

Recommendations for using the PST4Youth – Results of a Group Delphi approach



Background information

As part of an Erasmus+ project, the youth version of the Place Standard Tool (PST4Youth) was implemented, developed further and tested in seven European countries in collaboration with young people. Bochum University of Applied Sciences provided scientific support for the project.

The recommendations are therefore based on a consensus process involving the PST4Youth project partners. Based on 14 semi-structured expert interviews with 17 participants (three interviews involving two interviewees) from the seven participating countries, a set of statements was compiled for a workshop aimed at reaching a consensus on recommendations for the use of PST4Youth, which took place in July 2026.

The recommendations presented in this fact sheet are those that received the most agreement during the consensus process. However, there were differences in the level of agreement (for further information please see the published Scientific Report). Only statements that received a high to very high level of agreement are listed below. Explanatory texts for each statement, as well as further remarks, can be found below.

Recommendations at a glance

Promote Empowerment

- It is essential to demonstrate that young people's voices matter.
- It is necessary to build strong links with decision-makers to ensure that the perspectives of young people inform real planning and policy decisions.
- It is important to involve politicians, local authorities and community stakeholders from the beginning.
- Responsibilities of all project partners must be clearly defined and assigned right from the start.
- When using the PST4Youth, it is important to ensure that clear follow-up actions result.
- It is important to clearly communicate how the results will be used and provide visible feedback on the actions taken to demonstrate that participants' contributions have led to change.
- It is very important to manage expectations of the young people before and during the process of using the PST4Youth.

Facilitation of the process with young people

- A skilled and creative facilitation of the PST4Youth is important for the implementation quality.
- It is important to establish connections with the young people and explain the tool's purpose before using the PST4Youth.
- Using active methods, such as neighbourhood walks, can help facilitate the discussion by refreshing participants' memories and encouraging them to notice details they might otherwise overlook.
- Beyond quantitative aspects of the PST4Youth, the qualitative importance of comments and discussions should be highlighted.
- Using incentives like free food or drinks helps to promote the participation.

Time Management

- The PST4Youth application can be split into several days or sessions.
- Good time management is important and can be achieved, for example, by dividing topics and participants into smaller sub-groups.
- It is important to align seated group discussions with the attention span of young people.

Promote Empowerment

It is essential to demonstrate that young people's voices matter.

In terms of empowerment, this means that facilitators should consider how young people can contribute to implementing changes and what they can do themselves. It is important to demonstrate the importance of this topic.

It is necessary to build strong links with decision-makers to ensure that the perspectives of young people inform real planning and policy decisions.

In addition to involving young people, the process should also engage other stakeholders and, particularly political decision-makers. In the long term, the aim could be to embed participation within the system, for example by assigning specific responsibility for it within the local authority or the youth welfare office.

Furthermore, a presentation of the results can be used to engage the local community and to bring different stakeholders together. Following the participation process, young people could also discuss their ideas directly with political decision-makers.

It is important to involve politicians, local authorities and community stakeholders from the beginning.

The tool creates opportunities for dialogue between young people and local politicians. For the tool to bring about lasting change in politics, local authorities must be firmly integrated into relevant partnerships. Politicians should be involved right from the beginning, as political will is crucial for launching and supporting the project, particularly at this stage.

However, it is often not possible at this stage to definitively determine which other stakeholders will become relevant as the process progresses. Their involvement can therefore be adapted as the process unfolds.

Responsibilities of all project partners must be clearly defined and assigned right from the start.

'Right from the start' should be seen as a recommendation, although responsibilities may change. This means that the responsibilities of all project partners may vary depending on the context, but they should always be clearly defined. Structures also have to be defined.

When using the PST4Youth, it is important to ensure that clear follow-up actions result.

Since follow-up actions should result from using the PST4Youth, funding for these actions should be secured as early as possible. Also, responsibilities for implementing the follow-up actions should be clarified at an early stage.

It is important to clearly communicate how the results will be used and provide visible feedback on the actions taken to demonstrate that participants' contributions have led to change.

It is important to emphasise that the focus should be on what happens to young people's recommendations or the results of the tool after the participation process. The tool fails to fulfil its purpose if it is merely viewed as a workshop, for example.

It is very important to manage expectations of the young people before and during the process of using the PST4Youth.

Using the PST4Youth facilitates a discussion about how young people perceive their everyday lives. The prioritisation of actions taken as a result of using the tool should be presented transparently in order to emphasise their relevance to young people and their connection to their everyday lives more clearly. It is important for facilitators to keep in mind, that the PST offers young people the opportunity to experience participation and democratic processes in practice. Young people respond well to this approach when they are taken seriously as experts on their own lives. In order to manage expectations, it is important to explain to young people right from the start what options are available for dealing with, for example, problems identified in their neighbourhood, and which options are not.

Facilitation of the process with young people

A skilled and creative facilitation of the PST4Youth is important for the implementation quality.

The PST4Youth sessions should be facilitated and moderated by individuals with strong facilitation skills, which is important to ensure that the tool is used correctly. Good facilitation provides support, helping to avoid misunderstandings. This improves the quality of the discussion. A well-structured PST4Youth session involves an open-ended methodical approach and careful planning of how to use the tool. It is also recommended to use the handbook. To facilitate practical implementation, clear and concise worksheets are preferable to extensive ones, and engaging methods that allow young people to move around and work independently are recommended.

It is important to establish connections with the young people and explain the tool's purpose before using the PST4Youth.

Before using the PST4Youth tool with young people, it is important to establish a relationship with them and explain the reason as well as the objective for using the tool. Furthermore, the language used should be simplified and adapted to be more similar to the everyday language used by young people, in order to engage with them more effectively.

Using active methods, such as neighbourhood walks, can help facilitate the discussion by refreshing participants' memories and encouraging them to notice details they might otherwise overlook.

It is recommended that the PST4Youth participation process is made more varied and active by incorporating visual and playful elements. Another option is to extend it to a full day with additional neighbourhood activities, which could be documented through photography, for example.

Active methods, such as neighbourhood walks, allow participants to experience and observe the different PST4Youth topics directly on site. This direct link between conversation and surroundings fosters lively discussions and stimulates participants physically and mentally. Neighbourhood walks introduce young people to new places and make them more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their local area. Walking together can heighten attention and open up new perspectives. Neighbourhood walks are most effective when they are clearly structured. Providing participants with specific questions or observation tasks is particularly helpful. This helps them to stay focused on the topic and know what to look out for during the walk. As well as offering the opportunity to actively participate in the discussion, a walk enables participants to (re)discover their immediate surroundings and develop a better understanding of their neighbourhood.

One challenge is that many impressions take place simultaneously during neighbourhood walks, meaning participants can easily lose focus of the discussion or become distracted by their surroundings. The success of a neighbourhood walk therefore largely depends on how it is organised. The choice of route can also influence the discussion, as different locations evoke different impressions and shape the group's perceptions.

Beyond quantitative aspects of the PST4Youth, the qualitative importance of comments and discussions should be highlighted.

The PST4Youth should focus on qualitative interactions and discussions with participants rather than on just the quantitative assessment. Furthermore, the data collected should be as specific as possible and supplemented with examples, since policy-makers particularly value qualitative insights into people's perspectives as a complement to quantitative data.

Using incentives like free food or drinks helps to promote the participation.

It is recommended to provide drinks and snacks during participatory sessions, as this is appreciated by participants and helps to create a pleasant atmosphere during the activity.

Time Management

The PST4Youth application can be split into several days or sessions.

In terms of time management, it is important to consider participants' attention spans and their ability to engage. The most appropriate time management strategy will depend on the specific context and target group.

One option is to organise two separate sessions. Although organising two sessions can be logistically challenging, this approach has been found to be beneficial in many cases. For instance, the first session could involve introducing the project, facilitating discussion and conducting the neighbourhood walk, while the second session could focus on jointly reviewing the results and discussing topics that received lower ratings, with the aim of identifying potential actions. In some cases, it may also be advisable to spread the application of the tool over several days, in order to allow sufficient time to build a relationship of trust with the participants before a possible neighbourhood walk takes place.

However, in other situations, it may be more effective to conduct all activities within a single day to maintain continuity and prevent important observations or discussion points from being lost between sessions. Consequently, no universally applicable approach can be recommended. Instead, time management should be adapted flexibly to the specific circumstances and needs of the target group.

Good time management is important and can be achieved, for example, by dividing topics and participants into smaller sub-groups.

Good time management is an important part of using the PST4Youth. Working in small groups can make discussions more efficient, particularly when time is limited. For example, small groups could be formed and each group could look at the neighbourhood from a different perspective (e.g. safety or green spaces). However, dividing the topics amongst different groups means not all participants will discuss all the topics, preventing a consolidated overview. To avoid this, it was recommended that the small groups' results could be brought together in a plenary session afterwards, giving all participants the opportunity to contribute to all topics. Whether to use small groups should therefore depend on the time available and the specific context in which the session is held.

It is important to align seated group discussions with the attention span of young people.

There are no universal guidelines for how long a group discussion with the PST4Youth should be. For example, a discussion with young people might be limited to around two hours. However, what matters more than the specific duration is adapting the session to the participants' needs. The attention span, age and abilities of the young people should particularly be taken into account. The specific setting also plays an important role. Therefore, the duration of a group discussion should be flexible and adapted to the specific target group, their attention span and context.

Further remarks

Choosing a setting

Both youth centres and schools could potentially be successful settings for using the PST4Youth. However, it is not possible to make a specific recommendation as each setting has its own advantages and disadvantages. In youth centres, for example, it is often unclear how many young people will attend on a given day. Nevertheless, this setting typically involves smaller groups, which has proven to be more suitable for the practical use of the PST4Youth. Schools also appear to be an appropriate setting for introducing the tool, as they provide access to groups of young people who already know each other. However, this familiarity may also be a disadvantage if group dynamics lead participants to provide socially desirable responses. It is also important to consider whether participation is voluntary and whether the size of the class is appropriate for using the PST4Youth. Another challenge is that the school attended and the participants' place of residence may differ. No other suitable settings were identified.

Therefore, the choice of setting should be adapted to the respective context. While existing relationships with young people, such as those established in youth work, were considered an advantage, it should be noted that more focused participation may be facilitated by a neutral location, such as a school or a quiet room outside a youth centre.

Age and group size

In practice, both age group and group size can be managed very flexibly. Group size can vary significantly and depends on factors such as the chosen setting or objective. The age group can also be chosen flexibly and depends heavily on the selected objective when using the PST4Youth. Accordingly, age groups can be either defined or mixed in practical work, depending on the setting and objective. It should be noted that group size often cannot be fully planned in advance, so flexibility is required.

Authored by: Michelle Baus, Patricia Tollmann, Prof. Dr. Heike Köckler, Prof. Dr. Eike Quilling

Last updated: September 2026



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

With support from our project partners:

