



LuminaCity

Round Table: The Importance of City Branding to Foster Youth Participation

Youth participation events without mobilities - Malta

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INTRODUCTION

City branding is often understood as a strategy for promoting a city to visitors, investors, or businesses. However, its true value extends far beyond marketing. A successful city brand reflects the identity, values, culture, and aspirations of the people who live there. When young people are actively involved in shaping this identity, city branding becomes a participatory process that strengthens civic engagement, community pride, and democratic participation. Round table discussions provide an ideal environment for exploring these ideas by bringing together young people, local authorities, educators, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to exchange perspectives and co-create a shared vision for the future of their cities.

Round tables encourage open and inclusive dialogue where every participant has an equal opportunity to contribute. Unlike traditional presentations or formal consultations, they promote active listening, collaboration, and mutual respect. Young people are given the opportunity to express their opinions, discuss local challenges, and propose innovative ideas, while decision-makers gain valuable insights into the needs, expectations, and aspirations of younger generations. This exchange helps create stronger relationships between citizens and institutions and demonstrates that youth voices are an essential part of local governance.





Discussing city branding through a round table format enables participants to explore what makes their city unique. Conversations often focus on cultural heritage, local traditions, historical landmarks, environmental assets, innovation, entrepreneurship, public spaces, and community values. Young people frequently offer fresh perspectives on these topics, identifying strengths and opportunities that may otherwise be overlooked. Their creativity and familiarity with contemporary trends contribute to the development of a city identity that is authentic, dynamic, and attractive to both residents and visitors.



One of the key benefits of these discussions is that they encourage young people to develop a stronger sense of belonging. When participants are invited to contribute to conversations about the future image and development of their city, they begin to see themselves as active stakeholders rather than passive residents. This increased sense of ownership motivates them to participate in local initiatives, volunteer activities, cultural events, and community projects, strengthening social cohesion and civic responsibility.

Round tables also provide an opportunity to identify barriers that limit youth participation in urban development. Participants may discuss challenges such as limited communication between young people and local authorities, insufficient opportunities for consultation, lack of accessible public spaces, or limited awareness of existing participation mechanisms. By openly addressing these issues, stakeholders can work together to identify practical solutions that create more inclusive and youth-friendly environments for civic engagement.





An important aspect of the discussion involves examining how city branding can become a tool for local development rather than simply a promotional strategy. Participants explore how a strong city identity can attract tourism, investment, cultural activities, and new opportunities while simultaneously improving the quality of life for residents. Young people are encouraged to recognise that their ideas, creativity, and participation contribute directly to building cities that are more innovative, sustainable, and socially inclusive.

The round table also highlights the importance of collaboration between different sectors of society. Successful city branding requires cooperation between municipalities, educational institutions, youth organisations, businesses, cultural institutions, artists, entrepreneurs, and local communities. During discussions, participants identify opportunities for partnerships that can support youth-led initiatives, promote local culture, and create innovative projects that strengthen the city's identity. This collaborative approach demonstrates that effective urban development depends on shared responsibility and collective action.



CONCLUSION

Within the LuminaCity – Illuminating Urban Identity project, the round table on The Importance of City Branding to Foster Youth Participation serves as a valuable platform for connecting young people with local stakeholders and encouraging meaningful dialogue about the future of their communities. By exchanging ideas, identifying local priorities, and exploring collaborative solutions, participants contribute to a shared vision of cities that are inclusive, innovative, and youth-driven. The activity demonstrates that city branding is most effective when it is built through active citizen participation, ensuring that young people become genuine partners in shaping the identity and sustainable development of their cities.

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