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## Learning Situation

### Smart Participation: Engaging Young People in Public Decisions

In many cities, young people feel that public decisions are distant, difficult to understand, or disconnected from their everyday lives. Although digital tools are widely used for communication, they are not always effectively applied to inform young residents, involve them in civic processes, or allow them to meaningfully contribute to public decisions.

At the same time, local authorities are increasingly interested in improving transparency, trust, and participation in public decision-making. Digital solutions can support this goal by making information more accessible, enabling interaction, and creating new channels for engagement. However, these solutions must also address concerns related to data protection, accountability, and trust.

In this Learning Situation, participation is understood broadly and includes communication, consultation, and decision-making processes.

Students explore how smart digital solutions can support young people in staying informed, engaging in dialogue, and taking part in public decisions, while ensuring transparency through technologies such as blockchain.

#### Driving Question

**What smart digital solutions can help increase young people's engagement in public decisions?**

#### Scenario

Local authorities are seeking smart digital solutions to improve communication with young residents and encourage their participation in public decisions. They aim to ensure that young people are informed about local initiatives, can contribute their views, and understand how decisions are made.

At the same time, public institutions face challenges related to transparency, data security, and trust. Young residents need to know how their data is used, who controls it, and how their participation influences outcomes.

As local students, you have been asked to develop a proposal for a digital solution — such as an app, an online platform, or a digital campaign — that responds to these challenges and supports youth participation in a transparent and responsible way.

## Task

Students develop an evidence-based proposal responding to the local authorities' request. Working in groups, they **design and propose** one or two smart digital solutions aimed at young residents.

Their proposal should:

- **identify** a communication or participation challenge relevant to young people;
- **analyse** the needs and expectations of young residents;
- **design** a digital solution that supports information, interaction, and participation;
- **propose** how transparency and data protection are ensured, including the possible use of blockchain or similar technologies;
- **evaluate** the expected impact on young people's engagement in public decisions.

Students may present their proposal in the form of a presentation, video, digital mock-up, or campaign concept.

### **This activity implies a holistic approach.**

Students explore the Driving Question by **connecting** civic participation with digital technology, governance, and data responsibility. They **analyse** how digital tools can strengthen or weaken trust in public institutions and **evaluate** how transparency, security, and accessibility influence participation and decision-making.

The Learning Situation is intentionally broad and flexible. Students may focus on different types of digital solutions (apps, platforms, campaigns) and different participation contexts, while maintaining a shared focus on young people's role in public decisions.

**To support this process, teachers may use the Lesson Plan developed for this topic,** which guides the activity step by step while leaving students with agency to steer their own work and learning.

[Link to LESSON PLAN](#)

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## Alternative approaches

### 1. Single-Challenge Approach

Teachers may choose to focus the activity on **one single specific greening issue** that is particularly relevant to the local context.

This option is often easier to manage because:

- **it may require less time**, since the class concentrates on a single well-defined challenge;
- **it simplifies planning**, as all students work within the same theme;
- **it increases local relevance**, allowing teachers to select a challenge that is meaningful and visible in the school's immediate surroundings.

In the single-challenge approach, all student groups will work on the same overarching urban sustainability challenge. To provide focus and structure, each group can be assigned one of four perspectives to guide their investigation:

- **Where:** Investigating and describing the current state
- **Who:** Exploring community needs and preferences, including residents, schools, and local businesses.
- **Why:** Examining and describing the specific environmental challenges
- **How:** Identifying feasible types of planting, design interventions, or other practical solutions.

### Suggested Local Challenges (What can be done...?)

#### ***Improving access to information about public decisions***

Students **explore** how young residents currently receive information from local authorities.  
*What can be done to make public information more accessible and understandable for young people?*

#### ***Encouraging youth participation in consultations and initiatives***

Students **analyse** why young people may not take part in existing participation processes.  
*What digital tools could lower barriers to participation?*

Ensuring transparency and trust in digital participation tools

Students **identify** concerns related to data protection, manipulation, or lack of feedback.  
*What can be done to increase trust through transparent and verifiable systems?*

### 2. Developing Your Own Learning Situation

Teachers may design their own Learning Situation within this topic by narrowing the focus to a specific form of participation or decision-making, such as digital voting, participatory budgeting, reporting local issues, or youth consultation platforms. Teachers may also

collaborate with local authorities or youth organisations to identify a concrete and realistic challenge.

A good Driving Question should:

- be relevant and motivating for students;
- be feasible within available time and resources;
- support structured group work;
- involve accessible stakeholders;
- be linked to at least one of the project competences.

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