Policy Recommendations Across Europe

Fifteen policy recommendations across 5 countries

This document presents the policy proposals developed through Solidarity4All (Sol4All): Belonging and Active Citizenship for Inclusive European Solidarity.

This project began in September 2024 and ended in October 2026, involving partners from five countries: the Aga Khan Foundation (Portugal), the Fryshuset Foundation (Sweden), The Why Foundation (Denmark), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), and the Inst. European Institute of International Law and International Relations (France). Several national partners also took part, such as the municipalities of Loures and Fundão and Agência para a Integração, Migrações e Asilo (AIMA) (Portugal), the municipalities of Arvika and Flens (Sweden) and Citizens Crossroads, Youth Municipal Council of Thessaloniki and Youth European Parliament (Greece).

The overall objective of Solidarity4All has been to strengthen ecosystems of solidarity by increasing the participation of underrepresented communities (UCs) at the local, national, and European levels.

This is directly linked to the goal of promoting the participation and contribution of underrepresented associations and individuals to the democratic and civic life of the Union. More specifically, the project focused on engaging diverse communities in discussions and actions related to solidarity and civic participation.

Underrepresented communities (UCs) refer to groups of people who are insufficiently represented or who have limited visibility, influence, or access to resources within a given society or context. The term encompasses a diversity of groups facing distinct challenges in society.

To engage underrepresented communities, the project used participatory approaches that encouraged people to share their experiences, identify local challenges and contribute ideas for improving their communities.

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The project's various activities included: a Participatory Diagnosis; collaborative mapping of existing mechanisms for solidarity and participation; training for associations (community leadership) and local authorities (participatory methodologies); Support for community-led local solidarity activities; think tanks to discuss recommendations for public policies in each country; 5 national seminars; 1 international seminar (Brussels); and a documentary. As the final outcome of the project, 15 public policy proposals were developed based on discussions in the think tanks, which involved policymakers, public agencies/local governments, underrepresented communities, and civil society organizations.

Each of the proposals offers a specific approach to adapt and test locally that can be adjusted to every EU country.

1. The proposals at a glance

The project collected six proposals from Portugal, two from Denmark, two from France, three from Greece and two from Sweden. The table below retains the partners' substantive priorities while shortening their descriptions for policy use.

Portugal · Fundão	1. Inclusive community spaces	Open and animate existing spaces for interaction among residents.
Portugal · Fundão	2. Vacant housing revitalization	Identify empty homes, engage owners, and assess affordable rehabilitation.
Portugal · Fundão	3. Neighborhood culture and networks	Back resident-led projects, associations and volunteering.
Portugal · Loures	4. Intergenerational solidarity	Create regular opportunities for exchange between age groups.
Portugal · Loures	5. Civic education	Make local decision-making understandable and accessible.
Portugal · Loures	6. Representation	Bring underrepresented residents into consultation and decisions.
Denmark	7. Direct representation	Include people with lived experience early and provide practical support.

Denmark	8. CSO funding and knowledge exchange	Improve access to funding information, partnerships, and shared learning.
France	9. Women's rights and protection	Strengthen protection, services, equality, and public participation.
France	10. Migrant integration	Reduce language, qualification, and administrative barriers.
Greece	11. Union as a Service	Expand practical union support for workers, including seasonal workers.
Greece	12. Hybrid Community	Combine digital participation with in-person contact and skills.
Greece	13. Municipal Employment 55+	Develop municipal employment pathways for unemployed people aged 55+.
Sweden · Arvika	14. Youth participation	Connect youth consultation and budgeting to municipal decisions.
Sweden · Arvika	15. Public transport access	Improve rural, evening, and weekend mobility for young people.

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2. Shared priorities across countries

SHARED POLICY PRIORITY	COUNTRIES ADDRESSING THE THEME		COUNTRIES
Civic participation and inclusion		**5**	Portugal · Denmark · France · Greece · Sweden
Community engagement		**4**	Portugal · Denmark · Greece · Sweden
Inclusive policymaking		**3**	Portugal · Denmark · Sweden
Social inclusion		**3**	Portugal · France · Greece

The chart reproduces the four shared priorities in the Solidarity4All policy proposals. Figures count countries, not recommendations; a country can contribute to more than one priority. The analysis below follows the same sequence and connects each cluster to the partners' proposals, European experience, and practical actions.

Reading the evidence. Municipal programmes and participation mechanisms are presented as implemented practices; EU directives, funding instruments and institutional guidance are identified as enabling frameworks. Inclusion in this report does not imply a proven impact in every setting.

2.1. Civic participation and inclusion

Across all five countries, partners describe a familiar gap: people are invited to contribute, but language, cost, limited access to information and weak feedback can make participation superficial. The Loures civic education and representativity proposals, Denmark's direct-representation proposal, Arvika's youth participation proposal and Greece's hybrid model all call for participation processes that residents can be involved in and influence.
Research evidence reinforces the importance of addressing this gap. The OECD's 2024 Trust Survey, covering 30 OECD countries, found that only around 30% of respondents believed they had a say in government decisions. Trust in national government was substantially higher among those who felt they

had a voice (69%) than among those who did not (22%). While these figures are not specific to the EU, they highlight the relationship between meaningful participation and public trust. At EU level, Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836 encourages Member States to make public decision-making more inclusive, particularly for underrepresented groups, through accessible information and opportunities to participate both online and offline. Together, these findings support the need for participation mechanisms that do more than consult citizens: mechanisms should enable people to influence decisions and understand how their contributions have been considered.

EUROPEAN PRACTICES AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

Finland · Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO)

ETNO brings migrant and minority representatives into a standing dialogue with government, political actors and civil society; seven regional boards complement the national structure. Loures and Denmark could adapt its regular membership and regional outreach, while adding transparent selection and a public record of institutional responses. Its advisory mandate does not mean its proposals are automatically adopted.

Source: https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410853/new-advisory-board-for-ethnic-relations-etno-appointed-1

Portugal · Cascais Youth Participatory Budgeting

The municipality's youth participatory budgeting process offers an identifiable route from young people's ideas to project selection. For Arvika, the useful design feature is not simply a youth forum, but a defined budget, published eligibility rules, accessible proposal support, and reporting on delivery.

Source: https://www.cascais.pt/noticia/apresentacao-do-orcamento-participativo-jovem-20262027

Spain · Barcelona Decidim — digital and in-person participation

Barcelona's Decidim platform supports proposals, deliberation and participatory processes with public records of contributions and outcomes. For Greece's Hybrid Community proposal, the transferable lesson is not simply to install software: digital participation needs moderation, clear decision rules and accessible offline routes. It also offers Arvika a way to track youth proposals from submission to municipal response. This is an operational participation platform, not proof that online engagement reaches every excluded group.

Source: https://decidim.org/

European Union · EU Youth Dialogue

Recurring consultation cycles connect youth organizations and national processes to European youth policy discussions. Loures and Arvika could borrow the continuity of engagement and feedback between cycles, while creating stronger local links to actual municipal decisions. This is an established dialogue mechanism, not proof that every recommendation becomes policy.

Source: https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/euyouthdialogue_en

Council of Europe · BePART knowledge exchange

BePART collects and shares participation approaches. Denmark's knowledge-sharing proposal could build on such existing infrastructure instead of starting another isolated repository, focusing on multilingual access, practical templates and the needs of small organizations. BePART is a platform, not an independently evaluated social intervention.

Source: https://www.coe.int/en/web/participatory-democracy

Practical policy actions

To make civic participation more inclusive and effective, public authorities should:

- **Involve communities from the beginning.** Consult residents before decisions are made, with particular attention to groups that are often underrepresented.
- **Make participation accessible.** Provide clear information, combine online and face-to-face opportunities, and address practical barriers such as transport and childcare costs.
- **Show how citizens' views influence decisions.** Explain which suggestions were taken forward, which were not, and the reasons behind these decisions.
- **Assess the results.** Look beyond attendance figures to understand who participated, whose voices were missing and what changed as a result.

2.2. Community engagement

Strong communities are built through everyday connections, shared experiences, and opportunities for people to support one another.

Fundão, Portugal proposes active shared spaces and neighborhood networks; Loures, Portugal focuses on intergenerational relationships; Greece proposes digital tools that reinforce in-person contact. These ideas work best when local people help decide what the space or programme is for, and when there is a modest, dependable route to resources.
The 2022 EU Loneliness Survey found that 13% of respondents experienced loneliness most or all of the time, while 35% felt lonely at least some of the time.

The survey also found that people experiencing frequent loneliness were less likely to trust others and more likely to withdraw from political participation. These findings demonstrate why community engagement deserves attention beyond its immediate social benefits. Creating accessible opportunities for residents to meet, cooperate and support one another may help strengthen local relationships and reduce isolation. This evidence is particularly relevant to the Solidarity4All proposals from Fundão, Loures, Greece and Sweden, which promote community spaces, intergenerational activities, neighborhood networks and more inclusive forms of local engagement.

European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC). See Berlingieri, F., Colagrossi, M. and Mauri, C. (2023), *Loneliness and Social Connectedness: Insights from a New EU-wide Survey*.

EUROPEAN PRACTICES AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

Portugal · Lisbon BIP/ZIP

Lisbon identifies priority neighborhoods and supports projects led by partnerships among associations, residents and local institutions. Its municipal funding and community-led project model offer Fundão a practical route to animate existing spaces and strengthen neighborhood initiatives. URBACT documents the model as a European good practice; transferring it would require proportionate application rules and local facilitation, not only a grant competition.

Source: https://urbact.eu/good-practices/integrated-toolbox-deprived-neighbourhoods

Belgium · Ghent neighborhood participation and local co-creation

Ghent's neighborhood-oriented participation programmes offer a complementary approach to Lisbon's small-grant model: municipal staff work with residents and community groups on locally identified improvements. Fundão's neighborhood proposal could combine small project budgets with dedicated facilitation, while Loures could use shared projects to connect diverse age groups. Implementation would depend on staff capacity and transparent project selection.

Source: https://stad.gent/en

Portugal · BIP/ZIP Com.Unity.Lab transfer network

The BIP/ZIP Com.Unity.Lab approach supports community-led projects by bringing local residents, organisations and municipalities together to improve disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Lisbon shared this approach with partner cities including Aalborg, Bari, Ostrava, Lublin, Sofia, The Hague and Lille Métropole. This cross-city learning process is particularly relevant to Denmark's proposal for European civil-society knowledge exchange: documented practice, peer contact and adaptation support are more useful than a directory of links alone.

Source: https://bipzip.lisboa.pt/10-anos-bipzip/programa/%2C000010/index.htm

Council of Europe · Intercultural Cities

The programme offers municipal tools for interaction across cultural backgrounds and for designing shared public spaces. Fundão could apply its approach by involving long-term residents and newcomers in the activities offered in community facilities. This is a network and guidance framework; local outcomes depend on the projects adopted.

Source: https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/policy-briefs

WHO Europe · Age-friendly environments

WHO guidance emphasizes accessible places, social participation, and communication with older residents. Loures could use these design principles to connect schools, older residents and associations through regular shared activities, with transport and accessibility planned from the outset. The framework itself is not an evaluation of a particular local programme.

Source: https://www.who.int/europe/activities/enabling-age-friendly-environments-across-europe

Policy recommendations: Strengthening community engagement

Local authorities and community organizations should work together to create regular, accessible opportunities for residents to connect and participate.

- **Use existing community spaces.** Make libraries, schools and community centres available for activities organized with local residents, particularly in underserved neighbourhoods.
- **Support resident-led initiatives.** Provide small grants and practical assistance so that communities can develop activities based on their own needs.

- **Work with trusted local facilitators.** Involve community organizations and local representatives who can reach residents who are less likely to participate.
- **Encourage intergenerational activities.** Create regular opportunities for younger and older residents to meet, exchange experiences and work together.
- **Measure lasting results.** Assess whether activities strengthen relationships and sustain participation across different groups, rather than simply counting events.
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2.3. Inclusive policymaking

Public consultation is only meaningful when people believe their contributions can influence the decisions that follow. The OECD's 2024 Trust Survey, covering 30 OECD countries, found that only 32% of respondents believed their government would adopt opinions expressed through public consultations. Although this finding is not specific to the EU, it illustrates a wider challenge: consultation does not necessarily translate into public influence. At European level, Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836 calls for citizens and civil society organizations to be involved from the early stages of policymaking, with particular attention to underrepresented groups and barriers to participation. It also emphasizes the importance of informing participants about the outcomes of consultations. These findings are particularly relevant to Solidarity4All's proposals from Portugal, Denmark and Sweden, which call for more representative decision-making, stronger civil society involvement and clearer mechanisms for responding to citizens' contributions.

The proposals link Portugal, Denmark and Sweden through a shared demand for representative decisions. Loures, POrtugal seeks better local representation, Denmark asks for direct involvement of excluded groups and accessible support for civil society, and Arvika, Sweden wants youth participation that can influence municipal priorities.

EUROPEAN PRACTICES AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

European Economic and Social Committee · Civil Society Liaison Group

The Liaison Group creates a recurring channel between the EESC and organized European civil society. Its value for Denmark’s direct-representation proposal is institutional continuity: clear membership, regular dialogue and follow-up. A local adaptation should also recruit people outside established umbrella organizations so that the same voices are not always heard.

Source: https://www.eesc.europa.eu

Ireland · Citizens' Assembly — structured public deliberation

Ireland's Citizens' Assemblies have used randomly selected members, expert evidence and facilitated deliberation to develop recommendations on major public questions. Denmark's proposal for direct representation could draw on the combination of accessible briefing, balanced participation and a formal route for institutional response. Assemblies are advisory, however, and their influence depends on political follow-up.

Source: https://citizensassembly.ie/

European Commission · Funding & Tenders Portal and CERV

The portal provides a central entry point to EU calls; the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme supports rights and participation activities. Denmark's funding proposal should begin by testing what smaller organizations cannot navigate—language, co-financing, application burden or partner discovery—and designing assistance around those gaps. These are funding mechanisms, not evaluated grassroots projects.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home

European Commission · 2025 EU Strategy for Civil Society

The Commission announced plans for a Civil Society Platform and an online civic-space knowledge hub. This makes Denmark's proposal timely but also calls for coordination: new project resources should complement the announced EU infrastructure, not assume that planned tools are already fully operational.

Source: https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/stronger-measures-protect-our-democracy-and-civil-society-2025-11-12_en

Policy recommendations: Strengthening Representation

Establish transparent selection of participants, remunerate lived-experience contributions where feasible, publish consultation outcomes and provide hands-on funding assistance to smaller organizations. EU-level networks should be complemented by community-level outreach.

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2.4. Social inclusion

European statistics show that social exclusion remains a significant challenge despite ongoing policy efforts. According to Eurostat, 92.7 million people in the EU, representing 20.9% of the population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2025. The situation varied considerably between Member States, with Greece recording one of the highest rates (27.5%). Beyond income insecurity, barriers to essential services also contribute to unequal opportunities. Eurostat reported that in 2024, 3.6% of people aged 16 and over who needed medical care were unable to access it because of cost, waiting times or distance. These figures underline the importance of addressing exclusion through coordinated local action. They are particularly relevant to the Solidarity4All proposals from Portugal, France and Greece, which focus on access to housing, women's rights, migrant integration and employment opportunities for older people.

Portugal, France and Greece identify barriers that prevent people from participating on equal terms: unavailable housing, unequal protection, complex administration and restricted employment opportunities. Sweden's transport proposal, while placed elsewhere in the infographic's overlapping themes, also illustrates how access to services determines who can participate.

EUROPEAN PRACTICES AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

Spain · Vilafranca del Penedès vacant housing programme

Vilafranca links rehabilitation of empty homes to social housing and employment training. URBACT reports more than 250 homes renovated and 500 people gaining skills at the time of its 2017 case study. Fundão could test a smaller pilot with property inventory, owner agreements, training partnerships and affordability conditions. The historical figures should not be presented as current programme totals.

Source: https://urbact.eu/good-practices/empty-housing-social-inclusion

Germany · Integration through local one-stop services

Municipal integration services in Germany illustrate the value of coordinating language advice, administrative navigation and referrals instead of leaving newcomers to approach separate offices. France's recommendation could use a local service map and multilingual case guidance as a first pilot. Because provision differs by municipality, this is a model for service coordination rather than one standardized national intervention.

Source: https://www.bamf.de/EN/

European Union · ESF+ employment and skills funding

ESF+ supports skills, access to employment and social inclusion through national and regional programmes. Greece's Programme Nestor could explore relevant calls for tailored training and employer partnerships for unemployed people aged 55 and over; its Union as a Service proposal could explore worker guidance and training partnerships. Eligibility depends on the specific programme and national arrangements.

Source: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj

European Commission · SMARTA-NET rural mobility guidance

The Commission's 2025 publication draws on rural mobility work and practical approaches to gaps in conventional public transport. Arvika could assess demand-responsive services, evening connections and links to education and activities, using youth travel diaries before selecting routes. Guidance offers options, not evidence that one transport model will work everywhere.

Source: https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/commission-publishes-new-guidance-sustainable-rural-mobility-and-ecotourism-2025-07-30_en

European Union · Pay transparency and violence-prevention legislation

Directive (EU) 2023/970 on pay transparency and Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on violence against women provide relevant legal context for France's women's-rights proposal. The operational question is how people access information, legal protection and support locally; legislation should not be mistaken for evidence of completed implementation.

Source: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj

Policy recommendations: Ensuring multisectoral integration responses

Connect housing rehabilitation to affordability and skills; combine migrant language support with simpler administrative pathways and qualification advice; design tailored employment support for older workers; and evaluate mobility in terms of actual journeys people can make. For women's rights, pair legal safeguards with accessible services and enforcement.

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3. Implementation: from proposal to pilot

A workable European approach starts with a small number of locally led pilots. Each should identify a lead authority, a community partner, a realistic funding route and an outcome that can be observed within one year. Projects should not be imposed as a uniform European template.

Representation	Create a standing advisory group with published feedback rules.	Diversity of members; documented decisions changed.
Community networks	Open existing spaces and launch small partnership grants.	Ensure participation; active local partnerships; Shared spaces.
Housing and work	Assess vacant properties and test rehabilitation and training partnerships.	Homes made available; trainees completing placements.
Accessible services	Map language, administrative, and transport obstacles with users.	Reduced journey or processing barriers; user feedback.
Civil society support	Test application assistance and peer learning for small CSOs.	Eligible applications; first-time applicants supported.

Monitoring should distinguish outputs (meetings, grants, training places) from outcomes (changed decisions, durable community partnerships, access to housing or jobs) and publish limitations as well as achievements. Personal data should be collected only where necessary and with appropriate safeguards.

4. Conclusions

Across the five countries, civic participation, social inclusion and cooperation between public institutions and communities emerge as recurring priorities. However, the recommendations approach these objectives from different perspectives, reflecting the needs of the populations and territories involved.

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Several proposals focus directly on participation mechanisms, including advisory panels, participatory budgeting, civic education and community-led initiatives. Others address the practical conditions that determine whether participation is possible, such as access to housing in Fundão, employment opportunities in Greece, integration services in France and public transport in Sweden.

The recommendations also demonstrate the importance of recognising locally specific challenges. Although some themes recur across countries, their proposed solutions are not interchangeable. Effective implementation depends on the institutional capacities, community resources and social circumstances of each setting.

Taken together, the 15 recommendations provide a shared direction for strengthening solidarity across Europe: public policies should not only invite individuals to participate but also address the barriers that prevent them from doing so. By combining institutional accountability, accessible services and locally developed initiatives, the proposals offer practical approaches to building more inclusive, connected and participatory communities.

Solidarity4All's 15 recommendations do not ask Europe to adopt one new model of inclusion. They ask public institutions to take local experience seriously and to make participation possible in practice. Lisbon shows how municipalities can resource community-led initiatives; Finland illustrates sustained dialogue with minority communities; Vilafranca connects housing with employment; and established European mechanisms offer channels for youth participation and civil-society support. None can simply be copied. Each offers a design choice that partners can test, adapt, and evaluate.
When people have a genuine opportunity to take part in decisions that affect their lives, the benefits reach beyond the individuals involved. Participation can help build trust, strengthen relationships between communities and public institutions, and make policies more responsive to people's needs. These benefits are also recognized in the Council of Europe's *10 Principles for Inclusive Societies and Stronger Democracies* (2026), which highlights the importance of giving everyone opportunities to participate in community life and public decisions. This is particularly relevant to Solidarity4All, where the proposals from five European countries show how local participation can help create more inclusive communities and bring public decisions closer to the people they affect.

For European policymakers, the immediate opportunity is to connect these locally grounded proposals with existing participation standards, cohesion instruments, and cross-border learning. For municipalities and civil society, the next step is more concrete: agree who will act, involve those affected from the start, and show what changed.

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