

# YouthLab

The European Youthlab project has been finalized after 2.5 years of intense and fruitful cooperation between all partners. In the final months of the project, a lot of things happened - don't miss anything below.

## Looking Back: updates from partners

### DCI Belgium

Team YouthLab in Belgium was proud to close the project on the 24th of June with a learning event that provided an opportunity to share the findings of the project about youth participation in justice. On this occasion, DCI Belgium joined forces with the Belgian Youth Forum and invited different justice professionals and youth to discuss the findings and propose concrete solutions to improve the relationship of the youth with justice professionals. These recommendations will be carried into the future through advocacy initiatives and our youth will continue to carry the voices of children in contact with the justice system in other DCI Belgium projects during the autumn 2022, in the meanwhile, we wish all of you a great summer!



### DCI Italy

On 30 May 2022 more than one hundred participants attended the final learning event of the Youthlab Project in Italy. Justice professionals - lawyers, judges and prosecutors - social workers, educational staff, civil society professionals and relevant state authorities gathered online to discuss the progress and next steps on the rights of children in contact with the juvenile justice system in Italy. During this event, Youthlab Junior Trainers presented the project and their perspectives on this innovative method as a concrete contribution to child-friendly justice, while three justice professionals reported their views as participants of the Youthlab training.

Junior and senior Youthlab trainers exchanged with Cristina Maggia, President of the Italian Association of Juvenile and Family Magistrates, with Clara Paglionico and Claudia De Luca, Judge and Juvenile prosecutor of the Juvenile Court of Naples on the good practices, obstacles and opportunities in the field of the Italian juvenile justice system. Several state authorities, such as Giuseppe Cacciapuoti, PRAM general director of the Department of Juvenile and Community Justice renewed

their commitment to continue working for and with children.

Defence for Children Italy will continue working for a child-rights based approach to

the juvenile justice system, putting the child at the center, while promoting the three levels of child participation - consultative, collaborative and youth-led initiatives.

## EU YouthLab Final Conference

The Project Final Conference took place in Brussels, Belgium, on 8 June 2022. The event brought together 40 participants from 5 countries, including representatives from INGOs and European networks working in the field of youth criminal justice.

The objectives of the event were:

1. Reaching and informing new professionals and new countries;
2. Presenting the findings, impact of the project on professionals and youth;
3. Launching and dissemination of the youthlab toolkit and the creative campaign.

During the event, participants had the chance to learn more about the importance of strengthening child-friendly communication of justice professionals through their meaningful engagement with young people. The event offered a mix of panel discussions and interactive break-out sessions, in which young project participants themselves shared how the project impacted them, what were their take-aways and aspirations for the future.

When asked what they liked the most and/or would take away from the conference, participants answered:

*It is great to have an example to follow on meaningful, safe and effective child participation. The equality underlining the project is palpable.*

*Hope and motivation to continue the discussion.*

*The interaction between boys from different countries was great. More of that, more perspectives and learning from each other.*

In the evaluation form shared after the event, 75% of the participants answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge of policy frameworks concerning youth in contact with the justice system increased, while 91,7% said the same about their knowledge of child-friendly justice and 83.3% said the same about youth participation in the justice system. Finally, 91,7% have expanded their network of child-friendly justice stakeholders.

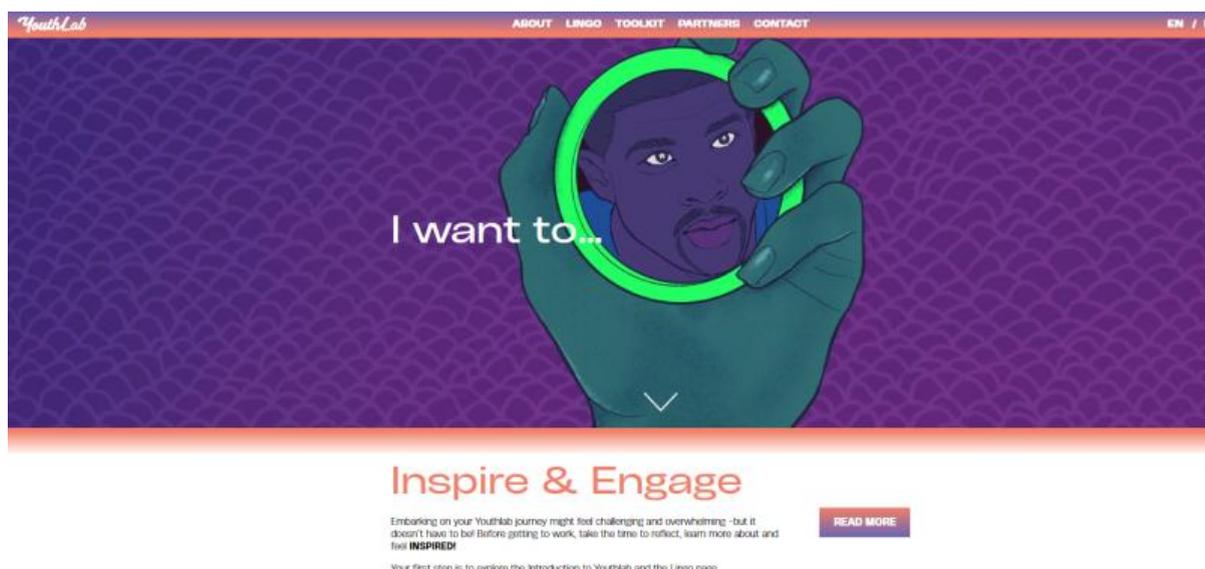
The conference was the perfect opportunity to launch the **Exchanging Perspectives short documentary and Toolkit!**

The **Exchanging Perspectives documentary** was developed with the intent of reaching new justice professionals and arousing their interest in the Youthlab model. By centering the experience of the youth participants with the criminal justice system and outlining how the Youthlab provided them with a new framework to engage with justice professionals, the mini-docu offers strong evidence of the positive impact of the project.

Filmed near Strasbourg, France, the development of the documentary provided a unique opportunity in the project to bring youngsters from the three participating countries together. The relaxed and informal atmosphere, filled with sports, music and spoken word, is a testament to the

2.5 years journey that partners and participants shared during the project implementation. You can watch the documentary [here](#).

Finally, the **Exchanging Perspectives online toolkit** is an important step forward in the dissemination and sustainability of the Youthlab model. By providing a blueprint of the Youthlab methodology, it aims to inspire and resource stakeholders in the youth justice system to implement their own programme. It brings together the experiences, lessons learned and best practices from three partners in three countries, as well as testimonials from participants. You can explore the toolkit [here](#).



## Impact of YouthLab

Over the course of the past 2,5 years the projects implemented in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands have also been monitored and evaluated, under supervision of [Stephanie Rap](#) (University of Amsterdam). The monitoring consisted of three main elements: evaluations of the training for professionals, interviews with the young experienced experts as members of YouthLab and an impact study among young people in contact with the justice system.

The results of the evaluation of the training of justice professionals show that generally they were very positive about the organization and content of the training - the involvement of the young experienced experts was specially valued to a great extent. The professionals indicated to have the intention to change their treatment of and communication with young people as a result of the training and to take more time to communicate with young people.

The young experienced experts valued their involvement in the training as well and they were overall positive about the exchanges they had with professionals during the training. The young experienced experts learned from the perspective of the professionals and were better able to understand their point of view in judicial procedures.

The results of the impact study among young people who are in contact with the justice system, showed that young people experience a lack of information regarding the youth justice process, that they experience a range of negative emotions during court hearings and that they were not always able to tell their own story to professionals.

The YouthLab training showed to be a valuable and useful addition to the training of professionals in the youth justice system, for both professionals and youth. However, the impact study also showed that continuous training of professionals is needed to improve practice for all professionals and youth.

## Looking Forward

The recently approved Just Closer project builds on the Youthlab project to ensure increased child participation during judicial proceedings and to roll out evidence-based support for children involved in criminal judicial proceedings. The project is led by DCI Italy and has YiP and UvA as partners. Stay tuned on the next activities!

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