

# SOL4ALL Evaluation Report

## Strengthening meaningful participation: evidence of change, contribution pathways and lessons

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**Report structure:** Executive Summary | 1. SOL4ALL and Its Intended Change | 2. Evidence Base and Analytical Approach | 3. Evaluation Findings | 4. From Signals to Contribution | 5. Conclusions | 6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations | 7. Documentary Basis

## Executive Summary

SOL4ALL was designed to strengthen empathy, solidarity, belonging and active citizenship by building citizens' capacity to engage in democratic life, creating and using participation opportunities with under-represented communities and grassroots organisations, and engaging public authorities and other stakeholders. The evaluation asked not whether a two-year project had transformed democratic systems, but whether credible change was visible in the conditions, capacities, practices and relationships through which more inclusive participation can develop, and how SOL4ALL plausibly contributed to those changes.

**SOL4ALL was conceived as a contribution to more inclusive and participatory democratic systems, strengthening the conditions that enable longer-term change through capacity-building, participatory practice, relationship-building and dialogue between under-represented communities, civil society organisations and public authorities.**

**The evaluation provides credible evidence of progress in these areas, particularly in strengthening participation practices, agency and cross-sector collaboration. Evidence of wider institutionalisation, formal influence and longer-term systemic change is still emerging; this needs to be understood in the context of a two-year project in which substantive implementation took place over less than 18 months across five countries, and whose policy engagement and recommendation pathway (WP25) was still ongoing at the point of evaluation. Several partner organisations also continue to work with public authorities and local stakeholders beyond individual SOL4ALL activities, creating opportunities for the uptake of recommendations and consolidation of changes initiated through the project.**

**SOL4ALL's contribution therefore lies both in the changes already observed and in establishing and validating conditions, relationships and policy pathways that can support more durable institutional and systemic change over time.**

The combined evidence tells a coherent story. Participation became more concrete and demanding: not simply being present, but being recognised, taking meaningful roles, influencing how activities or services are designed, and seeing what happens after contributing. The strongest change is visible in practice. Across Portugal, Greece and Sweden, participants and practitioners described more deliberate facilitation, outreach, delegation, co-design, feedback, organisational navigation and supported leadership. Local Solidarity Activities then provided real settings in which these practices had to be exercised, negotiated, and adapted. Relationships also became more usable: CSOs found new partners, municipal staff built cross-departmental contacts, young people gained access to adults and decision-makers, and some participants moved into new roles or continued engagement.

The significance of these changes varied because participants started from very different positions. Experienced CSOs, community leaders and municipal practitioners often entered SOL4ALL with strong participatory values; for them, change was more often reinforcement, transfer or operationalisation. For less experienced participants, including some young leaders and people less familiar with civic or institutional systems, the project could represent a more substantial shift in confidence, leadership experience, institutional navigation and perceived ability to act. The evaluation therefore interprets contribution relative to starting point, role, exposure and context rather than expecting one uniform outcome.

Across the five evaluation domains, evidence is strongest for understanding, agency, applied practice and relational change, while wider institutional change is visible in selected settings and longer-term policy influence remains an ongoing pathway rather than a completed outcome.

| Domain                                 | Headline evaluation finding                                                                                                                                                                              | Judgement                                               |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| EQ1 Understanding                      | Participation was increasingly framed as co-creation, meaningful voice, recognition and influence, while high-baseline actors often deepened rather than newly acquired these ideas.                     | Strong early-stage signal                               |
| EQ2 Motivation, confidence & inclusion | Safe, relevant and relational participation strengthened confidence and perceived capability for some participants; the meaning of this change varied strongly by starting point and structural context. | Moderate, uneven but credible                           |
| EQ3 Roles & practices                  | The clearest change is in applied practice: facilitation, outreach, delegation, co-design, communication, organisational navigation and supported leadership.                                            | Strong practice-level change                            |
| EQ4 Group dynamics & participation     | Specific relationships, interactions, visibility and active roles increased in several settings, creating or activating bridging relationships for future participation.                                 | Moderate, specific and relational                       |
| EQ5 Contribution & wider influence     | Trust, accessibility, facilitation, real responsibility, proximity, feedback, continuity and institutional responsiveness recur as mechanisms; selected service and institutional changes are visible.   | Strong explanatory value; emerging institutional change |

Read together, the five EQ-specific findings generate six cross-cutting findings about how meaningful participation changed, how SOL4ALL contributed and the conditions under which those changes were more or less likely to occur.

#### Six cross-cutting evaluation findings emerge from the combined evidence:

- 1. Understanding, confidence and agency strengthened, but unevenly.** SOL4ALL strengthened participants' understanding of participation and, in several settings, their confidence and perceived agency, with the significance of change varying according to starting point, actor role, exposure and context.
- 2. Learning became most consequential when followed by real responsibility.** Participation was strongest where learning and reflection were followed by substantive roles, practical application, responsibility and opportunities to influence processes or decisions.
- 3. Under-represented people contributed as actors and knowledge-holders, not only as consultees.** SOL4ALL's participatory mechanisms, including Groundstigator-supported processes, demonstrated that people experiencing exclusion and under-represented groups could contribute substantive knowledge, analysis and proposals when participation enabled self-representation and meaningful roles.
- 4. Institutional responsiveness was a critical condition for meaningful participation.** Voice alone was insufficient where decision pathways, feedback, accessibility or opportunities for influence were weak; participant capability therefore needed to be matched by institutional receptiveness.
- 5. Relationships were an important project result and part of the infrastructure for future participation.** SOL4ALL created or activated usable relationships between citizens, civil society organisations and institutional actors, although their durability depends on continued engagement, institutional ownership and follow-through.
- 6. The evaluation identified clear failure pathways.** Participation weakened where engagement was episodic, expectations or spheres of influence were unclear, access remained impractical, institutional response was limited, learning was not followed by application, or participation created unmanaged safety risks. These pathways matter because they show where otherwise well-designed participation can break down. While not the dominant story of SOL4ALL, they are an important evaluation result because they identify conditions future participation initiatives need to address.

In terms of reach, Annex G records 1,704 reported participation or outreach instances in the version used for this evaluation; these are not unique individuals. Among direct and evaluation participation instances with recorded gender, 56.1% were women, 43.4% men and 0.5% other. Uneven country reporting and the absence of stable participant identifiers prevent calculation of unique reach, repeat participation or participation intensity.

## 1. SOL4ALL and Its Intended Change

### 1.1 Context and intervention

SOL4ALL is a 24-month CERV initiative implemented by partners in Portugal, Sweden, France, Greece and Denmark. Its approved project framing centres on empathy, solidarity, belonging and active citizenship, combining capacity

development, opportunities for under-represented communities and grassroots organisations to participate, and engagement with local and national authorities and other stakeholders. In practice, substantive implementation unfolded over less than 18 months across five countries, an important consideration when interpreting the maturity of organisational, institutional and policy outcomes.

The intervention architecture was deliberately multi-stage. It combined stakeholder training and a Community of Practice; diagnosis and mapping of participation and solidarity mechanisms; practical experimentation through Local Solidarity Activities; further capacity development for under-represented communities, CSOs and Local Authorities; national Think Tanks; national and international seminars; communication and documentary work; evaluation; and a final policy-engagement and recommendation pathway. This created repeated opportunities to move between reflection, practice, dialogue and institutional engagement rather than treating participation as a single event.

## 1.2 Original and evaluation-informed refined Theory of Change

The original Theory of Change provided a broad hypothesis: if SOL4ALL combined training, participatory assessment, community action, exchange and policy dialogue, then under-represented communities would participate more, solidarity ecosystems would strengthen, Local Authorities would become better able to implement inclusive approaches, and project learning would influence policy discussion. Over time, these changes were expected to contribute to more inclusive participatory democracy, stronger social cohesion, and sustainable policy change. A companion inception note expressed the same logic more simply as movement from awareness and mobilisation, through engagement and local support networks, towards effective participation and social cohesion.

The evaluation supports the direction of this theory but substantially refines how the pathway works. The first refinement is that change begins from different starting points. In Sweden, several CSOs and the Arvika municipal respondent already had strong participatory commitments; SOL4ALL's added value was to make outreach, accessibility, youth responsibility and inter-organisational collaboration more intentional and transferable. In Portugal, experienced community leaders, CSOs and municipal technicians often described reinforcement or practical sharpening, while participants less familiar with Portuguese civic systems or participatory methods described clearer new pathways, confidence and institutional-navigation capability. Similar variation appears in Greece between experienced civic actors and participants for whom safe public dialogue represented a more substantial change.

The second refinement is that learning becomes consequential when it is followed by experience. Across the evidence, training and reflection were most likely to translate into change when people had real supported responsibility: organising an activity, facilitating a group, presenting a proposal, coaching a young person, negotiating resources, delegating decisions or adapting delivery when plans did not work. Portugal's Local Solidarity Activities repeatedly show this bridge from ideas to practice; Greek CSOs described adjusting facilitation so less-heard participants could enter discussion; and in Sweden younger activity leaders and Groundstigators developed confidence through responsibility rather than instruction alone.

The resulting pathway is better described as: **learning and reflection -> supported responsibility -> encounter with real constraints -> adaptation -> stronger capability and practice.**

The third refinement is relational. Trust, recognition and belonging repeatedly appeared as both preconditions and potential results of participation. People were more willing to enter unfamiliar spaces when participation was psychologically safe, facilitated in accessible ways, and connected to familiar or trusted people. Once participation produced recognition, useful exchange or visible response, trust could strengthen and future engagement could become easier. The Think Tanks showed this at different scales: interpersonal solidarity in Fundão; trust between communities and institutions in Loures (Portugal); trust in participation mechanisms in Greece; recognition and self-representation in Denmark; youth psychological safety in Sweden; and multilingual, migrant-centred voice in France.

Trusted intermediaries are therefore not a peripheral implementation feature but part of the causal infrastructure. Portuguese Groundstigators helped people navigate institutional systems while learning when to step back so communities could carry implementation themselves. Swedish Groundstigators described building trust before transmitting information, accompanying young people into meetings and making a large organisation more navigable. Similar bridging functions appeared through community mediators in Portugal, youth workers and visible municipal staff in Sweden, and mediator propositions presented in the International Seminar in Brussels. The long-term challenge is to retain the relational value of these roles while distributing contacts, knowledge and responsibility so access does not remain dependent on a small number of individuals.

The fourth refinement concerns the institutional interface. Stronger participant capability does not automatically become influence. SOL4ALL progressed most clearly where institutions or organisations were receptive: young people's input changed assumptions in the design of an Arvika youth centre (Sweden); Loures municipal staff developed more usable cross-departmental relationships and a library service introduced intentional feedback after consultation (Portugal); in the International Seminar in Brussels, participants reported moving towards earlier community involvement, outreach and mediation. Greece, by contrast, makes the institutional conversion problem

especially visible: participants described stronger confidence and civic energy alongside weaker evidence that institutions became systematically more responsive. The refined theory therefore requires change on both sides of the relationship: participant capability and collective efficacy, together with institutional accessibility, responsiveness, management legitimacy and procedures that can absorb and act on input.

The fifth refinement is that deliberation and recommendation-generation form a real intermediate result in the policy pathway. National Think Tanks in all five countries converted lived experience and analysis of barriers into specific policy and practice recommendations; National Seminars extended the participatory dialogue from identifying challenges and generating recommendations towards broader discussion with community, civil-society and institutional actors. In Portugal, the seminar explicitly presented and discussed recommendations largely developed through the National Think Tanks and wider SOL4ALL process; in Greece and France, the seminars contributed further reflection on barriers, enabling conditions and future priorities. The Brussels and Paris International Seminar events extended the process into institutional and European policy debate. At the point of evaluation, WP25 was still ongoing. The existence, provenance and content of these recommendations are therefore established project results, while their eventual adoption or implementation remains a question for later follow-up.

Finally, the evaluation makes the reverse pathway visible. Formal access without usable access can lead to exclusion or withdrawal; voice without feedback can produce disappointment and participation fatigue; training without application or organisational support can remain superficial; capability without institutional receptiveness can stall at the point of influence; intermediary-dependent access can remain fragile; and highly visible participation without adequate safeguarding can expose under-represented participants to unequal risk. These failure pathways do not invalidate the Theory of Change. They specify the conditions under which it is more or less likely to progress.

#### Evaluation-informed change pathway:

**differentiated starting points -> accessible and trusted opportunities -> recognition, learning and confidence -> real supported responsibility -> changed practice and substantive roles -> stronger relationships, networks and collective efficacy -> service, organisational and collaborative influence where institutions are receptive -> participant-generated recommendations and policy dialogue -> longer-term institutional and policy uptake through continued relationships.**

**Failure pathways can interrupt the chain at each transition.**

### 1.3 Evaluation questions and expected signals of change

The Evaluation Plan organised evidence around five linked domains. The questions below preserve the intent of each domain while making explicit what the evaluation was asking and what counted as a credible signal.

| EQ                                             | Evaluation question                                                                                                                                                  | Signals assessed                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EQ1 Understanding & meaning-making             | To what extent do participants articulate clearer, more concrete understandings of participation and solidarity, grounded in their role and context?                 | Changes in language, framing and examples; role-specific meaning; movement beyond abstract or purely normative definitions.                                         |
| EQ2 Motivation, confidence & inclusion         | To what extent do participants report increased confidence, motivation or readiness to engage in participatory or solidarity-based action appropriate to their role? | Greater willingness, comfort, agency and perceived inclusion; ability to include others; recognition of new or persistent barriers.                                 |
| EQ3 Roles, practices & organisational thinking | How has participation influenced reflection on roles, responsibilities, procedures, power, organisational constraints and ways of working?                           | Role and power reflection; changed perspectives on responsibilities; organisational learning; practical application where evidenced.                                |
| EQ4 Observed group dynamics & participation    | What observable signals of change are visible in participation, solidarity, visibility, relationships or connections at community or organisational level?           | Concrete examples of changed participation, new connections, role-taking, visibility, interaction or relational change; observation rather than causal attribution. |
| EQ5 Contribution pathways & enabling factors   | How and under what conditions did SOL4ALL plausibly contribute to reported or observed change, and what enabled or limited progress?                                 | Specific activities or features linked to change; mechanisms; application; enabling and limiting conditions; context and alternative explanations.                  |

## 2. Evidence Base and Analytical Approach

### 2.1 Evaluation design: building a whole-project view

The evaluation was intentionally designed to create a whole-project view rather than assess each activity in isolation. SOL4ALL operated through different countries, actor groups and intervention formats, so no single source could explain the project. Focus groups and interviews provided depth on experience and meaning; the online questionnaire provided structured perception evidence; Local Solidarity Activities showed participation being exercised in practice; Think Tanks and seminars documented participation quality, forward-looking priorities and recommendations; Annex G documented reach; and the same analytical framework was used to connect these evidence streams.

This design made it possible to view participation from several positions at once: under-represented participants, Community Leaders, CSOs, Local Authorities, Groundstigators and other trusted intermediaries, and the spaces in which these actors interacted. It also prevented one kind of evidence from carrying claims it could not support. A participant reporting greater confidence is evidence of internal change; a concrete account of a new relationship or changed practice is an observable signal; and an explanation that trust, facilitation, feedback or responsibility made the difference provides evidence about how change may have occurred. Keeping these levels distinct is central to the rigour of the evaluation.

### 2.2 Evidence coverage

| Evidence stream             | Validated coverage used                                                                                                                        | Primary analytical role                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus groups / interviews   | Portugal: 7 validated units; Greece: 6; Sweden: 7 substantive records grouped by actor typology, including interviews.                         | Primary depth evidence across EQ1-EQ5.                                                            |
| Online questionnaire        | Portugal n=29; Greece n=28; Sweden n=8; Denmark n=5; France missing.                                                                           | Structured perception evidence across EQ1-EQ5.                                                    |
| Local Solidarity Activities | 9 validated activity units: Portugal 4, Greece 3, Sweden 2.                                                                                    | Practice-level evidence for EQ3-EQ5.                                                              |
| National Think Tanks        | Validated national processes in Denmark, France, Greece, Portugal and Sweden; Fundão and Loures retained separately before Portugal synthesis. | Participation quality, meaning-making, barriers, learning, priorities and recommendations.        |
| National Seminars           | Portugal n=57; Greece n=53; France approx. 65-70 across the day; Denmark and Sweden missing.                                                   | Participation-in-practice, usefulness where evidenced, enabling conditions and future priorities. |
| International Seminar       | Brussels transcript/report and Paris narrative report, treated as analytically separate events within one international process.               | Deliberation, retrospective practice signals, structural barriers and policy propositions.        |
| Annex G                     | Partial reporting across all five countries; 1,704 reported participation/reach instances in the version used.                                 | Reach, gender, actor/entity coverage and data-quality assessment.                                 |

### 2.3 Analysis, triangulation and AI-assisted human validation

The methodology prioritised triangulation over aggregation. A conclusion became stronger when independent methods, actor perspectives or country processes converged on the same substantive pattern. Repetition within one source chain - for example, an organiser report and a summary derived from it - was not counted as independent corroboration. Questionnaire percentages were interpreted within their country datasets and were not pooled into a synthetic cross-country percentage because sample size, actor composition and exposure differed materially.

The analytical workflow was AI-assisted and human-validated. Integrated prompt guides translated the Evaluation Plan into repeatable analytical procedures: register the evidence; test whether sources were independent and fit for purpose; analyse countries, actors or events within their own boundaries; retain negative, contradictory and missing evidence; separate observation from contribution explanation; and only then compare validated outputs. Each stage included explicit human review before the next step. This allowed a large, heterogeneous evidence base to be processed systematically without allowing the AI to decide what counted as a validated finding.

This experience also generated a broader methodological lesson. High-quality analysis begins before analysis itself. The usefulness of AI, thematic coding and triangulation depended on what had been collected while activities were happening: clear participant and actor categories, traceable dates and exposure, raw feedback, stable records, source attribution and consistent data ownership. Where those foundations were strong, the evaluation could move from individual accounts to cross-method insight. Where they were weak or missing, no analytical technique could reconstruct certainty afterwards. The evaluation therefore reinforces an end-to-end data-management cycle: project design -> identification of information needs -> data collection and stewardship -> quality control -> analysis and triangulation -> insight -> use in decisions and future design.

This is also why the methodology is potentially transferable. It provides a practical model for future multi-country evaluations that need to combine qualitative depth, structured perception data, implementation evidence and policy learning while maintaining a transparent audit trail and explicit human judgement.

## 2.4 Limitations

**The evaluation was conducted before the full longer-term institutional and policy contribution pathway could reasonably be observed. SOL4ALL is a two-year project, substantive implementation took place over less than 18 months, and the policy-engagement and recommendation pathway was still ongoing. Absence of longer-term institutional or policy evidence at this stage is therefore not, by itself, evidence of intervention failure.**

Evidence coverage is uneven by country and method. Focus-group depth is available for Portugal, Greece and Sweden; France has no questionnaire dataset; Denmark and Sweden lack validated National Seminar evidence; and several Annex G activity lines are incomplete. The final validated package used here also lacks complete analytical outputs for the planned training pre/post self-assessments, participation-mechanism mapping and a standalone Decision Maker analysis.

Sampling was purposive and role-based, not statistically representative. Questionnaire samples are particularly small in Sweden and Denmark, and exposure to SOL4ALL varied substantially. Much evidence is self-reported or organiser-recorded, and several events lack transcripts, raw feedback or participant-level attribution. These conditions affect the strength and reach of claims, but they do not invalidate the evidence they can legitimately support.

Participant identifiers were not consistently available, so Annex G cannot calculate unique participants, repeat engagement, participation intensity or overlap between activities. Data-quality issues also affected some instruments and records, including questionnaire configuration problems in Greece, exposure/influence mismatches and missing raw seminar feedback. These limitations were retained explicitly rather than corrected by inference.

## 3. Evaluation Findings

This section arises directly from the SOL4ALL Evaluation Plan and presents the evaluation findings against the five Evaluation Questions (EQ1-EQ5) set out in Section 1.3, preserving the analytical structure used throughout the evaluation.

### 3.1 Finding 1: Participation became more concrete and demanding

**Overall judgement:** strong early-stage change, with substantial variation by starting point and context.

Across methods and countries, the most important conceptual shift was not simply a better definition of participation. Participants increasingly described a more demanding standard for what participation should mean: co-creation rather than attendance; self-representation rather than speaking through others; recognition rather than symbolic inclusion; and influence or visible consequence rather than consultation alone. The recurrence matters because countries arrived at this conclusion through different experiences.

In Portugal, Fundão public and institutional actors described moving away from predetermined solutions and involving young people earlier in diagnosis and design, while Loures municipal technicians distinguished knowing participation theoretically from knowing how to operationalise it with different audiences. The two Portuguese Think Tanks also illuminate different scales of meaning. Fundão participants grounded participation in everyday solidarity, belonging, neighbourhood support and community life; Loures participants framed it more institutionally, through representativity, influence, trust and the consequences of consultation. These are not contradictory interpretations: together they show participation as both a social relationship and a governance relationship.

Greek CSOs, Local Authorities, Community Leaders and mixed institutional/lived-experience participants described participation more strongly through shared decisions, co-shaping and active inclusion. The mixed group made a particularly important distinction between integration and inclusion: inclusion requires the surrounding system to adapt, rather than expecting people to fit an unchanged system. The Greek Think Tank arrived at the same issue from

another direction, describing civic mobilisation as strong but insufficient when it cannot be translated into institutional response.

Denmark's Think Tank challenged pseudo-inclusion through the principle that affected groups should speak for themselves and have a role in decisions concerning them. France similarly placed legitimacy of migrant voice at the centre of meaningful participation; multilingual facilitation, including Arabic, reduced dependence on intermediaries for expression. Sweden again needs a baseline-sensitive interpretation. Participation and democracy were already strong concepts among several CSOs and municipal actors, so SOL4ALL mainly sharpened questions of who was missing, how participation could be made accessible and how youth responsibility could become more substantive. Swedish evidence also shows why terminology should not be confused with practice: the word 'solidarity' was less institutionally intuitive than participation or democracy, even while mutual support, responsibility and youth helping youth were clearly present.

The online questionnaire is consistent with this pattern without proving its prevalence. Respondents in Portugal and Greece frequently selected meaning-making, barrier-awareness and role-reflection signals; Denmark's small sample emphasised applicable learning and challenged assumptions; Sweden was more divided, consistent with a high baseline. The evaluation therefore concludes that SOL4ALL strengthened the practical meaning of participation, but the magnitude and significance of that change depended on what participants already knew and practised.

### 3.2 Finding 2: Safe, relational and consequential participation strengthened agency unevenly

**Overall judgement:** credible and meaningful for some participants, especially where safe participation and real responsibility were present; uneven across actors and contexts.

Greece provides some of the clearest evidence that participation itself can build civic capability. Local Authority and Community Leader participants described becoming more comfortable expressing opinions, defending a reasoned position and formulating initiatives after experiencing non-judgemental participatory spaces. Community Leaders described movement from lower-risk online expression towards direct public dialogue. Across groups, seeing other people care about similar issues also reduced the sense of acting alone and strengthened collective efficacy: participation became not only an opportunity to speak, but evidence that acting with others was feasible.

In Sweden, change was most visible among younger or less-experienced leaders. Young CSO participants learned through teaching children, adapting activities, communicating with unfamiliar people and taking responsibility; Groundstigators described stronger professional identity and more conscious support to young people entering participatory situations. More experienced leaders sometimes reported little fundamental change, which is analytically important: a high baseline reduced the visibility of change without implying that SOL4ALL added no value.

Portugal shows the same differentiation. Groundstigators, Community Leaders and less-experienced participants described clearer participation pathways, facilitation confidence and institutional navigation, while established practitioners often described reinforcement. Think Tank feedback in Fundão also suggests that the participation conditions themselves were strong: 17 of 18 respondents reported an opportunity to participate, 16 of 18 felt very safe expressing opinions, and 17 of 18 reported learning something new. In France, the small feedback base was consistently positive about safety, clarity and opportunities to contribute, and the use of multilingual facilitation appears to have enabled more authentic participation for migrant participants.

The evaluation nevertheless rejects a purely motivational explanation of inclusion. Across Portugal, Greece, Sweden, Denmark and France, participants described structural thresholds: time, work, care responsibilities, transport, income, language, digital access, physical accessibility, bureaucracy, stigma, discrimination, weak information, fear of institutions and, in some contexts, direct safety risks. The Swedish Almedalen case makes the last point starkly: a young woman withdrew after racist online exposure in a highly visible civic setting. Inclusion therefore depends on whether people can participate safely and practically, not simply whether they are motivated.

No-change evidence is retained as part of this pattern. In the questionnaire, 4 of 8 Swedish respondents reported no EQ2 change, and Denmark's five respondents did not select inclusion/belonging as a change signal. These small samples cannot define national experience, but they confirm that SOL4ALL did not produce one uniform confidence trajectory. The more defensible conclusion is that safe, relational and consequential participation can strengthen agency, especially for people starting with less experience or confidence, while structural barriers continue to shape who can benefit.

### 3.3 Finding 3: Applied practice was the strongest domain of change

**Overall judgement:** the strongest change domain. The evidence is richest where learning was followed by practical responsibility and adaptation.

Across the evaluation, the strongest learning mechanism was not training -> knowledge; it was reflection and learning -> real responsibility -> negotiation with practical constraints -> adaptation -> changed practice. This distinction is

important because it moves the evaluation beyond satisfaction or intention and towards what participants and practitioners actually did differently.

Portugal provides particularly rich evidence. Fundão institutional actors described professionals relinquishing control and allowing students to determine activity content. Groundstigators learned when to support and when to step back rather than taking over implementation. In Loures, Community Leaders delegated substantive responsibilities, at least one participant moved from volunteer towards a leadership role, and municipal technicians translated participation from an abstract principle into questions of audience, method, feedback and interdepartmental collaboration. A library service began deliberately returning feedback after consultation. Across these examples, participation changed who holds responsibility and when professionals release control.

Greek CSOs described equal speaking time, active encouragement of less-vocal participants, interactive tools, smaller meetings and end-of-activity feedback. Community Leaders described stronger capacity to formulate initiatives and communicate beyond issues directly affecting their own communities. Local Authority participants described a more active concept of inclusion and greater confidence using communication skills. The key shift is from participation as invitation to participation as facilitation architecture: how a space is structured determines whose knowledge enters it.

Sweden shows the same process in a different institutional context. Groundstigators acted as coaches and navigators for young people, while youth leaders took responsibility in community and sport activities. The Arvika Local Authority respondent described moving from general support for youth participation towards more deliberate outreach, spending time where young people already are and applying co-design in concrete municipal work. Youth input in the youth-centre process changed professional assumptions: young people prioritised trusted adults, relationships, comfort, study space and food rather than the staffing and opening arrangements that had dominated professional discussion.

The nine Local Solidarity Activities strengthen this finding because they show application across three countries. In Portugal, groups defined feasible purposes, allocated roles, mobilised partners and adapted delivery; J-A-M generated practical follow-on collaboration, while Mocho participants described new day-to-day contact. In Greece, students and non-formal groups organised, presented, facilitated and performed; a Voices of Women participant with no prior theatre experience moved from uncertainty to being able to perform through collective preparation. In Sweden, young people represented themselves in political spaces at Almedalen and worked as activity leaders in StreetPep. These activities functioned as practice environments in which participation had to be exercised rather than merely discussed.

Formal organisational change developed more slowly. The questionnaire consistently shows reflection, community interaction, partnerships and barrier-awareness more often than changed procedures or institutional coordination. Portugal has credible practitioner, service and inter-organisational changes but uneven institution-wide adoption. Greece contains many institutional propositions and diagnoses but fewer documented procedural changes. Sweden provides the clearest emerging institutional pathway in Arvika, where participation gained municipal legitimacy, cross-sector collaboration strengthened and continuation through youth-leader/summer-employment structures was being planned. The evidence therefore supports substantial practice change and selected organisational embedding, without assuming that all institutions had already changed their formal systems.

### 3.4 Finding 4: SOL4ALL created or activated usable relationships for participation

**Overall judgement:** specific and relational changes are well supported in evidence-rich settings; they matter because they create infrastructure for future participation.

SOL4ALL created or activated relationships that participants could use. In Portugal, CSOs learned who does what and activated potential partnerships; early links emerged across the historically difficult Apelação-Quinta do Mocho divide; municipal technicians moved from knowing colleagues by name or function to having direct, usable cross-departmental contacts; and neighbourhood-level familiarity became more mobilisable through exchanged contacts and changed everyday interaction. Local activities add concrete follow-on examples: J-A-M participants reported resource-sharing, volunteers for later activities and new ideas, while Mocho participants described new day-to-day contact and improved exchanges with municipal actors.

In Greece, multi-actor and international spaces strengthened horizontal connection and perspective-taking. CSOs, Local Authorities, Academic Community participants and Community Leaders described contact with unfamiliar actors and people in other countries; Community Leaders particularly emphasised the motivational effect of discovering that others shared their concerns. This produced an important form of collective efficacy: the belief that action was more possible because one was not acting alone. The result is more than networking, but less than proof of durable partnership; it is an early relational resource for future collective action.

Sweden provides both relational and influence signals. Repeated StreetPep participation produced familiarity among children, families and activity leaders; young people took leadership roles; Groundstigators enabled direct contact

with senior managers and authorities; and the Arvika youth-centre case shows youth input affecting service-design assumptions. At Almedalen, prepared young participants experienced both a respectful disagreement and an interaction in which a politician failed to listen effectively. This contrast is analytically useful: participant capacity and preparedness can create opportunity, but the surrounding institution still determines whether voice becomes meaningful participation.

The questionnaire supports this bounded interpretation. Portugal, Greece and Sweden show recurring network and relationship signals, while broader community and institutional change is less consistent; Denmark is the clearest counter-case, with 3 of 5 respondents reporting no observable EQ4 change. These results reinforce the evaluation's central distinction: local and relational change can be real and significant without being equivalent to community-wide transformation.

The wider insight is that participation builds social and institutional infrastructure through repeated interactions, usable contacts and new roles. SOL4ALL did not need to create every relationship from zero to add value; in many cases, it made existing contacts more usable, connected previously separate actors or gave relationships a concrete task around which to develop. This relational layer is one of the project's most important foundations for continuation beyond individual activities.

### 3.5 Finding 5: SOL4ALL established credible contribution pathways, with wider influence still emerging

**Overall judgement:** strong evidence on how change was enabled; credible early institutional and policy pathways, with longer-term uptake still emerging.

**Across focus groups, Local Solidarity Activities, Think Tanks and seminars, the same mechanisms recur independently:** participation becomes more meaningful when people encounter trust, accessibility, active facilitation, proximity, real responsibility, visible response and continuity. Cross-role and cross-country exchange broadened perspectives and reduced isolation; practical responsibility converted reflection into capability; and feedback determined whether participation remained credible. The strength of this finding lies in recurrence across different methods and contexts, not in any single activity.

**Trusted intermediaries as relational infrastructure.** Groundstigators and analogous bridging actors deserve particular attention because they repeatedly made participation usable. In Portugal, Groundstigators helped people navigate municipal and organisational systems, accelerated access through personal relationships, and learned to support without taking over. In Sweden, Groundstigators built trust before providing information, accompanied young people to meetings with authorities and helped them navigate a large organisation; visible municipal staff also became familiar points of contact through repeated presence in schools and youth settings. Loures participants emphasised trusted community organisations and neighbourhood-level mediation; France highlighted multilingual facilitation and a trusted community volunteer as critical to reaching migrant participants; Brussels participants similarly proposed community mediators and proximity-based engagement. These roles connect people to systems that can otherwise feel distant, but sustainability depends on distributing their knowledge and relationships rather than allowing access to remain person-dependent.

**The evidence shows a progression from horizontal to vertical change rather than a sharp divide.** Horizontal capability - confidence, relationships, leadership, collaboration and practical participation - is the most mature. Early vertical signals are nevertheless visible. In Sweden, young people's input affected service design and CSO-municipality collaboration strengthened; in Portugal, municipal practice, feedback and cross-departmental relationships changed in selected services; in Brussels, participants reported greater outreach, mediation and earlier community involvement. Greece shows why this transition is difficult: civic energy and confidence strengthened more clearly than the institutional mechanisms required to convert voice into sustained influence.

**Think Tanks and seminars then extended the pathway from practice into policy articulation.** Participants in all five National Think Tanks generated policy, practice and process recommendations, often moving from broad aspirations into specific proposals through backcasting and prioritisation. National Seminars created additional cross-role dialogue and, in Portugal, largely disseminated and discussed recommendations already generated through Think Tanks and wider project work. Brussels added recommendations on co-design, trusted mediation, feedback and durable participation structures; Paris extended the discussion to legal recognition, electoral representation and migration governance. These are substantive project outputs and evidence that lived and practice experience reached deliberative and policy spaces, even though adoption and implementation were not yet measurable at the evaluation point.

**Starting point, actor role and exposure explain much of the variation in significance.** Under-represented participants most directly surfaced voice, access, safety and institutional barriers; Community Leaders showed mobilisation and distributed leadership; CSOs provided the strongest evidence of facilitation and organisational adaptation; Local Authorities provided the clearest tests of institutional embedding; and Groundstigators showed how relational access works in practice. The project's contribution therefore cannot be reduced to one outcome

measure: the same intervention can be reinforcing for an experienced practitioner, capability-building for a new leader and institution-changing for a service that begins to work differently.

## 4. From Signals to Contribution

### 4.1 Progress against the original Theory of Change

When the evidence is read against the original Theory of Change, a clear pattern emerges: SOL4ALL progressed furthest at the stages closest to participation practice and relationship-building, while institutional and policy pathways were beginning to develop but required more time and continued engagement.

| Original ToC outcome / impact claim                                              | Triangulated evaluation assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increased participation of under-represented communities in decision-making      | Supported at participation and process levels: stronger voice, substantive roles, civic capability and selected process/service-design influence. Formal decision authority is only evidenced in limited or emerging forms.                |
| Strengthened solidarity ecosystems and community engagement                      | Supported through specific relationships, bridging ties, collective efficacy, local collaboration and repeated engagement. Wider ecosystem-level durability remains to be followed.                                                        |
| Enhanced Local Authority capacity to implement inclusive approaches              | Credible practitioner and service-level changes in Portugal and particularly Arvika, with emerging cross-sector and municipal embedding; not uniform across institutions.                                                                  |
| Greater awareness and influence on solidarity-related policy discussion          | Strongly supported for awareness, deliberation and recommendation generation. Think Tanks, seminars and international events created a documented policy pathway; uptake is still being pursued through WP25 and continuing relationships. |
| More inclusive democratic systems, social cohesion and sustainable policy change | These are longer-term contribution ambitions. The evaluation identifies credible mechanisms and early institutional pathways that can support them, but a less-than-18-month implementation window cannot establish system-level effects.  |

### 4.2 Mechanisms of change

- **Real responsibility and practice.** Capability strengthened most clearly when participants had to organise, facilitate, represent, co-design, negotiate and adapt rather than only receive information.
- **Trust, recognition and psychological safety.** Trust enabled entry into participation; recognition and consequential participation could in turn strengthen trust and willingness to return.
- **Proximity and trusted intermediaries.** Participation became more usable when organisations and institutions went to people, used familiar actors and reduced institutional distance.
- **Inclusive facilitation and accessible design.** Group size, language, time, preparation, hybrid access, active encouragement and administrative thresholds shaped whose voice entered the process.
- **Cross-role and cross-country exchange.** Exposure to different experiences broadened perspectives, reduced isolation and made collective action appear more feasible.
- **Feedback and visible consequence.** People needed to understand what changed because they participated. Feedback increased credibility; silence or non-response undermined it.
- **Repetition, continuity and institutional support.** Repeated contact supported familiarity and capability; management legitimacy, resources and routines were required for practice to survive individual champions.

### 4.3 Country and stakeholder variation

Country differences are interpreted as differences in starting point, target group, institutional context and evidence coverage - not as a performance ranking. Portugal shows the clearest practice-based pathway: co-design, distributed responsibility, Local Solidarity Activities and organisational/intermediary bridging produced concrete changes in how participation was facilitated and connected to municipal systems. Greece shows especially strong confidence, facilitation and collective-efficacy signals, together with the clearest articulation of the vertical participation gap. Sweden began from a comparatively high participatory baseline; additionality is strongest in transfer, youth leadership, proximity-based outreach, CSO-municipality collaboration and early municipal embedding in Arvika. Denmark's strongest evidence comes from the Think Tank and a small questionnaire sample, highlighting stigma,

self-representation and citizen-centred services. France contributes primarily through migrant voice, multilingual participation, practical accessibility, mediation and the gap between formal provision and usable access.

The same variation exists within countries. Fundão and Loures, for example, generated complementary understandings of participation: belonging and everyday solidarity in a semi-rural context, and representativity, influence and institutional responsiveness in an urban/suburban context. In Sweden, experienced CSOs showed reinforcement and transfer while younger leaders showed more visible capability gains. In Greece, Community Leaders and Local Authority participants provided strong confidence signals, while under-represented-community evidence was more focused on structural barriers and institutional conditions. These differences are analytically valuable because they show that the meaning of 'change' depends on the role and starting position of the participant.

#### 4.4 Enabling and constraining conditions

The evaluation strongly supports a conditional model of participation. Formal opportunity is necessary but insufficient. People need time, information, physical and digital access, language support, relevant and safe formats, trusted relationships and a realistic sphere of influence. Institutions must also be understandable, responsive and capable of acting on contributions. Structural barriers vary by context, but their cumulative effect is consistent: several small thresholds can combine to exclude people even when a participation opportunity technically exists.

This finding clarifies the scope of capacity-building. Training can strengthen skills, confidence and reflection, but it cannot by itself remove discriminatory practices, inaccessible services, legal restrictions, transport deficits, economic constraints or institutional non-response. The refined Theory of Change therefore requires both participant-side capability and environment-side receptiveness, with trusted intermediaries helping bridge the two.

#### 4.5 Failures, breakdowns and unrealised pathways

One of SOL4ALL's substantive contributions was to make visible not only what enables meaningful participation, but where participation pathways break down. These negative and unrealised pathways are themselves evaluation findings. They identify practical, relational and institutional conditions that future participation initiatives need to address if participation is to become accessible, safe and consequential.

| Failure or breakdown                                   | What the evidence shows                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Voice without consequence                              | Repeated consultation or invitation without visible response can produce disappointment, fatigue and weaker willingness to engage. Symbolic participation was criticised across several countries. |
| Formal access without usable access                    | Participation channels, services or entitlements can exist while language, bureaucracy, time, transport, digital exclusion, disability barriers, stigma or discrimination prevent practical use.   |
| Capability without institutional receptiveness         | Prepared and confident participants can still be ignored. Greece makes the conversion problem especially visible; Almedalen provides a concrete interaction-level example.                         |
| Training without application or organisational support | Where learning is not followed by real responsibility, coaching, management legitimacy or routines, translation into practice is weak or fragile.                                                  |
| Operational design creating exclusion                  | Late information, unclear roles, unsuitable incentives, resource shortages and participant-data requirements can raise thresholds or distort inclusive practice.                                   |
| Unsafe participation                                   | The Almedalen case (Sweden) shows that visible civic participation can expose under-represented participants to unequal safety risks and lead to withdrawal.                                       |
| Intermediary and champion dependence                   | Trusted mediators and individual practitioners enable access, but pathways remain fragile where relationships and know-how are not distributed institutionally.                                    |
| Short-term project cycles                              | One-off engagement without continuity, feedback or follow-up risks reinforcing scepticism and undermining later mobilisation.                                                                      |

#### 4.6 How far change progressed

The refined Theory of Change is strongly supported through its early and practice-level stages, credibly supported through relational change, and beginning to show institutional progression in selected settings. In Portugal, change progressed most visibly from learning into co-design, distributed responsibility, feedback, local activity and organisational/intermediary bridging; some service-level and cross-departmental changes are already visible. In Greece, change progressed furthest in confidence, facilitation, collective efficacy and horizontal connection, while

institutional conversion remained a major unresolved condition. In Sweden, youth leadership, repeated participation, proximity-based outreach and CSO-municipality collaboration progressed into concrete service-design influence and emerging municipal continuation in Arvika.

France and Denmark contribute differently because the available evidence is more concentrated in Think Tanks, seminars and structured perception data. Their strongest contribution to the overall pathway lies in clarifying what meaningful participation requires - self-representation, recognition, accessible systems, legal and institutional inclusion, citizen-centred services and the conditions under which voice becomes consequential. These are not weaker forms of evidence; they answer different parts of the contribution story.

The transition from participatory practice and recommendations into durable institutional and policy change was still in progress when the evaluation was completed. WP25 was specifically intended to carry recommendations into policy engagement, and several partner organisations continue to work with public authorities and local stakeholders. The evaluation can therefore assess whether credible pathways and conditions were established; it cannot yet assess the final extent to which those pathways will be taken up after the project.

#### 4.7 Key Evaluation Findings: Cross-cutting synthesis

These six findings have not been generated independently of Section 3. They are what emerges when the EQ-specific findings are read together.

1. SOL4ALL strengthened participants' understanding of participation and, in several settings, their confidence and perceived agency, although the extent of change differed across actors and countries.
2. Participation was strongest where learning opportunities were followed by substantive roles, responsibility and opportunities to influence decisions.
3. SOL4ALL's participatory mechanisms, including Groundstigator-supported processes, demonstrated that people experiencing exclusion and under-represented groups can contribute substantive knowledge, analysis and proposals when they are enabled to participate as actors rather than primarily as consultation participants.
4. Institutional responsiveness was a critical condition. Voice alone was insufficient when decision pathways, feedback or opportunities for influence were weak.
5. Relationships developed between citizens, civil society organisations and institutional actors constituted an important project result, although their continuation beyond the project remains dependent on institutional ownership and follow-through.
6. The evaluation also identified failure pathways. Participation weakened where engagement was episodic, expectations were unclear, institutional response was limited or opportunities for continued responsibility were absent.

## 5. Conclusions

SOL4ALL succeeded most clearly at the levels it could directly influence within a short, multi-country implementation period: strengthening participatory capability, changing practice, creating meaningful opportunities for responsibility and voice, and developing relationships between communities, civil society and public actors. These are not minor precursors to the project's ambition; they are the mechanisms through which more inclusive democratic participation can become possible.

The strongest result is that participation became more intentional and practical. Participants and practitioners learned not only to value participation, but to think more concretely about who enters a process, when, with what support, what role they hold and what happens afterwards. In Portugal, this translated into co-design, delegated responsibility and changed facilitation; in Greece, into stronger public voice, facilitation practice and collective efficacy; in Sweden, into youth leadership, proximity-based outreach and early municipal embedding. Different starting points produced different forms of change, and the evaluation treats reinforcement, transfer and new capability as analytically distinct but all potentially significant.

The project also strengthened relational infrastructure. Some relationships were newly created; others became more usable. CSO-to-CSO links, cross-departmental municipal contacts, neighbourhood connections, youth-adult relationships and intermediary-to-institution bridges all became visible in the evidence. Groundstigators and other trusted intermediaries were especially important in turning formal systems into navigable human relationships. Their experience also shows that sustainable participation requires institutions to retain the function of relational access without leaving it dependent on a few exceptional individuals.

The most important longer-term challenge is not whether participants can be mobilised, but whether institutions and systems can receive, recognise and act on their participation. SOL4ALL already generated early vertical signals through service co-design, municipal collaboration, direct dialogue with decision-makers and a rich body of

participant-generated recommendations. The National Think Tanks, National Seminars and International Seminar created an explicit pathway from local experience to policy articulation. Because WP25 remained ongoing and substantive implementation lasted less than 18 months, wider institutionalisation and policy uptake should be understood as an emerging continuation pathway rather than a reasonable end-point test for the evaluation.

SOL4ALL also generated a validated body of practical knowledge about participation itself: trust and recognition matter; participation must be designed rather than merely invited; real responsibility is a stronger learning mechanism than information alone; feedback and consequence determine credibility; accessibility is multidimensional; institutional receptiveness matters as much as participant capability; and visible participation can carry unequal risks. The project's failure pathways are therefore not simply shortcomings. They are evidence about where participation systems can fail and what future initiatives need to do differently.

Overall, SOL4ALL was conceived as a contribution to more inclusive and participatory democratic systems. The evaluation finds that it strengthened the conditions that make such change more plausible - capacities, practices, relationships, institutional interfaces and policy pathways - and did so in ways adapted to very different national and local starting points. Its most significant legacy lies in the changes already visible and in the tested knowledge, relationships and recommendations that can support longer-term institutional and systemic change beyond the project period.

## 6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

### 6.1 Lessons from SOL4ALL's participation model

- **Participation quality is an intervention outcome, not a logistical detail.** Who is invited, how people are prepared, whether language and timing are accessible, how groups are facilitated and whether people can see the consequence of their contribution all shape whether participation is meaningful.
- **Starting points determine the significance of change.** A high-baseline CSO may show transfer or refinement; a young or less-experienced participant may show first-time leadership or confidence; a municipal service may show procedural experimentation. One standard of change would obscure this variation.
- **Real responsibility is the clearest bridge from learning to practice.** The strongest changes occurred when participants organised, facilitated, led, represented, co-designed or adapted in real settings, with support but without professionals retaining all control.
- **Trust and recognition are both inputs and possible outcomes.** People are more willing to participate when relationships feel safe and legitimate; consequential participation can then strengthen trust and make future engagement easier.
- **Trusted intermediaries are relational infrastructure.** Groundstigators, community mediators, youth workers and visible institutional actors help people navigate systems and cross boundaries, but their functions need to become distributed and institutionally supported.
- **Participation must connect voice to consequence.** Consultation without feedback risks fatigue; active roles and visible responses strengthen credibility and willingness to return.
- **Institutional receptiveness is a separate change condition.** Participant capability cannot compensate for institutions that are inaccessible, inflexible or unwilling to share influence. Effective participation requires change on both sides of the interface.
- **Strong data systems make evaluative learning possible.** The AI-assisted evaluation with human validation at every step confirmed that traceable participant data, raw feedback, consistent actor categories and clear source ownership must be designed into implementation if future programmes want to understand reach, progression and sustainability.

### 6.2 Recommendations generated through SOL4ALL's participatory processes

Recommendation-generation was itself an intended project result. The evaluative safeguard is important: producing a recommendation is not evidence that it was adopted or implemented. However, participants did move from diagnosis and lived experience into specific policy and practice propositions, and those recommendations were carried through successive deliberative spaces. Their origin and content therefore need to remain visible in the evaluation rather than being compressed into generic themes.

**Denmark - Copenhagen National Think Tank.** Participants proposed an Inclusive Community Framework for long-term relationship-building with under-represented people; an annual school-based de-stigmatisation week led by people with lived experience; legally defined timely and holistic care with a permanent contact person for citizens navigating complex services; a systematic self-representation mechanism requiring affected groups to be heard in decisions concerning them; CSO-foundation advisory juries with representation from affected groups; operational

funding legislation for CSOs, including simplified requirements for smaller organisations; and a European civil-society knowledge institution to support learning, funding visibility and cross-border collaboration. The recommendations reflect the Danish diagnosis that stigma, paternalism and weak civil-society infrastructure can prevent formal inclusion from becoming meaningful participation.

**Greece - National Think Tank.** Participants translated concern about weak conversion of civic mobilisation into institutional consequences into a set of governance and participation proposals: a 24/7 Legal Shield digital legal-aid service for precarious workers; lottery-based Kleroterion oversight councils composed of rank-and-file workers; a Hybrid Deliberation Law requiring digital consultations to be followed by in-person town halls; Digital Empathy training pairing tech-literate young people with digitally excluded neighbours; reform of union governance combining professional management with worker accountability; and a peer-to-peer solidarity platform designed to support citizen-to-citizen help rather than simply route complaints to the state. These recommendations combine technological innovation with democratic accountability rather than treating digitalisation as a substitute for participation.

**Portugal - Fundão National Think Tank.** Participants framed participation through community life and rural solidarity and generated a correspondingly place-based agenda: safe and accessible community spaces, including opening public infrastructure for community use; protocols for community co-management of public spaces; intergenerational solidarity initiatives; support for small agricultural producers and community food networks; flexible transport and mobile services for rural villages; legal and logistical mechanisms to reactivate vacant housing; arts, sport and cultural exchange bringing migrant and non-migrant communities together; and practical education focused on autonomy and traditional or repair skills. The recommendations show that housing, mobility, public space and local relationships were understood as participation infrastructure rather than separate policy sectors.

**Portugal - Loures National Think Tank.** Participants focused more directly on governance, representativity and the community-institution interface. They proposed civic education that teaches and models participation and prepares residents for assemblies and consultations; public policies to recruit and train local residents, including people from vulnerable backgrounds, into public-service and community-engagement teams; mechanisms to recognise migrant qualifications and address socio-economic barriers to participation, including the possibility of compensating participation time; participatory spaces with real authority rather than symbolic consultation; and intergenerational initiatives connecting older residents, schools and community life. Inclusive communication and trusted proximity-based structures were treated as preconditions across these proposals.

**Sweden - Arvika National Think Tank.** Young people, professionals and municipal stakeholders developed an integrated youth-participation agenda: a functioning municipal youth council with genuine influence and accessible digital/hybrid participation routes; a youth-co-designed information strategy and unified platform for activities and opportunities; more diverse, affordable and inclusive leisure provision, especially for young people excluded from sport-centred offers and older youth; more frequent, affordable and reliable evening/weekend public transport to reduce rural participation inequalities; and safer public environments through trusted adult presence, longer opening hours and attention to gendered safety concerns. The recommendations reflect the Swedish finding that willingness to participate existed but access was constrained by interconnected territorial, information, affordability and safety barriers.

**France - Paris National Think Tank.** Migrant and migrant-background participants generated recommendations to strengthen legal and political frameworks against discrimination and improve social protection for vulnerable groups; increase EU-level coherence in welcoming, integrating and regularising migrants, including addressing inconsistencies affecting family members; and connect inclusion with broader sustainability concerns. The process also demonstrated the substantive importance of multilingual participation and direct migrant voice: recommendations were generated in a setting where Arabic interpretation and trusted community mobilisation reduced linguistic and relational barriers.

**National Seminars - Portugal, Greece and France.** The seminars did not simply create a new parallel list. Across the three available cases, the recommendations and future priorities converged around deeper and more continuous participation, sufficient time for deliberation, accessibility, trust, institutional responsiveness and stronger links between community voice and decision-making actors. Portugal largely disseminated and discussed policy recommendations already generated through the National Think Tanks and wider project work, while Greece and France used participatory reflection to reinforce the need for citizen-institution cooperation and practical accessibility. This stage is best understood as broadening, testing and communicating the recommendation pathway.

**International Seminar - Brussels.** Participants recommended stronger use of community mediators and trusted local actors; proximity-based outreach, translation and direct community contact; explicit feedback loops and clarity about the sphere of influence available to participants; movement from consultation towards co-design and co-decision from needs definition through implementation and evaluation; longer-term participation structures that outlive individual projects; participatory practice embedded in organisational culture rather than held by individual

champions; action on practical and structural access barriers; and stronger representation in decision-making spaces while recognising that informal participation does not replace political rights.

**International Seminar - Paris.** The Paris event extended the policy dialogue to structural questions of legal and political inclusion. Participant propositions included regularisation of undocumented residents in recognition of their social and economic contribution; electoral reform for qualifying legal residents; coordinated migration databases and consular-card arrangements; EU partnerships with migrant-origin countries combining settlement, education, technical training and employment; and wider EU-Africa cooperation. These recommendations operate at a different policy level from Brussels and should remain identifiable as Paris-specific propositions rather than being merged into a false process-wide consensus.

Taken together, the recommendations demonstrate a clear progression inside the project: national processes translated context-specific barriers and aspirations into proposals; seminars provided wider deliberation and dissemination; the international process connected local and national learning to broader institutional and European debates; and WP25 provides the intended onward route for policy engagement. The evaluation can confirm that this recommendation architecture happened and generated substantive outputs. Whether recommendations are subsequently adopted, adapted or implemented remains to be assessed after the policy pathway and partner follow-up have had more time to operate.

### 6.3 Evaluation recommendations for future programming and institutional uptake

| Priority recommendation                                                                    | Rationale from the evaluation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Design participation around a defined sphere of influence and mandatory feedback.       | State what participants can shape, record what changed, explain what did not change and why, and return that information to participants. This directly addresses symbolic participation and fatigue.                                                        |
| 2. Couple capacity-building with real responsibility, coaching and repeated application.   | The strongest practice changes occurred where learning was followed by organising, facilitation, co-design, leadership or representation in real settings.                                                                                                   |
| 3. Institutionalise relational access without creating dependency on individual champions. | Maintain trusted liaison, mediator, Groundstigator or youth-coordinator functions while distributing contacts, procedures and participation capability across teams and institutions.                                                                        |
| 4. Make accessibility and safeguarding explicit design requirements.                       | Plan for time, transport, care, language, digital access, disability access, psychological safety, online exposure and administrative burden before participation begins.                                                                                    |
| 5. Replace one-off consultation with sequenced participation pathways.                     | Use repeated engagement, follow-up roles and visible next steps so that trust and capability can accumulate rather than reset with each event or project.                                                                                                    |
| 6. Create a formal institutional uptake mechanism for SOL4ALL recommendations.             | Maintain a recommendation register with origin, proposed actor, response owner, follow-up status and decision rationale. Distinguish discussion, commitment, adoption and implementation, and use WP25/partner relationships to close the feedback loop.     |
| 7. Build the evaluation and reach data architecture into future intervention design.       | Use privacy-compliant participant identifiers, harmonised actor categories, consistent exposure fields, raw feedback retention and planned follow-up so future evaluations can assess unique reach, participation intensity, progression and sustainability. |

## Final Assessment

SOL4ALL provides credible evidence that meaningful participation can be strengthened when people are recognised as actors with knowledge, agency and a legitimate role in shaping decisions, when participatory learning is followed by real responsibility and practical application, and when institutions create accessible, safe, responsive and consequential conditions around voice.

Change varied according to participants' starting points: for some, SOL4ALL generated new confidence, capabilities and leadership experience; for others, it reinforced, transferred or made existing participatory practices more deliberate and actionable.

Trusted intermediaries were particularly important in making organisations and institutions more accessible and navigable, while the evaluation also showed where participation pathways can break down when voice has no visible consequence, access remains impractical or institutions are unresponsive.

SOL4ALL progressed furthest in strengthening participatory capacity, practice, agency, relationships and cross-sector collaboration, while also moving participant and community experience into policy-oriented spaces through Think Tanks, Seminars and the international dialogue.

**Its strongest legacy lies in the combination of observed change, tested participation mechanisms, explicit failure pathways, strengthened relationships and participant-generated recommendations that provide a foundation for continued institutional and policy change beyond the project period.**

## 7. Documentary Basis

Grant agreement and annex 1 description of the action; Original theory of change documents; SOL4ALL evaluation plan with data collection tools; Validated focus group/interview country syntheses for Portugal, Greece and Sweden; Validated cross-country online questionnaire analysis; Validated local solidarity activities country and cross-country analyses; Validated national think tank analysis; Validated national seminar country and cross-country analyses; Validated international seminar analysis; Annex G aggregate reach analysis supplied for this report; Validated AI prompt guides and human-review workflow used to produce the analytical packages.