



YoCoJoin workbook



Introduction: the power of youth in journalism

Across Europe, local journalism is facing a crisis. Shrinking newsrooms, vanishing ad revenues, and disengaged audiences - especially among young people - are threatening the very foundation of our democracies. In this challenging landscape, the **YoCoJoin** project emerged with a bold, practical idea: involve young people directly in the production of news to strengthen both journalism and democracy from the ground up.

YoCoJoin - short for Youth Community Journalism Initiative - was launched as a European collaboration between seven local media organizations, with Omroep Tilburg in the Netherlands leading the project. Drawing on their successful youth journalism model in Tilburg, Omroep Tilburg coordinated a diverse and experienced consortium of partners from across the continent: Zavod Časoris in Slovenia, SideStreet Malta, the Dublin Inquirer in Ireland, Media Diversity Institute Global in Belgium, Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans in Serbia, and Nyugat Media in Hungary. Together, they brought the concept of youth-driven community journalism to life in seven national contexts, each with its own challenges, media landscapes, and opportunities.

Supported by the Creative Europe programme, these partners worked together to engage over 150 young people - from primary school children to university students - as community reporters. Through tailored training, mentorship, and hands-on reporting, they covered stories that mattered to them and their communities. In doing so, they developed essential democratic skills, gained firsthand experience in how journalism works, and explored a more inclusive model of journalism.

This workbook distills the key lessons of the **YoCoJoin** project while also telling our stories. It is written for local media organizations, educators, youth workers, and anyone interested in making journalism more accessible, relevant, and representative. Our aim is simple: to show you how to embed youth community journalism into your own context - whether in a newsroom, a school, or a local community center.

You'll find **step-by-step** guidance on how to build a youth-centered journalism ecosystem, engage and train young people, produce content with them, and make this work sustainable. We include tools, templates, and real-world examples from across Europe, along with voices from the young journalists and mentors themselves.

At its heart, this is not just a manual for a program. It's a roadmap for a different kind of journalism - one that is local, participatory, and future-facing.

Let's build it together.

Reader's guide

Chapter 1: Building the Local Ecosystem & Recruiting Young Journalists

This chapter explains how to establish a supportive environment for youth journalism through partnerships with schools, community organizations, and media outlets. It guides readers through defining goals, identifying target groups, and recruiting young people using both online and offline strategies. Real-life examples show how to make young voices central to local media.

Chapter 2: Engaging and Expanding Young Audiences

Focusing on outreach, this chapter explores how to make journalism accessible and appealing to young audiences. It discusses platform choices, storytelling formats, and relevant topics, offering insights from YoCoJoin partners on adapting content styles and building trust with youth through authentic, relatable narratives.

Chapter 3: Training Youth Community Journalists

This chapter presents a comprehensive, hands-on approach to guiding young people through the journalistic process. It covers organizing editorial meetings and training sessions, introducing the role of journalism in society, and developing core skills such as finding stories, interviewing and writing. It also explores the role of mentorship in helping youth reporters navigate challenges, receive feedback, and grow in confidence. Throughout, real-life examples and exercises show how to combine structure with flexibility in both training and mentoring.

Chapter 4: Ensuring the Sustainability of Youth Journalism Initiatives

The final chapter looks at how to sustain youth journalism long-term. It highlights funding strategies, institutional partnerships, educational integration, and the importance of collecting impact data. It also provides ideas for revenue generation, community engagement, and building a supportive ecosystem beyond the project.

Meet the YoCoJoin partners

The Netherlands – Omroep Tilburg (OT)

Omroep Tilburg is the local public media institution in the municipality of Tilburg. OT media is made by, with, and for Tilburg residents. It firmly believes that it is the voice of the city that makes Tilburg sound as it is. YoCoJoin is modeled after OT's T-Reporter concept: young reporters going out into their neighborhood, under the guidance of professional journalists, to create stories about their immediate surroundings. OT serves as the lead partner in YoCoJoin and shares its extensive expertise on youth citizen journalism with the project partners. OT also has extensive experience connecting and working with vulnerable youth populations, ensuring that a diverse group of voices was (and is) heard and empowered through the YoCoJoin program.

Slovenia – Zavod Časoris

Časoris is a unique project partner. It is an award-winning, non-profit media organisation founded in 2016 in Ljubljana, Slovenia that publishes an online newspaper for children. Časoris also develops and implements media literacy workshops and tools for their audience base. While their primary audience is children in primary school, they are also consumed by high school age students and some adults largely due to the readability of their news stories. In the past, Časoris developed a "Kid Reporters" team to engage young readers in content creation, similar to OT's T-Reporter program. With strong media literacy programs and over a decade of relevant project experience, Časoris brings deep expertise and a wide network to the YoCoJoin project.

Belgium – Media Diversity Institute Global (MDI Global)

The Media Diversity Institute (MDI) works internationally to encourage accurate and nuanced reporting on race, religion, ethnic, class, disability, gender, and sexual identity issues in media landscapes around the world. The organisation's work is grounded in the principles of freedom of expression and diversity and inclusion. MDI Global is an offshoot of the longstanding Media Diversity Institute in the UK and sister organisation of Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans. MDI Global serves as both the overarching research institute, as well as a pivotal assistant in content creation and dissemination in YoCoJoin. This organisation also assists the project in ensuring that its results are disseminated at the EU-level; using its location in Brussels, its extensive media connections, and its access to the European Parliament to directly impact Union initiatives on media literacy, independent journalism, local reporting, and youth engagement in democracy.

Serbia – Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans (MDI WB)

The Media Diversity Institute in the Western Balkans (MDI WB) works within the Balkan region to encourage accurate and nuanced reporting on race, religion,

ethnic, class, disability, gender, and sexual identity issues in media landscapes throughout the region. MDI WB is an offshoot of the longstanding MDI in the UK, and it is grounded in its regional approach to issues within the media sector—using its experts and local knowledge to actively engage in the promotion of a free and independent press. Within YoCoJoin, MDI Western Balkans serves as a key content creator in a country (Serbia) that is a core member of Europe’s Eastern partnership. It contributes to the geographical and linguistic diversity of the project, and uses its extensive experience and media networks in the region to assist other partners in the consortium.

Malta – SideStreet Malta (SSM)

SideStreet Malta is a unique up-and-coming digital platform based in the Maltese islands which values freedom of expression and grassroots journalism (emphasising the value of real-time connection and community-building). The organisation empowers young people to engage in local news and gives a voice to those that are not always heard. SSM also prioritises making news more fun and accessible to the youth by meeting them where they are already active – i.e., non-traditional forms of media such as TikTok and Instagram. Within YoCoJoin, SSM plays an important role in guiding partners when it comes to outreach strategies tailored to youth culture.

Ireland – The Dublin Inquirer Ltd. (DI)

The Dublin Inquirer is an independent, reader-supported newspaper serving Ireland’s capital. The organisation values the importance of a “free and independent” press, and they conduct in-depth, original reporting on issues that shape Dublin. Launched in 2015, the Dublin Inquirer is small, but constantly motivated to grow their audience and outreach within the Dublin City Council area. Their coverage seeks to focus on issues that affect underserved groups, including social and private-rental tenants, those who use public transport and cyclists, immigrants, and children. Within YoCoJoin and beyond, the Dublin Inquirer implements active community engagement projects, including projects to increase their reporting in parts of the city where there is low voter turnout.

Hungary – Nyugat Média és Világháló Egyesület

Nyugat.hu is the most read rural independent media in Hungary and the largest independent media source outside of Budapest. It was launched 23 years ago (1999), founded and published by a civil association, and over the years it has amassed a massive viewership. Its content is even frequently picked up by the national press in Hungary. Furthermore, Nyugat.hu prides itself on its strong local connections and its direct contact with their readers, and it has learned how to prioritise the importance of a free and independent press in a challenging national media landscape. Additionally, since it has always operated on a digital platform—avoiding the struggles of a shrinking print press – Nyugat has extensive experience in navigating the digital sphere and has shared their innovative practices with other project partners throughout YoCoJoin.

Chapter 1: Building the local ecosystem & recruiting young journalists

This chapter explores how to create a local media ecosystem where youth journalism can thrive. It offers practical guidance on building inclusive and supportive environments, forming meaningful partnerships, recruiting young people, and keeping them engaged. You'll find real stories, effective practices, and adaptable strategies drawn from across Europe to help you bring youth journalism to life in your community.

Before we can train young reporters, we need to build a world that welcomes them - a space where they are heard, valued, and supported. This requires more than just good intentions; it means working closely with schools, youth centers, NGOs, media outlets, and local governments to create a sustainable network of support. These partnerships not only help to create an environment where youth journalism is possible, but also play a vital role in reaching and recruiting young people - especially those who might not otherwise see themselves reflected in the media. Laying this foundation begins with a clear, locally grounded plan. The first step is turning your ambition into action - by outlining your goals, identifying your audience, and designing a structure that fits your context.

1.1 Setting up your project: writing an action plan

Every YoCoJoin partner began their journey by developing an action plan. This was a crucial first step to ensure each project was locally relevant, realistic, and rooted in the needs of their community.

For these purposes, an Action Plan guidebook was created that offered our partners and participants a roadmap to design their youth journalism initiative. Some of the key elements that need to be included in the action plan:

- **Clear goals and objectives**, such as increasing media literacy, enabling civic participation, or offering pathways to professional journalism.
- **Defined target audiences**, tailored to local demographics (e.g. students aged 15–23, underrepresented communities).
- **Training and mentoring strategies**, including (meta) journalism skills and hands-on guidance (more about this in chapter 3).
- **Outreach and engagement tactics**, including collaboration with schools, community centers, and online platforms (more about this later in this chapter).
- **Implementation timelines** that align with the timeline of your organization and partners.
- **Logistical considerations**, such as equipment needs, staffing, venues, and budgets.

Each partner emphasized different spearheads. Some prioritized civic engagement, others focused on more practical and technical (storytelling) skills. The action plans also reflected the nature of the different partnerships that were set up; with schools, media organizations, youth organizations, or social workers. They proved to be of vital importance to the success of YoCoJoin.

1.2 The value of partnerships

Youth journalism cannot exist in isolation and throughout YoCoJoin we realized that setting up partnerships is not just helpful, it is essential. For example, schools and universities allow you to connect with eager learners and can add credibility to your project. Community organizations can help you reach underrepresented communities. And (local) newsrooms and media organizations can offer expertise, mentorship and exposure.

The best way to start out is by mapping the local (media) ecosystem: who already works with young people? Which institutions share your goals? Teachers, librarians, youth workers, journalists and NGO staff often act as bridge-builders so it is best to invite them in early!

Some tips on mapping your local (media) ecosystem



Identify potential stakeholders: Which schools, NGOs, youth centers, and media outlets already work with young people or have an interest in youth empowerment?

Understand mutual interests: What do these organizations hope to achieve, and how might youth journalism align with their missions (e.g. education, media literacy, civic engagement, creative expression)?

Assess capacities and roles: Who can offer mentorship, space, funding, equipment, or access to youth audiences?

Initiate conversations: Reach out with a clear vision and explore how your goals might align. Ask what support they need in return.

Visualize the ecosystem: Use tools like mind maps or community asset maps to see how each stakeholder connects and contributes to the broader youth media environment.

Many of our YoCoJoin partners decided to partner up with educational institutions. In the Netherlands, Omroep Tilburg collaborated with social work educational institution Yonder and created Press Tilburg. This initiative served as a testing ground for students aged 17-23. Students experimented with producing journalism for their own generation, gaining practical experience and exploring journalism as a potential career path. Embedding these activities in an educational setting led to greater motivation and commitment, and several students from this cohort have expressed interest in continuing their work with Omroep Tilburg, even after leaving school.

In similar fashion, **Časoris from Slovenia** worked closely with schools to engage primary school students in youth journalism. Teachers kept students motivated throughout the process, while a professional journalist serving as a mentor introduced them to real-world tools and storytelling techniques, turning journalism into an adventure. Thanks to this partnership, 47 young Časoris reporters became more media literate, published 21 stories, and discovered the joy and power of journalism.

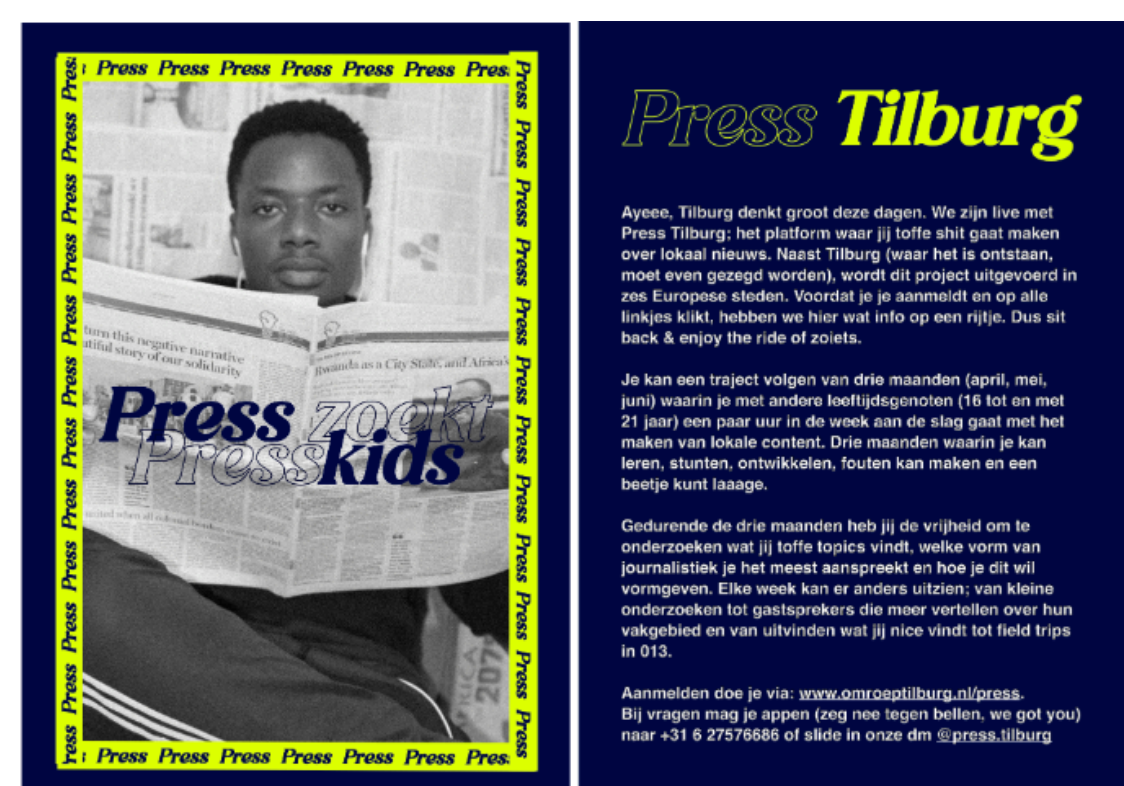


1.3 Recruitment

Recruitment was one of the most important and challenging aspects of the YoCoJoin project. We found that it isn't just about flyers or hashtags; it's about meeting young people where they are, both physically and digitally, and giving them reasons to care. Our partners went about this in a variety of ways.

SideStreet Malta leaned heavily into digital marketing and tapped into their social media experience and reached out to youngsters through Instagram and TikTok.

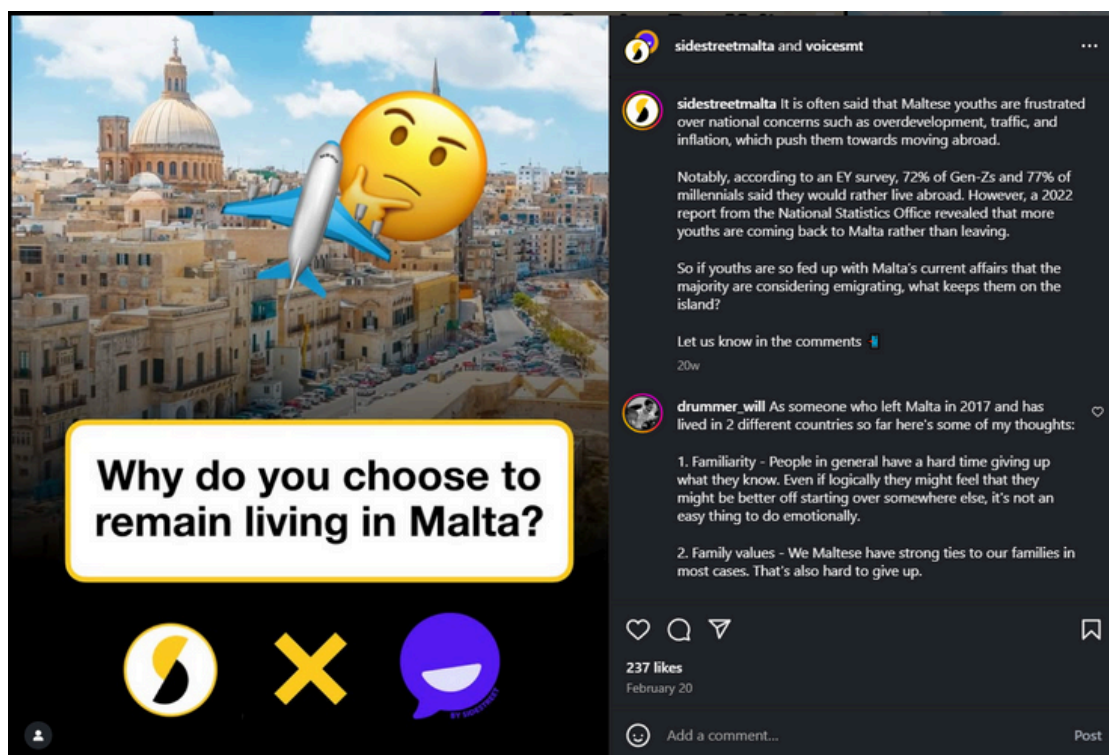
They branded their YoCoJoin adventure into VOICES and used social media to attract more than 30 applicants aged 16-30. Omroep Tilburg also rebranded their initiative into Press Tilburg and adopted an appealing new digital house style. They reached out to their target group via social media and through physical flyers and posters, spread around the city.



Press Tilburg Flyer



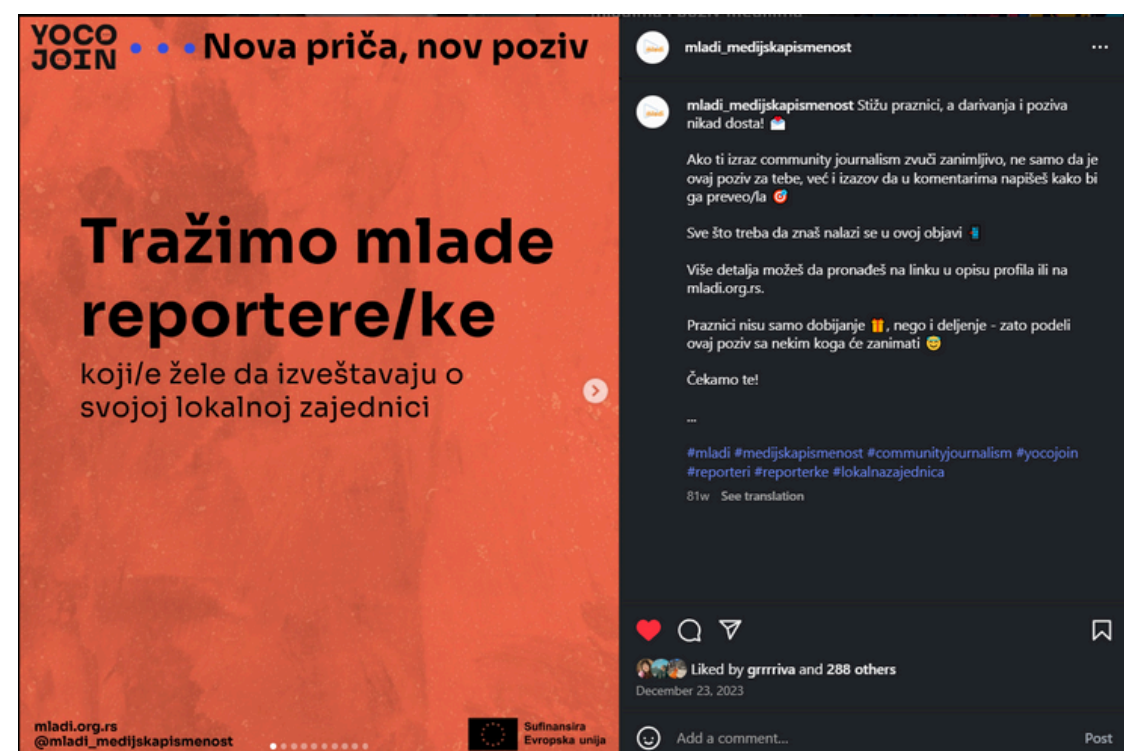
Example of house style Press Tilburg



Example of a post on VoicesMT Instagram profile

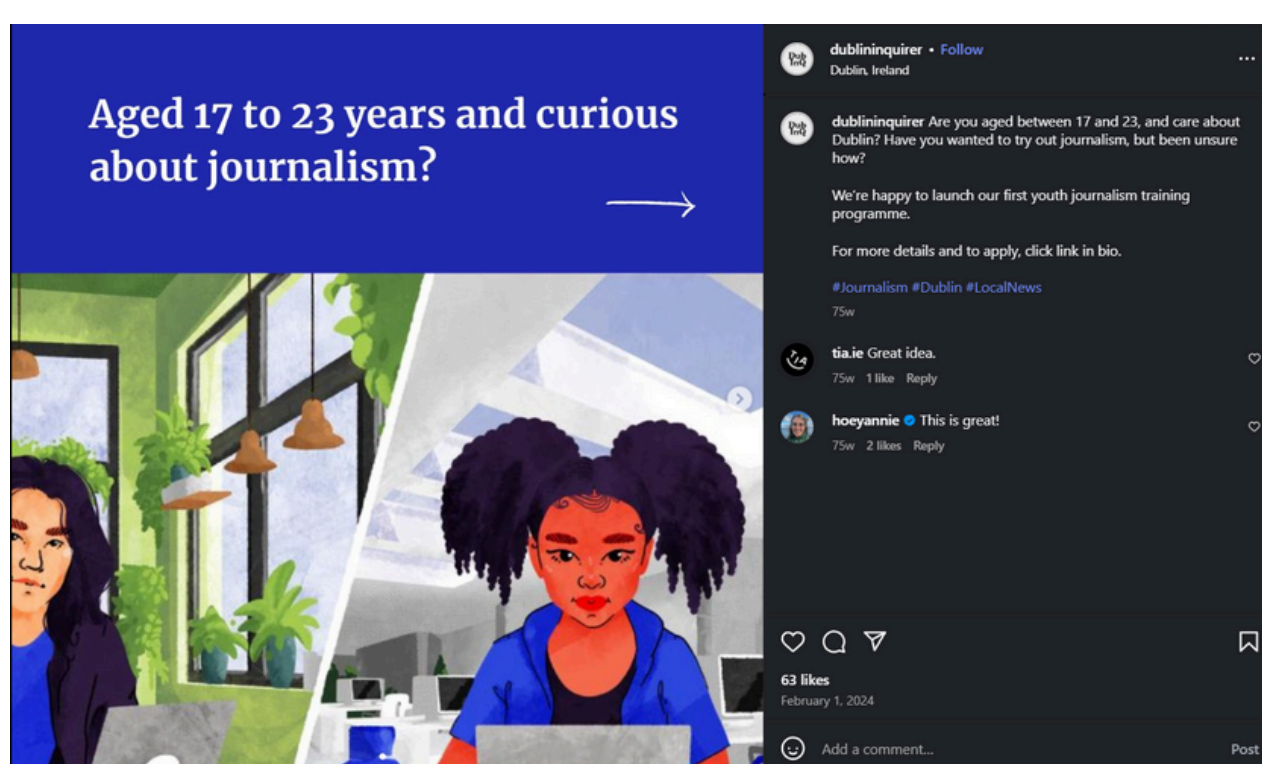
Most partners chose a mixed approach, combining on- and offline recruitment. Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans (Serbia) shared their open call on their website and across their largely viewed social networks. They also relied on their extensive network and partnered with local media and youth organizations to gather a strong pool of applicants.

Media Diversity Institute Global (Belgium) did likewise and adopted a flexible approach to recruitment. When something was not working, they decided to try a different approach, such as creating a video and reaching out to their partners. This led to collaborations with universities in Brussels and Ghent, and established media (literacy) partners such as StampMedia and Mediawijs, who all shared the call.



Example of a post on MDI WB's Instagram profile

The Dublin Inquirer from Ireland published an open call, contacted youth organisations and community workers, attracting more than 70 applications from diverse young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, asylum seekers, and people with disabilities.



Example of a post on DublinInquirer's Instagram profile



Nyugat from Hungary reflects on their recruitment strategy:

"We promoted the YoCoJoin program through our own platforms, including our website and social media channels.

This alone provided significant reach, as our news portal is read by 50,000 to 60,000 people daily on average, and our Facebook page has over 100,000 followers.

From the beginning, we considered it important to meet young people in person and to try to convince them directly. This is not easy in Hungary today, as entering schools requires permission from the local education authorities, who are often very cautious due to political pressure from the government.

We started by holding a meeting with all the staff in the editorial office, including administrators and everyone else. We listed who had informal connections with schools, student organizations, or youth-focused NGOs. Then we divided up who would contact whom.

We were rejected in many places, but some high schools allowed us to put up posters, and in a few cases, we were able to speak directly with students.

Our most successful experience was at a secondary school where one group of students was studying media literacy as an elective subject, and the teacher was very supportive. There, we were also able to meet students of different ages but with similar interests.

During a very engaging conversation, we managed to spark their interest in the project. The core of our team came from this group.

The recruitment proved to be successful, as students joined the program from a wide variety of high schools, and there were even university students who had moved from our city to study in the capital but still chose to participate.”

Some final recruitment tips from the field:

- No one-size-fits-all solution exists: The best recruitment strategies reflect local needs, community connections, and the media young people already use.
- Start with trusted intermediaries: Schools, teachers, youth workers, and NGOs already connected to young people can help make the first introduction.
- Use a mix of channels: Combine social media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) with school visits, workshops, and word-of-mouth.
- Show what's in it for them: Highlight opportunities to learn new skills, publish their work, or gain mentorship.
- Create a strong visual identity: Use engaging and youth-friendly materials such as videos, posters, stories from peers.
- Offer low-barrier entry points: Short workshops or info sessions can help hesitant participants get a taste of journalism.
- Be flexible and iterative: Adapt your outreach if something isn't working. Try different approaches, messages, or formats.
- Celebrate early participants: Showcase their work and share their stories to inspire others.
- Ensure diversity in outreach: Partner with organizations that serve underrepresented groups and minorities.

Chapter 2: Engaging and Expanding Young Audiences

Let's be honest, if you're trying to get young people to care about your journalism, how you tell the story is just as important as the story itself.

The old-school formats don't always cut it anymore. Whether it's a 60-second reel, a meme with a punch, or a visually attractive carousel post, the packaging needs to feel like it belongs to them, not something handed down from a newsroom that hasn't updated its playbook since 2005.

This chapter looks at how different partners across the YoCoJoin project tackled that challenge. Their approaches weren't about finding a one-size-fits-all blueprint, but about testing what works locally, listening to young people, and experimenting with formats and platforms.

Youth participants often inject fresh energy, new ideas, and a deep understanding of emerging platforms and storytelling formats. Their involvement can become a catalyst for organizations to step outside their comfort zones and experiment with styles, formats, and tones they might otherwise overlook.

What follows is a series of examples, grounded in real contexts and real communities, that show how youth engagement can take shape. They're not about chasing trends or gimmicks, but about showing up with intent, clarity, and respect. You'll see that success came when young people were given the space to define relevance on their own terms, and when storytelling was rooted in their lives, identities, and concerns.

2.1 How YoCoJoin partners created content that speaks to young audiences

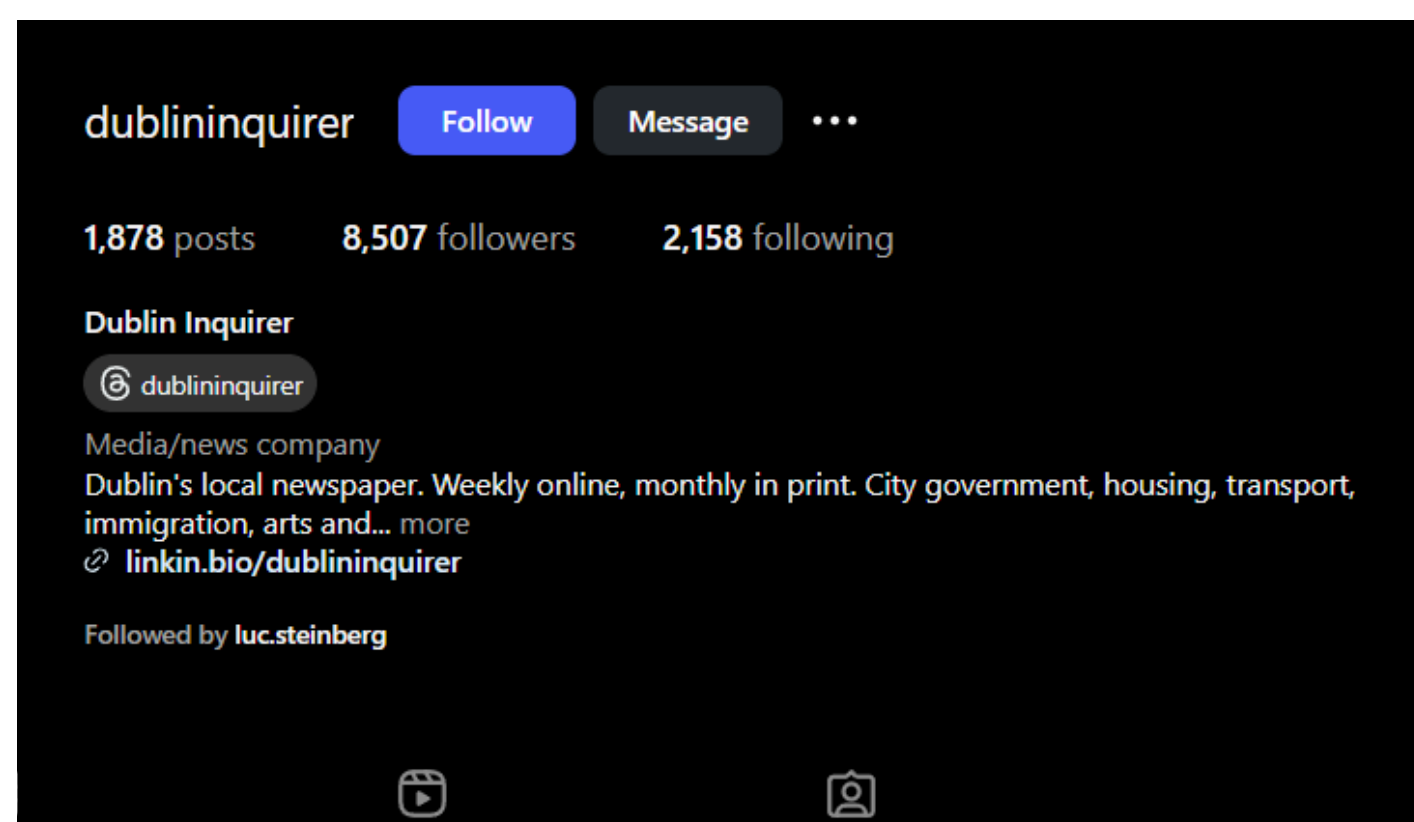
SideStreet (Malta) found that Instagram and TikTok are dominant for the Maltese youth. Very few turn to traditional outlets or news websites unless redirected there through social media. Through workshops and practical exercises within the VOICES programme, SideStreet established that there was a clear preference for visual content, quick explainers, and authentic, unfiltered narratives.

In their productions, SideStreet blended humour, sharp design, and emotional resonance to make news feel accessible. Complex stories were translated into different formats such as memes, short videos, polls, carousels and others. For example, an article about Malta's housing market was turned into a series of street interviews with students, an animated explainer and an infographic.

The most resonant stories proved to be those that are rooted in identity and lived experience. An example of this is the Instagram series “Why I Left Malta”, which was built from interviews with young Maltese abroad.

This series struck a chord with audiences feeling the same pressures.

SideStreet’s young community reporters also produced content on the erosion of the Maltese language in everyday life. This tapped into cultural vulnerability and sparked a wide debate.



The Dublin Inquirer (Ireland) took a different approach altogether and chose intimacy over reach. While they built up their Instagram offering, rather than saturating youth feeds on social media which many said they didn't like, they leant into email newsletters and in-person engagement.

Youth journalists co-hosted events like a discussion on social media algorithms. This was a strategic decision to build trust and encourage activities offline.

The Dublin Inquirer encouraged community reporters to write hyper-local, investigative stories about topics such as vacant buildings, local community futures, and sustainability topics.



Omroep Tilburg (the Netherlands) - as a public broadcaster - integrated youth content into its existing television programmes and longer-form online videos. Though the primary format was still traditional TV, they experimented with YouTube as an extension, especially for explainers.

Social media was not heavily emphasised due to platform infrastructure and organisational constraints, but the content that did get posted under the flag of Press Kids had strong visual identities tailored for younger audiences.



1 **Kollégánk az Európai Unió központjában, Brüsszelben vesz részt éppen egy szakmai projekt zárókonferenciáján**
Szilágyi József · 2025. május 16. 11:05
A többnapos program egy kétéves újságíróképzés és gyakornoki program zárórendezvénye, melyen rengeteg szakmai programot is szerveztek.

Szombathelyi sikátorok és átjárók, apró örömmel
Nyugat.hu · 2024. december 23. 18:57
Fiatal kollégánk kis tárgyakkal dobta fel a Forgó közt.

Vasárnap zár a botrányokban bővelkedő budapesti ARC-kiállítás
Görcz Gergő · 2024. október 09. 15:56
Az alliteráló cím mellé hoztunk jó néhány fotót is.

Topics included youth drug use (snus), social safety during carnival, and disability access. The explainer on snus gained political attention and was cited in discussions at the municipal level. The Press Kids also investigated the value that news holds for their peers in two investigative voxpops.

Nyugat (Hungary) primarily published youth-written news articles on its high-traffic website (50k+ viewers per day), focusing on local civic happenings, from political town halls to sports competitions. This content was also shared through their Facebook (100k+ followers) and Youtube account, reflecting platform preferences in their region.

What they found is that young readers have an increased interest in local and national public life and politics, which could be related to the specific situation in Hungary. They are keen to read and write articles about schools and education, as well as reports and reviews of local cultural events (pop concerts) attended by young people. There is also an interest in content dealing with the mental health of the young generation. The youth-written articles were accompanied by selfmade pictures.



Zavod Časoris (Slovenia) focused on a younger age bracket, often working with children and early teens. They published their content in an online newspaper for children, featuring one daily story on current events in language adapted to young readers, along with an afternoon contribution written by a child.

Additionally, Časoris was active on Instagram and started experimenting with TikTok during the course of YoCoJoin. By using a “youth for youth” approach and through short, trend-driven videos made by a dedicated TikTok reporter, Časoris aims to boost reach, encourage interaction and guide viewers to their longer-form content.

The primary school community reporters explored topics they personally found meaningful. The emphasis was on empowering them to choose subjects relevant to their own lives and school communities; their first audience. Through group discussions and reflection, they considered what their peers, both locally and across Slovenia, should or needed to know. The themes ranged from school-focused questions - such as why the school bell had gone silent, how often young people read, and what made the school musical such a success - to broader concerns like environmental change and the uncertain future of a local ski slope. Students also addressed issues of social responsibility, including how to respond to reckless peer behaviour.



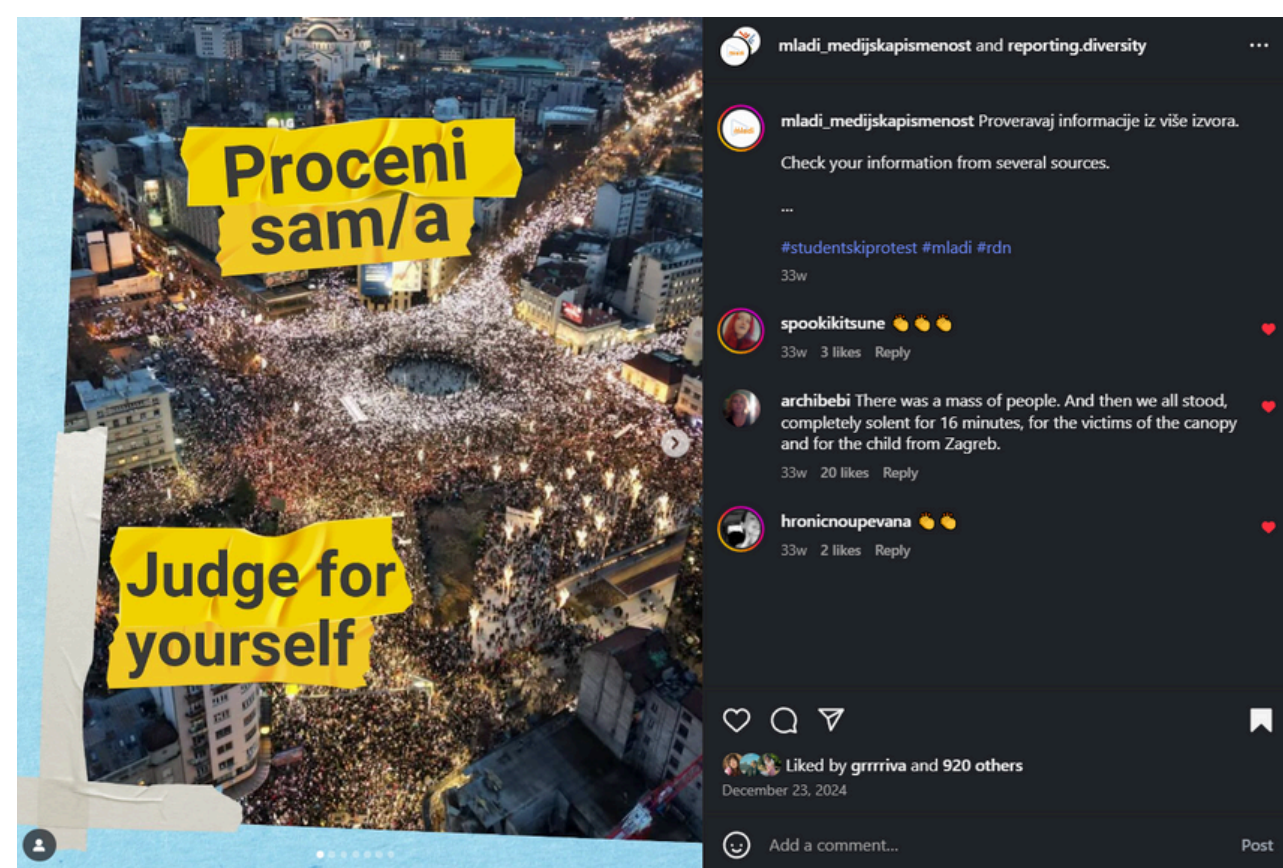
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In the second, more advanced round of the programme, students turned their attention outward to the broader local community. They explored topics such as youth participation in participatory budgeting and the preservation of cultural memory, which helps foster a sense of continuity and belonging for new generations of students, rooted in the history and identity of their rural school. They also examined the adequacy of public transport for children in rural areas and investigated how aware young people are of opportunities for active citizenship in their communities. Every topic emerged from the students’ own curiosity, observations, and critical engagement.

For MDI Global’s (Brussels) young journalists, choosing the story they would work on was closely related to their values and background, the challenges their communities face, and their motivation to create small but meaningful change. It was important to find a balance between activism and human-centered storytelling. As a result, they explored a variety of topics important to them. Dea Bakashvili explored [the impact of Russian influence on Georgia's democratic path toward the EU](#), while Ngoc Thien An Nguyen investigated [funding limitations faced by non-European students](#). Faris Zebib wrote about [the academic uprising in Belgium](#), exploring how Belgian students were challenging Israeli ties, and Ranim Alhoushi, Nisrine Koukouchi, and Ngoc Thien An Nguyen co-authored a piece on [the Brussels Peacebuilding and Multi-Faith Forum](#), highlighting the role of women in peacebuilding. Ranim Alhoushi also reported on [the challenges refugees face within Belgium’s asylum system](#), while Joanna Tibesar wrote [why homelessness sector needs to listen to women with lived experience](#). Nisrine Koukouchi tackled [the issue of post-prison reintegration and the cycle of reoffending](#), and Luna-Marie Noyelle examined [Belgium’s broader carceral policies and prison situation in her hometown Mechelen](#).

Lastly, **MDIWB (Serbia)** recruited young reporters from diverse educational backgrounds - including journalism, tourism, project management, and security - proving that youth from all fields can contribute meaningfully to journalism when rooted in their local communities. The topics they worked on were varied and ranged from



student protests, mental health after the fall of the canopy at the Railway Station in Novi Sad, to current problems affecting young people such as the state of local swimming pools. Their (mostly) written articles were published on regional news platforms, thereby supporting and spreading youth-produced and youth-friendly journalism in the area.



2.2 Tips & takeaways

- Start with what matters to them
- Topics succeed when they blend relevance, emotion, and a clear youth perspective. Voices participants began with their personal concerns, then built formats around those.
- Tailor the format to the platform
- TikToks, reels, newsletters, or live events - each needs a format that feels native. SideStreet thrived with short-form video; Dublin Inquirer built trust through newsletters and face-to-face engagement.
- Let young people choose the topics
- Ownership matters. From Časoris to MDIG Brussels, youth reporters chose what they covered, leading to more authentic, peer-resonant content.
- Mix professionalism with personality
- Youth-led doesn't mean low-effort. Good youth journalism pairs clarity with credibility, like the sharp regional reporting by MDIWB.
- Stay close to home

- Local beats work. Časoris and Nyugat found success reporting on school life, neighborhood changes, and local culture. Familiar stories create real impact.
- Lead with visuals
- Strong visual identity helps cut through. From YouTube explainers to stylized Instagram posts, visual storytelling is key. Just ask Omroep Tilburg or SideStreet.
- Go beyond the screen
- Offline engagement builds trust. Youth-focused events and workshops, like Dublin Inquirer's algorithm talk, turn journalism into a shared experience.
- Widen the circle
- Great reporters come from all backgrounds. MDIWB Serbia proved that with contributors from journalism, tourism, and even security studies - diversity fuels creativity.

Chapter 3: Training and mentoring youth community journalists

YoCoJoin's ultimate aim is to reinvigorate the professional local news media sector by introducing youth community reporters into the everyday work of local media agencies. This approach not only strengthens journalism itself, but also brings new perspectives, fresh storytelling styles, and stronger connections to younger audiences. Achieving this goal requires training young prospective reporters and familiarizing them with the most important aspects and practices of journalism.

This is no easy task. Many young people are active consumers of journalistic content - especially via social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube - and often follow grassroots and independent media outlets they trust. But while they may be well-versed in how to engage with content, that doesn't mean they know how to create it. What's often missing is a deeper understanding of how journalism works: how stories are researched, fact-checked, shaped, and held to ethical standards.

That's where our role comes in. If we want young community journalists to inform their peers about the immediate world around them, we must first introduce them to the role journalism plays in society: what journalism actually is, and why it matters. Ultimately, we must help them see that journalism is more than just producing content - it is a vital public service that supports informed citizenship and community connection.

The second task at hand is to let the young reporters experience what it is like to be a journalist: how do journalists actually work, and what are their most important skills? Through practical assignments, real-world reporting experiences, and structured feedback, young reporters learn to think critically, ask the right questions, verify information, and present their findings clearly and responsibly. It is through doing - not just listening - that they begin to internalize the habits and standards of professional journalism.

But training alone is not enough. Young journalists need guidance throughout the entire reporting process - from idea to publication. That's where mentorship comes in. Mentoring offers ongoing, personalized support that helps youth reporters build confidence, deepen their storytelling, and navigate the practical and ethical challenges of journalism. It complements training by providing a trusted relationship in which learning continues, questions can be asked, and skills are refined in context.

To support these goals, this chapter is structured into three main parts.

First, we look at how to organize your training and mentoring practically, with a focus on editorial meetings as the backbone of the program (1. Organizing your training and mentoring). Second, we explore how to introduce young people to the role of journalism in society - why it matters, and what sets it apart (2. Teaching journalism: the role of journalism in society). Finally, we focus on helping trainees practice journalism themselves through hands-on lessons on finding stories, interviewing, and writing (3. Teaching journalism: being a journalist).

Each section includes practical tips that you, as a professional, can apply in organizing, mentoring, and guiding your young reporters.

3.1 Organizing your training and mentoring

YoCoJoin partners organized their training and mentoring differently but there was one important common denominator: the (bi)weekly editorial meeting. These meetings serve as a real-life journalistic practice and can form the heartbeat of your program. They provide a regular, central moment where youth journalists can get to know each other, exchange ideas, discuss news from their communities, and where you as a trainer can guide, mentor, motivate, and plan future activities.

Importantly, editorial meetings closely mimic professional newsroom routines, giving young participants the experience of working within a real journalistic environment. This sense of professionalism can boost their motivation and help them take their role as reporters seriously.

From these meetings, you can also organize tutorials and workshops on the role of journalism and journalistic skills (more on that later), allowing your trainees to develop within a structured and credible framework.

3.1.1 How to organize an editorial meeting

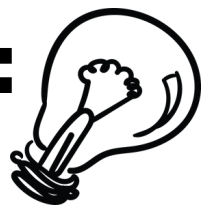
Organizing a structured and effective editorial meeting is essential to creating a professional and engaging experience for young community reporters. Based on the experiences of our partners, here's a short how-to on organizing your meetings in a practical and sustainable way.

Frequency and length

- The rhythm of your editorial meetings is key.
- Most YoCoJoin partners found that holding weekly editorial meetings worked best to maintain momentum and build habits. Weekly meetings create a steady structure that mirrors professional journalistic routines and allows for consistent follow-up on tasks and learning.

- In some cases, partners alternated between bi-weekly physical meetings and bi-weekly online sessions. This flexible approach can be useful, but online sessions are mostly useful for follow-ups in smaller groups or for giving feedback. Physical meetings should be the standard as this boosts motivation, fosters a sense of collectivity and it allows for the aspiring reporters to get to know the organization.
- In terms of meeting length, **2 hours per session** was the most common among partners. This provides enough time for updates, discussion, and planning without overwhelming participants.
- Parallel to the editorial meetings, other sessions can be organized such as guest lectures, workshops, site visits etc.

Two YoCoJoin examples of successful guest lectures and site visits:



- **MDIG** hosted investigative journalist Ivana Milosavljević from the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia, who did an undercover investigation, uncovering voter manipulation, vote buying, and the non-transparent financing of the ruling party. For this investigation, Ivana Milosavljević received the 2024 Ethical Journalism Award presented by Article19. This meeting with her focused on ethics and undercover journalism.
- **The Dublin Inquirer** organized meetings with council officials, such as the mayor of Dublin Daithí de Róiste, where they discussed important local government issues and social topics. The agenda for the 45-minute discussion was set entirely by the students, who raised topics such as improving disability access in cultural venues, the housing crisis, the Mayor's travel allowance, and the cause of the November Riot. At the end of the meeting, the students had the chance to reflect on the experience, discussing how to approach interviews with political figures, how to structure questions, and how to ensure key issues are covered in interviews. This exercise provides a unique opportunity for young people to engage with local governance, practice their journalistic skills in a real-world setting, and gain insight into the intersection of politics and media.

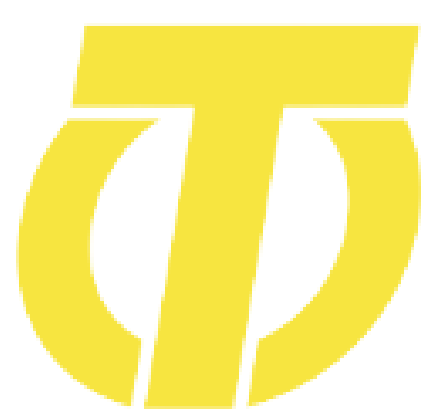
Ideal group size

- While many training programs started with 20 to 30 young participants, this number is not ideal for an editorial meeting.
- An ideal editorial meeting group size is 10 to 15 participants.
- This smaller size allows everyone to contribute actively, ensures more meaningful discussions, and makes it easier for the trainer to provide individualized guidance.

- In some cases, partners alternated between bi-weekly physical meetings and bi-weekly online sessions. This flexible approach can be useful, but online sessions are mostly useful for follow-ups in smaller groups or for giving feedback. Physical meetings should be the standard as this boosts motivation, fosters a sense of collectivity and it allows for the aspiring reporters to get to know the organization.
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- Parallel to the editorial meetings, other sessions can be organized such as guest lectures, workshops, site visits etc.

Physical location: creating a sense of place

- The meeting location plays an important role in setting the tone for the training.
- Most YoCoJoin partners combined physical training sessions with online follow-up meetings. However, several went a step further by creating a dedicated physical headquarters for their young reporters. These spaces gave youth reporters a sense of ownership and belonging, and they replicated a real newsroom environment.
- If setting up a physical newsroom is not possible, you can create a consistent meeting point in a community center, school, or even a public library. As long as the young reporters have a place that they can associate with their role as journalists.



Omroep
Tilburg



“At Omroep Tilburg, we branded our Youth Community Journalism department Press Tilburg. To create a sense of ownership and belonging within Omroep Tilburg, we created a Press Tilburg headquarters: a dedicated newsroom in the Omroep Tilburg building where our reporters could meet, socialize and exchange ideas.”

YoCoJoin Coordinator Omroep Tilburg - Lotte van Oudheusden

Meeting structure: what happens during an editorial meeting?

To keep editorial meetings efficient and productive, following a simple but consistent structure can be useful. Consistency gives off a sense of professionalism and it makes sure that participants know what they can expect from the trainer and from each other.

- **Opening check-in** (5-10 minutes): quick updates, announcements, celebrating small wins.
- **Idea exchange** (20-30 minutes): participants pitch story ideas or project updates.
- **Planning and assignments** (30 minutes): discuss who will work on what, set deadlines.
- **Skill-building moment** (optional, 20 minutes): mini-workshop, tutorial, guest speaker, or peer feedback session.
- **Closing round** (5 minutes): summarize key points, confirm next meeting date and tasks.

3.1.2 Some tips from the YoCoJoin partners on training and mentoring young people

- At the start of the mentoring program, it is important to organize an **introductory session** where the mentors and participants can get to know each other, discuss the topic the young reporters want to explore, and define the specific angle they will take. This session should also be used to agree on general expectations, set clear timelines, outline how the collaboration will work, including how often meetings will take place.
- During the introductory meeting, it's important to **take time to get to know each other as people**, not just as mentor and mentee. Begin by introducing yourselves, beyond just your professional background. You can share things like where you're from, what motivates you, your interests, what brought you to the project, what you hope to gain from the mentorship experience, and ask the participants to do the same.
- It's also important to create space to understand if the mentor should be mindful of any **personal sensitivities or boundaries** the mentee may have, in order to ensure a safe, respectful, and supportive working relationship.
- Fostering a **sense of ownership** is key to sustaining fun, commitment, and motivation. Make sure that the organization of your editorial meeting is structured, but also flexible enough to respond to their questions, interests, and learning needs.
- Once you've agreed on the structure and working process, MDIG's experience shows it's helpful to **share useful resources** with the participants. This can include examples of stories they can read to better understand journalistic formats and approaches, as well as books, films, or podcasts that can help them prepare for researching and developing their own story.

- Involve participants in deciding what skills they want to develop, and **encourage them to take the lead** in running parts of the editorial meetings themselves. Giving them real responsibility helps build confidence, fosters ownership and reinforces their sense of belonging to the project.
- The editorial meeting is not only for planning but also for coaching. Therefore, **build in regular opportunities for (group) feedback sessions** in which constructive feedback can be exchanged on story ideas and draft productions.

Giving feedback is an essential part of the program and warrants special attention. Here are some tips from our partners:

- Explain upfront that feedback is part of the creative process - not a judgment. This helps mentees see it as supportive rather than personal.
- Mentors should model curiosity instead of authority: it creates a safer space for mentees to express themselves, take risks, and grow.
- Mentors should share their own past work or speak openly about the challenges they've faced in their careers. This not only builds trust, but also reassures the mentee that confusion and setbacks are part of the creative process.
- When giving feedback, it's important to carefully consider language, using a supportive and open tone can make a big difference in how mentees receive and respond to suggestions. Try using reflective, open-ended questions like "Have you considered...?" rather than prescriptive comments. This encourages critical thinking and ownership.
- The most effective way to provide feedback is through in-person contact; face-to-face conversations allow for nuance, reassurance, and a more human connection.
- Try experimenting with a peer-to-peer feedback approach. Young people communicate faster and more openly with their peers, and know each other's language. As such, consider letting participants give feedback to each other, or pair your participants with younger journalists or recent alumni.

- As mentioned before, embedding **guest lectures and external workshops** into the rhythm of your editorial meetings is highly encouraged. Inviting local politicians, professionals, academics and journalists proved to be very informative for our community reporters.
- **Offer extra training or mentorship opportunities for those who want to go further.** Some participants may show particular enthusiasm or ambition and offering them additional learning sessions, one-on-one mentoring, or giving them the chance to shadow professionals can help keep them engaged and motivated.

- Editorial meetings are **not just about doing journalism; they're also about organizing it.** Use them to teach reporters how to contact people, make appointments, handle logistics, and manage time and responsibilities. These skills are just as essential to journalism as writing and reporting.
- One of the key lessons during the training and mentoring process is for the participants to **learn to understand their target audience - who they are writing for.** Together with the mentor, they explored questions such as: What does the audience already know about this topic? What would they want to know? This approach not only sharpened their editorial thinking, but also helped them produce more relevant and engaging stories.
- It's important to send young community reporters out into the field from the very start. Alongside editorial meetings, **hands-on experience is essential** for them to understand what journalism really entails. Early fieldwork builds confidence, reveals the real-world challenges of reporting, and makes the training immediately meaningful.



Now that we have laid the foundation for how to organize your training - from editorial meetings to group structure and meeting rhythm - we can turn our attention to the content of the program itself. As mentioned earlier, we divide the content into two main topics: (1) the role of journalism in society, and (2) being a journalist in practice. These two themes complement each other and together provide a balanced mix of critical reflection and hands-on learning.

3.2 Teaching journalism: the role of journalism in society

For young community reporters to produce meaningful journalism, it is important that they understand what journalism is, why it matters, and how it serves society - especially at the local and community level. Many young people today encounter content through influencers, corporate messaging, and social media algorithms - but that doesn't mean journalism is unfamiliar or invisible to them. Rather, as was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, they often engage with journalistic content in new and different forms, through independent media, grassroots platforms, and creative storytelling on social media. What may appear as a lack of recognition is actually a shift in how journalism is accessed and understood.

This section explores how to support young reporters in connecting with the core idea of journalism. The focus here is not yet on how to write an article or conduct an interview, but on what journalism represents: its values, its role in society, and its relevance to democracy and community life. In the context of YoCoJoin, this means helping young people recognize that many of the things they already engage with - storytelling, sharing community concerns, holding power to account - are journalistic at their core. Journalism isn't something distant and not understandable, it's something they can practice themselves, in their own neighborhoods, about the issues that matter to them and their peers.

Even if your organization is not aiming to train full-time community reporters, these lessons and exercises are still highly valuable. They support the broader goal of developing active, and engaged citizens. In this way, journalism also becomes a tool for civic development: it can help youth to ask questions, to listen to opposing views, to reflect critically and to build informed opinions.

Based on our experience, we have sketched out three thematic, introductory lessons that trainers can implement practically, each with a range of suggested exercises. These lessons encourage youth reporting students to explore journalism's core purposes.

3.2.1 Lesson 1: what is journalism?

Goal: to help youth reporters to define in their own words what journalism is and what it means to them and to society.

Key concepts:

- Journalism informs, investigates, explains and holds accountable
- Journalism serves the public interest, not the private gain
- Journalism differs from advertising, PR or entertainment and has its own moral codes and principles

Example exercises:

- Group brainstorm: what is (community) journalism according to you and what is journalism not? Letting students put these principles into their own words helps internalize them and encourages critical thinking about what (community) journalism should stand for. You can also ask students to organize these principles in order of importance according to them, and explain their reasoning.
- Journalism scavenger hunt: bring examples of news articles, ads, press releases, sponsored content, influencer posts and other media productions. Let the students bring examples as well. Ask the students to order them into journalism and non-journalism categories. In a group brainstorm, discuss their reasons.

- Journalistic idol: ask students to prepare a short presentation on their journalistic idol - or of someone they admire in the media domain - and to bring it to the editorial meeting. This exercise allows for students to get to know each other by sharing their preferences and encourages discussion on who is a journalist and who is not.
- Mission statement: ask students to collaboratively write a mission statement for themselves in which they outline their aims and values.
- Media landscape map: ask students to design a map of the media landscape, based on all the journalistic outlets they can think of. This can be a national or local map.



Our young reporters appreciated the opportunity to get a glimpse into a profession that is often talked about but rarely truly understood. The theoretical insights into journalism – covering topics such as ethics, genres, and fact-checking – were considered both useful and interesting by all participants, just like the practical exercises.

They emphasized how proud they felt seeing their names published next to their articles, something that was also noticed by people in their surroundings. Many mentioned the excitement of witnessing a podcast being recorded live and learning about the technical background behind it. They found the structure of the training – two-hour sessions every other week – to be optimal.

Editor-journalist, Antal Józsi

3.2.2 Lesson 2: why journalism matters

Goal: to help youth reporters gain an understanding of the importance of journalism to democracy and society.

Key concepts:

- Journalism as the ‘fourth estate’: it monitors power and informs citizens
- Journalism enables citizens to make informed decisions, also at the local level
- Journalism is essential to democracy: without it, democracy weakens

Example exercises:

Timeline creation: ask students to think of moments in history (or the present) in which journalism made a difference, at a transnational, national but especially local level. This exercise can be expanded on by giving presentations on (famous) journalistic cases from history.

- Scenario discussion: ask students to imagine what would happen if all journalists went on strike for a week. Discuss the answers to questions such as: what information would disappear, how would this impact different sections of society (politics, economy, healthcare etc.), who would benefit from this?
- Social media debate: organize a debate on the statement ‘Social media is enough to stay informed vs. traditional journalism is outdated.’ Divide the group into two and let one side argue for this proposition, the other side against it.
- Power triangle exercise: divide the students into three groups, assigning each one a role: journalists, politicians, or citizens. Each group discusses and lists the kinds of power they hold in society (e.g. journalists have the power to hold accountable, politicians have the power to create laws, citizens have the power to vote and to choose their media outlet of choice). Discuss how they interact.

On ethics...

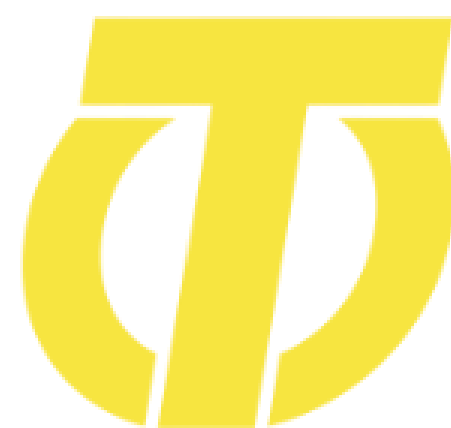
Journalistic ethics can feel abstract or overly complex to young community reporters. But ethical decision-making is a core part of the job and, and it can be made accessible with the right approach. You don’t need an entire lesson to introduce it. Instead, short, interactive moments can go a long way.

Here are a few ways to spark ethical reflection and conversation:

- **Explore the codes.** Introduce students to a variety of ethical guidelines and codes used by journalists. Ask them to analyze these codes to identify common principles. Which values consistently appear across different codes, and why might they be fundamental to journalism?
- **Use dilemmas to get them thinking.** Start with familiar moral questions - like the classic **trolley dilemma** - and then move to journalistic situations: Would you publish a name? Show a face? What’s your responsibility as a reporter?
- **Debate real headlines and images.** Show students news photos or headlines that raise ethical questions - like shocking accident photos, or images of crime suspects with black bars over their eyes. Ask: Is this okay? What’s the effect on the viewer or the person pictured?
- **Explore framing and bias.** Discuss how an image or choice of words can shape how we perceive a person or story. For example, how is a protestor framed visually - in anger or in solidarity? What kind of photo would you choose, and why?
- **Unpack journalistic practices.** Talk about things like protecting sources. Why is it important not to reveal them? When might it be okay to share more?
- **Gamify the codes.** Instead of just listing ethical principles like fairness, privacy, or transparency, turn them into a game - match dilemmas to values, or let students create their own “ethical toolkit” for reporting.

- **Encourage reflection, not perfection.** Ethics isn't about always making the "right" choice - it's about understanding that choices **exist**, and learning to navigate them with care.

For an example of how this can work in practice, see how Omroep Tilburg used a Journalism Dilemma Game to spark thoughtful conversations with their student reporters.



Omroep
Tilburg

> JOURNALISTIEK

“Doing journalism means asking ethical questions and making difficult choices. To explore these challenges, we played a [Journalism Dilemma Game](#) with our young reporters, designed by the Fontys School of Journalism. The game presents real-world scenarios drawn from journalistic practices, such as how to report inclusively on minority communities or whether to publish sensitive information about a public figure.

It encouraged thoughtful discussion about what decisions they would make and why. This interactive format was a fun and accessible way to introduce key journalistic values like independence, fairness, and responsibility. It helped our students understand that journalism isn't just about reporting facts; it's about navigating complex situations and standing by ethical principles. reporters could meet, socialize and exchange ideas.”

YoCoJoin Coordinator Omroep Tilburg - Lotte van Oudheusden



“Training the young reporters in the YoCoJoin programme was one of the most rewarding parts of the year. What stood out wasn’t just their creativity, but their hunger to tell stories that actually matter to their generation, stuff that’s often ignored by mainstream media.

It wasn’t about teaching them how to be journalists in the traditional sense. It was about helping them find their voice, shape it for modern platforms, and stay true to what they wanted to say. Some came in unsure or quiet, and left pitching ideas confidently, editing their own reels, even challenging narratives with real depth.

What I loved most was how unfiltered and fearless they were. They didn’t just want to make content, they wanted to spark a discussion and ignite change. That kind of energy is contagious, and honestly, it reminded me why SideStreet exists in the first place.”

Founder SideStreet Malta, Luigi Sapiano

3.2.3 Lesson 3: what is news?

Goal: familiarize students with the differences between news, opinion and false or misleading content.

Key concepts:

- Journalism is based on verifiable facts
- What is news is determined by news values
- There is a difference between news, mis- and disinformation

Example exercises:

- News values quiz (pt. 1): familiarize students with the different news values (e.g. conflict, negativity, novelty, proximity, etc.) and discuss them critically: do you agree with the given news values, do you miss a news value? Discuss examples of news stories. Combine this with the journalism scavenger hunt of lesson 1 and let the students combine their self-picked stories with the applying news values.

- Dis- and misinformation quiz: familiarize students with the different types of dis- and misinformation (e.g. fabricated content, satire or parody, propaganda) and ask students to place different (local) ‘news’ stories in the appropriate categories.
- Check the facts: give students 3–5 short “news” snippets, some containing factual inaccuracies (e.g. exaggerated numbers, incorrect locations, misquoted people). Ask them to verify the claims using reliable online sources. Discuss the results.
- [Bad News Game](#): play this award-winning fake news intervention game and let students build up psychological resistance against dis- and misinformation.
- Fake headline contest: ask students to collect news from their community and to write fake news headlines for these stories. Let the other students fact check the headlines.
- Spot the bias workshop: show students two or more articles covering the same event but with different headlines, tone, or imagery. Let them analyze what facts are included or omitted, how visuals and language shape perception, and whether bias or framing is present. Combine this with an introductory session on framing (also see the section of ethics).

Dublin InQuirer

“Breaking down what news is was a good starting exercise. It got youth journalists chatting in groups. It helped youth journalists to understand how editors in traditional newsrooms evaluate the “newsworthiness” of a story, and also empowered them to talk about how their own judgement may differ and why. By taking a selection of existing publications, and evaluating articles based on the criteria, it gives them the tools to start to critique and engage with media in a different way.”

Deputy editor Dublin Inquirer, Lois Kapila

Understanding the role of journalism in society is a vital first step, but it’s only part of the journey. In the following section, we shift our focus from reflection to practice, introducing hands-on training activities that teach youth how to find stories, conduct interviews, and create journalistic content with confidence and purpose.

3.3 Teaching journalism: being a journalist

Ultimately, journalism is a craft - a set of skills that is best learned by doing. From day one, our YoCoJoin community reporters were sent out into the field to find stories, to interview people and to produce meaningful community journalism. In short, learning by doing. Simultaneously, we provided our participants with the journalistic tools they needed.

This section focuses on the basics of journalistic work. The aim is not to turn young reporters into instant professionals but to teach them the fundamental skills they need to practice journalism. Through real-world exercises, workshops, and field assignments, students will learn how to think like reporters. Each thematic lesson in this chapter provides practical activities inspired by the training practices developed by YoCoJoin partners.

3.3.1 Lesson 1: finding stories

Goal: teach students what is newsworthy in their communities.

Key concepts:

- Newsworthiness is based on values
- Good stories come from ordinary conversations and daily observations
- All news starts locally

Example exercises:

- Story hunt: students choose a place - a street, a park, a market, a community centre, a café - and observe carefully what they hear and see. They list at least five story ideas and bring them back to the editorial meeting to discuss their newsworthiness.
- Snapshot your neighborhood: students explore and reflect on their surroundings by documenting the places, people, and details that shape their daily environment, noting down what they like about it and what they'd change. This exercise helps them to see their environment with journalistic eyes. It also encourages critical thinking, storytelling, and visual expression; all key skills for young reporters.
- News values quiz (pt. 2): students discuss their own story ideas or stories and match them with the news values that apply to them.
- The magic wand: Students approach community members with the question: 'If you had a magic wand, what would you change about your neighbourhood?' Students record the most striking answers and report back to the newsroom where the input is discussed and follow-up researching and reporting is planned. This assignment introduces young reporters to the importance of listening and looking for underlying issues.



Some tips from the YoCoJoin trainers:

Encourage real-world engagement: prompt them to go out and talk to people: help them take those first steps with guidance and support.

Model and mentor: show them how to approach interviews and build confidence by doing it alongside them at first.

Use tools as empowerment: teach them to see the microphone and camera as tools for expression and connection, not just equipment.

Prepare with intention: help them plan what they want to ask, so they approach conversations with curiosity and clarity.

Clarify identity and purpose: support them in understanding “what they stand for” to help build public trust.

Foster independence: let them eventually take full responsibility for arranging expert interviews and managing their reporting process.

Promote ownership: give them a sense of belonging by integrating them into the team: not just with outsiders, but also with colleagues at your organization.

Take their interests seriously: be curious about why a topic matters to them, even if it seems minor. Guide rather than dismiss.

Normalize mistakes: accept that making mistakes is part of learning: don't be afraid of it, and don't let them be either.

3.3.2 Lesson 2: Interviewing skills

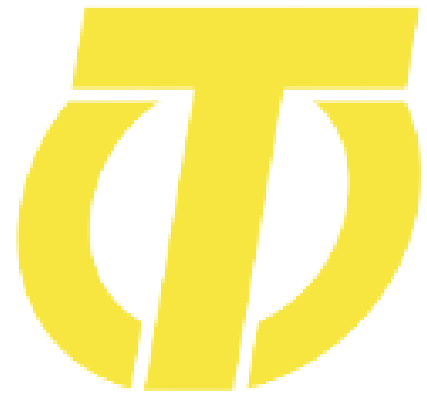
Goal: to train students how to conduct respectful and effective interviews.

Key concepts:

- Interviewing is a cornerstone of journalism
- Good questions are clear, open-ended and respectful
- Listening is just as important as asking
- There are different types of interviews

Example exercises:

- Roleplay: students pair up and one is the reporter, the other is a "source" (character cards can be used: a shopkeeper, a student activist, a city councilor, etc.). Students practice short interviews: identifying themselves, asking clear questions, and taking good notes. Afterwards, swap roles and reflect on what went well and what could be improved.
- Interview a journalist: let students interview their journalistic trainers and mentors on what it means to be a journalist. This exercise not only builds interviewing skills but also helps them to see journalism through the eyes of someone with real experience. It's also a step toward seeing themselves as part of that world.
- Give interviewing a shot: students go out in pairs to a spot in their community (park, café, market) and interview at least two people. They must introduce themselves, explain the project, ask for consent to quote, and note down at least one direct quote from each person. Back at the newsroom they reflect on how it went and what quotes deserve a follow-up.
- Interview styles in action: introduce students to the main types of journalistic interviews (such as informational, profile, vox pop, investigative, and opinion-based interviews). Ask each student to find a real-world example of one interview type (from a newspaper, website, podcast, or video) and prepare a short summary. During the meeting, students share and compare their examples, discussing the purpose, tone, and structure of each. This exercise can be expanded by inviting students to choose one interview type and conduct a short (mock) interview in that style.



Omroep
Tilburg



“As a social work student, conducting interviews taught me valuable communication skills, such as asking sensitive questions and listening attentively. It also gave me valuable insights into community perspectives on societal topics.

Working with a news organization also helped me to understand the power of media in covering social topics. Overall, it strengthened my ability to engage with the public and gave me a better understanding of what it means to give a voice to (underrepresented) communities.”

Youth Community Reporter Press Tilburg, Matthijs Moesker

3.3.3 Lesson 3: writing and structuring news stories

Goal: teach students how to write and create clear, structured and informative news stories.

Key concepts:

- News stories can be broken down into 5W's and H: what, who, where, when, why and how
- News stories follow the 'inverted pyramid' structure
- The most important information always comes first

Example exercises:

- Pitch your story: the Dublin Inquirer asked students to pitch their story ideas while their peers interrogate three questions to help direct their reporting:
 - What is the story about?
 - Why does the story matter?
 - What does the story say about our times?

Students were encouraged to freewrite answers to these questions on the spot, and then discuss those with each other.

- Take the story apart: students are presented with different local news stories. Their task is to underline the different aspects of the news story (what, where, when, why, who and how) and mark up the structure of the piece. Familiarize students with the ‘inverted pyramid’ structure before doing this exercise.
- Put the story back together: students are presented with a ‘messy’ account of a story. Their task is to write a lead paragraph (who, what, where, when, why, how) and to reorganize the information using the inverted pyramid structure. Alternatively, present students with shuffled paragraphs and let them put them in the right order.
- One story, two styles: students take a short interview they conducted earlier and write two versions: as a hard news piece (straight facts, short sentences) and as a soft feature story (more descriptive, with quotes and color). Compare the two approaches: which fits the story best?



“Časoris successfully integrated group interviews with experts - such as an ornithologist, a school librarian, a psychologist, a correspondent, a local community representative and even the mayor - to help students explore real-world issues like stork migration, local playground access, and EU affairs. These sessions gave elementary school students their first chance to conduct real interviews, access expert sources, and build essential journalistic skills.”

Youth media journalist and project manager Časoris, Saša Petejan

3.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter offers a practical foundation for organizing and delivering youth community journalism training and mentoring, but it is by no means an exhaustive blueprint. Depending on your organization’s goals, resources, and audience, you may choose to expand your training with medium-specific modules, such as photography, videography, podcasting, or social media storytelling, and with in-depth workshops on investigative (data) journalism. These specialized skills are highly valuable but go beyond the scope of this general framework. Whether your aim is to nurture future journalists or simply to help young people engage more critically and confidently with their communities, the tools and lessons in this chapter are designed to be adaptable. Ultimately, your program should reflect the unique context, strengths, and ambitions of the young people you work with.

Chapter 4: Ensuring the sustainability of youth journalism initiatives

During the YoCoJoin project, partners across Europe built inspiring youth journalism initiatives, from high school classes and youth media labs to mentorship programs embedded in local newsrooms. These initiatives gave young people the tools and space to report on what matters to them and their communities.

Through their stories, youth reporters brought new voices into the public debate, and helped strengthen the connection between local media and young audiences. But as the project comes to an end, an important question remains: how do you make these initiatives last?

Sustainability is about finding money. But it is also about embedding youth journalism into the DNA of your organization, planning for continuity, and securing the right people and partnerships to support it. This chapter explores what's needed to keep youth community journalism going – structurally, financially, and operationally – so that it becomes more than a temporary project.

Drawing on the experiences of YoCoJoin partners and the business plans developed alongside this workbook, it offers practical ideas for turning short-term success into long-term impact.

4.1 Embedding youth journalism into your organization

Many of the foundations for sustainable youth journalism were laid in the early phases of YoCoJoin, through ecosystem-building, school partnerships, and inclusive recruitment, as outlined in Chapter 1. This next section builds on those initial steps. It focuses on what it takes to move from one-off projects to lasting practices by embedding youth journalism structurally within an organization's operations, partnerships, and culture.

4.1 Embedding youth journalism into your organization

Across YoCoJoin, partners who built sustainable formats often gave youth journalism its own space, identity, and rhythm within the organization. At Omroep Tilburg, this took the form of Press Tilburg – a distinct but connected project that operated under its own name and Instagram channel, while still feeding into the broadcaster's wider editorial ecosystem.

what's needed to keep youth community journalism going – structurally, financially, and operationally – so that it becomes more than a temporary project.

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Many of the foundations for sustainable youth journalism were laid in the early phases of YoCoJoin, through ecosystem-building, school partnerships, and inclusive recruitment, as outlined in Chapter 1. This next section builds on those initial steps. It focuses on what it takes to move from one-off projects to lasting practices by embedding youth journalism structurally within an organization's operations, partnerships, and culture.

4.1.1 Making a space for youth journalism

Across YoCoJoin, partners who built sustainable formats often gave youth journalism its own space, identity, and rhythm within the organization. At Omroep Tilburg, this took the form of Press Tilburg – a distinct but connected project that operated under its own name and Instagram channel, while still feeding into the broadcaster's wider editorial ecosystem.

In similar fashion, SideStreet rebranded their YoCoJoin experience to Voices with its own distinct look and feel. That allows for clear brand visibility, and audience targeting, which fits well with SideStreet's monetisation strategy of sponsorship. Giving youth journalism its own recognizable space helps young reporters feel ownership and legitimacy. It also makes it easier for staff and audiences alike to understand the role and value of the initiative.

Other publications, such as Dublin Inquirer and Nyugat, chose to mainstream the stories projected by youth journalists during the YoCoJoin period. This was an easier fit organisationally and carried lighter ongoing costs, and provided for a period of learning. It ensured that the youth-produced journalism wasn't siloed and had the benefit of ensuring that their stories immediately reached an existing larger audience through long-standing distribution channels. It also sets up the programme to serve as a pathway to part-time or full-time employment within the newsroom.

Going forward, Nyugat has plans to develop a weekly youth-focused newsletter segment and a dedicated youth journalism section, featuring multimedia content. Dublin Inquirer launched a things-to-do newsletter, triggered partly by

feedback among youth journalists as to what they felt was missing in how they engage with the city and as a funnel from culture to local news consumption.

Whenever possible, all partners found ways to connect youth stories to regular editorial workflows – whether through joint editorial meetings, shared production tools, or publishing youth work alongside professional content. This kind of structural embedding ensures that youth journalism contributes to the broader mission, and that young reporters benefit from the knowledge, mentorship, and resources of the full organization.

4.1.2 Build long-term partnerships that fit your ecosystem

One of the clearest ways to embed youth journalism sustainably is through recurring partnerships – particularly with schools, youth centres, and journalists.

As was discussed in chapter 1, Omroep Tilburg primarily partnered with educational institutions in Tilburg and created Press Tilburg in collaboration with a social work educational institution. Parallel to this, more than 60 high school students of the Cobbenhagen Lyceum aged 15-17 took part in an 11-week program designed to teach the basics of journalism. They created video reports, recorded podcasts, and wrote articles using a specially developed workbook co-created by Omroep Tilburg. The program also included on-site training, where students learned technical skills such as operating cameras and microphones, as well as editorial skills like identifying strong story angles and understanding what makes a story newsworthy. In the coming years, Omroep Tilburg aims to expand this initiative to other high schools in Tilburg, with the goal of fostering early interest in journalism and media literacy.

Additionally, Omroep Tilburg maintains strong ties with the Fontys School of Journalism, which contributes academic expertise and conducts research on journalism at the neighborhood level. With many local newspapers facing challenges due to aging volunteer staff, Omroep Tilburg and Fontys are exploring how young community journalists can help revitalize these outlets, combining fresh perspectives with professional support and research-based insights.

The team at Časoris also heavily invests in educational partnerships and have spent years building up a cohort of media literacy ambassadors. These ambassadors are elementary and high-school teachers, who also believe in the importance of media literacy teaching within schools. In Slovenia, media literacy is not on the curriculum but these teachers are open to it. The connections mean that Časoris is a trusted partner to enter schools with workshops on media literacy for both students and teachers. Key to the continued success of this is a clear offering on what workshops by Časoris offer: critical thinking, local media,

impact, democracy and the role of journalism. Promoting the school is also a big motivator for schools to be part of the project.



“As a small school, we greatly benefit from having a journalist visit and encourage our students to explore local topics. This experience helps them recognize the value of local stories and uncover everything their home environment has to offer”

Teacher Černi Vrh Primary School, Jana Peternel

Elsewhere, Dublin Inquirer has invested in school outreach without formal partnerships. Journalists visited classrooms and facilitated exercises that helped students recognize journalism in their everyday lives. These visits laid the groundwork for future participation – a seed-planting strategy that doesn’t require large resources but can build trust and recognition over time.

In cases where journalistic expertise wasn’t available within the organization, partnering with local journalists proved to be a successful strategy. For example, as youth reporters at MDI Global began developing their own story ideas, the team actively recruited working journalists to step in as mentors. MDI Western Balkans adopted a similar approach, bringing in external expertise to support and guide their young reporters.

Going forward, MDI Global is planning a “talent agency” to bring together young journalists and struggling local news outlets, whereby MDI Global takes on the burden of recruitment and outreach and selection of youth journalists, and training and early mentoring, before they go on to placements in partner local newsrooms.

What all of these efforts have in common is a long-term orientation. Rather than approaching schools and youth groups as one-off “recruitment” partners, they treat them as core collaborators – organizations with their own goals, rhythms, and strengths that can complement the mission of youth journalism.

4.1.3 Create a supportive culture

Sustainability is also about culture. But that culture cannot be built without serious investment. Funding is essential to create the conditions in which youth

journalism can thrive. That means securing resources not only for external activities but also for internal change: investing in staff buy-in, internal training, and additional support where needed. Mentors, editors, and coordinators must be on board with the idea that young people can produce meaningful journalism, even if they lack experience. Youth engagement should not be seen as a side project or an add-on, but needs to be integrated into the core of the organization's operations and future.

That kind of commitment pays off. Embedding youth journalism also brings fresh energy and perspectives into partner organizations. Young reporters introduce new topics, different storytelling styles, and greater awareness of what matters to younger audiences. In turn, this helps partners better reflect the communities they serve.

A key part of building this culture is ensuring the right people are in place. Assigning clear roles, allocating staff time, and even hiring dedicated coordinators for youth journalism are essential. For example, Omroep Tilburg's business plan outlines a structure with multiple part-time roles, including a youth coordinator, a high school program lead, and separate mentors for Press Tilburg and school-based initiatives. This kind of staff commitment sends a strong internal signal that youth journalism is here to stay.

MDI Global's future staffing proposals for its talent agency include a program director, training coordinator, placement coordinator, and an administrative coordinator – as well as a freelance mentors – to ensure that it has the staff to manage both the youth journalists and partnerships with newsrooms.

Dublin Inquirer, meanwhile, has reassessed internal roles and responsibilities within its small team, and expanded the hours of its administration and office manager staff so that its reporters have hours freed up for mentoring and distribution and newsletters.

Dublin InQuirer

“YoCoJoin has given me an insight into the importance of research as a journalist that I feel I did not understand to such an extent before. Through the workshops and research for my own work, I have discovered the amount of research and information that actually goes into writing an article. It has changed how I view news that I come across and to look at it from a more critical point of view and to be more aware of fake news.”

Youth journalist with Dublin Inquirer, Ruby Dolan

4.2 Funding and revenue logic

Funding youth journalism has particular challenges. Subscription or membership models encounter a layer of difficulty, given youth audiences have less disposable income. Distribution channels can impact the strength of a relationship between a youth audience and a publication, which also impacts the likelihood of generating subscriptions. Meanwhile, models built on advertising and sponsorship of journalism aimed and produced by youth journalists bring additional ethical considerations.

Still, across the YoCoJoin partnership, newsrooms are building on different models for how to fund this work: through partnerships, grants, audience support, events, and creative outreach. While not every approach fits every organization, a mix of strategies – grounded in public value – can go a long way.

4.2.1 Starting with public value and strong links

For most YoCoJoin partners, the primary goal wasn't to generate revenue but to create community value: inclusion, civic literacy, access, and connection. That authentic commitment to public service journalism can, though, open doors to education, cultural, and community funding.

In some cases, this public value approach is supported by existing institutional structures. Omroep Tilburg, for instance, benefits from its status as a local public broadcaster in the Netherlands, which comes with legal requirements and structural funding. While this is not easily replicable in other contexts, it does show how alignment with public-interest goals can strengthen the case for youth journalism within broader educational or cultural mandates. Their model, built on long-term partnerships, in-kind contributions from schools, and measurable community impact, is a useful example of how to anchor youth work within a mission-driven organization.

As with other Yocojoin partners, MDI Western Balkans and MDI Global have a strong focus on working with underrepresented groups. In doing so, it addresses representation gaps in media, helps to combat “news deserts” and ensures that diverse voices are included in local and national storytelling. It also means that the stories produced are overwhelmingly those that “would not otherwise be told”, which is a clear indicator to both readers and possible funders as to the additive value of the work.

As a first-mover with a primary focus on youth journalism and the creation of the next generation of thoughtful civic-minded news consumers, Časoris in Slovenia has staked out a space and developed its brand as a public-interest quality organisation – setting it up to explore a variety of revenue streams.

4.2.2 Grants and institutional partnerships

Many youth journalism programs are eligible for national or EU-level grants in areas such as media literacy, youth work, civic participation, or cultural innovation. These often require collaboration across borders. The [EU Funding and Tenders Portal](#) is a useful tool to search for calls and find partners.

Časoris has developed a strategic and mission-driven approach to securing grants and institutional partnerships, enabling it to sustain and grow its work in journalism, media literacy, and civic engagement. Over the years, it has or will participate in a wide range of national and European funding opportunities, including calls under Creative Europe, CERV, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, COST, and various EU media and media literacy programmes.

Through partnerships that promote cross-cultural exchange and capacity-building, Časoris has been able to lead and collaborate in projects such as Digi.Dr, EduSkills+ Media2, Media Masters, Mediawise, and YoCoJoin. These collaborations have contributed to both financial sustainability and alignment with key policy priorities. By combining editorial integrity with institutional cooperation, Časoris strengthened its role as a trusted platform for youth journalism and education.

The call for proposals "A European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans" is especially relevant for those working in youth community journalism. It supports innovative, cross-border media initiatives that engage young people in democratic debate and strengthen their connection to European public life.

To get inspired, explore the media consortia selected under previous calls:

[Four consortia selected to enrich pan-European debate among young Europeans](#)

Good partnerships also reduce costs: schools and civic groups can offer free space, access to youth, and staff time. Časoris, for instance, has long-standing relationships with educators which builds consistency in readership and audience engagement across years.

MDI Global is looking closely at what it can do to give institutional partners any extra support they may need to enable them to take on youth journalists. For example, it is looking to pilot a HR service for newsrooms hoping to engage interns through national and local employment agencies, and so take on the bureaucratic burden of processing and organising those placements.

Maintaining editorial independence and integrity

As organizations apply for and implement grant-funded projects, it is crucial to maintain clear boundaries between editorial work and funder influence. Editorial independence is foundational to public trust and the credibility of (youth) journalism. This means being transparent about funding sources, setting up internal guidelines for how grant conditions interact with editorial planning, and ensuring that no funder can dictate content or influence reporting decisions.

MDI WB mainly works on media and information literacy, hate speech in the media and media monitoring, as well as on the active participation of young people in their communities. It is extremely important for them to cooperate with local (youth) media such as YouthVibes, Zoomer, Oblakoder and Mingl...

In the coming period, MDIG WB will work on strengthening cooperation through projects and grants, in order to empower young readers from local communities. Dublin Inquirer is looking to pilot a collaboration with a local university, for one stream of its youth journalism work, which reduces costs around room hire and recruitment.

The call for proposals "Journalism Partnerships – Collaborations 2025" aims to foster systemic cooperation among news media organisations across Europe. It supports networks that strengthen the resilience, innovation, and diversity of the European media landscape.

This is the funding strand that enabled the YoCoJoin project. It is particularly well-suited for initiatives that combine journalism innovation with training, youth engagement, and cross-border collaboration.

Learn more: [Call for proposals – Journalism Partnerships: Collaborations 2025](#) 

4.2.3 Collect impact data to support funding

Sustained funding often requires proof of impact. Časoris developed before-and-after surveys, followed by a check-in three months later to gather long-term feedback. They collected testimonials, direct quotes, and case stories to include in future grant proposals. This kind of lightweight but systematic data collection makes your project easier to explain – and fund.

Dublin Inquirer, and other partners, also had a tracker to collect data around reach and readership across distribution channels, and any impact, of pieces

produced by youth journalists. Traditional newsrooms can often hold this kind of data close, but the Dublin Inquirer has found that radical transparency around its operations and accounts can help readers and subscribers to track how contributions are used – and boost financial supports.

4.2.4 Tap into audience revenue

Youth journalism can also be part of a broader membership or subscription model, especially when the public understands the mission.

Dublin Inquirer moved to a new tech platform, with greater capabilities to build up its subscription model, offering more opportunities to explain to readers how they rely on them to fund local news, to make it clear that they are supporting more than just the stories on the website, but also events, training programmes, and the future of democracy.

Both Nyugat and Dublin Inquirer are developing newsletters, as a way to build a resilient distribution channel with younger readers and buffer themselves against the instability of changing social media algorithms and the rise of AI-generated summaries. This allows them to develop a strong direct connection to audiences.

4.2.5 Get creative with events and merchandise

A number of partners explored non-traditional revenue streams that also helped with outreach:

- **Events:** To bring in younger perspectives at the talks that they run, Dublin Inquirer invited a youth journalist to co-host a panel, at a talk on social media algorithms. The youth journalist opened up different lines of conversation than would otherwise have happened and the event also served as a revenue raiser.
- **Premium training modules:** MDI Global is looking to develop premium training modules for working journalists, using the revenue to fund its youth journalism projects. Training modules would overlap with the skills and infrastructure needed to reach youth audiences, such as social media journalism ethics, audience engagement strategies, and multimedia storytelling techniques.
- **Local Sponsorships:** To test interest in a weekend summer school, Dublin Inquirer partnered with an ethical coffee roaster that believed in civic engagement. This allowed them to offer free places for youth and others and still cover costs.

SideStreets Malta is also exploring local sponsorships, with possible adverts in training materials for youth journalism students or in-kind sponsorships such as

catering.

Merchandise: Both Časoris and Dublin Inquirer created hoodies, tote bags, and branded items that were popular with young readers and helped spread the word. While not a major income source, merchandise contributed to visibility and youth buy-in.

2.6 Join the growing youth journalism community

There is a growing movement across Europe of organisations working to involve younger groups in journalism, and to encourage policies to support that work. Some of the main organisations and alliances are listed below.

- [European Youth Press](#) is a network of youth media organisations in Europe.
- [Global Youth and News Media](#) is a not-for-profit which “aims to strengthen the linkages between young people and news media through three kinds of actions: honoring news media that truly serve the young, promoting media literacy through a journalistic prism and amplifying the journalism of young people.”
- [Children News Europe](#) is a collective of producers of news for children throughout Europe who strive to serve their audiences by offering rigorous and trustworthy journalism, and by offering resources to support mental health and education, particularly media literacy. This collective is hosted by the aforementioned Global Youth and News Media organization.
- [Young Media network](#) was founded with the vision of erasing borders and connecting young people from the region through its activities in the Western Balkans. The members pledged at the founding assembly to advocate for the promotion of media content for young people, the spread of media literacy, and professional and truthful information by DW Akademie.
- [European Youth4Media Network](#) is giving young people a voice through digital media. It is a European association of 52 organisations from 32 countries working in the field of community media and civil society to promote political and intercultural dialogue.
- [ChildPress](#) is a global network that empowers children to become reporters, giving them the tools and platform to share stories from their perspective and promote child participation in media and society.
- [Young Journalists In Europe](#) was created with the aim of involving young people in creating content on the [European Youth Portal](#). These young journalists have the freedom to choose the topics they want to cover and can either create podcasts, articles, or videos.

Conclusion

The YoCoJoin project has been as much a learning journey for us as it has been for the young people we worked with. Across countries, languages, and contexts, we experimented, adapted, and discovered new ways to bring youth into the heart of community journalism. What we present in this workbook is not a final blueprint, but a living document; a collection of strategies, stories, and lessons learned that we hope can inspire others to start or strengthen their own initiatives.

We have seen firsthand how powerful it can be when young people are trusted to tell the stories that matter to them. We've also seen the challenges: of sustainability, of building the right support structures, and of making space for youth voices in a professional media landscape. We do not have all the answers. But we do know that the work is worth doing, and that it is work best done together.

If this workbook helps you take even one step toward more inclusive, participatory journalism, then it has done its job. And if you're interested in exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, or collaborating in the future, we warmly invite you to stay in touch with any of the YoCoJoin partners. Together, we can keep learning, improving, and building toward a more youth-driven media future.

YoCoJoin partner contacts:

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- Dublin Inquirer (Ireland) – www.dublininquirer.com | info@dublininquirer.com
- Media Diversity Institute Global (Belgium) – www.media-diversity.org | contact@media-diversity.org
- Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans (Serbia) – <https://www.mladi.org.rs/mladi-i-mediji-medijski-pismeni-sebi-i-drugimakorisni/> | office@mdi-see.org
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Let's keep the conversation going!



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