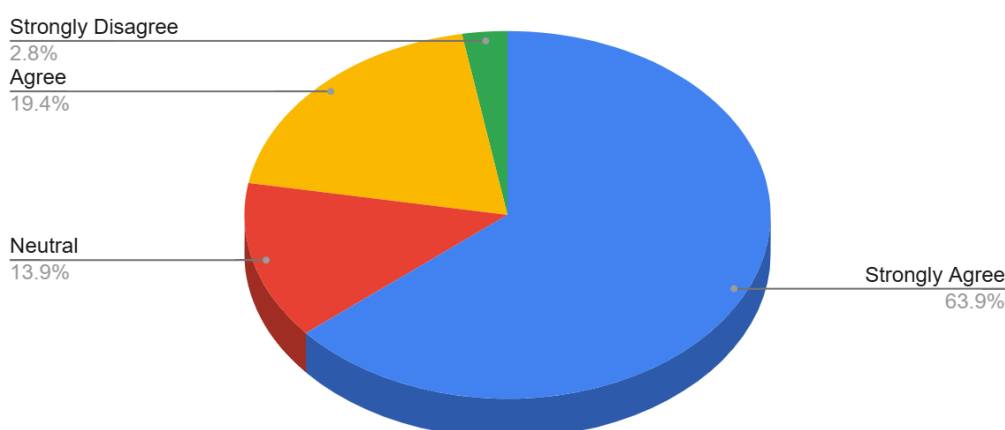


Figure 9: Understanding Social Inclusion – Over 80% of surveyed youth felt that the tour significantly deepened their understanding of social inclusion and diversity in their community. A majority strongly agreed with this outcome, reflecting the project’s success in sensitizing participants to inclusion issues and marginalized narratives.

Inclusion & Awareness: "The educational tour significantly deepened my understanding of social inclusion and diversity within my local community."

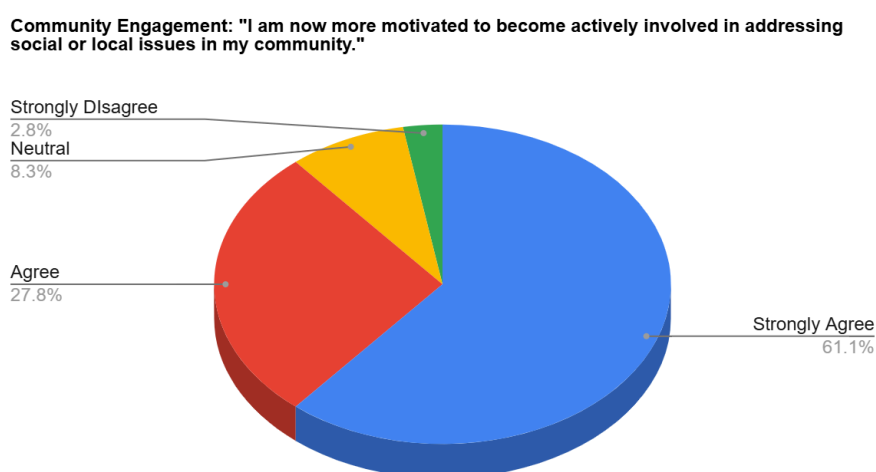


Crucially, this learning was not abstract—it was tied to a sense of personal and collective identity. Many participants described how connecting with local stories and interacting with community members on the tours made them feel more rooted and included. In Spain, for instance, the tour was said to help young people feel a “sense of belonging” to their city by validating diverse experiences and histories. Likewise, Italian team members noted that focusing on social topics and non-dominant perspectives meant that “inclusion comes automatically along with it”—in other words, by shining a light on minority narratives and hidden stories, the tours created a space where participants (especially those from marginalized backgrounds) felt recognized and included. This underscores how the content and process of the EWT reinforced social inclusion: not only were participants learning about inclusion as a concept, they were *experiencing* it by engaging respectfully with different viewpoints and by seeing their own heritage and community contributions valued.

Motivation for Civic Participation: Another key finding is that the tour-laboratory method translated increased awareness into a desire for action. After participating, young people reported significantly higher motivation to get involved in their community. According to the survey, about 88.9% of respondents felt more motivated *to some degree* to address social or local issues as a result of the project (Figure 10). In particular, roughly 62% of all participants *strongly* affirmed that they are now more likely to take an active role on community or social

issues – a notable outcome for a short intervention. One of the project’s goals was to nurture active citizenship, and these results suggest it succeeded: by the end of the tour, a large majority of youths not only understood their community better but were also inspired to contribute to positive change within it. Qualitative evidence supports this trend. Many interviewees and focus group participants mentioned feeling *empowered to act* – for example, some Albanian youths discussed plans to continue working on storytelling projects addressing local challenges, and Serbian participants emphasized the importance of keeping dialogues on contested issues going in their peer groups. This points to an emerging cohort of youth who see themselves as agents of change in their local context, directly thanks to the EWT experience.

Figure 10: Motivation for Community Engagement – The majority of participants left the project feeling more motivated to engage in their community’s social issues. In fact, over 60% expressed that they are extremely likely to involve themselves in local initiatives or actions, indicating a substantial boost in civic enthusiasm as a result of the tour.



The combination of heightened awareness and increased motivation is particularly powerful. The data showed that these two outcomes went hand-in-hand: those who learned the most about inclusion and local context were often the ones most inspired to take action. This validates the EWT model’s theory of change – by educating youth about their community in an interactive way, it cultivates not just knowledge but the agency to act on that knowledge. One focus group participant described the tour as an experience that helped them see that “new generations can take on a role in social transformation” by reinterpreting their environment’s history and issues. In essence, the EWT is converting awareness into agency, a hallmark of effective civic education.

Inclusive Dialogue and Safe Spaces: The qualitative findings also highlight *how* the tour-laboratory fostered inclusion and engagement. Youth workers described the EWT as a **tool for dialogue** that intentionally gives space to marginalized voices. For example, in Italy the tour content “showed perspectives that are not privileged ones” – meaning it brought forward stories of immigrants, social housing residents, or others not usually heard – and through this, “inclusion comes automatically”. In Serbia, where ethnic and political divides are pronounced, the project team designed the tour to encourage reflection and conversation across those divides, rather than avoid them. This approach required creating **safe spaces** during the preparation workshops and the tours themselves, so that all participants (including minority youth) felt comfortable sharing their views. One Serbian partner noted the importance of actively engaging the city’s multiethnic reality and *ensuring minorities could participate* without fear, which the tour format allowed by grounding discussions in shared local landmarks and stories. In Spain and Jordan, partners emphasized empowering marginalized youth as *co-creators*, which gave them a sense of ownership and belonging in the narrative of their city. By validating their perspectives, the project helped these young people see themselves as an integral part of the community’s ongoing story.

Another outcome was the **reinterpretation of public spaces** as inclusive community spaces. Participants and community members alike experienced familiar places in new ways – as sites for sharing stories and bridging differences. In Italy, youths remarked that certain streets or squares transformed into “meaningful sites of resistance and resilience” once the historical social struggles associated with them were illuminated during the tour. In Albania, local partners observed that many city spaces held *hidden histories* that, once told by the youth, made those places symbols of dialogue and memory rather than neglect. This reimagining of space helped strengthen participants’ emotional connection to their city. In Jordan, involving local people in the tour (as hosts or co-storytellers) turned the tour into a true community event – “different people met each other and talked more openly about their place and history” during the tour, according to one organizer. This not only benefited the youth but also gave older community members a chance to impart knowledge and engage with the younger generation, building intergenerational trust.

In summary, the EWT methodology effectively advanced key civic outcomes for youth: it educated them about local issues and diversity, increased their sense of belonging and inclusion, and motivated them to become active citizens. The tours achieved this by creating an environment where learning is tied to real community experiences and where every participant’s story is valued. The strong social inclusion and civic engagement findings here reinforce the argument that such non-formal initiatives contribute directly to broader policy goals (e.g. the European Youth Strategy’s pillars on social inclusion and active citizenship). At the same time, the project’s success in fostering inclusive dialogue also illustrates the importance of skilled facilitation – youth workers had to carefully manage sensitive

discussions, a point that relates to training and support needs discussed later. Overall, the evidence suggests that if scaled up, the tour-laboratory approach could serve as a powerful instrument for communities to engage youth as partners in social cohesion and local development.

3.4 Impact on Organisations and Youth Work Practice

The implementation of the Educational Walking Tour methodology extended its impact well beyond youth participants, producing significant effects on the organisations and youth workers responsible for delivery. Evidence from organisational interviews indicates that the Tour-Laboratory functioned as a professional development mechanism, strengthening organisational capacity, validating non-formal methodologies, and reinforcing organisations' positioning within their local ecosystems.

3.4.1 Strengthening Organisational Capacity and Professional Expertise

Across all partner contexts, the project contributed to the expansion of organisational competencies. Youth workers reported the development and refinement of skills in storytelling, digital documentation, teamwork, communication, and participatory facilitation (*MAMOON, Jordan*). These competencies were not acquired in abstract training environments, but through the direct experience of designing and delivering complex, community-based educational processes.

The methodology required organisations to operate in socially and politically sensitive environments, addressing themes such as resistance, migration, social inequalities, and political divisions (*Serbia*). This placed substantial ethical and facilitation demands on youth workers. One partner described how the process forced teams to cultivate a higher level of emotional awareness and responsibility, particularly in balancing difficult content with the creation of safe and respectful learning spaces (*Albania_Harold*). As a result, organisations strengthened their capacity for moderating dialogue, managing group dynamics, and navigating contested narratives.

At the same time, the project surfaced clear professional development needs. Partners emphasised the value of developing structured training pathways combining general guiding competencies with specialised modules on sustainability, accessibility, multilingual facilitation, and digital storytelling (*Serbia*). This reflective identification of gaps indicates that organisations not only expanded their expertise, but also sharpened their understanding of what professionalisation in this field would require.

3.4.2 Validation and Positioning of Non-Formal Methodologies

A second major organisational outcome concerns the validation of non-formal education practices. Partners consistently reported that the tours generated meaningful dialogue among participants and community members, visibly influencing how people related to their city, its history, and its social realities. This practical impact functioned as tangible evidence of the educational value of participatory, place-based methodologies.

Several organisations noted that the concept of a “tour-laboratory” initially faced conceptual barriers, as stakeholders often associated tours exclusively with tourism. Through the lived experience of the project, organisations succeeded in reframing the methodology as an educational walking tour created by young people, designed to foster learning, reflection, and dialogue. This translation from abstract concept to observable practice was repeatedly cited as critical in enabling stakeholders to understand the purpose and relevance of the approach.

Importantly, organisational interviews indicate that engagement with the project also strengthened partners’ awareness of the broader policy environment. Through implementation, organisations identified the absence of formal recognition for educational walking tours as non-formal learning tools and began articulating the need for clearer institutional anchoring (*Albania_Harold; Serbia*). This process positioned organisations not only as service providers, but as informed actors capable of engaging in evidence-based advocacy grounded in lived practice.

3.4.3 Strengthening Community and Grassroots Connections

The Tour-Laboratory methodology also reinforced organisational relationships with local communities. Partners described how the project fostered social interaction, dialogue, and new relationships, strengthening the community-based foundations of their work (*Mamoon, Jordan*). Community members were engaged not as audiences, but as contributors, co-creators, and knowledge holders, which deepened mutual trust.

In Jordan, partners highlighted how inclusive participation enabled people from different backgrounds and age groups to engage collectively, strengthening local social ties (*Mamoon, Jordan*). In Italy, the implementation strategy prioritised collaboration with grassroots organisations and informal networks, relying on direct engagement rather than institutional mediation (*Italy_Fabrizio*). This approach embedded organisations more deeply within the local social fabric and diversified their partnership base.

Overall, the findings indicate that the EWT methodology functioned as an organisational development instrument. It enhanced professional competencies, strengthened community

embeddedness, and increased organisations' readiness to articulate and position non-formal youth work within broader local and national ecosystems.

3.5 Impact on the Local Community

The Educational Walking Tour methodology was explicitly designed as a community-embedded intervention. Evidence from all partner contexts confirms that its effects extended beyond youth participants to influence local relationships, narratives, and social interaction.

3.5.1 Community Participation and Social Bridge-Building

Across all implementations, community members were actively integrated into the Tour-Laboratory as co-creators, hosts, and contributors of local knowledge. This participation transformed residents from passive observers into active stakeholders. In Jordan, community members from diverse age groups and social backgrounds contributed to the tours by sharing stories, offering hospitality, and guiding participants through local contexts (*Mamoon, Jordan*).

Partners repeatedly emphasised the relational effects of this engagement. One organisation described how the process enabled “different people to meet each other and talk more openly about their place and history” (*AWWAD, Jordan*). The tours created spaces for dialogue that did not previously exist, fostering new connections and strengthening community interaction (*MAMOON, Jordan*).

In Italy, the methodology relied heavily on informal conversations and grassroots engagement, allowing local residents to contribute their own voices to the tours (*Italy_Fabrizio*). Community reactions were described as open, welcoming, and supportive, with residents expressing appreciation for having their experiences and memories acknowledged (*Italy_Fabrizio*).

These findings indicate that the EWT functioned as a social connector, facilitating intergenerational and intercultural encounters and reinforcing the social fabric of local communities.

3.5.2 Cultural Preservation and Reinterpretation of Local Context

A second major community-level outcome concerns the preservation and reinterpretation of local heritage. The tours were deliberately shaped to move beyond gentrified or touristic representations of cities, focusing instead on what one partner termed “the most invisible

face of the city" (*Alberto, Barcelona*). This included a strong emphasis on human narratives, everyday experiences, and intercultural realities (*Spain*).

In Italy, tours addressing social inequality, environmental challenges, and urban transformation enabled participants and community members to reinterpret familiar spaces as sites of resistance and resilience (*Italy_Eric*). In Serbia, the project deliberately addressed the challenge of acknowledging migration histories and minority narratives, creating spaces in which diverse groups could participate safely (*Serbia*).

In Jordan, partners identified a strong need to document oral histories and local stories that had not previously been preserved in written or digital form (*Mamoon, Jordan*). Youth participants actively contributed to this documentation process, supporting the transformation of community narratives into digital and educational resources (*Mamoon, Jordan*).

Through these processes, the EWT methodology contributed to the recognition, preservation, and circulation of intangible cultural heritage, while also enabling communities to critically engage with their own histories.

3.5.3 Community Development Relevance

Organisational reflections also highlighted the broader relevance of the methodology for community development. Partners observed that existing cultural and tourism policies remain largely oriented toward traditional or commercialised forms of tourism (*Italy_Fabrizio; Italy_Eric*), while community-based educational initiatives often operate without clear institutional anchoring (*Albania, Harold; Mamoon, Jordan*).

At the local level, the success of the tours demonstrated the potential of grassroots collaboration, informal networks, and youth-led cultural initiatives to generate social value (*Italy_Fabrizio*). Partners emphasised that community-based experiential formats already exist and thrive informally, but require supportive environments to ensure continuity and ethical standards (*Italy, Fabrizio; Albania, Harold; Mamoon, Jordan*).

These findings situate the EWT methodology as not only a youth learning tool, but as a mechanism with demonstrable relevance for inclusive community engagement, heritage preservation, and local dialogue.

CHAPTER 4 – THE EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY ARGUMENT

This chapter translates the empirical findings presented in Chapter 3 into an evidence-based policy argument. It examines what the documented outcomes reveal about existing systemic conditions and explains why the formal recognition and structured integration of the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology are necessary to ensure quality, sustainability, and strategic relevance within youth, education, cultural, and local development policy frameworks.

4.1 The Imperative for Formal Recognition: Quality, Sustainability, and Systemic Gaps

The research demonstrates that the impacts generated by the Tour-Laboratory methodology are currently sustained primarily through the informal commitment, project-based resources, and institutional flexibility of youth organisations. While this has enabled innovation, it also exposes the methodology to structural vulnerability. Without formal recognition, EWTs remain dependent on short-term funding, have unclear legal standing, and face fragmented institutional support.

Legal ambiguity and institutional exclusion

Organisational evidence indicates that educational walking tours frequently operate in a regulatory grey area. Partners reported that their work is often not recognised as either a youth work tool or an educational methodology, limiting access to public funding schemes, municipal partnerships, and institutional cooperation (*Albania_Harold; Italy_Fabrizio*). This ambiguity weakens organisational sustainability, constrains long-term planning, and restricts the capacity to embed the methodology within public service ecosystems.

Risk to quality, ethics, and safeguarding

The findings also reveal that the EWT methodology demands advanced facilitation competencies. Youth workers engaged with sensitive community narratives, including migration, political divisions, resistance histories, and social inequality (*Serbia; Albania_Harold*). In the absence of recognised professional standards, accredited training pathways, and quality assurance mechanisms, the ethical and pedagogical integrity of such

work remains dependent on individual organisational capacity. From a policy perspective, the lack of formal frameworks creates a structural risk: high-impact methodologies are left without consistent safeguards, professional benchmarks, or accountability systems.

Sectoral fragmentation

The research further exposed persistent silos between policy sectors. Tourism, education, culture, and youth policies remain largely disconnected, despite operating in overlapping community spaces (*Mamoon, Jordan; Italy_Fabrizio*). As a result, educational walking tours fall between institutional mandates, unable to fully access resources, regulatory clarity, or cross-sector programmes. Formal recognition constitutes a necessary enabling condition to overcome this fragmentation and to situate EWTs within integrated territorial and youth development strategies.

Together, these dynamics demonstrate that policy intervention is not supplementary but structural: without recognition, the quality, safety, and continuity of the methodology cannot be assured at scale.

4.2 The EWT as an Effective Youth Development Instrument

Beyond structural challenges, the empirical evidence confirms that the EWT methodology constitutes an effective non-formal education instrument delivering outcomes aligned with contemporary youth development priorities.

Measurable learning and competence development

Quantitative findings show consistently high learning returns. A large majority of participants reported improvement in digital storytelling competencies and increased confidence in leadership and teamwork. These outcomes correspond directly to transversal skill sets emphasised across national youth strategies and employability frameworks. Importantly, participants did not only acknowledge skill exposure but expressed intention to apply these competences in future educational, professional, and civic contexts.

Pedagogical effectiveness and engagement

The data further indicate that the co-creative, experiential format of the Tour-Laboratory outperformed conventional pedagogical models in perceived learning value. Most participants assessed the methodology as more effective than traditional classroom-based learning. This confirms the EWT as a high-engagement educational environment capable of sustaining motivation, attention, and ownership—critical factors for youth learning, particularly among those less reached by formal education pathways.

Civic agency and social awareness

The strongest evidence relates to civic and social learning. Participants reported simultaneous growth in awareness of inclusion and motivation to engage with local issues. This co-occurrence suggests that the methodology does not merely transmit information, but supports the transformation of understanding into agency. From a policy standpoint, this positions the EWT as a functional mechanism for cultivating civic competence, local belonging, and participatory readiness.

Collectively, these findings confirm that the methodology already performs functions typically pursued through public youth, education, and civic programmes, despite operating largely outside formal policy frameworks.

4.3 Capacity and Feasibility: Conditions for Scalable Implementation

Policy integration is not only justified by impact, but also by feasibility. The research demonstrates that the EWT methodology is both adaptable across contexts and supported by existing organisational capacities.

Contextual adaptability and local ownership

Across partner countries, the Tour-Laboratory was successfully adapted to diverse thematic, cultural, and political environments—from addressing gentrification and social exclusion in Rome to engaging multi-ethnic narratives in Serbia. This confirms that the methodology functions as a flexible framework rather than a fixed programme model. Its reliance on local narratives, community engagement, and youth co-creation enables contextual relevance while maintaining methodological coherence.

Equally significant is its grounding in grassroots ecosystems. Organisations consistently collaborated with informal networks, local residents, and community groups (*Italy_Fabrizio; Mamoon, Jordan*). From a policy perspective, this embeddedness enhances sustainability, legitimacy, and responsiveness to territorial realities.

Organisational and professional readiness

The research also indicates that youth organisations possess foundational capacities for expanded implementation. The project strengthened competencies in facilitation, ethical engagement, research, advocacy, and community partnership management (*Albania_Harold*). Moreover, organisations demonstrated the ability to articulate the

methodology to stakeholders, navigate conceptual barriers, and refine implementation approaches.

At the same time, partners identified concrete professional development needs—signalling readiness for structured training, accreditation, and quality frameworks rather than dependency on ad hoc project learning. This combination of existing capacity and reflective identification of gaps constitutes a favourable condition for policy-supported scaling.

4.4 Strategic Alignment with National and European Policy Agendas

The policy case for recognising the EWT methodology is further reinforced by its direct contribution to established strategic priorities.

Active citizenship and participation

European and national youth strategies consistently prioritise youth participation, democratic engagement, and community involvement. The documented increase in youth motivation for civic action and local engagement demonstrates that the methodology operationalises these objectives through applied practice rather than declarative programming.

Digital and transversal competences

The development of digital storytelling, research, communication, and teamwork skills aligns with national modernisation agendas and European competence frameworks. The EWT model integrates digital learning within real-world social contexts, offering an applied pathway to digital and media literacy.

Inclusion, cohesion, and territorial development

By centring marginalised narratives and facilitating intercultural dialogue (*Italy_Eric; Mamoon, Jordan*), the methodology contributes to social inclusion and community cohesion agendas. It also complements territorial development strategies that seek to connect cultural heritage, youth participation, and community-based innovation.

Accession and harmonisation relevance

For EU accession contexts, the methodology reflects recognised European youth work principles: experiential learning, community engagement, participation, and non-formal competence development. Its formal recognition and potential linkage to validation

instruments would constitute tangible steps toward alignment with European youth work quality frameworks.

The evidence demonstrates that the Educational Walking Tour methodology is not a peripheral or experimental practice, but a functioning, high-impact youth work instrument. Its current informal positioning exposes structural vulnerabilities that cannot be resolved through project cycles alone. Formal recognition and strategic integration represent the necessary transition from isolated innovation to sustainable public value creation.

CHAPTER 5 – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter translates the evidence-based policy argument developed in Chapter 4 into a coherent set of strategic recommendations. These proposals respond directly to the systemic gaps identified in the research: the absence of formal recognition, the lack of sustainable financing mechanisms, the fragmentation between policy sectors, and the under-institutionalisation of community-based youth work practices.

The recommendations are designed to be actionable at local, national, and European levels. Collectively, they aim to move the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology from an isolated project-based practice to a recognised, supported, and sustainable youth development instrument embedded within public policy frameworks.

5.1 Strategic Orientation: From Innovation to Public Infrastructure

The findings demonstrate that the EWT methodology already delivers outcomes aligned with national youth strategies, civic participation agendas, and European policy priorities. However, these outcomes are currently dependent on short-term projects and organisational initiative. Policy action is therefore required to shift the methodology from informal innovation to structured public value creation.

For EU Member States and accession countries alike, formalising the EWT model represents a strategic mechanism to:

- harmonise non-formal education standards with European youth work frameworks;
- channel public investment toward a proven, high-impact youth development model;
- strengthen social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and local democratic engagement.

The following recommendations propose an integrated pathway addressing recognition, quality, financing, governance, and long-term knowledge development.

5.2 Formal Recognition and Quality Frameworks

5.2.1 Recognition of the EWT methodology

Public authorities are encouraged to formally recognise Educational Walking Tours as a non-formal youth work and educational methodology within national youth, education, and cultural policy frameworks. This recognition may take the form of ministerial directives, inclusion in youth strategies, or regulatory clarification linking EWTs to non-formal learning systems.

Such recognition provides the legal and institutional foundation necessary to integrate EWTs into public programming, partnership schemes, and funding instruments.

5.2.2 Professional standards and accreditation

National or regional competence frameworks should be developed to define the skills associated with EWT facilitation, including participatory education, ethical community engagement, digital storytelling, and inclusive facilitation.

These competences should be linked to validation instruments such as Youthpass, micro-credentials, or national non-formal education certification systems. This would allow both youth participants and youth workers to formally document learning outcomes, reinforce quality assurance, and support professional mobility.

5.3 Sustainable Financing and Programmatic Integration

5.3.1 Integration into public funding structures

EWTs should be incorporated into municipal, regional, and national budget lines related to youth services, non-formal education, culture, heritage, and social inclusion. This transition from ad hoc project funding to multi-annual public financing would stabilise implementation, enable strategic planning, and protect quality standards.

5.3.2 Dedicated grassroots support schemes

Public authorities are encouraged to establish accessible small-grant mechanisms targeting youth organisations and community groups implementing educational walking tours. These schemes should prioritise community-based initiatives, low administrative thresholds, and

capacity-building components, ensuring that local innovation remains a central driver of the methodology.

5.4 Cross-Sector Governance and Territorial Embedding

5.4.1 Inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms

Formal coordination between youth, education, culture, and tourism authorities should be established at national and regional levels. This may include joint working groups, shared programme lines, or integrated calls for proposals. Such mechanisms enable EWTs to operate at the intersection of policy fields while avoiding regulatory ambiguity.

5.4.2 Local partnerships and territorial integration

Municipalities are encouraged to embed EWTs within local development strategies, cultural programming, and youth participation infrastructures. Partnerships between youth organisations, schools, museums, heritage institutions, and tourism offices can transform EWTs into stable territorial instruments supporting education, inclusion, and cultural vitality.

5.5 Community Empowerment and Inclusive Access

5.5.1 Simplified regulatory pathways

Public administrations should introduce flexible and proportionate permitting frameworks for community-based educational tours, distinct from commercial tourism regulation. Simplified access to public space, heritage sites, and municipal cooperation reduces barriers for youth-led initiatives while maintaining public accountability.

5.5.2 Support for dialogue and minority narratives

Funding and recognition schemes should explicitly encourage EWTs that foreground marginalised histories, intercultural dialogue, and social inclusion. This ensures that community participation, minority representation, and ethical engagement remain core components rather than optional features.

5.6 Implementation Responsibilities and Capacity Development

Policy effectiveness depends on coordinated engagement across institutional levels.

Youth organisations and youth workers

Should invest in advanced facilitation training, ethical practice standards, and internal documentation systems. This strengthens readiness for accreditation, enhances quality assurance, and supports evidence-based advocacy.

Local authorities and cultural institutions

Should establish formal cooperation agreements with youth organisations, facilitate access to community spaces, and co-develop heritage and oral history archives that preserve outputs generated through EWTs.

Youth participants

Should be supported to continue as local multipliers—documenting community narratives, initiating peer learning processes, and contributing to the co-creation of future tours. Their ongoing agency reinforces the sustainability and democratic legitimacy of the methodology.

5.7 European and Strategic Policy Relevance

The implementation of these recommendations contributes directly to European and regional policy objectives, including:

- The EU Youth Strategy's priorities on participation, inclusion, and youth empowerment;
- National digital and competence agendas through applied digital storytelling;
- Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue frameworks;
- EU accession processes through alignment with recognised youth work principles.

By institutionalising the EWT methodology, public authorities transform a proven practice into a policy instrument capable of delivering educational, civic, and cultural objectives simultaneously.

These recommendations collectively reposition the Educational Walking Tour methodology from a successful project outcome to a sustainable public asset. They propose a structured pathway through which youth work innovation can be formally recognised, professionally supported, financially stabilised, and territorially embedded—ensuring that the documented impacts extend beyond pilot initiatives and contribute to long-term youth and community development.

A table?

Recommendation Area	Level	Lead Institution	Policy Instrument	Timeline	Key Indicator
Formal Recognition of EWTs	National	Ministry of Youth / Education	Ministerial Directive / Strategy Amendment	12–18 months	EWT included in national youth/education strategy
Professional Standards & Accreditation	National / Regional	Youth Agency / Training Authority	Competence Framework / Youthpass Annex	18–24 months	Accreditation scheme adopted
Integration into Public Budgets	Municipal / National	Ministry of Finance / Municipal Councils	Dedicated Budget Line	Annual cycle	Stable public funding allocated
Small Grants for Grassroots Initiatives	Local / Regional	Municipal Youth Office	Annual Grant Call	Yearly	Number of funded EWT initiatives
Inter-Sector Coordination	National / Regional	Inter-Ministerial Committee	Coordination Protocol	6–12 months	Committee operational
Local Partnerships	Municipal	Municipality / Cultural Dept.	Cooperation Agreements	12 months	Signed partnership agreements
Simplified Permit System	Municipal	Local Administration	Simplified Permit Scheme	12 months	Reduced approval time
Support for Minority Narratives	National / Local	Ministry of Culture / NGOs	Targeted Funding Scheme	Ongoing	Number of inclusive EWTs
Organisational Capacity Building	Regional / National	Youth Agencies / NGOs	Training Programme	Ongoing	Trained facilitators

Youth Multipliers	Local	Youth Councils / NGOs	Peer Learning Programme	Ongoing	Number of youth-led tours
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CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to examine the Educational Walking Tour (EWT) methodology as a non-formal youth work instrument and to assess its relevance, impact, and positioning within contemporary youth, education, and community development contexts. Drawing on youth surveys, organisational interviews, and focus groups, the findings lead to a clear conclusion: the EWT methodology constitutes a high-impact educational and civic tool whose future potential is currently constrained not by effectiveness, but by systemic conditions.

The empirical evidence demonstrates exceptionally strong youth engagement and learning outcomes. Overall satisfaction among participants reached 93.9 % , indicating very high perceived value and motivation. Competence development results were equally significant: 87.5 % of participants reported improvement in digital storytelling skills, and 75 % reported increased confidence in leadership and teamwork. These outcomes confirm that the EWT methodology successfully cultivates transversal competences aligned with employability, collaboration, and lifelong learning priorities.

Beyond skills development, the research highlights the distinctive civic and social dimension of the methodology. A substantial proportion of participants 81.8% agreed or strongly agreed that the experience significantly deepened their understanding of social inclusion and diversity in the community, alongside an increased motivation to engage with community and social challenges. Notably, 62.5% of participants stated that their motivation to become involved in local issues grew as a result of their participation. This convergence of learning, reflection, and action indicates that the EWT methodology does not merely transmit knowledge, but supports young people in repositioning themselves as active social actors. The methodology thereby functions as a bridge between youth learning and civic participation.

At community level, the findings show that the EWT operates as a place-based intervention. The tours created new spaces for dialogue, enabled the documentation of oral histories, and supported the reinterpretation of public spaces as sites of memory, identity, and social reflection. Community members were not positioned as audiences, but as contributors and knowledge holders. These processes strengthened local relationships, elevated

under-represented narratives, and contributed to cultural preservation and social cohesion. In this sense, the EWT methodology demonstrated value not only for youth development, but also for inclusive community engagement and local cultural vitality.

Despite these documented impacts, the research identifies a central structural challenge. The EWT methodology currently operates largely outside formal youth, education, and cultural policy frameworks. The absence of legal recognition, professional standards, and stable financial mechanisms confines its implementation to short-term projects and informal arrangements. This limits scalability, weakens institutional continuity, and places the ethical quality and long-term sustainability of the methodology at risk. The core gap revealed by this research is therefore not one of innovation, but of institutional anchoring.

From a policy perspective, this creates a clear responsibility. The EWT methodology already delivers outcomes sought by public strategies: competence development, civic engagement, social inclusion, and community participation. When a practice consistently generates public value, its continuity cannot depend solely on organisational commitment and fragmented project funding. Formal recognition, sustainable financing, and structured integration become governance requirements rather than optional support measures.

The policy pathway articulated in this report responds directly to this responsibility. The proposed framework advances formal recognition of the methodology, the establishment of professional and ethical standards, the integration of EWTs into public funding structures, and the creation of cross-sector coordination mechanisms linking youth, education, culture, and tourism. Importantly, it also safeguards the grassroots foundations of the methodology by reinforcing community partnerships, youth leadership, and local ownership. The objective is not to standardise narratives or formats, but to stabilise the conditions under which quality, inclusive, and context-responsive practice can flourish.

Looking forward, the strategic horizon of this research is the sustainable replication of the Educational Walking Tour methodology across diverse local environments. This does not imply uniform expansion, but the creation of enabling policy environments in which municipalities, youth organisations, and communities can adapt the methodology to their specific realities. Through institutional recognition and integrated support structures, EWTs can become a permanent component of non-formal education ecosystems and local cultural programming, rather than isolated initiatives.

For European Union contexts and accession countries alike, this pathway also carries wider strategic relevance. Formalising applied, community-based youth work instruments contributes directly to the implementation of the European Youth Strategy, strengthens alignment with recognised youth work principles, and reinforces commitments to democratic participation, digital competence development, and social cohesion. In this way,

the EWT methodology functions not only as a local intervention, but as a translatable model for youth-centred territorial development.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the Educational Walking Tour methodology is not an experimental approach in search of justification, but a functioning practice in need of institutionalisation. It has proven its capacity to empower young people, activate communities, and generate public value. What remains is a policy decision. By formally recognising and strategically integrating the EWT methodology, public authorities and donors do not initiate a new programme; they consolidate an existing one. In doing so, they transform dispersed innovation into sustainable public infrastructure, ensuring that future generations of youth workers, educators, and young citizens are supported in continuing to shape their communities through participatory, ethical, and transformative practice.

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