

INSIGHTS INTO YOUTH-LED EXPERIENCES FOR LOCAL POLICY-MAKING IN MIGRATION ISSUES

This paper is part of a selection of good practices gathered from the E-LoCUM partner countries. These examples showcase successful models and mechanisms for fostering youth participation in migration-related initiatives. The initiatives described serve as practical references for youth workers, educators, and practitioners, offering real-world examples of how youth engagement can be effectively structured and implemented.

These practices are designed not only to inspire but also to encourage creative thinking about how similar models could be adapted to your own local contexts. Furthermore, the practical insights from these models will provide additional "food for thought" to deepen discussions on migration and democratic participation.

The Boat Collective (Greece)

- **Location:** Greece (national scale)
- **Year of creation:** 2019
- **Status:** Informal (grassroots) initiative

Context and background: The Boat Collective started with self-organised theatre classes in the midst of Europe's largest, most inhumane refugee camp, Moria camp on Lesbos island, Greece at the end of 2019. The collective artistic journey was started to cope with the difficulties experienced and the efforts to develop environments for social support, creative expression and connection at a time when it was needed the most.

The volatile situation refugees are forced to live in, considering the policies and practices of deterrence implemented in Greece, left most members of the collective living in limbo for years. Yet, they managed to nurture safe spaces for artistic expression and bonds which gave them the opportunity to support each other with the challenges around them.

Over the two years in Lesbos the collective grew into a close-knit network of artists, debuting their own self-led performance 'The Boat' in August 2021. The Boat was an interdisciplinary theatre performance connecting various forms of non-verbal art including acting, dance, and music/sound to explore themes of inequality and inhumanity in today's global society.

August 2021 was a stepping stone for the collective but also a turning point. Changing policies, practices, and procedures allowed the majority of the collective to leave Lesbos. Some of the artists moved to Athens, while others have sought protection and opportunities in other countries including Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. In Athens the team has expanded, with more artists joining the collective through various forms of creative expression.

These developments have reshaped the collective to an ever-growing network of artists, where members engage in their decided manner. The aim as a collective is to provide support and amplify one another's art and creativity and build solidarity in the communities they live in.

Youth engagement strategies: 'The Boat Theatre' is a non-verbal theatre performance exploring themes of inhumanity in today's global society. It dives into the creation of humans, the treacherous journeys of forced migration, the protection of children, and advocates for LGBTQIA+ Rights. Through this form of theatre, the collective amplifies messages of human rights and solidarity to all audiences regardless of language or background. Through theatre it brings together refugees, migrants, and local Greek populations in one space able to understand and feel the same messages.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkLpIVgILyc>

<https://www.theboatcollective.org/projects-newest>

Partnerships and collaboration: The Boat Collective are artists, engineers, doctors, cultural mediators, electricians, students, social workers, carpenters, business people, educators, travellers, humans, friends, cats, dogs, fighters, activists. They are all part of the neighbourhood around the boat art centre, coming from various places, have various backgrounds and represent a variety of groups.