

**EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET**

*(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.)*

**!** *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).*

<b>PROJECT</b>	
<b>Participant:</b>	[2] - [Alternatives Européennes] (AE)
<b>PIC number:</b>	941964479
<b>Project name and acronym:</b>	[Speak Out] — [SO]

<b>EVENT DESCRIPTION</b>	
<b>Event number:</b>	13
<b>Event name:</b>	Pathways of democracy
<b>Type:</b>	Conference
<b>In situ/online:</b>	in-situ
<b>Location:</b>	Pollina & Palermo, Italy
<b>Date(s):</b>	21/04/2026
<b>Website(s) (if any):</b>	<a href="https://euroalter.com/projects/speak-out-empowering-youth-for-change/">https://euroalter.com/projects/speak-out-empowering-youth-for-change/</a>
<b>Participants</b>	
Female:	32
Male:	25
Non-binary:	5
From country 1 [Italy]:	30
From country 2 [France]:	6
From country 3 [Belgium]:	1
From country 4 [Germany]:	4
From country 5 [Sweden]:	1
From country 6 [Hungary]:	1
From country 7 [Spain]:	1
From country 8 [Czechia]:	2
From country 9 [Netherlands]:	1

Total number of participants:	62	From total number of countries:	9
<b>Description</b>			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
<p><b>Final Closing Event of the Speak Out Project</b></p> <p>The final closing event represented the culmination of the Speak Out project and served as its principal international dissemination and policy engagement activity. Designed to build upon the knowledge, experiences and recommendations generated throughout the project, the event brought together young people, youth representatives, civil society organisations, local authorities and policy-makers to reflect on the project's achievements and explore concrete pathways for sustaining meaningful youth participation beyond the project's lifetime.</p> <p>Rather than functioning solely as a concluding conference, the event was conceived as a participatory space where young people could actively present their experiences, exchange practices with peers from across Europe, engage in structured dialogue with decision-makers and contribute to discussions on the future of participatory democracy. Throughout both parts of the event, young participants were recognised not merely as beneficiaries of the project but as equal partners, experts by experience and active contributors to democratic processes.</p> <p>The closing event gathered approximately 50 participants from six European countries, representing youth organisations, local authorities, environmental organisations, youth councils, community groups and policy-making institutions. The event built directly upon the methodologies tested throughout the Speak Out project, including the National Policy Dialogues, international learning activities and webinar series, demonstrating how participatory approaches can successfully strengthen democratic engagement among young people.</p> <p>The programme was divided into two complementary sessions, each addressing different dimensions of democratic participation while maintaining a strong focus on intergenerational dialogue, collaborative learning and policy engagement.</p>			
<b>Part 1: Peer Exchange with Youth Activists</b>			
Date: 21 April 2026			
Venue: Pollina River, Sicily			
<p>The first part of the event was organised in the natural setting of the Pollina River, providing an informal and inclusive environment that encouraged open dialogue, peer learning and collaborative reflection. The choice of venue reflected the project's commitment to non-formal education methodologies and demonstrated how democratic participation can flourish in accessible community spaces beyond traditional institutional settings.</p> <p>The decision to host the first part of the closing event along the Pollina River was intentional and closely aligned with the objectives and values of the Speak Out project. The river itself represents an important local environmental challenge, as sections of its ecosystem have been significantly impacted by concrete infrastructure and environmental degradation. In recent years, a local collective of young activists has been working in partnership with municipal and regional authorities to promote the restoration and depollution of the river, demonstrating how youth-led environmental action can influence public policies and foster constructive collaboration with institutions. This provided participants with a tangible example of how climate action and democratic participation are intrinsically connected. Environmental protection is one of the issues that most strongly mobilises young people across Europe, and creating opportunities for youth to engage in environmental decision-making is an essential component of meaningful democratic participation.</p> <p>At the same time, holding the event in a natural, non-formal setting reinforced another key message of the Speak Out project: democratic participation does not only take place in institutional spaces such as council chambers or conference rooms. Parks, rivers, community spaces and other informal environments can facilitate more open, accessible and inclusive dialogue, reducing barriers between young people and decision-makers and encouraging equal participation regardless of participants' backgrounds or previous experience in civic engagement. By moving the discussion outside traditional institutional settings, the event demonstrated that informal forms of participation are equally valuable in building trust, fostering collaboration and enabling diverse voices to contribute to democratic processes.</p>			

This session focused on exchanging experiences among youth activists and exploring innovative approaches to participatory democracy developed throughout the Speak Out project. Participants reflected on the barriers and opportunities for youth engagement at local, national and European level while sharing successful practices implemented within their own organisations and communities.

The discussions highlighted the diversity of youth participation across Europe and demonstrated how participatory processes become more effective when young people are actively involved in designing, implementing and evaluating democratic initiatives. Particular attention was given to bottom-up approaches, youth-led advocacy, environmental participation, local governance and cooperation between civil society and public institutions.

A central objective of the session was to strengthen young people's confidence in engaging directly with institutional actors. By creating an equal and respectful dialogue between youth representatives and policy-makers, participants were able to discuss both the challenges of democratic participation and the practical opportunities available for influencing public decision-making.

The session also provided an opportunity to present the main achievements of the Speak Out project, showcasing the outcomes of the National Policy Dialogues, the webinar series and the collaborative work carried out by project partners over the duration of the project. Participants reflected on how these activities had increased civic awareness, strengthened youth leadership skills and encouraged greater participation in democratic life.

Programme:

09:00 - 09:30

Registration and networking breakfast, meeting at the bus departure point

09:30 - 10:00

Welcome remarks and introduction to the closing event; presentation of the Speak Out journey and project achievements.

10:00 - 11:15

Panel discussion: Youth-led democracy in practice

Experiences from youth organisations and local initiatives

11:15 - 11:30

Coffee break

11:30 - 13:00

Interactive peer exchange workshop

Sharing successful practices for youth participation across Europe

13:00 - 14:00

Picnic lunch

14:00 - 15:30

Structured dialogue between youth representatives and policy-makers, building trust between institutions and young citizens:

- Hanna Rasper, Rewild Sicily Collective
- Fabrizio Lo Verso, Councillor for Youth Policies, Cultural Heritage and Culture, Municipality of Monreale
- Ilaria Cascino, former Vice-President of the Youth Council of the Municipality of Monreale

15:30 - 16:30

Reflection session, lessons learned from the Speak Out project and recommendations for future action. Trip back to the city!

The presence of local institutional representatives alongside experienced youth activists created an atmosphere of genuine dialogue and mutual learning. Young participants were encouraged to share their perspectives openly, while policy-makers demonstrated a willingness to listen, exchange ideas and reflect on how institutions can become more accessible and responsive to young citizens.

The session successfully demonstrated that meaningful youth participation requires continuous cooperation rather than one-off consultations. Participants recognised that effective democratic engagement depends upon long-term relationships built on trust, transparency and shared responsibility between institutions and young people.

## **Part 2: Beyond Youth Activism: How Youth participation is interconnected with other forms of political action**

The second session broadened the discussion by examining how youth participation extends beyond traditional civic engagement and intersects with environmental action, European citizenship, public policy, social innovation and community development.

Building on the recommendations developed during the Speak Out webinar series and National Policy Dialogues, participants presented a series of concrete proposals aimed at strengthening participatory democracy at local and European level. These recommendations served as the basis for structured discussions with policy-makers, who reflected on the practical mechanisms through which young people's ideas can influence institutional decision-making.

The session highlighted the importance of creating permanent mechanisms for youth participation rather than relying solely on project-based initiatives. Discussions explored how municipalities, regional governments, civil society organisations and European institutions can work together to ensure that young people continue to play an active role in shaping democratic governance.

The exchange also demonstrated the interconnected nature of contemporary democratic participation. Speakers illustrated how youth engagement contributes not only to political participation but also to environmental sustainability, social inclusion, European cooperation and community resilience. This interdisciplinary perspective reflected one of the core principles of the Speak Out project: that active citizenship is strengthened when young people are empowered to participate across multiple areas of public life.

Participants were encouraged to critically reflect upon their own experiences throughout the project and identify practical actions they could continue implementing within their communities after the project's conclusion. The session therefore served both as a dissemination activity and as a sustainability mechanism, reinforcing participants' commitment to ongoing civic engagement.

An important feature of the session was the active contribution of young participants in presenting a set of policy recommendations developed throughout the Speak Out project. Drawing on the outcomes of the National Policy Dialogues, international exchanges and webinar series, the recommendations reflected young people's perspectives on strengthening participatory democracy, climate governance and inclusive decision-making. These proposals were discussed directly with the panel of experts and policy-makers, who provided feedback on their feasibility and relevance within current policy frameworks. As part of the project's dissemination and advocacy strategy, the recommendations will also contribute to broader international policy discussions and are intended to be brought forward to COP31 in Antalya, ensuring that the voices and proposals developed by young people through Speak Out continue to inform debates on climate action, democratic participation and youth engagement beyond the lifetime of the project.

Programme

17:30 - 17:45

Opening remarks, from project outcomes to long-term impact

17:45 - 18:30

Keynote panel: Youth participation as a driver of democratic innovation

18:30 - 19:15

Roundtable discussion: connecting youth participation with environmental action, European citizenship and local governance. Speakers were:

- Giulia Giordano, ECCO Think Tank
- Patrizia Pozzo, Earth Day Med
- Luca Guidi, Young European Greens
- Anna Lisa Boni, Councillor for European Funds, Municipality of Bologna

19:15 - 19:45

Presentation of Speak Out policy recommendations

19:45 - 20:15

Open dialogue between participants and policy-makers

20:15 - 20:30

Closing remarks: the future of youth participation beyond Speak Out.

The diversity of expertise represented during this session enriched the debate and illustrated the value of cross-sectoral cooperation in strengthening democratic participation. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the multiple pathways through which young people can influence public policy, while policy-makers recognised the importance of establishing permanent and meaningful channels for dialogue with younger generations.

## Results and Impact

The closing event successfully achieved its objectives as the final milestone of the Speak Out project. It effectively disseminated the project's achievements, validated the participatory methodologies developed during implementation and reinforced the project's long-term sustainability by strengthening networks between youth organisations and public authorities.

Most importantly, the event demonstrated the effectiveness of meaningful youth participation. Young people actively shaped discussions, presented project outcomes, facilitated peer learning and engaged directly with decision-makers on an equal footing. Rather than being consulted symbolically, participants exercised genuine influence over the content of discussions and the policy recommendations emerging from the event.

The structured dialogue sessions strengthened mutual understanding between young citizens and institutional representatives, contributing to increased trust, greater awareness of participatory mechanisms and stronger relationships between civil society and public authorities. Participants reported increased confidence in engaging with democratic institutions and a greater understanding of how local, national and European decision-making processes can become more inclusive.

The event also contributed significantly to the project's dissemination objectives by extending the reach of Speak Out beyond the consortium itself. Through the participation of youth organisations, municipalities, environmental networks, policy-makers and civil society stakeholders, the project's results reached new audiences with the potential to replicate its methodologies within their own communities.

Finally, the closing event reinforced the European added value of the Speak Out project by bringing together diverse experiences from different countries, facilitating transnational peer learning and demonstrating that common democratic challenges can be addressed through collaborative, participatory and youth-led approaches. The event therefore not only celebrated the successful completion of the project but also established a strong foundation for future cooperation, ensuring that the project's outcomes, partnerships and policy recommendations continue to generate impact well beyond the end of the funding period.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).