



# White Paper

The word 'access' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'a' is stylized with a red arrow pointing to the right.



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# I. Recommendations

## Summary

Access recommends to promote a **systemic institutional approach** that acknowledges that young (disadvantaged) learners and the youth education and social sector become empowered, connected and meaningfully engaged in sustainable education and sustainable social development through enhanced participation.

Access team believes that this can happen when institutions become **living laboratories for participation and active citizenship**, when equity in access is secured, and gender equality, connections with and respect for the environment, and the planet is ensured. A prerequisite is enabling the learning process to be **experiential, action-oriented, localized in the social space, and culturally specific**. This allows young people to learn from their living environment and be empowered to live the lives they choose through their learning.

Access recommends to recognise **sustainability** as one of the three priorities of the EU Youth Strategy and the Education for Sustainable Development. Its scope and intervention model (tackled by the case study held in Vienna) require to act increasingly fast if climate change and equity in access to resources is to be tackled.

Access also recommends to recognize the **pivotal role of youth educators, youth workers and social workers in the further development and adaptation of the social space-oriented method** to contribute to and to promote sustainable development of youth with fewer opportunities. It is within the power and scope of all organisations active in the social space to make decision to increasingly and decisively invest in the recognition and capacity development of youth workers and social workers, and in so doing to enable the latter in turn to empower and enable young people at all levels. Only through acknowledgment, recognition, and capacity development they will ensure tangible impacts within the sector are operationalised. Empowered youth workers and educators will advocate for the **social space-oriented participatory approach** and contribute for their institutions to be part of the **sector transformation**.

Access recommends to harness the potential of the digital skills (and 'green' technologies), as one of the pillars of the EU Youth Strategy to ensure that the digital divide progressively reduces, and to ensure access, development and use of technologies in a responsible, safe, equitable, and inclusive environment for all. Strengthening young people's digital skills enhances their critical thinking, contributing to an informed assessment of the risks and benefits of the digital sphere. Digital skills also promote broader access to free educational resources, open pathways to employment, and foster inclusion in increasingly digital and interconnected communities and labour markets.

Access recommends seizing the opportunity to **invest in young people (with fewer opportunities) as agents of change**, as the main actors to experience and to embody equity and justice. Disadvantaged youth can be reached by creating tailor-made learning opportunities fostering participation, mutual trust and civic

engagement. Learning is not only about providing competencies and tools defined by educators and teachers, as more importantly **tools and models to foster participation, critical thinking, co-creation skills, and the sense of purpose**. These tools provided by youth organisations and social actors can initiate and anchor in the local contexts individual and societal transformation for the well-being and enjoyment of everyone.

Access recommends to **prioritize marginalized individuals and groups of youth**, including young persons with (learning) disabilities, persons with migration backgrounds, young individuals experiencing conflicts within their communities or society at large. Through an **inclusive approach** Access recommends to **promoting innovative participatory education offers contextualized and embedded in the social space**, offering a **safe space** for individual and collective development through education.

Access recommends to **mobilize social space-oriented models of intervention to combat exclusion**, particularly of those individuals and groups affected by financial insecurity and need, and provide learners with relevant competencies to meet individual and societal demands, including through **digital skills development and skills for sustainable development**, and continue to ensure the respect of human right and the **right to self-determination** in the live decisions.

Access recommends enhancing **multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaborations** across actors and institutions at all levels of governance to ensure a holistic and systemic approach. This includes strengthened **cooperation between practitioners and policymakers in the education and environmental sectors**, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholder groups—non-governmental organizations, academia, the business sector, youth groups, and youth alliances. Enhancing **networking opportunities and mutual learning** among different stakeholders will **mainstream efforts, provide mutual support, and ensure synergies and complementarity** of actions and more sustainable impacts on the ground.



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