



# INSIGHTS FROM THE YOUTH LEADERS ON THEIR NEEDS, PREFERENCES, AND CHALLENGES ON WHAT MOTIVATES AND TRAINS THEM TO GET ENGAGED IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE

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# I. INTRODUCTION

**The present report** is developed in the framework of the project ENGAGE - Empowering Next Generation Advocates for Global Education, co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme, KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth, Ref. no.: 2024-1-RO01-KA220-YOU-000250540.

**The ENGAGE project addressing youth leaders (YL)** fills an existing gap by providing them with an online course and training internationally and nationally on EU values, cultural diversity, inclusion, social justice, and civic engagement; it equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills that empower them to effectively guide and mentor young people in various aspects of personal development and active citizenship. The project is driven by a desire to educate knowledgeable, skilled, and socially responsible citizens through a holistic youth development approach.

**The main aim of ENGAGE project is to develop resources and actions, providing youth leaders (YL) with the necessary knowledge, skills, methodologies, and tools to educate youth on democratic processes and European values**, raise awareness of the diversity and role of inclusion in Europe, and ensure that all young people, including those with disabilities and those who are at risk, have equal access to opportunities.

**The National Report is based on the findings of the research developed by the project consortium** to define the base ground of the project. Even though the project application started with a solid motivation and needs identification, for the development of the project results, especially the involvement strategy, online course and direct actions with the target group, the partnership considered essential the need to implement in the beginning of the project research activities to involve the direct target group to identify Youth Leaders' needs, preferences and challenges related the topic.

Getting information about **their experience, knowledge, skills, training, the strategies they use to motivate young people, raise their awareness of inclusion and diversity or what topics they would like to do in the training course** suggested by the project **will help project partners to effectively design the training course to customize Youth leaders' needs**. This will also ensure that the topic, content, methodologies and inclusive strategies of the training course will be relevant, impactful and useful to youth leaders.



## II. RESEARCH DESIGN

### 2.1 Objectives and research questions

The present research within the ENGAGE project aims to provide data and insights that support the project's main objective: to empower Youth Leaders (YLS) to become effective educators and facilitators of civic participation, social inclusion, and European values. Based on the research findings, the project will develop tools and methods that are relevant, impactful, and practical for youth work across Europe.

To ensure the quality and usefulness of project outcomes, **the key objectives of this research are to:**

- 1) Understand Youth Leaders' needs, preferences, and challenges in engaging young people in inclusive and democratic activities. These insights are essential for shaping training content and resources that respond to real-world contexts.
- 2) Explore young people's attitudes, motivations, and perceived barriers in getting involved in civic life, with a particular focus on youth programs and initiatives. Understanding youth perspectives is key to designing inclusive, participatory approaches.
- 3) Support the co-creation of a training course by integrating Youth Leaders' direct input. Their feedback ensures the course will reflect current challenges and interests in the field.
- 4) Inform the development of a strategic framework and practical tools for working with young people who face exclusion risks, helping to ensure that inclusive youth work becomes more widespread, intentional, and effective.

#### Key Research Questions

To respond to the first two objectives, the study explored the following overarching questions:

Q1. How can we better understand the current practices, challenges, and support needs of Youth Leaders in promoting civic participation, inclusion, and European values, in order to design training and tools that are relevant, impactful, and grounded in their realities?

Q2. What motivates and hinders young people's participation in civic life, and how do they perceive inclusion, representation, and support within their communities and youth programs?

These research questions were designed to capture a multi-perspective understanding of youth participation and engagement, in order to inform both the design of the ENGAGE training and the broader strategy for inclusive youth work.

In this way, the research contributes directly to the ENGAGE mission by identifying key areas of support and enabling youth leaders to make a lasting impact. Ultimately, the findings will guide not only the training program, but also the creation of advocacy resources, ethical communication codes, and inclusive engagement strategies at both national and European levels.

### 2.2 Methodology overview

This research followed a multiphase quantitative design, conducted through two online surveys: one targeting Youth Leaders (YLS) and another targeting young people (ages 13–30). The study aimed to generate comparative and actionable insights that would inform the ENGAGE project's training curriculum, communication strategies, and inclusive youth engagement practices.

The design of both questionnaires was a co-creation process within the ENGAGE consortium, grounded in the project's objectives and aligned with key European frameworks on youth participation, civic engagement, and inclusion. The tools were designed to be both evidence-generating and practical, ensuring their relevance across four diverse national contexts.

## 2.3 Sampling

The sampling was non-probabilistic, based on convenience and snowball sampling, and was tailored by each country partner to best reach Youth Leaders and youth locally. Neither of the samples is not representative at the national or European level, but includes a diverse range of respondents in terms of age, gender, location, and background.

Recruitment was done using multiple outreach channels, including internal databases, social media campaigns, collaboration with local organizations, direct engagement with youth workers and educators, and peer-to-peer sharing (especially to reach youth respondents via Youth Leaders). While the youth sample showed slightly higher rates of non-response, especially in open-ended questions, the overall completion rate and data quality are considered robust for the project's goals.

A total of 477 Youth Leader and 415 Youth completed questionnaires were collected across Romania, France, Czech Republic, and Germany, resulting in a total of 892 questionnaires accross all countries.

The present report reports on **the 154 Youth Leaders questionnaire collected in Romania.**

Table 1. SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY

YOUTH LEADERS SAMPLE		YOUTH SAMPLE		TOTAL SAMPLE
CZ	112	30		142
DE	102	79		181
FR	109	22		131
RO	154	284		438
TOTAL Sample	477	415		892

## 2.4 Data collection

Two distinct but complementary questionnaires were used:

*Youth Leader questionnaire:* Final version included 31 questions, of which 6 were open-ended, allowing for deeper qualitative insights.

*Youth questionnaire:* A shorter instrument with 23 questions, including 1 open-ended question, designed to reduce dropout and missing responses.

To ensure inclusivity and capture a broader range of experiences, most multiple-choice questions included an “Other” option, enabling respondents to reflect contexts not foreseen by the research team.

After validation in English, each partner translated and adapted the questionnaires into their national language to ensure cultural and linguistic relevance. Online distribution was facilitated using SurveyMonkey in all four countries, and the data collection took place over a 3–4-month period, starting in March 2025 and concluding by mid-August 2025.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

The analysis was primarily descriptive, focusing on trends, distributions, and cross-country comparisons. Quantitative data was processed using SPSS, and data visualizations were produced with Tableau to facilitate interpretation and reporting.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, open-ended responses were examined thematically, particularly for Youth Leaders, to extract insights about challenges, needs, and preferred approaches.

For each partner was produced a country-level report, and a comparative report summarizing and analysing cross-country findings will be developed as a final output.

## 2.6. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. No personal identifiers were collected, and respondents could withdraw at any time. Ethical principles of informed consent, data protection, and respect for participants were upheld across all stages.

Limitations of the research include:

- 1) The non-representative nature of the sample, limiting generalizability;
- 2) Self-selection bias, particularly among more engaged or motivated respondents;
- 3) Online distribution constraints, potentially excluding youth and youth leaders without digital access;
- 4) A relatively high non-response rate for the youth survey, possibly due to perceived complexity or survey length;
- 5) Use of some terminology from EU frameworks (e.g., “inclusion,” “civic engagement”) that may not be equally familiar across all respondent groups.

Despite these limitations, the research provides rich, context-sensitive insights that support the co-design of relevant and impactful tools for youth leaders across Europe.

## III. YOUTH LEADERS- FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

### 3.1 RESPONDENT PROFILE

#### 3.1.1 Demographic overview

Most of the 156 youth leaders who responded to the survey in Romania come from large cities, with 60% living in urban centres of over 250,000 residents.

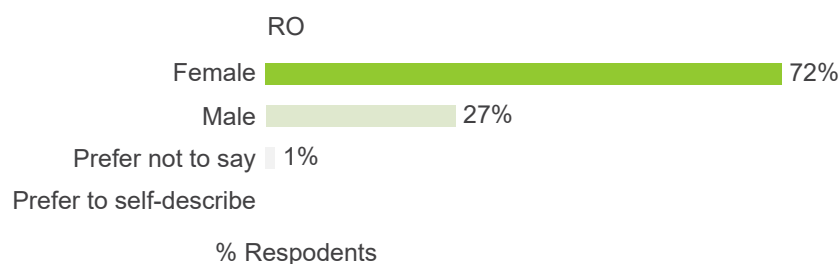
Smaller towns and rural areas are significantly less represented, findings that could suggest that most of the youth-related initiatives and networks may remain concentrated in urban environments.

Based on the age profile, nearly half of the respondents are between 41 and 60 years old, and only a quarter are under 25. This points to a strong presence of educators or professionals with experience in the field of working with youth, rather than younger peer leaders.

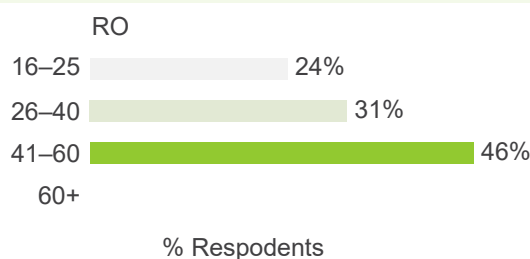
In terms of gender, women are the overwhelming majority, making up 72% of the respondents.

These patterns should be considered when designing future training, especially the need to tailor content for both experienced facilitators and emerging peer leaders, and to expand outreach beyond dominant urban and gendered profiles.

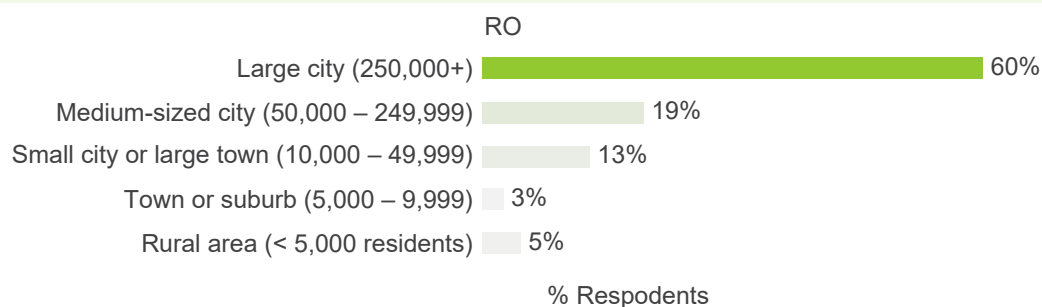
#### GENDER



#### AGE



#### TYPE OF RESIDENCE



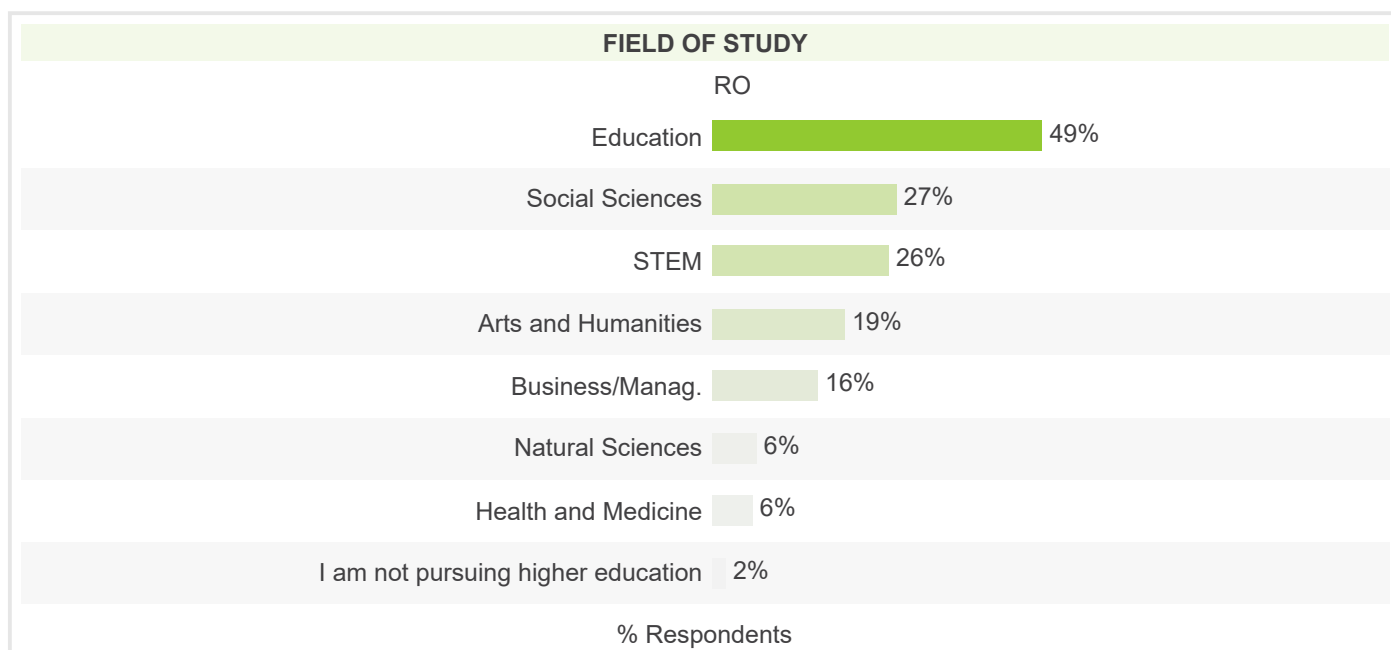
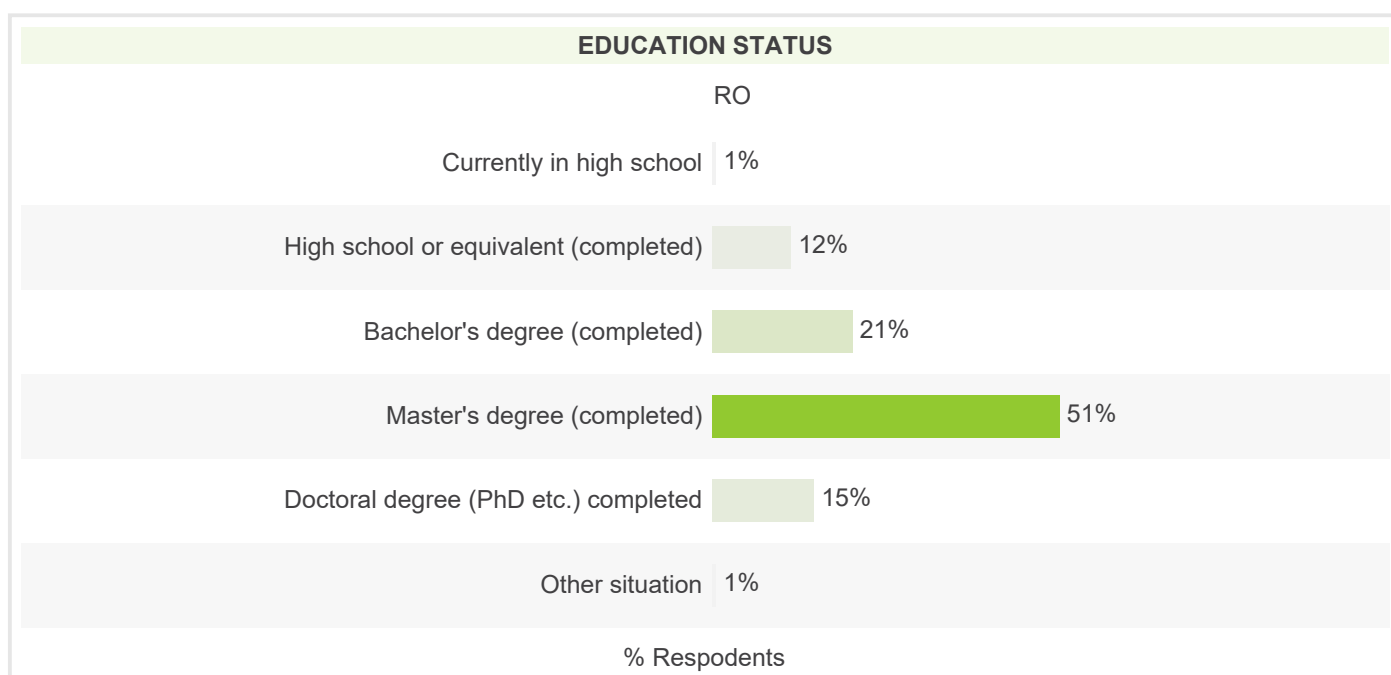


### 3.1.2 Education and field of study

The educational background of youth leaders in Romania reflects **a highly qualified group**, with 51% having completed a master's degree and another 15% holding a PhD or equivalent. Only 1% are still in high school, and 12% finished high school, in concordance with the age profile.

In terms of disciplinary orientation, **nearly half (49%) come from the field of education**, followed by social sciences (27%) and STEM (26%). Fields like arts and humanities (19%), business and management (16%), or health and natural sciences are less represented.

The strong concentration in education fields creates a solid base for pedagogical approaches, but training should also create space for interdisciplinary exchange and practices that engage those from less traditionally “educational” backgrounds, such as STEM or business, who may bring complementary skills and perspectives into youth work.



### 3.1.3 Work experience and context of working with youth

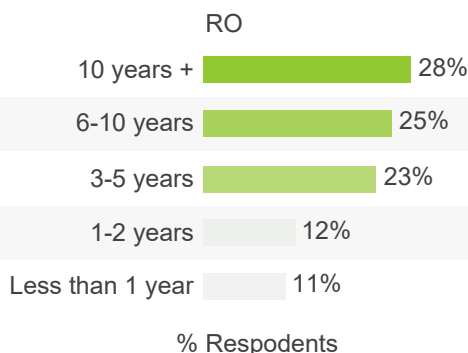
Although there is a core group of experienced professionals, with 28% active for 10+ years, it's worth noting that almost half (46%) of youth leaders have less than five years of experience in youth leadership. This includes 11% with less than one year, 12% with 1–2 years, and 23% with 3–5 years.

Most youth leaders in Romania report working with adolescents and young adults, particularly those aged 15–17 and 18–24, both mentioned by about 48% of respondents. A smaller proportion, 38%, work with 13–14 year olds, and about a third (32%) engage with children under 13. Engagement with the 25–30 age group is less frequent.

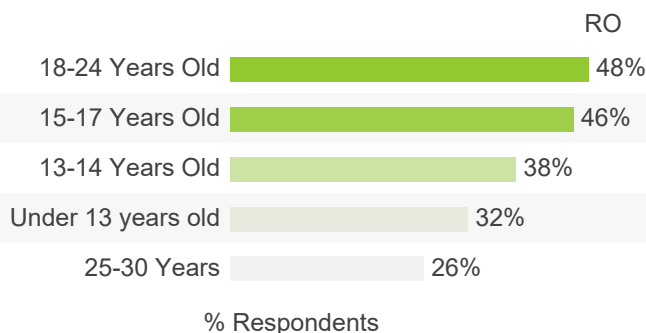
When it comes to the institutional picture, the range of institutions in which youth leaders work is wide, with most respondents affiliated with NGOs (47%) or schools (38%), while youth centres (18%), universities (13%), and public institutions (5%) are less common.

Overall, data suggest that there are many youth leaders that are building their practice. Trainings should provide not only advanced tools for seasoned professionals but also strong foundational elements and practical resources for those newer to the field.

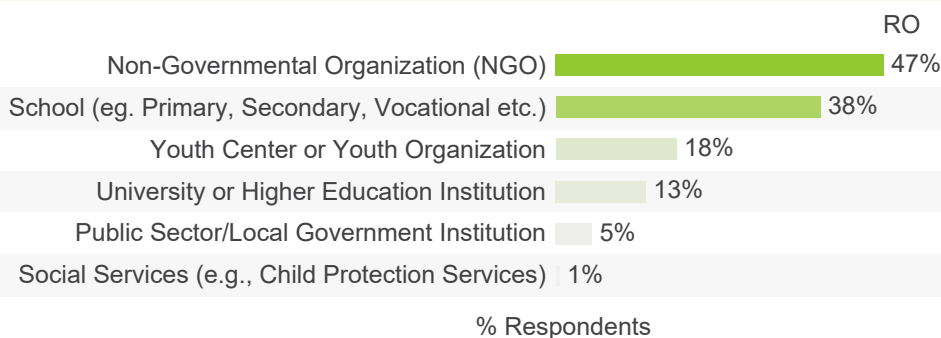
#### WORK EXPERIENCE WITH YOUTH



#### AGE GROUPS WORK WITH



#### TYPE OF INSTITUTION YOUTH LEADERS WORK



### 3.1.4 Working with specific youth groups

Youth leaders in Romania **engage with a wide range of young people**, but some groups are clearly more present in their current practice than others.

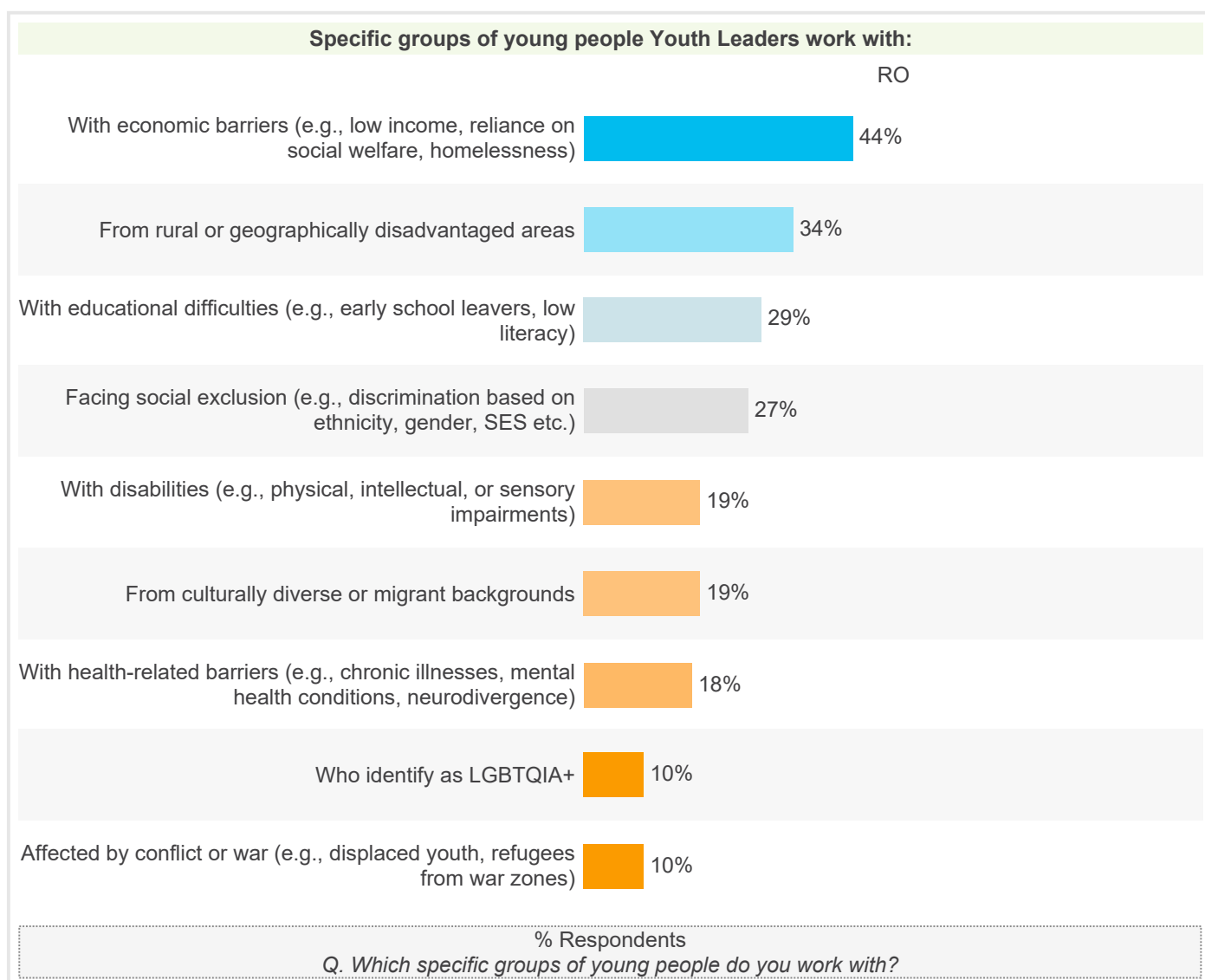
The most common are youth facing economic barriers, mentioned by 44% of respondents, followed by those from rural or geographically disadvantaged areas (34%) and young people with educational difficulties (29%), such as early school leaving or low literacy.

Working with youth social excluded based on factors like ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status was mentioned by 27% of youth leaders.

Lower levels of engagement are reported when it comes to working with young people with disabilities (19%), from culturally diverse or migrant backgrounds (19%), or those with health-related barriers (18%), including mental health conditions or neurodivergence.

Groups like LGBTQIA+ youth and those affected by conflict or war are the least represented, each cited by only 10% of respondents.

While many youth leaders work with structurally disadvantaged groups, there is a clear gap in experience with more invisible or marginalized identities. Trainings could help broaden understanding and capacity for inclusive work with underrepresented groups, especially in areas of mental health, migration, LGBTQIA+ identities.



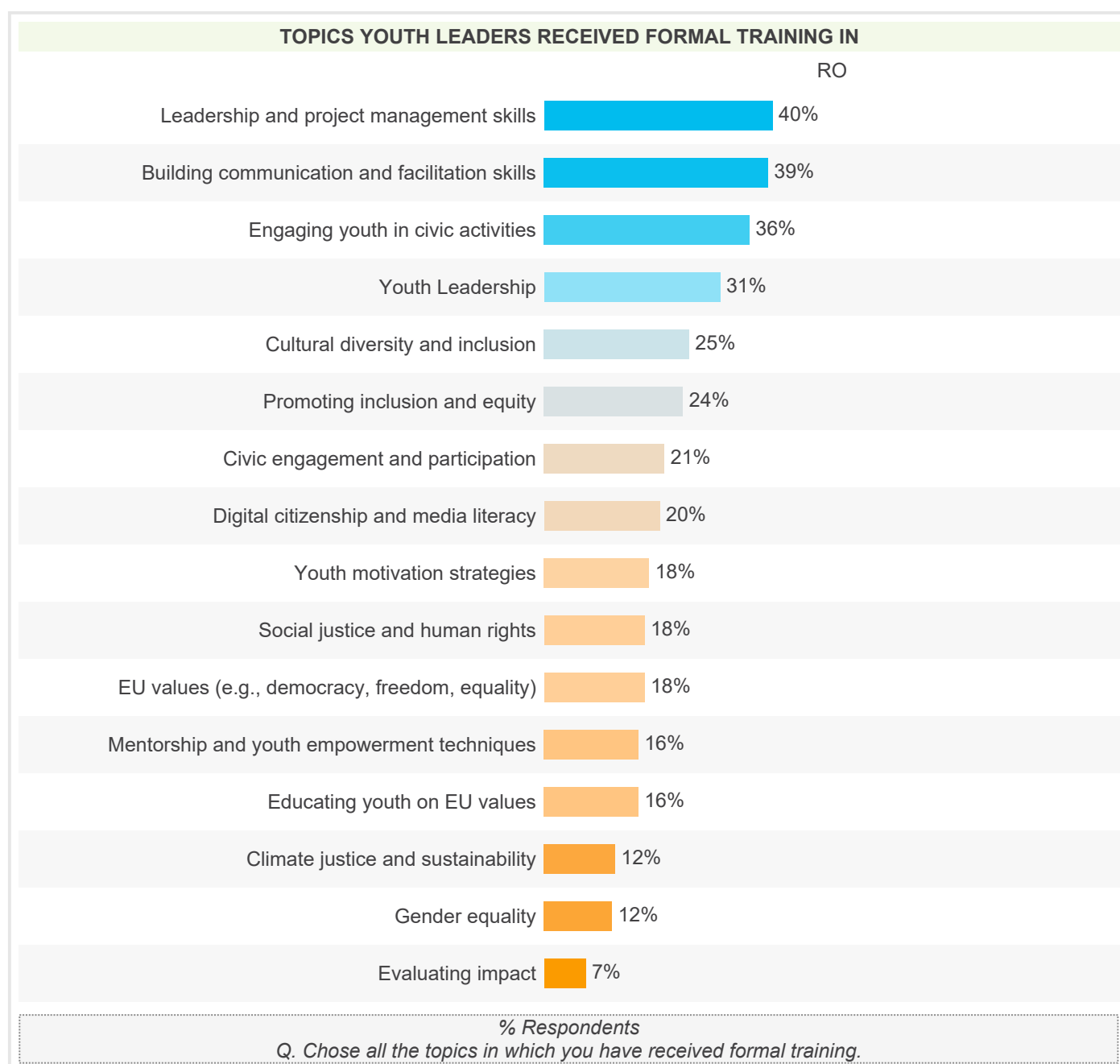
## 3.2 KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

### 3.2.1 Link between training, practice and priorities in Youth Leadership

When we look at areas in which youth leaders report that are trained, the gap is evident. Although over a third of youth leaders in Romania received training in leadership and project management (40%) or communication and facilitation (39%), fewer than a third received training in youth leadership (31%), engaging youth in civic activities (36%), or civic engagement (21%), despite these being the most valued topics (See *Topics considered most important by Youth Leaders* chart).

In other areas such as youth motivation strategies, social justice, and mentorship, the mismatch is even wider: all have high perceived importance but training rates fall below 20%.

These findings suggest a strong opportunity for targeted training programs that align with youth leaders' real priorities and needs.

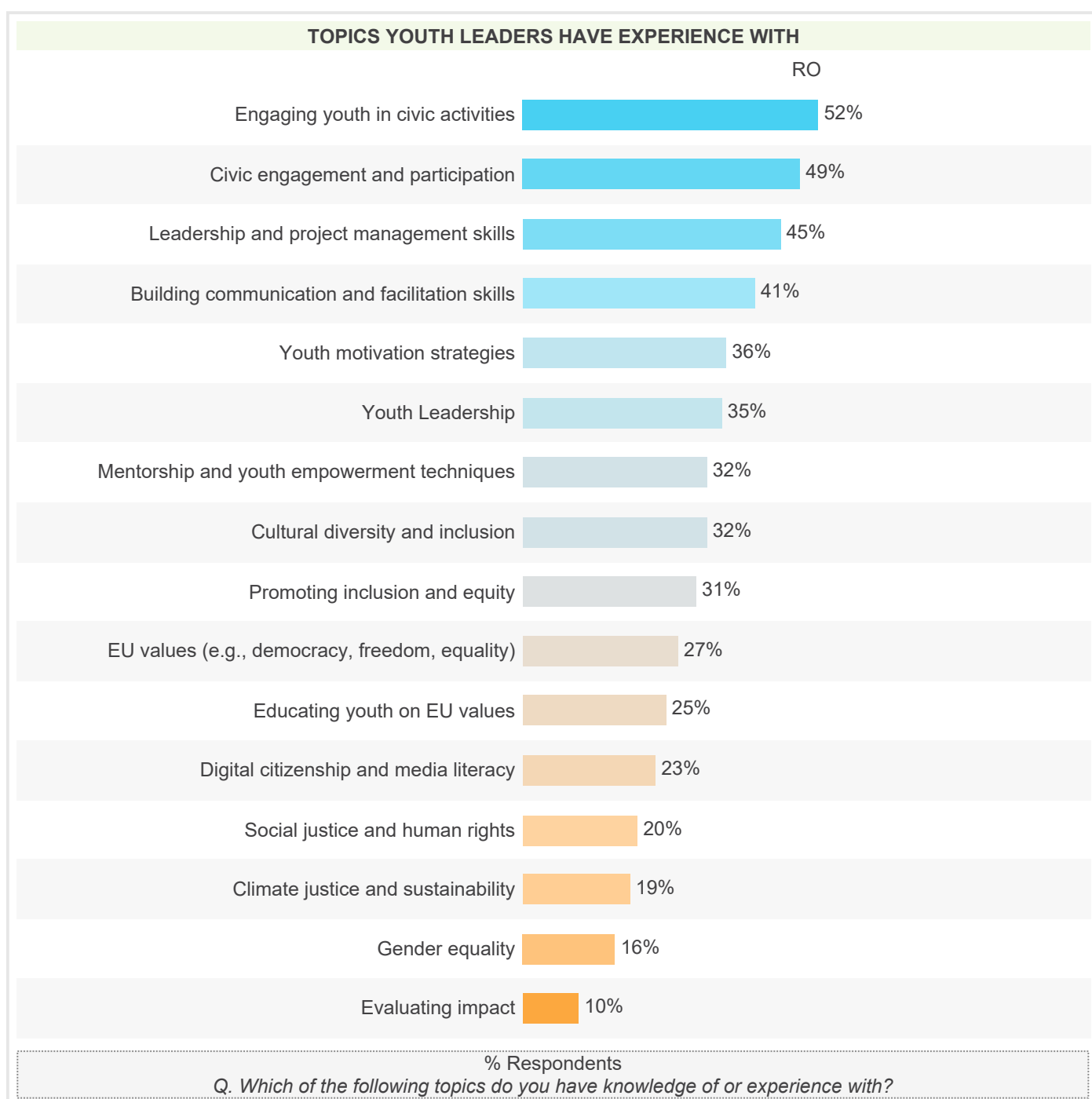


While youth leaders in Romania have practical experience with core civic themes, such as engaging youth in civic activities (52%), civic engagement and participation (49%), and leadership and project management (45%), other essential areas remain underdeveloped.

Notably, youth leadership (35%), mentorship (32%), and youth motivation strategies (36%) register significantly lower experience levels.

The gap is even more pronounced for topics tied to equity and rights. Less than a quarter of respondents have experience with digital citizenship (23%), social justice (20%), or climate and sustainability (19%), underscoring the need to build capacity in areas where social relevance is increasing but field practice is still limited.

Even competencies like gender equality (16%) and impact evaluation (10%) are rarely reported, suggesting that many youth leaders lack knowledge and skills in technical and rights-based dimensions of their work.



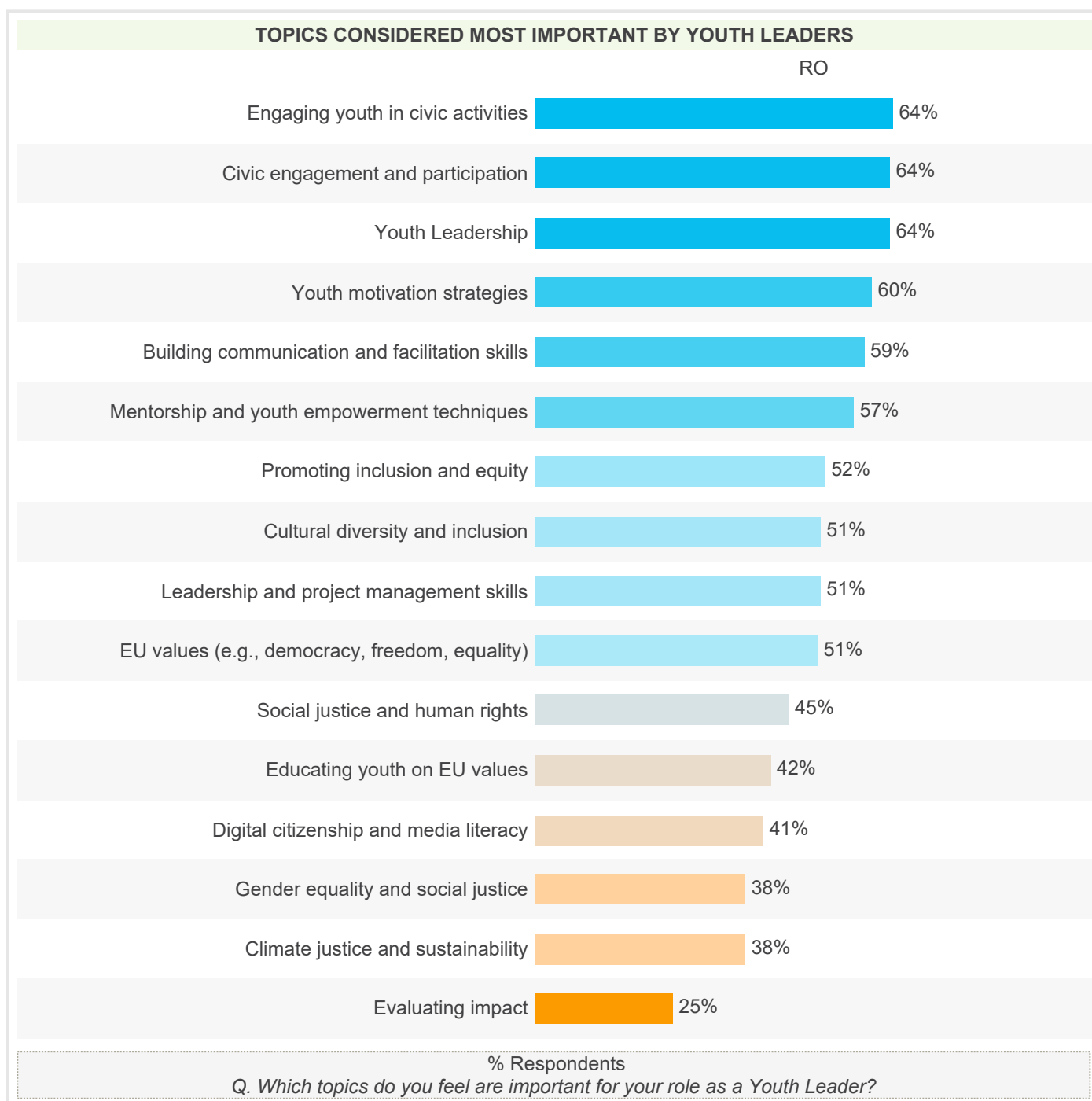


When it comes to the importance of different topics in their every-day life working with youth, leaders in Romania place the highest value on themes that directly relate to young people's agency and participation: engaging youth in civic activities, youth leadership, and civic engagement and participation each top the list, with 64% of youth leaders marking them as highly important.

These are followed by youth motivation strategies (60%) and communication and facilitation skills (59%), suggesting a strong focus on creating space for youth voices and supporting their active involvement.

Overall, data suggest that the clearest training needs lie in the core areas youth leaders care most about participation, motivation, leadership, and civic action. These themes should be central to future curricula.

At the same time, trainings should include flexible modules to build capacity in less familiar but emerging topics like climate, inclusion, and intersectionality, so youth leaders can grow in areas they currently engage with less confidently.



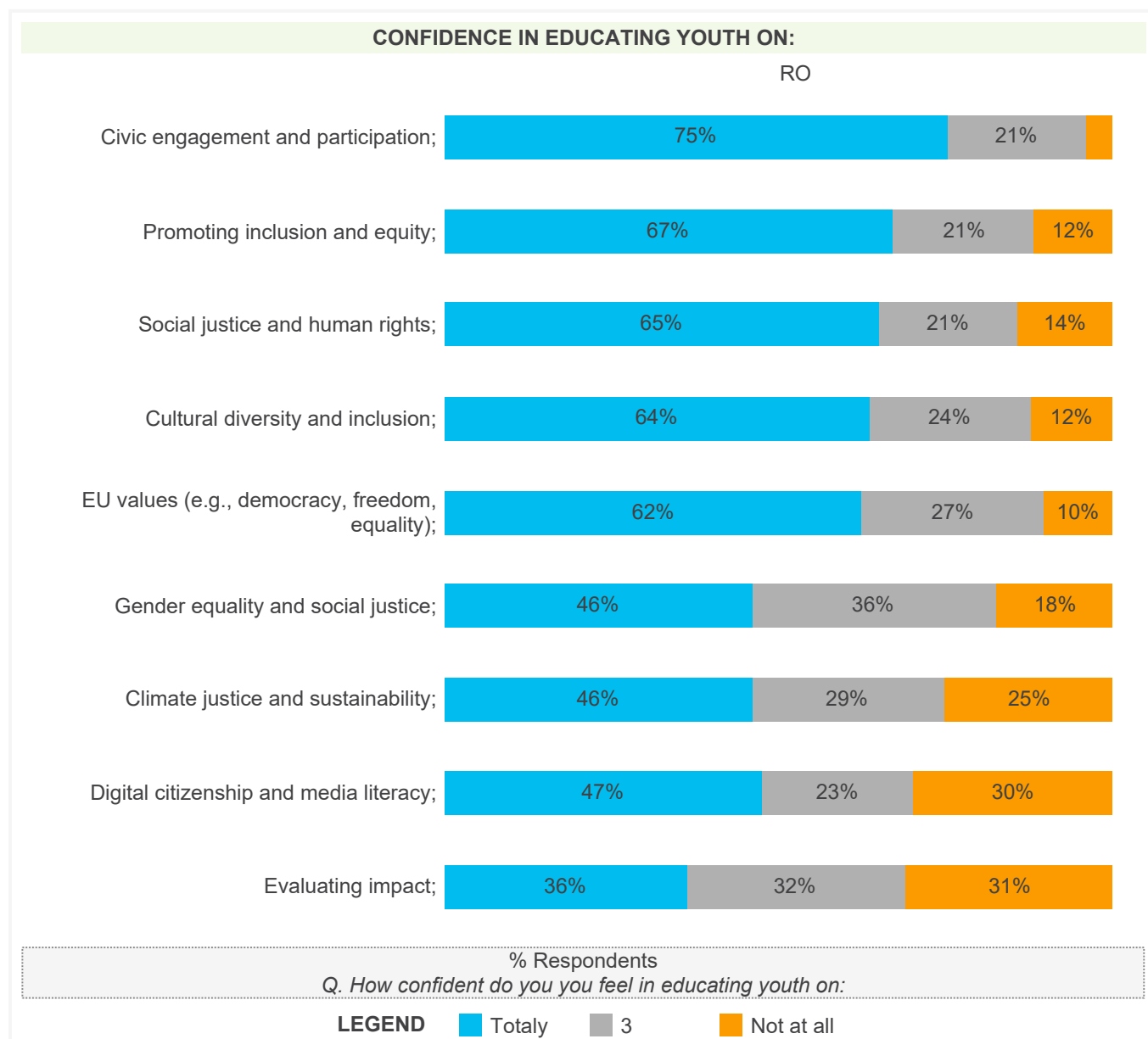
### 3.2.2 Confidence in educating youth on different thematics

Youth leaders in Romania feel most confident to educate young people on civic engagement, inclusion, and human rights, areas that also rank highest in perceived importance.

For example, 76% feel confident discussing civic participation, even though only 21% have received formal training.

This pattern suggests that many rely on personal values or lived experience rather than structured learning. On the other hand, issues like climate justice, gender equality, and especially evaluating impact remain underdeveloped: they score lowest on training, experience, and confidence.

36% feel confident teaching evaluation, and just 7% have received training in it, making this the least covered area across all topics surveyed.



## 3.3 CHALLENGES IN WORKING WITH YOUTH

### 3.3.1 Challenges youth face in Youth Leaders opinion

A major concern raised by youth leaders in Romania is the widespread lack of motivation and direction among young people. Many feel that youth today struggle to find meaning or clear goals, often discouraged by limited opportunities, the absence of local role models, and a general feeling that their efforts won't lead to visible results.

Closely tied to this is a profound sense of uncertainty about the future. Faced with economic instability, a precarious job market, and a mismatch between their education and what the workforce demands, many young people experience anxiety and doubt about their prospects. Some turn to emigration as a perceived solution, contributing to a deeper sense of societal disengagement.

Compounding this are issues of mental health, with stress, social pressure, and lack of psychological support surfacing repeatedly. The education system is often seen as outdated and unaligned with young people's needs, failing to equip them with practical, civic, emotional, or digital competencies. Meanwhile, social inequality, overexposure to digital media, and a lack of adult support and mentorship further isolate youth.

Leaders also note an erosion of civic interest and engagement, as many young people feel powerless or disconnected from their communities.

*"One of the biggest challenges young people face is their limited access to relevant educational and professional opportunities. Many youth from rural or less developed areas struggle to find the resources they need to grow, whether that means courses, mentoring, or experiences that could broaden their horizons. Our library plays an essential role in narrowing this gap by offering a learning space, access to information, and opportunities for personal and professional development. Yet the challenge remains: how can we connect these young people to more opportunities that allow them to reach their potential? Another important issue is the lack of motivation and belief in the future, often caused by the absence of local role models and the perception that opportunities are scarce. That's why it's crucial to develop initiatives that offer not only access to resources but also ongoing inspiration and support.", YL, Romania, 2025*

#### CHALLENGES YOUTH FACE

RO

<b>Civic Disengagement and Disinterest</b> "passivity", "lack of interest", "self-sufficiency", "they believe their involvement wouldn't change anything", "apathy toward community values",	<b>Educational System Gaps</b> "outdated curriculum", "disconnected from reality", "lack of practical education", "lack of civic education", "lack of financial education", "lack of emotional education", "functional illiteracy",	<b>Lack of Support and Mentorship</b> "absence of involved adults", "lack of counseling", "lack of support spaces", "lack of youth centers", "lack of local resources", "disengaged families", "lack of career counseling", "no role	<b>Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing</b> "stress", "anxiety", "depression", "lack of psychological support", "overload", "constant comparison", "low self-esteem", "emotional regulation struggles", "bullying", "lack of support"
<b>Lack of Critical Thinking</b> "difficulty telling truth from hood", "lack of questioning", "lack of reflection", "lack of critical thinking", "they don't ask, they just react", "easily influenced by digital flow"	<b>Employment Challenges</b> "mismatch between education and labor market demands", "lack of relevant jobs", "low wages", "economic migration", "experience always required", "emigration as the solution", "brain drain"	<b>Social Inequalities and Exclusion</b> "urban/rural disparities", "lack of opportunities in disadvantaged communities", "class differences" "unequal access to education", "unequal access	
<b>Digital Overload and Disinformation</b> "social media addiction", "screen distraction", "negative influence of content", "fake news", "image pressure", "getting information from unreliable	<b>Lack of Motivation and Direction</b> "demotivation", "lack of meaning", "lack of a vision for the future", "apathy", "difficulty staying motivated", "lack of constructive goals", "lack of role models", "lack of support", "lack of visible results"	<b>Uncertainty and Anxiety</b> "economic uncertainty", "social uncertainty", "emotional uncertainty", "anxiety about career prospects", "high social pressure", "insecurity", "lack of confidence", "competition",	

*Q. Thinking about the youth generation in your country, what is the biggest challenge they are currently facing?*

### 3.3.2 Barriers in working with youth

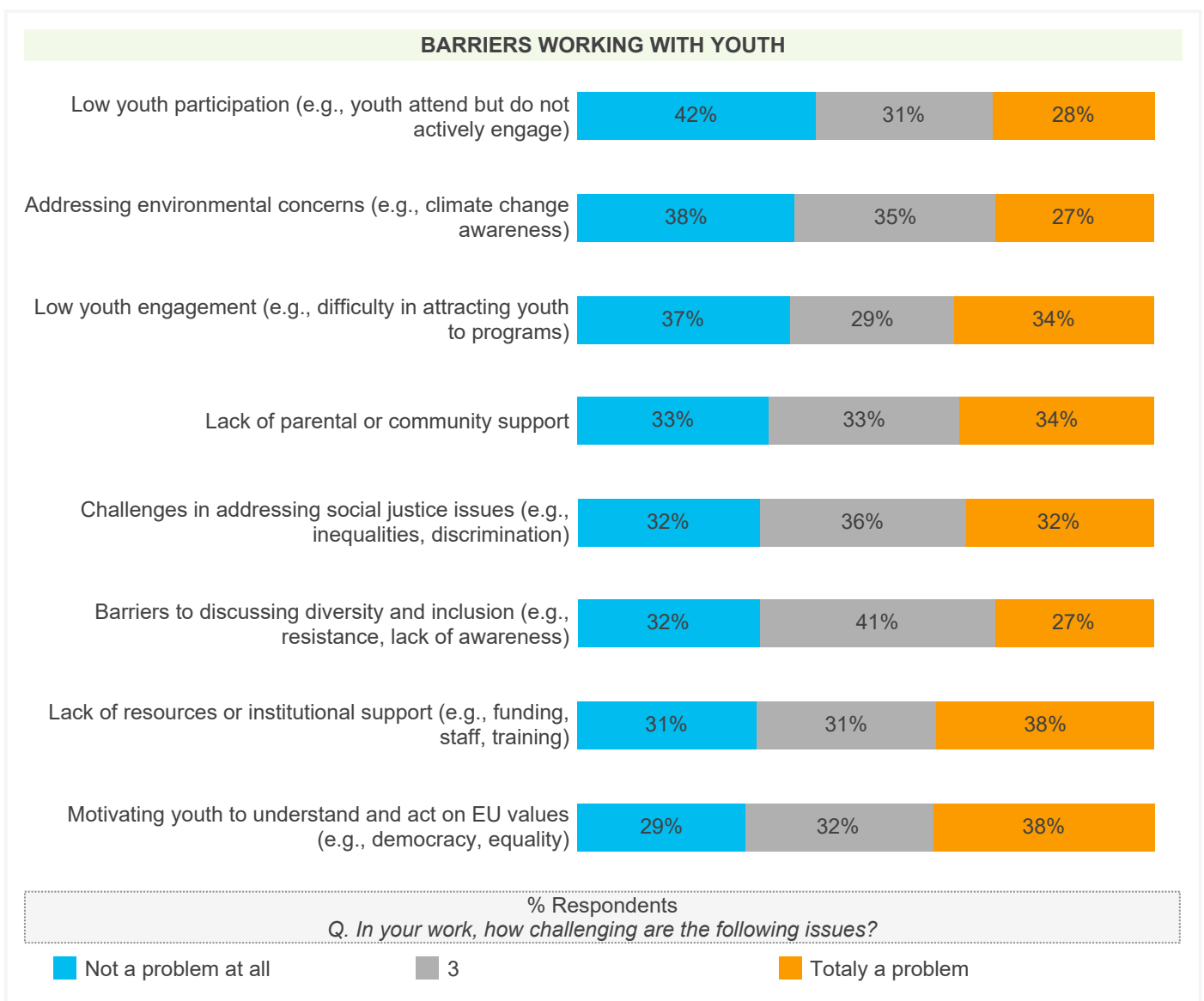
Youth leaders in Romania identify several persistent barriers that complicate their work with young people. The most significant is the lack of institutional resources including funding, staff, and training, with 30% marking it as a major problem and another 56% rating it between moderate and severe.

This structural challenge is closely followed by the absence of consistent parental or community support (19% total problem, 61% moderate to severe), which limits efforts to build continuity or broader engagement beyond isolated projects.

While many youth do show up to activities, low participation and engagement remain pressing concerns: 50% of respondents say youth attend but don't actively take part, and 48% struggle to attract young people in the first place.

Meanwhile, sensitive topics like diversity, inclusion, EU values, or climate change are less often perceived as direct obstacles, though resistance or lack of awareness still surface.

In terms of training design, the priority should be on equipping youth leaders to navigate institutional limitations and design inclusive, motivating activities that foster genuine participation. Building local alliances with schools, families, and community actors can amplify reach and sustainability.



### 3.3.3 Methods in motivating youth

When asked how they engage and motivate youth, Romanian youth leaders pointed to several tools and approaches. Some leaders pointed to interactive, real-life experiences that go beyond traditional education.

A significant number rely on non-formal methods such as role-playing, storytelling, outdoor learning, and team-based projects to create meaningful, hands-on learning environments. One of the most impactful tools mentioned was service-learning.

In addition, digital tools, from social media platforms to gamified learning and digital storytelling, are widely used to meet youth where they are and keep them engaged. Mentorship also emerged as a key strategy, along with personalized support, recognition of effort, and the creation of safe, inclusive spaces. These methods suggest that when youth feel seen, valued, and empowered, their motivation increases.

Service-learning frameworks and experiential education strategies into training curricula could help youth leaders build participatory programs that foster motivation through personal growth and civic responsibility.

METHODS AND TOOLS USED TO MOTIVATE YOUTH			
RO			
<b>Barriers or Non-Use</b> I don't know / I don't use any; The question doesn't apply to my situation; Lack of resources or unfavorable context	<b>Mentorship and Role Modeling</b> Mentoring and inspirational leadership; Leading by example, personal involvement; Examples from other projects, testimonials, alumni	<b>Non-formal and Experiential Education</b> Non-formal education, project-based learning; Outdoor activities, camps, hikes; Storytelling, forum theatre, role-play games	<b>Personal Relevance and Autonomy</b> Personalizing activities based on youth needs; Clarifying purpose and personal relevance; Offering autonomy and initiative
<b>Creating a Safe and Inclusive Environment</b> Active listening, co-creation; Sense of belonging and support; Warm communication, safe spaces			
<b>Face-to-Face Interaction and Dialogue</b> 1:1 discussions, debates, themed dialogues; Informal meet-ups, open conversations; Creating spaces for personal expression	<b>Recognition and Feedback</b> Awards, public appreciation, certificates; Constructive and personalized feedback; Symbolic and moral rewards		<b>Volunteering and Civic Engagement</b> Volunteering projects and civic initiatives; Community involvement, service-learning; Social campaigns, eco events
<b>Interactive and Practical Activities</b> Hands-on workshops, experiments, hackathons; Learning by doing, real responsibility; Role-play exercises, simulations	<b>Use of Technology and Digital Tools</b> Online platforms, social media (Instagram, TikTok, Discord, WhatsApp); Gamification, educational apps, podcasts, vlogs; Digital education, digital workshops		

Q. What tools or methods do you use to engage and motivate youths?



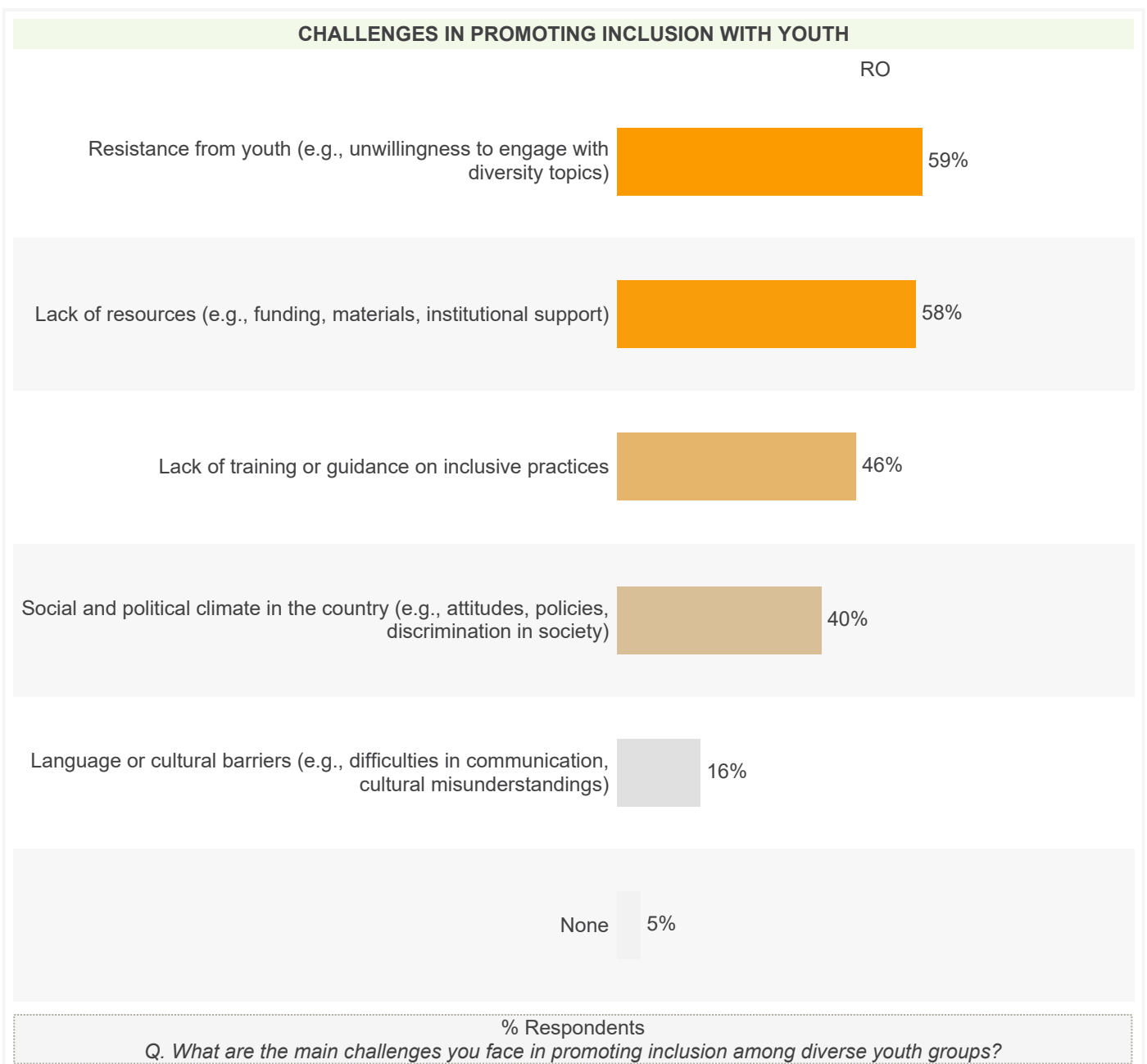
### 3.3.4 Challenges in promoting inclusion among youth

Promoting inclusion among youth in Romania remains a complex challenge shaped by both internal resistance and external limitations.

The most frequently cited obstacle is resistance from youth themselves, nearly 60% of youth leaders perceive that young people are often reluctant to engage with diversity-related topics. Closely following is the lack of institutional resources (58%), which most probably limits the ability of programs to provide inclusive materials, safe spaces, or consistent support.

Just as concerning is the lack of training on inclusive practices (46%), pointing to a gap in how youth leaders themselves are equipped to navigate sensitive conversations or facilitate learning that truly includes everyone.

Interestingly, language or cultural barriers are cited far less frequently (16%), suggesting that the barriers are less about communication and more about attitudes, capacities, and structural gaps.



### 3.3.5 Methods in promoting inclusion among youth

When asked how they support the inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities, Romanian youth leaders highlighted a mix of personal support, practical learning, and civic engagement. Mentorship emerged as a key strategy, often described as “*personalized support*” or “*active listening*”.

Non-formal education also plays a central role. Leaders use methods such as workshops, theater for wellbeing, and experiential learning to help youth feel empowered and capable.

Volunteering and civic projects were commonly cited as tools that help youth gain purpose and connection. From Clubul IMPACT to Erasmus+ projects, many described these as opportunities where young people “*develop skills and support networks*.”

Creating inclusive spaces, both physical and emotional, was another recurring theme. Activities were often held in accessible public locations, and several respondents spoke of the importance of “*safe and welcoming environments*” that encourage participation.

While digital tools and partnerships with NGOs were present, they were mentioned less often. Still, where used, they facilitated access to resources like free courses, transportation, or information on scholarships.

However, nearly 40 responses fell under “I don’t know” or “I don’t use any methods,” indicating a gap. These leaders may lack exposure, tools, or support systems for inclusive practice, an important finding for capacity-building efforts.

Equipping youth leaders with inclusive program design, partnership development, and mentoring skills could strengthen their ability to engage marginalized youth meaningfully.

*“The activities carried out by the institution I work for take place in a public space, located in the city center to be easily accessible to all those who wish to participate. Unfortunately, I do not use other methods that might motivate them to get involved.” YL, Romania, 2025*

#### INCLUSION SUPPORT METHODS AND TOOLS

RO

<b>Volunteering and Civic Projects</b> Volunteering; civic projects; community involvement	<b>Use of Technology and Digital Tools</b> Digital platforms; online education; social media	<b>Mentorship and Individual Support</b> Mentorship and personalized support; informal counseling; examples from other projects	
		<b>Recognition, Encouragement and Inclusion Culture</b> Constructive feedback; recognition; promotion of positive examples	
		<b>Access to Resources and Logistics</b> Access to educational resources; logistical	
<b>No Methods / I don't know</b> I don't know; I don't use any; Not applicable	<b>Partnerships and Institutional Support</b> Partnerships with NGOs, schools, authorities; institutional support		

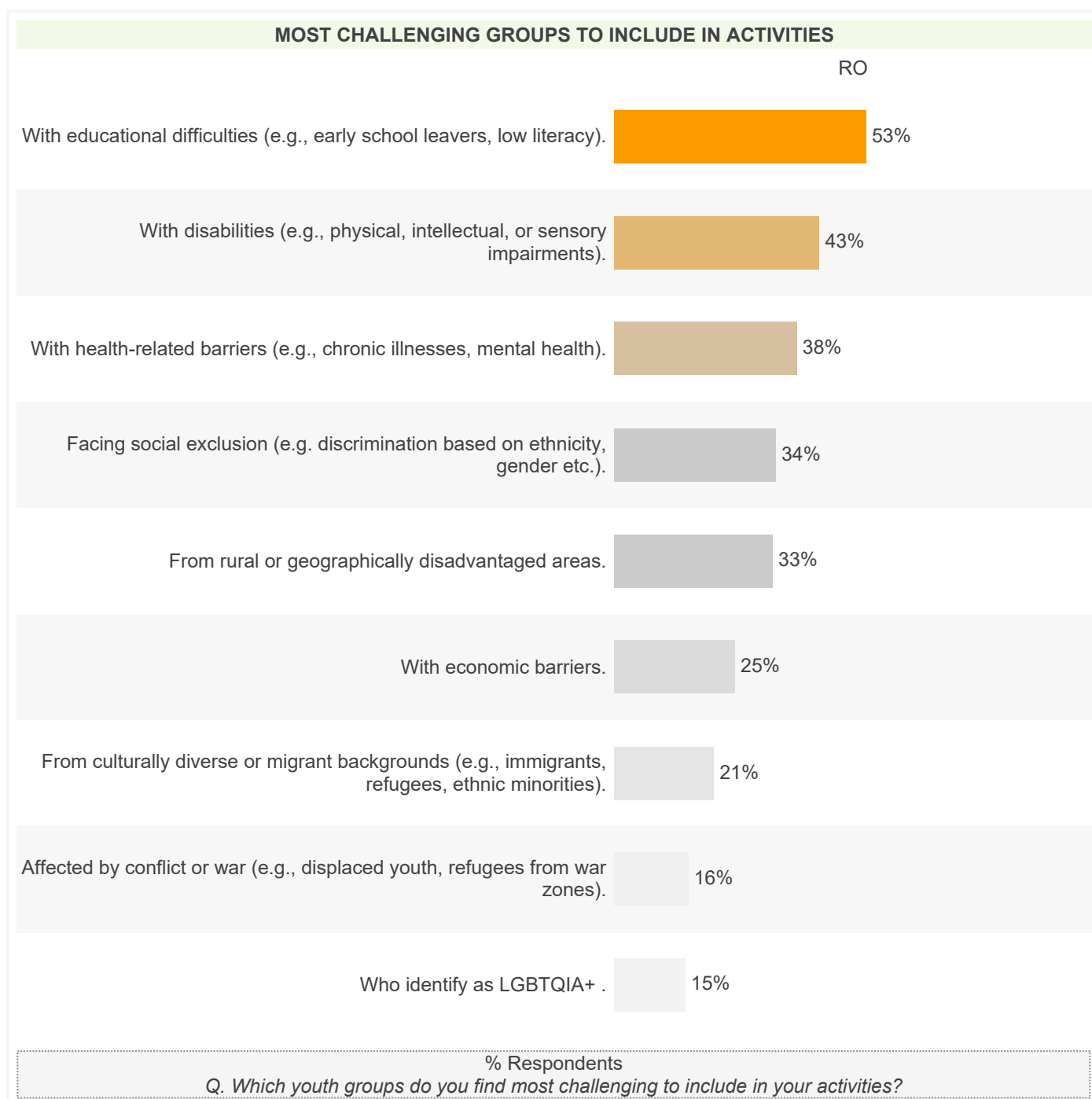
Q. What tools or methods do you currently use to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (e.g., youth facing economic, social, educational, or health-related barriers)?

### 3.3.6 Challenging youth groups to include in activities in Youth Leaders perception

Youth leaders in Romania report that the most challenging group to include in activities are young people with educational difficulties, over 53% mention struggling to engage those who have dropped out of school or face low literacy. This is followed by youth with disabilities (43%) and those facing mental or physical health-related barriers (38%), who often require adapted methods and more support than most programs currently offer.

Economic hardship (25%) and cultural diversity (21%) are somewhat less frequently reported as difficult to integrate, though still present, while LGBTQIA+ youth (15%) and refugees (16%) are the least likely to be mentioned, possibly indicating either fewer experiences working with these groups or lower local visibility.

There is a clear need to strengthen the capacity of youth leaders to work with young people who face structural and educational barriers, by offering inclusive facilitation techniques, hands-on practices, and strategies for accessible communication.



## 3.4 TRAINING NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

### 3.4.1 Topics of interest

Youth leaders in Romania express the highest interest in training on topics that directly support youth motivation (73%), mentorship (70%), and youth leadership (69%), areas that also scored highest in perceived importance and are frequently used in their current practice.

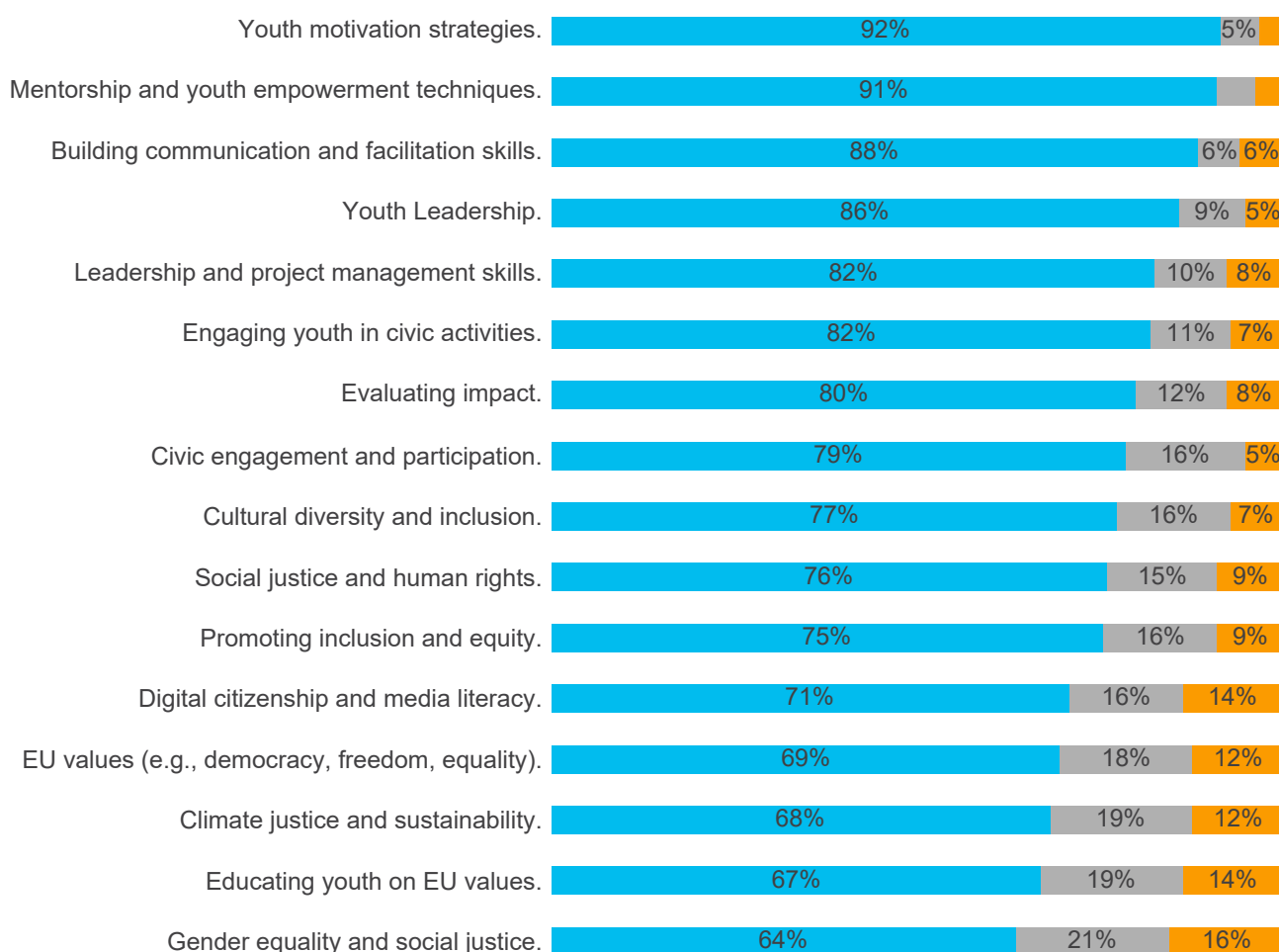
This alignment suggests a strong desire to deepen and refine approaches they already see as essential. Interest remains high for project management (64%) and communication skills (62%), reinforcing the need to strengthen facilitation capacities and leadership structures in youth work.

When it comes to more content-heavy or sensitive themes like inclusion, EU values, or climate justice, confidence and interest drop, despite moderate levels of importance in earlier responses. Only 49% feel very confident or interested in training on EU values, and even fewer on climate justice (47%) or gender equality and social justice (47%). These are also the areas where experience and training gaps were previously reported.

Youth leaders are most engaged when training builds on areas they already invest in motivation, leadership, mentoring, but they need more support for less familiar topics like evaluating impact, inclusion, democracy, and sustainability.

#### INTERESTED IN RECEIVING TRAINING

RO



% Respondents

Q. How interested are you in receiving training on the following topics:

### 3.4.2 Preferred training formats and learning approaches

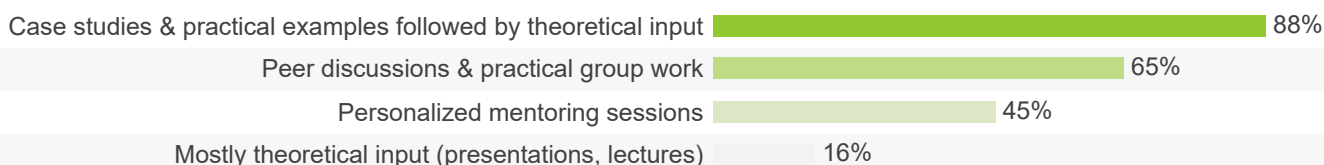
When it comes to training preferences, youth leaders in Romania show a clear appetite for practical, applied, and flexible formats. The most preferred approach by far is working with case studies and practical examples followed by theoretical input, chosen by 88% of respondents, suggesting that hands-on experience and real-life relevance are key to maintaining engagement. Peer discussions and group work are also popular (65%), while traditional lecture-style input is the least appealing (only 16%), reinforcing the need for dynamic, participatory learning environments.

In terms of training formats, preferences are fairly evenly distributed, with hybrid formats (50%) and interactive online training (49%) slightly ahead of volunteering or internship experiences (41%) and face-to-face training (40%). This mix reflects the desire for both flexibility and social connection, as well as real-world application of knowledge. Self-paced online courses are less favored (32%), possibly due to a perceived lack of interaction or personalization.

As for preferred timing, weekends are clearly the best choice for most (57%), followed by school breaks (36%) and weekdays (33%). Only a small fraction prefer public holidays (5%). Data suggest that trainings should focus on applied learning in mixed (hybrid) formats, offered primarily on weekends, with strong peer interaction and a balance between structured facilitation and real-world practice.

#### LEARNING APPROACHES

RO

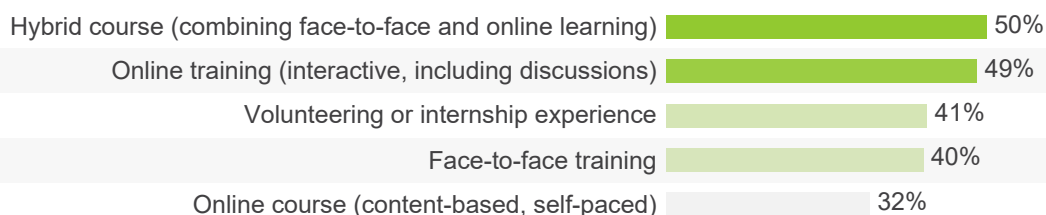


% Respondents

Q. What Learning Approaches do you prefer?

#### TRAINING FORMAT

RO

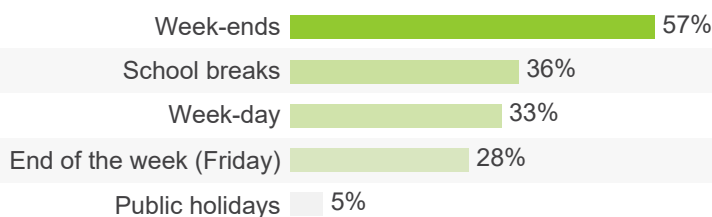


% Respondents

Q. What training formats do you prefer?

#### PREFERED TIME

RO



% Respondents

Q. When do you prefer to participate in training?



### 3.4.3 Preferred training content or activities

Asked about what content or activities should be included in a training course, youth leaders in Romania consistently emphasized the need for relevant, real-world learning that helps them take action.

One of the most frequently mentioned elements is the inclusion of activities based on real-life situations. Leaders want training that mirrors their everyday work with youth "situations that have been solved," "real examples," and "barriers youth face" are all seen as essential entry points for learning. This also includes the use of case studies and good practices, which participants described as "easy to replicate," "grounded in experience," or "connected to the challenges of young people with fewer opportunities."

Equally central is the format of delivery. Interactive sessions are preferred across the board, whether through simulations, debates, workshops, role-plays, or games. "Something practical and interactive," "where we can test things ourselves," and "not just theory" were recurring requests.

Several youth leaders also requested strategies and concrete tools to work with youth, particularly to address motivation, engagement, and inclusion. This includes content on how to mobilize youth, how to create safe and inclusive spaces, how to build confidence in young people, and how to respond to their emotional and social needs. Many also asked for peer learning formats, such as workshops with facilitators from other organizations, mentoring sessions, and the opportunity to share experience.

Youth leaders are also highly responsive to content that links personal development with social action: emotional regulation, public speaking, storytelling, project writing, digital literacy, and volunteer mobilization all surfaced as themes. Crucially, the tone that comes through is pragmatic: "anything that leads to a concrete result," "strategies that work," and "what I can actually apply" are key indicators of what makes training meaningful.

Overall, youth leaders are asking for learning experiences that are grounded in reality, structured around active methods, and rich in strategies that help them respond to the real challenges they, and the young people they work with, face every day, including how to talk about inclusion, gender, mental health, and civic participation in ways that resonate with youth. They call for methods that are not just informative, but engaging and empowering.

*"A training course should offer both theory and practice, but above all, it must be grounded in reality. We need examples, tools, and experiences we can apply immediately in our work with youth." – YL, Romania, 2025*

#### PREFERRED CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES

RO

<b>Activities Based on Real-Life Examples</b> "real situations and solutions", "case studies from similar contexts", "examples grounded in"	<b>Emotional Support and Wellbeing</b> "emotional self-regulation", "stress management techniques", "peer support skills"	<b>Interactive Sessions</b> "role-plays", "team games", "debates", "simulations", "learning through doing"	<b>Strategies for Youth Engagement</b> "tools to increase participation", "tailoring messages to different youth groups", "long-term"	<b>Updated and Youth-Relevant Content</b> "issues young people care about", "solutions that can be applied in real contexts", "practical skills"
<b>Civic and Critical Thinking Skills</b> "civic participation projects", "decision-making exercises", "developing personal responsibility"	<b>Feedback, Reflection, and Empathy</b> "constructive feedback methods", "empathy games", "guided reflection after activities"	<b>Mentorship and Peer Learning</b> "1:1 mentorship", "experience sharing between practitioners", "learning from success"	<b>Volunteering and Social Action</b> "community involvement models", "designing youth-led campaigns", "building civic responsibility"	
<b>Digital Literacy and Media Use</b> "how to spot fake news", "digital safety", "using social media for advocacy"	<b>Inclusion, Diversity, and EU Values</b> "anti-discrimination workshops", "exploring identity and belonging", "building inclusive spaces"	<b>Project Design and Funding</b> "writing project proposals", "budget planning", "finding funding opportunities"	<b>Youth Leadership and Communication</b> "public speaking workshops", "team coordination exercises", "confidence-building activities"	

Q. What content or activities should be included in the training course for you to participate?

Open Q

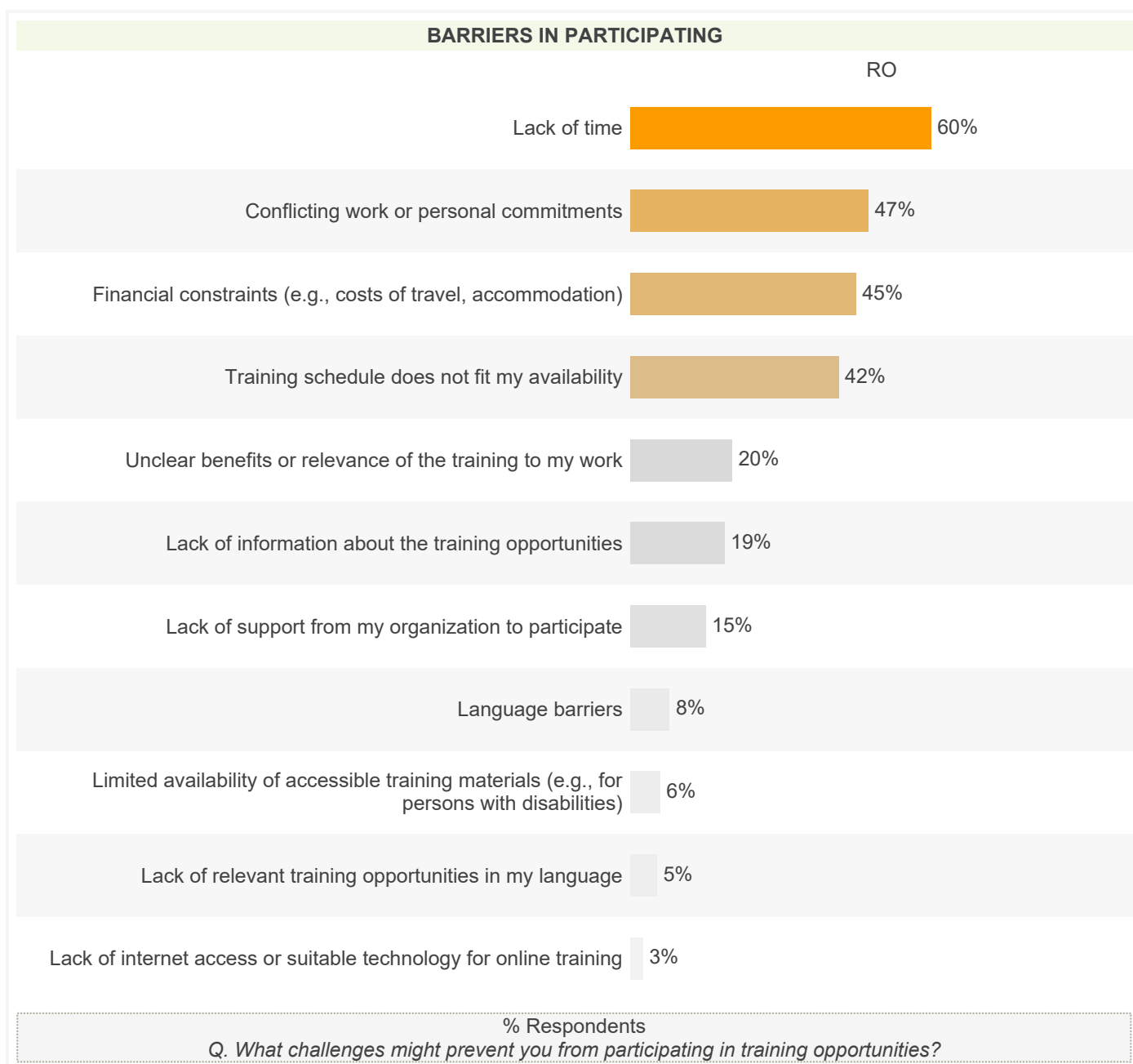
### 3.4.3 Barriers and incentives to accessing professional development

Romanian youth leaders report a number of structural and personal barriers that prevent them from participating in training. The most common obstacle, cited by 60%, is the lack of time, often compounded by conflicting work or personal commitments (47%) and financial constraints such as travel or accommodation costs (45%).

These findings suggest that flexibility and affordability are essential for any future training design. Moreover, 42% say that the training schedule does not match their availability, reinforcing the need for adaptable formats.

Beyond logistics, a smaller proportion of respondents mentioned unclear benefits (20%) and limited information (19%) as reasons for non-participation, indicating that the perceived relevance and visibility of the offer still matter. Organizational support also plays a role: 15% said they lacked backing from their workplace. Language and accessibility barriers, while less frequently mentioned (8% or below), still require attention to ensure inclusivity.

Overall, reducing practical obstacles and increasing perceived value could significantly improve participation.

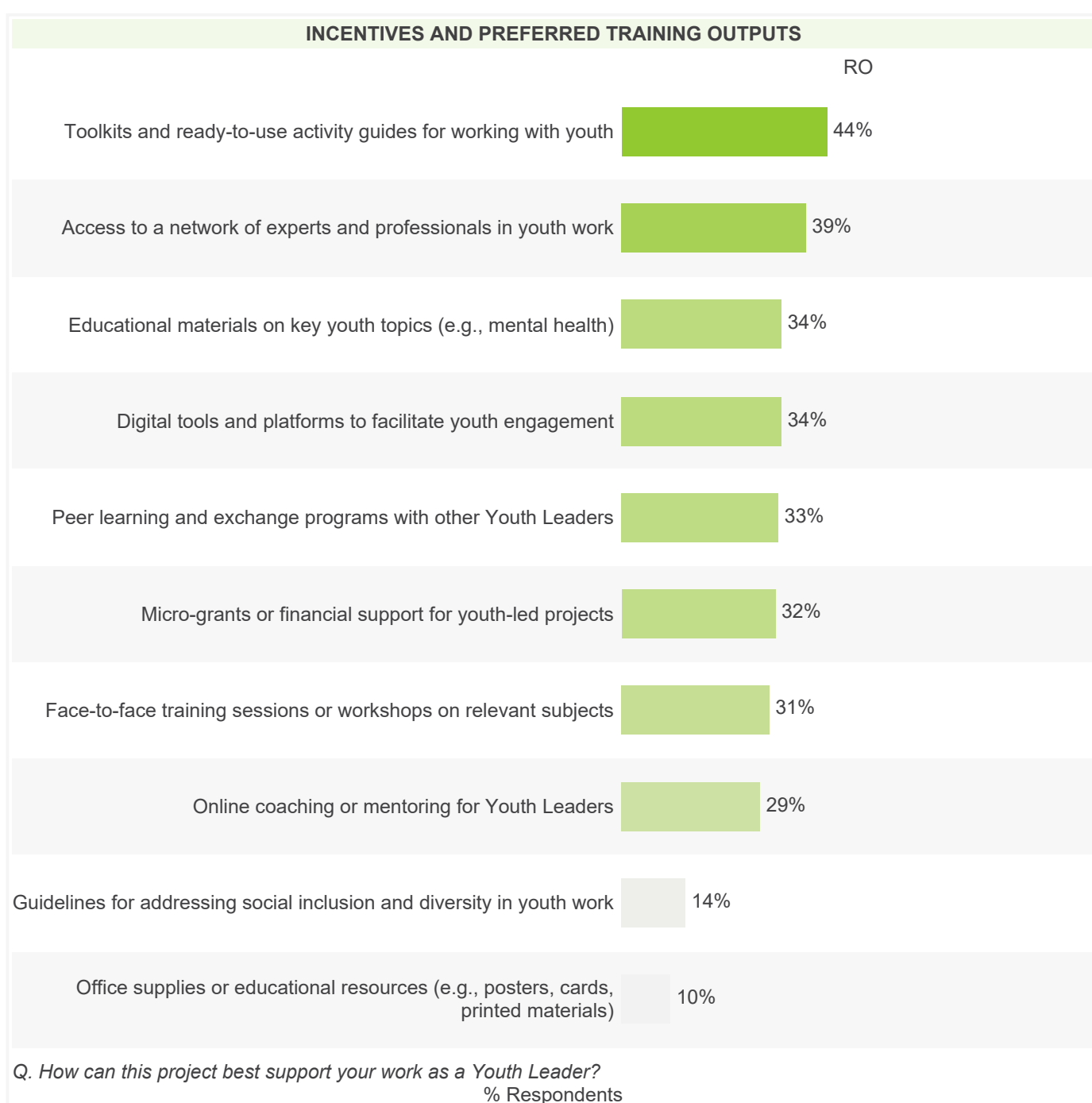


When asked what types of outputs or incentives would be most valuable, Romanian youth leaders showed a clear preference for practical, immediately usable resources and access to supportive communities.

The top choice, selected by 44%, was *toolkits and ready-to-use activity guides* to support their daily work with youth, highlighting a strong demand for concrete, adaptable content. This was followed by interest in *access to networks of experts* (39%), suggesting that leaders value opportunities for professional connection and advice.

Educational materials on key youth topics such as mental health (34%) and *digital engagement tools* (34%) were also seen as important enablers in their work. Notably, 33% expressed interest in *peer learning and exchanges* with other youth leaders, while 32% would value *micro-grants or financial support* for youth-led initiatives.

Although slightly less prioritized, options like *face-to-face workshops* (31%) and *online mentoring* (29%) still appear relevant. In contrast, printed resources or inclusion guidelines were less frequently mentioned, suggesting a stronger need for actionable and dynamic tools.



### 3.4.4 Interest in participating in international experiences and needs

In Romania, 62% of youth leaders report a high probability of participating in international training or networking programs, while 63% also express strong interest in future ENGAGE activities.

This readiness is supported by a consistent belief that international opportunities contribute meaningfully to their work. Open responses indicate that youth leaders see such experiences as a way to expand their skill sets, explore new methods, and apply diverse approaches in youth work.

Many mention the value of exchanging ideas with peers, accessing new resources, and learning from different national contexts. For some, international engagement is viewed as a means to build institutional partnerships, broaden outreach strategies, and stay informed about European-level priorities.

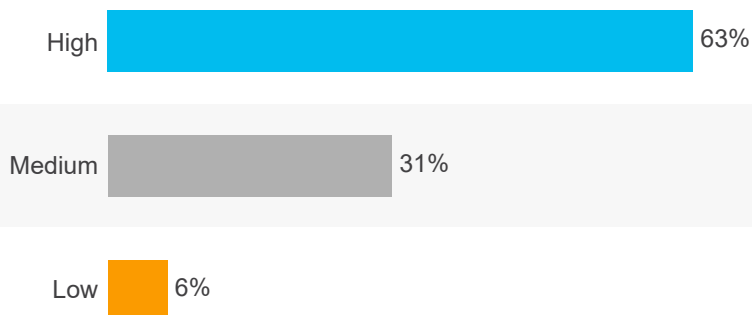
Others highlight the importance of transferring insights from abroad into practical initiatives within their local communities.

Overall, the responses point to a pragmatic interest in international collaboration, seen not only as a learning opportunity but also as a tool for increasing impact, visibility, and innovation in youth work.

*“Participating internationally is not just about learning new things, it’s about realizing you’re not alone in the struggle to support youth. That alone changes everything.”, YL, Romania, 2025*

#### INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN NEXT ENGAGE ACTIVITIES

RO

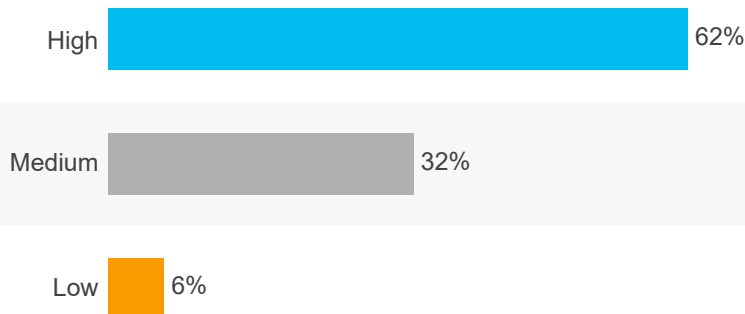


% Respondents

Q. How can this project best support your work as a Youth Leader?

#### PROBABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL TRAINING OR NETWORKING PROGRAMS

RO



% Respondents

Q. Would you participate in international training or networking opportunities with Youth Leaders from other countries, if expenses covered?

### 3.5 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The profile of youth leaders in Romania, as reflected in survey data, shows a highly educated and predominantly urban demographic, with 60% living in large cities and 66% holding at least a master's degree. Most are experienced professionals, many from education or social sciences backgrounds, with women comprising 72% of respondents. Still, almost half have less than five years of experience in youth work, indicating an emerging generation of practitioners. Respondents work primarily with adolescents aged 15–24 and are mostly affiliated with NGOs (47%) and schools (38%).

While youth leaders prioritize themes such as youth leadership, civic participation, and engagement, the training they have received in these areas is often limited. This mismatch is most evident in areas like gender equality, intersectionality, and climate justice, where interest exists but training and experience remain low. Similarly, confidence often exceeds formal preparation, especially in topics like civic education and human rights, suggesting a strong personal commitment but inconsistent institutional support.

Youth leaders report significant challenges in motivating and engaging young people, particularly those facing educational difficulties, disabilities, mental health issues, or geographic exclusion. Barriers include low participation, limited institutional resources, and lack of parental or community support. To address these, youth leaders adopt experiential, non-formal methods such as service learning, storytelling, and digital engagement. They highlight the importance of safe, inclusive spaces and mentorship as central to building trust and participation.

Regarding training preferences, there is a strong demand for formats that are practical, interactive, and grounded in real-life examples. Case studies, simulations, and peer exchange are consistently preferred over lecture-based input. Hybrid and online formats are valued for their flexibility, especially when scheduled on weekends. Leaders also ask for toolkits, expert networks, and digital tools as key outputs, alongside peer-learning and access to funding.

Finally, youth leaders demonstrate high openness to international collaboration: 62% report a high likelihood of participating in international training, and 63% express strong interest in continued ENGAGE activities. They see international experiences as valuable for gaining new methods, strengthening institutional partnerships, and translating global insights into local youth engagement strategies. This reflects a pragmatic orientation toward learning that connects innovation, practice, and impact.