



Evaluation Report

Assessing the Impact of the
BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting
on Knowledge Exchange, Policy Development
and Transnational Collaboration

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Van den Broeck, J., van Veen, F., Kanellopoulou, P., McGovern, D. (2026).
Evaluation Report: Assessing the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting.

Utrecht: Stichting Halt.

Acknowledgements

This Evaluation Report was developed as part of the Erasmus+-funded BRIDGE project (Building a Resourceful International Youth Diversion Group for Exchanging Best Practices Across Europe), a partnership between Stichting Halt, Foróige and Terre des hommes Hellas. We gratefully acknowledge the commitment, expertise and collaborative spirit of all three partner organisations, whose shared ambition to strengthen youth diversion across Europe made this evaluation and the wider BRIDGE project possible.

We would also like to thank the European Union, through the Erasmus+ Programme, for supporting the BRIDGE project and enabling the international cooperation, comparative learning and knowledge exchange that formed the foundation of this evaluation.

We are particularly grateful to all participants of the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting, held on 20 November 2025 in The Hague, for their active participation, openness and willingness to share their knowledge and experiences throughout the exchange. Their contributions, together with the reflections provided through the surveys, interviews and focus group, form the basis of the findings presented in this report.

We also extend our thanks to Willem Lammerink and Isanna Houwen for their hard work realizing the visual design and presentation of this evaluation report and its related materials.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the youth ambassadors from the Netherlands, Ireland and Greece, whose lived experiences and thoughtful reflections enriched both the exchange meeting and this evaluation. Their willingness to share their perspectives ensured that the voices of young people remained central to discussions on the future development of child-friendly diversion across Europe.

Disclaimers

The BRIDGE project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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Executive Summary

This report presents the evaluation of the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting, organised as part of the Erasmus+ BRIDGE project. Bringing together practitioners, policymakers, researchers and youth ambassadors from Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands, the exchange aimed to strengthen knowledge exchange, promote mutual learning, foster transnational collaboration, and ensure that the voices of young people informed discussions on child-friendly diversion.

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods design, combining pre- and post-exchange surveys with interviews and a focus group involving youth ambassadors. The findings indicate that the exchange successfully achieved its immediate objectives.

Participants reported increased knowledge of youth diversion systems across Europe and a stronger understanding of the international child rights framework underpinning diversion, particularly the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. While support for diversion was already very high before the meeting, participants expressed greater confidence afterwards in identifying opportunities to strengthen diversion within their own countries. The greatest knowledge gains related to understanding the strengths, challenges and legal frameworks of diversion systems outside participants' own jurisdictions, demonstrating the value of comparative international learning.

The exchange meeting itself was evaluated very positively. Participants particularly valued the combination of comparative presentations, interactive discussions, networking opportunities and the integration of research findings from the BRIDGE Needs Assessment. The involvement of youth ambassadors was consistently highlighted as one of the programme's greatest strengths. Their lived experiences grounded policy discussions in the realities faced by children in contact with the justice system and reinforced the importance of meaningful child participation, procedural safeguards, clear communication and restorative approaches.

Beyond immediate learning outcomes, the evaluation suggests that BRIDGE strengthened professional relationships and laid the foundations for continued European cooperation on youth diversion. Participants indicated that they intended to share the knowledge gained within their own organisations and explore how promising practices from other countries could inform future policy and practice. Rather than promoting a single model of diversion, the exchange encouraged critical reflection on different approaches and demonstrated how comparative dialogue can support more evidence-informed and child-centred justice systems.

The evaluation also identifies several areas for improvement. Future exchanges would benefit from a longer programme, greater opportunities for in-depth discussion and networking, broader participation of policymakers and other stakeholders across all participating countries, and the direct involvement of youth ambassadors from every partner country. Furthermore, while the evaluation demonstrates substantial immediate impacts on knowledge exchange and collaboration, longer-term monitoring will be necessary to assess how these translate into sustained policy development, practice innovation and European cooperation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the BRIDGE methodology, combining comparative research, professional exchange, policy dialogue and meaningful youth participation, provides a promising model for stimulating transnational collaboration to strengthen child-friendly diversion across Europe. The lessons learned directly inform the next phase of the partnership through the European Youth Diversion Network and the implementation of BRIDGE II, supporting continued knowledge exchange, joint research and policy development in the years ahead.

1. Introduction

1.1 About the BRIDGE Project

The BRIDGE Project (Building a Resourceful International Youth Diversion Group for Exchanging Best Practices Across Europe) is an Erasmus+ partnership between Stichting Halt (the Netherlands), Foróige (Ireland) and Terre des hommes Hellas (Greece). The project aims to strengthen mutual learning and cooperation between professionals working on youth diversion across different European legal and policy contexts.

Although diversion is widely recognised as a key component of child-friendly justice, its implementation varies considerably between countries. Differences in legal frameworks, eligibility criteria, procedural safeguards and diversion practices create valuable opportunities for comparative learning. BRIDGE was established to facilitate this exchange by bringing together practitioners, policymakers, researchers and young people from the three participating countries.

The project combines comparative research, professional exchange, youth participation and policy dialogue. A joint Needs Assessment informed the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting, held in The Hague on 20 November 2025, where participants explored similarities, differences and opportunities for strengthening diversion across Europe. The project also seeks to support long-term European cooperation on youth diversion through evidence-informed policy recommendations and the development of a sustainable European Youth Diversion Network.

1.2 Purpose of this Evaluation

Before and after the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting, evaluations were conducted to assess the effectiveness and impact of the project's transnational exchange activities. This report examines participants' knowledge gain, experiences of the exchange meeting, the contribution and experience of youth ambassadors, and the extent to which the project fostered mutual learning and collaboration between the participating countries.

Drawing on both quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews with youth ambassadors, the report identifies key lessons learned and provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening future international exchange activities, promoting transnational cooperation, and supporting the continued development of youth diversion policy and practice. These findings have been taken into account in designing the next phase and activities of the European Youth Diversion Network as laid out in the Sustainability and Scale Up Plan, which will be implemented in 2026-2030 through BRIDGE II and associated activities.

1.3 Structure of the Report

This report is structured into eight chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 3 provides an overview of the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting and its programme. Chapter 4 describes the evaluation methodology, including the survey design and semi-structured interviews with youth ambassadors. Chapter 5 presents the evaluation findings, covering participants' knowledge gain, experiences of the exchange meeting, and the perspectives of the youth ambassadors. Chapter 6 discusses these findings in relation to the project's objectives, while Chapter 7 explores the impact of the exchange on transnational collaboration and policy development. Chapter 8 presents recommendations for future exchange activities and long-term impact monitoring. Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the report by summarising the main findings and reflecting on the future of European cooperation on youth diversion.

2. The BRIDGE Exchange Meeting

2.1 Objectives of the Exchange Meeting

The BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting was organised as the central activity of the project, bringing together practitioners, policymakers, researchers and youth ambassadors from Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands. Building on the findings of the comparative Needs Assessment while expanding and discussing their implications, the meeting aimed to facilitate mutual learning on youth diversion by creating opportunities between stakeholders to exchange knowledge, compare national approaches and discuss common challenges and opportunities.

More specifically, the exchange sought to strengthen the links between policy, research and practice, promote transnational cooperation, and ensure that the lived experiences of young people informed discussions on the future development of youth diversion. By bringing together stakeholders from different professional backgrounds and national contexts, the meeting also laid the foundations for continued European collaboration and the further development of a European Youth Diversion Network.

2.2 Programme and Activities

The BRIDGE Exchange Meeting took place on 20 November 2025 at a community centre in The Hague and brought together youth justice professionals, policymakers, researchers and youth ambassadors from Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands. The programme was deliberately designed to combine research, professional exchange, youth participation and policy dialogue, thereby reflecting the project's objective of strengthening the links between policy, research and practice.

Morning Programme: Comparative Learning and Professional Exchange

The morning programme was facilitated by two youth ambassadors from the Halt Youth Panel with lived experience with diversion. They opened the meeting with an interactive icebreaker to get participants to mingle before introducing the day's programme. The first part of the morning focused on learning more about each other's diversion systems and presenting the comparative findings of the BRIDGE Needs Assessment. Representatives from Foróige, Stichting Halt and Terre des hommes Hellas each presented the legal framework, organisation and practical implementation of youth diversion within their respective countries.

Building on these presentations, participants explored five key comparative themes that had emerged from the Needs Assessment:

- Access points to diversion;
- Eligibility criteria, including offence types and repeat offending;
- Age limits and diversion eligibility;
- Legal and procedural safeguards;
- The role of restorative justice within diversion.

Participants were divided into mixed international discussion groups based on their nationality and professional background, with each group focusing on one of these themes. Discussions centred on similarities and differences between national diversion systems, examples of promising practice, implementation challenges and opportunities for mutual learning. Each group subsequently presented its main reflections during a plenary discussion, allowing participants to compare perspectives across countries and professional backgrounds.

The morning concluded with a youth-led dialogue facilitated by two Halt Youth Panel ambassadors. Drawing on the same interviews conducted with youth ambassadors from Greece and Ireland that

are used in this report, as well as the lived experience of the two Dutch youth ambassadors in attendance, participants discussed a series of statements on contemporary diversion issues. Topics included the appropriate age limits for diversion, eligibility criteria and proportionality in diversion decision-making. Rather than seeking consensus, this session aimed to stimulate reflection on how diversion policies are experienced by young people and to put their perspectives on these issues front and centre for the professional and policy discussions.

Afternoon Programme: Policy Dialogue and Future Collaboration

The afternoon programme expanded the discussion by bringing together a larger group of representatives from the Dutch youth justice sector, including policymakers and justice professionals. A representative of the Dutch Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and Youth Protection (RSJ) presented the findings and recommendations of the Council's recent advisory report on youth diversion in the Netherlands, providing a basis for discussion on current policy developments and opportunities for reform.

This was followed by shorter presentations from Foróige and Terre des hommes Hellas and the Greek Ministry of Justice, highlighting current developments and challenges within the Irish and Greek diversion systems and reflecting on how the comparative discussions earlier that day could inform future policy and practice and resonate with the common challenges faced in the Dutch system for the wider Dutch audience, exploring opportunities for mutual learning and policy development.

Following these presentations, participants took part in a structured networking session designed to facilitate direct exchange between professionals from the three participating countries. Dutch participants were invited to connect with colleagues from Ireland and Greece to discuss their respective diversion systems, reflect on lessons learned throughout the day, and explore opportunities for future collaboration. This informal exchange provided participants with an opportunity to deepen discussions beyond the plenary sessions.

After the networking session, the programme split into two parallel sessions. The Dutch participants remained for an interactive panel discussion reflecting on how the insights from the exchange meeting could be translated into the Dutch youth justice system and identifying opportunities for future policy and practice development. Meanwhile, the international delegation concluded the day with a keynote presentation by Silvia Randazzo, who presented insights from her research on child-centred diversion practices across Europe. Her presentation, *Diversion with children who are suspects and accused of a crime: Learning from each other, towards child-centred diversion*, explored different conceptualisations of diversion, discussed the practical application of key international child rights standards, and identified lessons from diversion systems across Europe that may support the continued development of child-friendly justice.

The exchange meeting concluded with a facilitated brainstorming session among the international partners on the future development of the emerging European Youth Diversion Network. Participants reflected on opportunities for continued cooperation beyond the BRIDGE project and identified priorities for future knowledge exchange, collaborative research and joint advocacy.

2.3 Participants

The BRIDGE Exchange Meeting was attended by 85 participants in total. The full-day programme brought together an international delegation of professionals, researchers and youth ambassadors from the Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, and Belgium. This group consisted of 29 participants, representing a cross-section of expertise within youth justice, including diversion practice, youth work, probation, the judiciary, prosecution services, policy development, academic research and child rights advocacy. Within this group, the Dutch delegation primarily consisted of representatives

from Stichting Halt, including senior management, policy and strategic advisors, researchers, youth diversion practitioners, communications staff and two members of the Halt Youth Panel that actively contributed to the programme as facilitators and speakers. The delegation also included the National Juvenile Prosecutor of the Public Prosecution Service. The Irish group representing Foróige, consisted of youth justice professionals working in community-based Youth Diversion Projects, including youth justice workers, senior youth officers and management and a family support worker. Their contributions provided practical insights into Ireland's long-term, needs-based diversion approach. The Greek group brought together a unique combination of representatives from the judiciary, prosecution, juvenile probation services, the Ministry of Justice and Terre des hommes Hellas. This multidisciplinary composition enabled participants to discuss diversion from both a policy and operational perspective within the Greek child justice system. Lastly, the international programme was further enriched by the participation of Silvia Randazzo (KU Leuven, PhD researcher on comparative diversion), whose expertise in child rights and comparative research on diversion across Europe provided an important academic and critical perspective throughout the exchange.

In the afternoon, the programme was expanded into a broader advocacy event with the participation of an additional 56 Dutch stakeholders. This larger delegation represented a wide range of organisations across the Dutch youth justice, child protection and social domains, including the Ministry of Justice and Security, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Public Prosecution Service, the Judiciary, the Child Care and Protection Board, the National Police, municipalities, universities and research institutes, victim support organisations, youth and community work organisations, mediation and restorative justice services, and a variety of organisations involved in youth care, prevention and diversion. The afternoon programme created an opportunity to connect the international comparative exchange with ongoing policy developments in the Netherlands, enabling Dutch professionals and decision-makers to reflect on the comparative findings, discuss their relevance for the Dutch context, and identify opportunities for further strengthening diversion policy and practice.

3. Evaluation Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Design

To evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting, a mixed-methods evaluation was conducted, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach made it possible to assess both measurable outcomes, such as changes in participants' knowledge gain and perceptions of youth diversion, and more in-depth reflections on participants' experiences of the exchange and the contribution of youth ambassadors.

The evaluation was designed to assess the extent to which the exchange meeting achieved its objectives of strengthening knowledge exchange, facilitating transnational collaboration, connecting policy, research and practice, and ensuring meaningful youth participation. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-exchange surveys completed by meeting participants, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with youth ambassadors and a focus group conducted with members of the Halt Youth Panel following the exchange meeting.

3.2 Data Collection

To evaluate the BRIDGE Youth Diversion Exchange Meeting, data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative data were obtained through pre- and post-exchange surveys completed by participants, while qualitative data were collected through interviews with youth ambassadors and a follow-up focus group with members of the Halt Youth Panel. Together, these methods provided insight into participants' knowledge development, experiences of the exchange meeting, perceptions of transnational collaboration, and the contribution of youth participation.

Pre- and Post-Exchange Surveys

Participants attending the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting were invited to complete an online questionnaire both before and after the event. The pre-exchange survey established a baseline by assessing participants' existing knowledge of youth diversion systems, familiarity with diversion practices in the participating countries, expectations of the exchange meeting, and attitudes towards key diversion principles. The post-exchange survey assessed perceived knowledge gain, participants' evaluation of the programme, reflections on the exchange methodology, and intentions to apply newly acquired knowledge within their own professional practice. The post-survey also invited participants to provide suggestions for improving future international exchange activities.

Youth Ambassador Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with youth ambassadors from Ireland and Greece prior to the exchange meeting. These interviews explored young people's experiences with diversion, their perspectives on current diversion policies, and their views on several themes that were discussed during the exchange meeting. Excerpts from these interviews were incorporated into the youth-led session to ensure that the perspectives of young people from all participating countries informed the discussions.

Focus Group with the Halt Youth Panel

Following the exchange meeting, a focus group was conducted with four Halt Youth Panel members, including the two who had facilitated parts of the programme. The discussion explored their experiences of participating in the exchange meeting, their reflections on the conversations with professionals and policymakers, and their views on the extent to which young people's perspectives had been meaningfully incorporated throughout the event. The focus group also generated recommendations for strengthening youth participation in future international exchange activities.

Ethical and safeguarding considerations

All youth participants received clear, age-appropriate information about the purpose of the evaluation, what participation would involve and how their contributions would be used. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could decline to answer any question, pause the discussion or withdraw without adverse consequences. Separate consent was obtained for audio recording and for the publication of anonymised quotations. Where applicable, consent and assent procedures for participants under the age of 18 were followed in accordance with the participating organisation's safeguarding requirements. Names and other direct identifiers were removed from transcripts, notes and reported findings. Quotations were selected and edited carefully to remove unnecessary identifying details while preserving their intended meaning.

3.3 Participants

The quantitative component of the evaluation consisted of participants who completed the pre- and post-exchange surveys. Respondents represented a broad range of professional backgrounds, including policymakers, youth workers, juvenile prosecutors, juvenile probation officers, juvenile judges and representatives of Terre des hommes. A total of 23 participants completed the pre-exchange survey, comprising 9 participants from the Netherlands, 6 from Ireland and 8 from Greece. The post-exchange survey was completed by 21 participants, including 8 participants from the Netherlands, 7 from Ireland and 6 from Greece.

For clarity, this evaluation focused exclusively on participants in the international exchange programme (n = 29), comprising the delegations from Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands. The additional 56 Dutch stakeholders who attended only the afternoon advocacy programme were not invited to complete the survey, as they did not participate in the full exchange programme. Of the international participants, 23 completed the pre-exchange survey (79%) and 21 completed the post-exchange survey (72%).

The qualitative component consisted of interviews with youth ambassadors and a follow-up focus group. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one young person with lived experience of diversion from Ireland and one from Greece. In addition, a focus group was held with four members of the Halt Youth Panel, all of whom had previously participated in a Halt intervention and had actively contributed to the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting as youth ambassadors.

Table 1. Overview of evaluation participants

Evaluation activity	Participants
Pre-exchange survey	23 (NL = 9; IE = 6; GR = 8)
Post-exchange survey	21 (NL = 8; IE = 7; GR = 6)
Youth ambassador interviews	2 (Ireland = 1; Greece = 1)
Halt Youth Panel focus group	4

3.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative survey data were analysed descriptively by comparing responses from the pre- and post-exchange surveys. Frequencies, percentages and mean scores were used to identify changes in participants' self-reported knowledge, attitudes and perceptions following the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting. Responses to open-ended survey questions were reviewed to identify recurring themes regarding participants' experiences of the exchange meeting and suggestions for future improvement.

The qualitative data collected through the youth ambassador interviews and the focus group were analysed using a thematic approach. Interview transcripts and discussion notes were reviewed and coded to identify recurring patterns and key themes related to participants' experiences with diversion, their reflections on the exchange meeting, and their recommendations for strengthening youth participation and future international exchange activities.

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses were subsequently integrated to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the exchange meeting, combining measurable changes in participants' knowledge and perceptions with a deeper understanding of their experiences and reflections.

4. Evaluation Findings

4.1 Baseline Knowledge and Expectations

Familiarity with Youth Diversion

The results from the pre-survey show that Ireland is the most familiar with diversion, with an average score of 4.83. The Netherlands and Greece show similar levels of familiarity. However, when examining the more legal aspects of diversion, we see that Ireland is the least familiar with the contents of the UNCRC (2.83), whereas the Dutch participants demonstrated the highest level of self-reported knowledge in this area (3.78).

Table 2. General questions pre-test

How familiar are you with youth diversion?

Overall (N=20)	Greece (N=5)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=9)
4.15	3.80	4.83	3.89

How familiar are you with the contents of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to youth diversion?

Overall (N=20)	Greece (N=5)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=9)
3.45	3.60	2.83	3.78

Note: Based on mean scores: 1 = not at all familiar, 5 = very familiar

The attitude towards diversion

Participants expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the use of youth diversion. Respondents strongly agreed that diversion constitutes an important component of their national youth justice systems (M = 4.84) and believed that diversion should be used more extensively within their own countries (M = 4.63). Likewise, participants generally considered diversion to be more effective than punishment in preventing reoffending (M = 4.47).

While support for diversion was consistently high across all three countries, respondents were somewhat less confident about how existing diversion systems could be expanded or further developed (M = 3.32). This suggests that, despite broad support for diversion as a principle, many participants were looking for practical ideas and comparative insights to strengthen diversion policy and practice within their own jurisdictions.

Table 3. Attitude towards diversion pre-test

Statement	Overall (N=23)	Greece (N=8)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=9)
<i>I think it is very important to apply youth diversion in my own country.</i>	4.84	4.50	5.00	4.80
<i>I think we should use youth diversion more than we already do.</i>	4.63	4.50	4.50	4.78
<i>I know possible ways to expand the current youth diversion program in my own country.</i>	3.32	3.25	3.67	3.11
<i>I think youth diversion is more effective than punishment in preventing re-offending.</i>	4.47	4.25	4.50	4.56

Note: Based on mean scores: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Existing knowledge of international diversion systems

As expected, participants demonstrated considerably greater knowledge of their own national diversion systems than those of the other participating countries. Respondents generally reported being familiar with the diversion measures, strengths and challenges within their own jurisdictions, while their knowledge of diversion systems abroad was substantially lower.

These findings underline one of the central rationales for the BRIDGE project: although all participants possessed considerable expertise within their own national contexts, there remained significant scope for comparative learning and the exchange of international best practices.

Table 4. International youth diversion policies pre-test

Statement	Overall	Greece	Ireland	Netherlands
<i>I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Irish youth diversion system.</i>	2.95	1.50	4.17	2.78
<i>I am familiar with the main strengths of the Irish youth diversion system.</i>	3.21	1.25	4.50	3.22
<i>I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Irish youth diversion system.</i>	2.89	1.25	4.50	2.56
<i>I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Dutch youth justice system.</i>	2.58	1.25	1.33	4.00
<i>I am familiar with the main strengths of the Dutch youth diversion system.</i>	2.63	1.25	1.50	4.00
<i>I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Dutch youth diversion system.</i>	2.68	1.25	1.33	4.22
<i>I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Greek youth justice system.</i>	2.32	4.75	1.17	2.00
<i>I am familiar with the main strengths of the Greek youth diversion system.</i>	2.21	4.75	1.17	1.78
<i>I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Greek youth diversion system.</i>	2.26	4.75	1.17	1.89

Note: Based on mean scores: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Expectations of the BRIDGE meeting

Participants' expectations closely reflected the objectives of the BRIDGE project. The dominant theme emerging from the open-ended responses was a desire for mutual learning and knowledge exchange. Respondents hoped to gain a better understanding of how youth diversion is organised in the three participating countries, to learn about successful practices and implementation challenges, and to identify ideas that could strengthen diversion within their own national contexts. Participant responses included:

"I expect to learn methods of working within diversion in other countries and how we can use this practices at home."

“I expect to learn how youth Diversion programs have been rolled out in different contexts to our own country. I expect to hear about common challenges we all share working with young people today as well as unique issues local to each country.”

Participants also expressed strong expectations regarding international cooperation. Many hoped the exchange meeting would contribute to building lasting professional relationships and strengthen a European network around youth diversion.

“I hope to build strong partnerships and learn new things about the other systems.”

Finally, respondents indicated that they hoped the exchange would generate practical inspiration for future policy and practice within their own organisations.

“I hope to walk away with a sense of inspiration, with some strategic goals and ideas for projects to advance diversion in our country and internationally in the EU.”

4.2 Knowledge Transfer

Perceived knowledge gain

Following the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting, participants reported a clear increase in their perceived knowledge of youth diversion. Across all participating countries, respondents indicated greater familiarity with diversion than they had prior to the exchange, with the overall mean score increasing from **4.15** in the pre-survey to **4.47** in the post-survey.

A similar trend was observed regarding participants' familiarity with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) relating to youth diversion. The overall mean score increased from **3.45** to **4.07**, with the largest improvements reported by participants from Greece and Ireland. These findings suggest that the exchange meeting contributed not only to participants' understanding of diversion practices, but also to their awareness of the international child rights framework underpinning diversion.

Although participants reported clear increases in perceived knowledge, these findings should be interpreted cautiously. The evaluation relied on self-reported learning rather than objective knowledge assessments. Consequently, the results primarily demonstrate participants' confidence in their understanding rather than independently verified knowledge acquisition.

Table 5. General question post-test

How familiar are you with youth diversion?

Overall (N= 15)	Greece (N=3)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=6)
4.47	4.33	5.00	4.00

How familiar are you with the contents of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to youth diversion?

Overall (N=15)	Greece (N=3)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=6)
4.07	4.67	4.00	3.83

Note: Based on mean scores: 1 = not at all familiar, 5 = very familiar

Attitudes towards youth diversion

Participants' already positive attitudes towards youth diversion remained consistently high following the exchange meeting. Whereas the pre-survey had already shown strong support for the importance of diversion (M = 4.84), post-survey respondents unanimously agreed that diversion should play an important role within their national youth justice systems (M = 5.00).

One of the most notable changes concerned participants' confidence in identifying opportunities to further develop diversion within their own countries. The mean score for this statement increased from **3.32** before the exchange to **4.00** afterwards, suggesting that the comparative discussions and

exchange of international practices provided participants with new ideas for strengthening diversion policy and practice in their own national contexts.

Support for expanding the use of diversion ($M = 4.87$) and the belief that diversion is more effective than punishment in preventing reoffending ($M = 4.80$) also remained consistently high across all participating countries. The relatively high baseline scores also indicate a possible ceiling effect. Participants already held very positive attitudes towards diversion before attending the exchange meeting, leaving limited scope for measurable attitudinal change. Consequently, the primary added value of the exchange appears to lie less in changing opinions than in deepening understanding and broadening participants' perspectives.

Table 6. attitude towards diversion post-test

Statement	Overall (N= 15)	Greece (N=3)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=6)
<i>I think it is very important to apply youth diversion in my own country.</i>	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
<i>I think we should use youth diversion more than we already do.</i>	4.87	5.00	4.67	5.00
<i>I know possible ways to expand the current youth diversion program in my own country.</i>	4.00	4.00	4.50	3.50
<i>I think youth diversion is more effective than punishment in preventing re-offending.</i>	4.80	5.00	4.83	4.67

Note: Based on mean scores: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Knowledge gain of international youth diversion systems

The largest changes were observed in participants' knowledge of diversion systems outside their own national contexts. Whereas the pre-survey demonstrated that respondents were primarily familiar with their own diversion systems, post-survey scores increased across all questions relating to the Irish, Dutch and Greek diversion models.

Participants reported greater familiarity with the diversion measures available in each country, as well as a better understanding of their respective strengths, limitations and implementation challenges. This pattern was observed across respondents from all three participating countries and suggests that the exchange meeting successfully achieved one of its principal objectives: facilitating comparative learning between professionals working in different youth justice systems.

Although participants generally remained most familiar with their own national diversion systems, the findings indicate that the exchange substantially reduced the knowledge gap identified in the baseline assessment. The programme therefore succeeded in broadening participants' understanding of alternative approaches to youth diversion and provided a stronger basis for future transnational collaboration and mutual learning.

Table 7. International youth diversion policies post-test

Statement	Overall (N=14)	Greece (N=3)	Ireland (N=6)	Netherlands (N=6)
<i>I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Irish youth diversion system.</i>	4.14	4.00	4.67	3.67
<i>I am familiar with the main strengths of the Irish youth diversion system.</i>	4.29	3.50	4.83	4.00

<i>I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Irish youth diversion system.</i>	3.93	3.00	5.00	3.17
<i>I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Dutch youth justice system.</i>	4.07	3.50	4.00	4.33
<i>I am familiar with the main strengths of the Dutch youth diversion system.</i>	4.36	4.00	4.17	4.67
<i>I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Dutch youth diversion system.</i>	4.29	4.00	4.00	4.67
<i>I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Greek youth justice system.</i>	3.29	5.00	3.17	2.83
<i>I am familiar with the main strengths of the Greek youth diversion system.</i>	3.21	5.00	3.33	2.50
<i>I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Greek youth diversion system.</i>	3.07	5.00	3.00	2.50

Note: Based on mean scores: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

4.3 Evaluation of the Exchange Meeting

Besides measuring perceived knowledge gain, the post-exchange survey evaluated participants' experiences of the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting itself. Participants were asked to reflect on the overall value of the meeting, the effectiveness of its different programme components, the extent to which it influenced their thinking, and the practical organisation of the event.

Overall evaluation

Participants evaluated the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting very positively. The exchange was considered highly valuable (M = 4.60) and effective in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences between participants (M = 4.69). The comparative discussions (M = 4.63), the preceding Needs Assessment (M = 4.63), and the youth-led activity (M = 4.56) were all regarded as important contributors to the success of the meeting.

Overall, respondents also indicated that participation had influenced their perspectives on youth diversion (M = 4.40), suggesting that the exchange not only increased participants' knowledge but also encouraged critical reflection on existing diversion policies and practices.

The consistently high evaluation scores should be interpreted in light of the composition of the participant group. Participants voluntarily attended the exchange meeting and were professionally engaged with youth diversion prior to the event. As such, a generally positive evaluation was perhaps to be expected. Nevertheless, the qualitative responses demonstrate that participants valued specific elements of the programme (particularly the comparative discussions and youth-led activities) rather than expressing only general satisfaction.

Table 8. Perceived effectiveness from participants

Question	N	Mean
<i>To what extent was the BRIDGE exchange valuable to you?</i>	15	4.60
<i>To what extent has your participation in BRIDGE confirmed or changed your perspective about diversion?</i>	15	4.40
<i>BRIDGE was effective in facilitating knowledge exchange among participants.</i>	16	4.69

<i>The findings of the Needs Assessment were useful for me.</i>	16	4.63
<i>The discussions on comparative insights were useful for me.</i>	16	4.63
<i>The youth led activity was effective in providing insights into current practices of youth diversion.</i>	16	4.56

Note: based on mean scores 1 to 5.

Learning outcome and intended application

Beyond evaluating the meeting itself, participants reflected on how the exchange had influenced their own professional thinking and how they intended to apply the knowledge gained.

Several respondents described the exchange as prompting critical reflection on their own national diversion systems. Rather than simply confirming existing practices, the meeting encouraged participants to reconsider underlying assumptions and identify opportunities for further development:

“It made me reflect on the threshold for entering the criminal justice system here in Ireland. Realizing we have centered diversion in our youth justice system has highlighted how progressive we are but the exchange also reminded me how Ireland can feel disconnected from research and legal training that we need to target and support high risk young people.”

Others emphasised that the exchange had strengthened their understanding of diversion as a child rights-based approach and reinforced the importance of ensuring access to diversion for young people:

“I have a much deeper understanding in what diversion is action means, and it has confirmed to me that access to diversion should be a right for all juveniles who commit an offence or are at risk of committing an offence.”

Participants also described concrete intentions to share the knowledge acquired during the exchange within their own organisations and national contexts:

“We are eager to report our findings and other countries best practices to our greater Dublin team. I will now look at my everyday diversion interventions with a deeper knowledge of what diversion means.”

“Certain elements of the youth diversion process as applied in the Netherlands and in Ireland could be adopted in the Greek system of diversion, in order to improve the way the diversion of the criminal procedure is conducted by the prosecutors.”

Others indicated that they certainly found the meeting useful for gaining a deeper understanding of diversion, but do not yet know how they will apply this in their work:

“It’s hard to know right now. In the long run, I think it has reshaped how I see my work. Before I would have seen myself ore as a youth worker or social worker. Now I can better appreciate how diversion work sits in the nexus of several fields; child justice, legal reform, community work, trauma informed praxis. It has definitely enabled me to appreciate the scope and importance of our work and how we draw lessons from other countries.”

Reflections on the programme content

Participants particularly valued the combination of expert presentations, comparative discussions and interactive group work. The overall balance between presentations, interactive sessions and

networking opportunities received a high rating (M = 4.60), while respondents also indicated that participation and interaction were actively encouraged throughout the programme (M = 4.69). The small-group discussions were frequently mentioned as one of the most valuable components of the exchange. Participants appreciated the opportunity to compare national diversion systems, discuss practical challenges and explore differences in legal frameworks and implementation.

“When broken into groups to discuss different topics there were a few things I picked up on in the difference between the Irish Youth Justice in comparison to how the Netherlands and Greece do things. If a youth carries out an offence when they are still a minor but the case goes to court when they are over 18 years of age that youth although technically an adult is tried as a juvenile. That is not the case in Ireland, this is found very interesting. Also, how it is mandatory for a youth to engage with the Justice system whereas in Ireland it is voluntary. Seeing comparisons between how youth justice is rolled out in different countries is a huge learning curve.”

The presentations by the project partners and the keynote presentation by Silvia Randazzo were likewise highlighted as valuable. Participants indicated that these sessions provided a broader conceptual understanding of diversion and encouraged reflection on contemporary challenges in developing child-friendly diversion systems.

“Everything professor Randazzo discussed at the end I found fascinating. The nature of diversion; it is preventative / remedial / responsive / reactive? Who deserves and needs Diversion? What do we in Ireland lose from tolerating a lot of youth crime before young people appear before court? How can community based Diversion be more research informed and effective? What age should Diversion stop?”

Although participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the programme, several suggested that future exchange meetings could benefit from the involvement of an even wider range of stakeholders, including additional policymakers and police representatives, to further enrich the discussions.

Table 9. evaluation related to the content of the BRIDGE meeting

Question	N	Mean
To what extent was there a good balance between the various activities, such as presentations, interactive sessions and networking opportunities?	16	4.60
To what extent were the participants well-matched to the purpose of the exchange meeting?	16	4.40
To what extent were participation and interaction during the activities actively encouraged?	16	4.69

Note: based on mean scores 1 to 5.

Organization of the BRIDGE meeting

Participants were also highly positive about the practical organisation of the exchange meeting. The overall meeting received an average rating of **4.67**, while respondents expressed similarly high levels of satisfaction with the venues and facilities (M = 4.67), the overall management of the event (M = 4.61), the clarity of pre-event communication (M = 4.50), and the information provided beforehand regarding the programme (M = 4.72).

Respondents particularly appreciated the informal setting of the community centre and the active involvement of youth ambassadors throughout the programme, which several participants regarded as distinctive strengths of the meeting.

The most frequently recurring suggestion concerned the duration of the programme. Although participants considered the programme highly engaging, many indicated that its content would

benefit from being spread over two days. A longer format would create additional opportunities for networking, informal discussions and more in-depth reflection on the comparative themes.

“The exchange was organized extremely well. The only suggestion would be to split the day of the conference into two days. It was quite a packed day, and although it was very informative and planned to a high standard it was a long day.”

“The only improvement I could suggest is having the event spread over the course of 2+ days. The conversations and presentations were so engaging, but the 12 hour day was long. I also felt like by the end of the first day, I had made amazing networks with other delegates that it would have been even more enriching to have another day for discussions and connections!”

Table 10. Evaluation related to the organization of the BRIDGE meeting

Question	N	Mean
Overall, how would you rate the BRIDGE exchange meeting?	18	4.67
How would you rate the overall management of the exchange meeting (Timing, venues, food, transport, accommodation etc.)	18	4.61
To what extent were the venues and facilities adequate and comfortable?	18	4.67
To what extent was the pre-event communication clear and informative?	18	4.50
To what extent was the purpose of the program clear beforehand?	18	4.72

Note: based on mean scores 1 to 5.

4.4 Youth Ambassador Perspectives

To complement the perspectives of professionals and policymakers, the evaluation included interviews with youth ambassadors from Ireland and Greece and a focus group with four members of the Halt Youth Panel. Drawing on the comparative themes identified in the Needs Assessment, participants reflected on their experiences with diversion, their views on child-friendly justice and the role of young people within diversion processes. Together, these findings provide valuable insight into how diversion is experienced by the young people it is ultimately intended to serve.

4.4.1 Experiences with Diversion

Legal Safeguards

Across the interviews, several issues emerged regarding young people’s understanding of their rights, the voluntariness of their choices, and the clarity of the diversion process;

Limited sense of voluntary choice (the Netherlands)

A concern among the four Dutch respondents was that the choice to participate in the diversion measure did not feel fully voluntary. They described being presented with only two options – proceeding through the formal criminal justice process and receiving a criminal record, or accepting a diversion measure such as Halt:

“It was simply a choice between getting a criminal record or doing the Halt program. I wasn’t really told much more than that.”

The respondent went on to say:

“Perhaps there could have been a clearer explanation of what each option would actually entail. For example, what the consequences would have been if I had chosen to pay the fine and have it recorded

on my criminal record. But then again, the word ‘criminal record’ already sounds intimidating, so in principle that alone is enough – if the goal is to prevent people from ending up with one.”

A similar dynamic appeared in Ireland, where the respondent reported being given a choice by a JLO between ‘a charge’ or entering a Youth Diversion Programme (YDP). In both contexts, the framing of the options made the diversion pathway feel less like a genuine choice and more like the only acceptable alternative.

Insufficient information about the process (Greece)

A second theme related to insufficient information, is the lack of information given about the process. The Greek respondent described receiving limited information at the outset, typically at the police station, but no further explanation afterwards. As the respondent noted:

“I just remember that no one really explained things clearly. Letters came to our house, the lawyers talked to each other, and my parents told me bits and pieces, but I didn’t really understand any of it. The language in the documents wasn’t simple, and no one broke it down for me. I just remember being told “you have to start doing this”, and then the meetings began.”

A similar issue surfaced in the Netherlands. Respondents indicated that, during the initial decision-making stage, they received no explanation about what the Halt trajectory would entail or what it would mean for them personally. This information was provided only after they had already agreed to participate, raising questions about informed consent.

In contrast, the Irish respondent reported clearer communication. The respondent described receiving a detailed and accessible explanation about the YDP, stating:

“They really easily explained it to me, made it really easy to understand. (...) She explained to me that it’d be like if I got there they’d teach me on how to be ground, and teach me real things that you wouldn’t really learn in school, like people skills basically.”

Equal access to diversion

Perceived equal treatment in individual cases (the Netherlands):

One Dutch respondent described feeling that they had been treated equally in comparison with others involved in the same incident. Although the three young people involved in the case came from different backgrounds (Dutch, Polish and Turkish), the respondent noted that the case was handled in an equivalent manner for everyone, stating:

“From what I’ve heard based on what they told me, we basically went through the same process. According to what they shared with me, they were not looked at differently or treated in any other way. All three of us received the same sanction, the same amount, and literally had to do exactly the same things.”

Differences in treatment linked to attitude rather than background (the Netherlands):

Two of the Dutch respondents also highlighted that variations in access to Halt or in the resulting measures were more strongly related to a young person’s attitude than to their ethnic or social background. As one respondent explained:

“If people don’t take it seriously or don’t behave normally, then they don’t get the option anymore.”

Another respondent described a situation where a peer received a stricter sanction, but attributed this difference to the individual’s behavior and attitude, rather than factors such as ethnicity:

“I wasn’t treated differently...my friend got a much harsher punishment, but that had more to do with him as a person than with him being a man of color. (..) He messed around with the assignments, or something along those lines.”

Concerns about vulnerable groups experiencing greater inequality (Greece):

A contrasting perspective emerged from Greece, where the respondent expressed concern that certain vulnerable groups – such as Roma youth or immigrant children who do not speak Greek – might be treated more harshly within the justice process.

Restorative justice

A greater desire for mediation from a victim-perspective (The Netherlands and Greece):

The willingness to participate in mediation was present among both the Greek and two of the Dutch respondents. Both perceived themselves, at least in part, as victims in their cases and would have been open to some form of mediation, provided they did not have to initiate it themselves:

“I don’t think I would’ve been the one to make that move, no. But if they had asked to talk, to make peace, and I’d heard a sincere apology, yeah, I’d have done it. That’s all I wanted honestly. Not money, not to “win” the case. I didn’t need that. I just wanted someone to say “I’m sorry””

A Dutch respondent indicated that he also filed a police report against the other person involved in the case, and states:

“From that position as a victim, I would have wanted to take part in that mediation conversation. And not as a perpetrator or offender or anything like that. But it was outside of Halt, so it had nothing to do with Halt but with the fact that I had filed a police report. ”

Courtroom as unsuitable setting for mediation (Greece):

The Greek respondent also stated that mediation should ideally take place in an informal or low-threshold setting:

“Because going to a court feels like you’re about to be judged, it’s too serious. But if it’s a place where you can just talk, it feels more relaxed. It has to be something more friendly.”

Child participation and Agency

Limited opportunity for input or decision-making by the child (The Netherlands):

Dutch respondents mention that suitable assignments were simply “presented” to them. They reported having little influence over the type or content of the task:

“I didn’t have much say in which ones I wanted to do or not, or how many. I just had to complete a certain number of hours as part of the sanction, and they just presented me with whatever they presented me with.”

The respondent explained that, although he indicated there was no peer pressure involved, he was nevertheless given assignments on peer pressure:

“Of course, it is important to have the perspective of the Halt worker, as they have a good sense of what may or may not be useful. However, I did find it a bit disappointing that, even though I had made it quite clear that peer pressure was not involved, they still focused on it, and a large part of the assignments I had to complete were about peer pressure”

“During the conversation about what went wrong and what could go wrong, I did speak up quite a bit, but it was brushed aside like ‘yeah, you don’t know what you’re talking about.’”

Another Dutch respondent reported he did, to some extent, feel listened to, because the duration of the intervention was adjusted and shortened following an intake conversation. However, the content of the intervention also remained non-negotiable.

Young people can feel unheard (Greece):

When it comes to child agency in Greece, the respondent primarily reported negative experiences:

“Decisions were being made for me without asking me because I couldn’t speak up. I don’t remember anyone asking for my opinion. (...) And with the whole justice system, from the moment I was arrested until they released me that day, they didn’t involve me at all. They just did what they had to do. They didn’t listen to me, not at all. The whole thing was just procedural.”

A high level of youth agency (Ireland):

In contrast to the Greek and Dutch respondent, the Irish respondent stated that he was explicitly asked “what do you want?”, what he would like to do and what he’d look to get out of attending the YDP. The YDP focuses on the wishes of the young person and on strengthening their voice:

“They actually kinda helped me learn to speak up about what I felt (..) And like now I’m good at talking in big groups and I’m not scared anymore. I’ve got confidence because of it.”

He continued by saying that he wanted to focus on school and on getting job, and states how the youth worker supported him with this:

“So I told them that’s what I wanted to do, and they build around that and help me look for jobs and gave me a few referrals.”

4.4.2 Recommendations from Young People

Raising the age limit for a diversion measure from 18 to (at least) 21 (the Netherlands and Ireland):

The Irish respondent experienced the end of the YDP as too abrupt and would have preferred it to continue beyond the age of 18. He also suggested that turning 18 does not automatically make someone fully mature:

“The only thing that I think should be done there really is the age. It shouldn’t just stop at 18. Because you’re not becoming adult, off and out. It takes a few couple of months to even a couple of years to become a full, like developing adult, a fully developed adult.”

In the Netherlands all four respondents recommended raising the age limit for Halt to at least 21, and possibly even 25 for certain offences. They saw the limited ability of adolescents to think about the long-term consequences as a key reason:

“I would also extend Halt beyond 18, starting with only certain offences. Because right now... a lot of young people live very much in the moment; they don’t really think 5 or 10 years ahead. It’s very much like: ‘right now I’m cool; and I think that’s a shame.’”

Communication should be more child-friendly, respectful and clear (Greece):

The Greek respondent stated that the system needs to be structured in a more child-friendly way to ensure that children understand what is happening and why. Additionally, children should be approached respectfully and without accusatory language:

“The system should be more child-friendly. Everything should be explained clearly, with communication, not accusatory. Police, social workers, everyone should approach children in a respectful, supportive way. No sarcasm, no humiliation.”

Social work and psychological support should go hand in hand (Greece):

The respondent emphasized on the, according to him, underlying issue that many young people in justice processes face:

“Children involved in the justice system, especially for serious matters, should receive some kind of psychotherapy. There should be a psychologist alongside the social worker (...) This is a must to help them escape from what they’re stuck in, to solve problems in their mind.”

Personalized (restorative) assignments promote awareness (The Netherlands):

One Dutch respondent indicated that actively engaging with the topic related to the offence can increase awareness and empathy. Examples include a restorative assignment involving a specific victim or community-based work in the affected area:

“I thought the assignments – the actual assignments, so not the questionnaires – those things were you had to actually write something, were also very good because then you’re really dealing with what you’ve done. That piece of awareness (..) I think that if you’ve harmed your environment, it’s not strange to give something back to your environment, through volunteer work or something like that, to give back to what you’ve harmed.”

4.4.3 Broader Reflections

The young person’s environment has a strong influence on behavior (Ireland and Greece):

Both the Irish and Greek respondent emphasized on the role that environmental factors play in shaping young people’s behavior. The Irish respondent stated the following:

“People need to actually understand that the area you grow up in is kinda who you’re supposed to be – not who you are supposed to be, but it kinda shapes you as a young kid. But the YDP gives you a chance to brush away from the group, if that makes sense.”

A similar statement was given by the Greek respondent:

“Many people grow up in harmful environments. For example, I know a child in a central neighborhood of Athens who was detained 36 times. How many times must a child go to jail before anyone realizes the home environment is the problem? If they go to prison, they don’t become better, they get worse”

He continues to say:

“Some countries even remove children from harmful homes if necessary. Here it’s rare. (..) A proper foster care is needed.”

The influence of the parents during the meetings (Greece and the Netherlands):

The presence of parents can also affect how the young person behaves – sometimes positively when the young person shows more respectful behavior, and parents get to be more properly informed. A Dutch respondent highlighted the potential benefits of having parents present:

“I can imagine that it’s, first of all, nerve-racking, and second, that when your mother is there, some boys hold back a bit. Normally they might act tough, with that ‘fuck you’ mentality, but with their mother

present they behave more and listen more, not necessarily rebelling as much (..) At the start of the conversation, they also say that you've waived your right to participate in Halt, and I think that kind of information is important for your mother to know. And that she knows what the assignments are and what it's going to look like, so she can maybe support you with that as well."

The Greek respondent expressed a less favorable view, specifically on the presence of the parents during any form of restorative measures and mediation, noting that the presence of parents can shape or affect the response a child gives:

"Ideally the parents should talk to each other, and the kids should talk to each other. Because sometimes a parent might interrupt or try to control what their child says. So I think it's better if the kids handle it themselves. Most kids are very different from their parents anyway."

4.4.4 Contribution of Youth Participation to the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting

The findings demonstrate that involving youth ambassadors substantially enriched the exchange meeting. Rather than discussing diversion exclusively from legal or professional perspectives, participants were confronted with lived experiences that illustrated how diversion is experienced in practice. This was reflected not only in the positive evaluation of the youth-led activity ($M = 4.56$), but also in participants' qualitative reflections, which frequently highlighted the value of hearing directly from young people. The combination of interviews from Greece and Ireland and active facilitation by the Dutch youth ambassadors ensured that youth participation was embedded throughout the exchange rather than being treated as a standalone session.

Although youth ambassadors were actively involved throughout the exchange meeting, only Dutch young people were able to participate in person. The perspectives of Irish and Greek youth ambassadors were incorporated through interviews rather than direct participation. While this ensured that their voices informed the discussions, future exchanges would benefit from facilitating direct interaction between young people from different countries.

5. Discussion

5.1 Did BRIDGE Achieve its Objectives?

The evaluation suggests that BRIDGE largely achieved its immediate objectives. However, it is important to distinguish between immediate outcomes, such as perceived knowledge gain and strengthened professional networks, and longer-term impacts on policy and practice. The latter could not yet be assessed within the timeframe of this evaluation. Still, both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that the exchange created an environment in which participants not only expanded their knowledge of youth diversion systems in other European countries, but also critically reflected on their own national approaches and identified opportunities for future collaboration.

One of the clearest outcomes of the evaluation concerns knowledge exchange. The pre- and post-exchange surveys demonstrated a consistent increase in participants' self-reported knowledge of youth diversion, particularly regarding the legal frameworks, strengths and challenges of diversion systems in the participating countries. Whereas the baseline assessment showed that participants possessed extensive knowledge of their own national systems but relatively limited understanding of diversion elsewhere, the post-exchange findings suggest that this knowledge gap was substantially reduced. Participants also reported feeling better equipped to identify opportunities for strengthening diversion within their own national contexts, indicating that the exchange succeeded in moving beyond information sharing towards practical learning and reflection.

The evaluation further demonstrates that BRIDGE effectively connected policy, research and practice. The programme deliberately brought together policymakers, practitioners, researchers and youth ambassadors, creating opportunities for dialogue between stakeholders who do not routinely engage with one another. The combination of comparative country presentations, discussions based on the findings of the Needs Assessment, policy reflections from representatives of the Dutch youth justice system and Silvia Randazzo's research on child-centred diversion enabled participants to consider diversion from multiple complementary perspectives. This multidisciplinary approach was consistently reflected in participants' positive evaluations of both the programme content and the comparative discussions.

A distinctive strength of the BRIDGE methodology was its emphasis on meaningful youth participation. Rather than involving young people solely as beneficiaries or observers, youth ambassadors actively facilitated parts of the programme, shared their lived experiences and challenged participants to reflect on diversion from the perspective of children and young people. The interviews conducted with youth ambassadors from Ireland and Greece, together with the contributions of the Halt Youth Panel, ensured that discussions were grounded not only in legal and policy considerations but also in the lived realities of diversion. The consistently positive evaluation of the youth-led activities illustrates the added value of embedding youth participation throughout the exchange rather than treating it as a separate component.

Finally, the evaluation indicates that the exchange successfully contributed to building a European learning community around youth diversion. Participants consistently emphasised the value of exchanging experiences with colleagues from different legal systems, while the structured networking opportunities facilitated new professional relationships and laid the foundation for continued cooperation beyond the project. Many participants indicated that they intended to share the knowledge gained within their own organisations and explore how practices observed in other countries could inform future developments in their national contexts. Together, these findings suggest that BRIDGE achieved more than a one-day exchange meeting; it established the basis for sustained international dialogue on child-friendly diversion.

5.2 Reflections on Comparative Learning

One of the central ambitions of BRIDGE was not to identify a single "best" diversion model, but to facilitate mutual learning between countries with different legal traditions, institutional arrangements and approaches to youth diversion. The evaluation findings suggest that this objective was achieved. Rather than viewing national differences as barriers, participants consistently approached them as opportunities for reflection, discussion and professional learning.

The comparative discussions revealed that, despite considerable differences in legislation and institutional organisation, many of the challenges faced by the participating countries were remarkably similar. Participants repeatedly returned to themes such as ensuring meaningful child participation, safeguarding children's procedural rights, balancing accountability with rehabilitation, broadening access to diversion and strengthening restorative approaches. While each country addressed these issues in different ways, recognising these shared challenges encouraged participants to move beyond comparisons of legal systems and instead focus on the underlying principles of child-friendly justice.

At the same time, the exchange highlighted the value of exposing participants to fundamentally different approaches to diversion. The Irish emphasis on community-based intervention and voluntary engagement, the Dutch institutionalised diversion model and the developing Greek diversion framework each prompted participants to reconsider assumptions about how diversion can be organised. Rather than encouraging the transfer of isolated practices, these comparisons stimulated broader reflection on the rationale behind different policy choices and their potential applicability within other national contexts.

The findings also suggest that the exchange generated more than increased factual knowledge. Many participants described how the meeting had reshaped their understanding of diversion, encouraged them to critically reflect on their own professional practice and inspired new ideas for policy and programme development. These reflections demonstrate that comparative learning is not merely a process of acquiring information, but also one of questioning existing assumptions, broadening perspectives and identifying new possibilities for innovation.

Finally, the evaluation highlights the added value of combining professional expertise, academic research and lived experience within a single exchange programme. The comparative presentations and research findings provided participants with a common evidence base, while the contributions of the youth ambassadors ensured that discussions remained connected to the experiences of young people themselves. This combination enabled participants to consider diversion not only as a legal or policy instrument, but also as a practice that directly shapes the lives and futures of children in contact with the justice system. As such, the BRIDGE methodology demonstrates the potential of multidisciplinary and participatory exchange activities to support more reflective, evidence-informed and child-centred approaches to youth justice.

5.3 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this evaluation. First, the evaluation primarily relied on participants' self-reported perceptions of knowledge gain rather than objective measures of learning. While participants consistently reported increased understanding of youth diversion and greater confidence in applying comparative insights, these findings reflect perceived rather than independently verified learning outcomes. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as an indication of participants' experiences of the exchange rather than as objective evidence of knowledge acquisition.

Secondly, the relatively small sample size reflects the targeted nature of the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting and limits the extent to which broader conclusions can be drawn. The evaluation focused exclusively on the international delegation, comprising 29 participants from the three partner countries, of whom 23 completed the pre-exchange survey and 21 completed the post-exchange survey. Although these response rates are high for an evaluation of this nature, the number of participants remains too small to support robust statistical analysis or generalisable conclusions regarding the effectiveness of international exchange activities more broadly.

Instead, the findings should primarily be understood as providing rich insight into the experiences, perceptions and reflections of the participants who took part in the exchange. The combination of survey data, interviews and focus group discussions offers valuable evidence of how this particular group experienced the programme and the ways in which it influenced their thinking and professional practice. However, these findings should be regarded as illustrative rather than definitive. They provide evidence of perceived impact and identify promising patterns, but do not allow causal claims about the effectiveness of the BRIDGE methodology or international exchange programmes more generally.

Thirdly, participants were selected because of their expertise and involvement in youth diversion rather than through random sampling. As a result, the participant group was not intended to be representative of the wider youth justice sector. Many participants already held positive attitudes towards diversion and had a strong professional interest in comparative learning and international cooperation before attending the exchange. This likely contributed to the consistently high evaluation scores and should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Finally, the evaluation measured participants' immediate reflections following the exchange meeting. While many respondents indicated concrete intentions to apply the knowledge gained within their own organisations and national contexts, the evaluation was not designed to examine whether these intentions translated into sustained changes in professional practice, organisational development or policy reform. Such impacts typically emerge over a considerably longer period and are influenced by numerous contextual factors beyond the scope of this evaluation. The framework for long-term impact monitoring presented in Chapter 8 therefore provides recommendations for assessing the sustained effects of future exchange activities.

A final limitation relates to the composition of the exchange itself. The international programme primarily brought together professionals already committed to the development of youth diversion. This proved highly valuable for facilitating in-depth comparative discussions and fostering strong professional networks. At the same time, future dissemination activities may benefit from engaging a broader range of stakeholders across jurisdictions, including professionals less familiar with diversion, policymakers responsible for wider criminal justice reform, police representatives, and practitioners from adjacent sectors such as education, social care and mental health. Broadening participation would not only enrich future discussions but could also strengthen the project's long-term policy influence and facilitate wider dissemination of the knowledge generated through BRIDGE.

6. Transnational Collaboration & Policy Impact

While the previous chapter examined the extent to which the exchange meeting achieved its immediate objectives, this chapter considers its broader contribution to transnational collaboration and policy development. Drawing on participants' reflections and the design of the exchange itself, it explores how BRIDGE strengthened professional networks, facilitated the exchange of promising practices and created opportunities for continued cooperation beyond the lifetime of the project.

6.1 Strengthening European Collaboration

One of the central objectives of the BRIDGE project was to strengthen cooperation between organisations and professionals working on youth diversion across Europe. The evaluation findings indicate that the exchange meeting successfully created opportunities for participants to establish new professional relationships, exchange expertise and explore possibilities for future collaboration. A particular strength of the exchange was the diversity of participants involved. By bringing together practitioners, policymakers, researchers and youth ambassadors from three different national contexts, the meeting facilitated dialogue between stakeholders who would otherwise have few opportunities to engage with one another. Throughout the programme, participants were encouraged not only to present their own national approaches, but also to critically reflect on the similarities and differences between diversion systems and discuss how common challenges could be addressed collectively.

The structured networking session formed an important element of this objective. By pairing participants from different countries, the programme created space for more informal conversations in which participants could discuss their professional experiences, explore potential collaborations and identify shared priorities. Many participants indicated that these conversations were among the most valuable aspects of the exchange, allowing them to develop professional connections that extended beyond the formal programme.

The exchange concluded with a discussion on the future development of a European Youth Diversion Network, further demonstrating participants' commitment to sustaining international cooperation beyond the BRIDGE project. Rather than viewing the exchange meeting as a standalone event, participants consistently expressed a desire to continue sharing knowledge, exchanging good practices and collaborating on future initiatives aimed at strengthening child-friendly diversion across Europe.

6.2 Best Practice Exchange

The comparative design of the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting enabled participants to move beyond describing their own national diversion systems and instead critically examine how different approaches could inform future developments within their own countries. Rather than identifying a single "best" diversion model, participants recognised that each participating country possessed valuable experiences from which others could learn.

The evaluation findings suggest that participants particularly appreciated the opportunity to compare practical implementation alongside legal and policy frameworks. Discussions on topics such as access to diversion, procedural safeguards, restorative justice, age limits and eligibility criteria encouraged participants to reflect on how similar challenges were addressed in different jurisdictions. This comparative approach stimulated critical reflection rather than direct imitation, with participants recognising that successful practices would need to be adapted to their own legal, institutional and cultural contexts.

Several respondents explicitly indicated that they intended to share the knowledge gained through BRIDGE within their own organisations and use it to inform future developments. Irish participants described plans to present the findings and identified best practices to colleagues within their Youth Diversion Projects, while Greek participants reflected on how elements of the Dutch and Irish diversion models could strengthen the further development of diversion in Greece. These responses illustrate that the exchange facilitated not only knowledge acquisition but also the translation of comparative insights into practical ideas for future policy and practice.

At the same time, the exchange demonstrated that transferring practices between countries is rarely straightforward. Differences in legal traditions, institutional structures, available resources and political priorities mean that practices cannot simply be replicated across jurisdictions. Instead, comparative learning appears to be most valuable when it encourages critical reflection on underlying principles rather than direct policy transfer. The exchange meeting also revealed that understanding other legal traditions, which is necessary for understanding diversion, is a time-intensive endeavour. Future exchanges would benefit from having more time for participants to discuss and ask questions to better understand one another.

6.3 Policy Influence

Although the BRIDGE project was not designed to measure long-term policy change, the evaluation findings suggest that the exchange meeting made a meaningful contribution to ongoing policy discussions within the participating countries, particularly the Netherlands. By bringing together policymakers, practitioners, researchers and young people with lived experience, the programme created a platform for dialogue that extended beyond operational practice and addressed broader questions concerning the future development of youth diversion. While the exchange undoubtedly stimulated policy dialogue, the present evaluation cannot determine whether this dialogue ultimately results in concrete policy reforms. Such developments typically occur over a considerably longer timeframe and are influenced by numerous political and institutional factors beyond the scope of the BRIDGE project.

The afternoon advocacy programme played an important role in strengthening this dialogue. Presentations by representatives of the Dutch Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and Youth Protection, together with comparative contributions from the Irish and Greek delegations, enabled participants to discuss current policy developments alongside international experiences and emerging research. Silvia Randazzo's presentation further situated these discussions within the broader framework of international children's rights standards and comparative European practice.

Participants' reflections also suggest that the exchange encouraged them to reconsider existing policies and identify opportunities for reform within their own national contexts. Rather than focusing exclusively on immediate implementation, many respondents described how the exchange had broadened their understanding of diversion and inspired them to reflect more critically on issues such as procedural safeguards, access to diversion, restorative justice and meaningful child participation. These reflections demonstrate the potential of comparative dialogue to stimulate policy learning and support evidence-informed decision-making.

The knowledge generated through the exchange has subsequently informed the wider outputs of the BRIDGE project, including the comparative Needs Assessment, the accompanying Policy Brief and the Sustainability and Scale-up Plan. Together, these outputs ensure that the discussions initiated during the exchange meeting continue to contribute to policy development, professional learning and future European cooperation on youth diversion. While longer-term policy impact will depend on continued collaboration beyond the project, the evaluation suggests that BRIDGE successfully established the foundations for ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange between the participating countries.

7. Recommendations

The evaluation demonstrates that the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting successfully facilitated knowledge exchange, strengthened transnational collaboration and incorporated youth perspectives into discussions on youth diversion. At the same time, it identified several areas where future exchange activities could be further strengthened. The recommendations below build on both the strengths and the limitations identified throughout the evaluation and are intended to support the continued development of evidence-informed and child-centred transnational learning activities.

7.1 On Exchange Methodology

Broaden participation beyond diversion specialists

The BRIDGE Exchange Meeting primarily brought together professionals who were already committed to and knowledgeable about youth diversion. While this facilitated in-depth discussions, it also meant that participants largely shared similar values and perspectives. Future exchange meetings should seek to involve a broader range of stakeholders, including professionals with limited experience of diversion, representatives from adjacent sectors and decision-makers responsible for wider criminal justice reform. This would broaden the discussion and increase the potential for systemic impact.

Balance knowledge exchange with collaborative problem-solving

Participants consistently valued the comparative thematic discussions. Future exchanges should build further on this approach by dedicating more time to collaborative problem-solving and co-design. Rather than focusing primarily on understanding differences between systems, discussions should increasingly explore how common challenges can be addressed collectively and translated into practical improvements within different national contexts.

Allocate more time for dialogue and networking

Although participants appreciated the programme, many indicated that the schedule was ambitious and limited opportunities for informal exchange and deeper discussion. Future exchange meetings should consider extending the programme over two days or incorporating additional networking sessions to allow participants more time to build professional relationships, reflect on comparative findings and explore opportunities for future collaboration.

Move beyond knowledge exchange towards implementation

The evaluation demonstrates that participants left the exchange with new ideas and increased awareness of alternative diversion approaches. However, it remains unclear to what extent these insights will translate into concrete changes in policy or practice. Future exchange activities should therefore include structured follow-up sessions, implementation workshops or communities of practice that support participants in applying lessons learned within their own organisations.

7.2 On Youth Participation

Involve young people throughout the entire exchange process

Rather than limiting youth participation to individual programme components, future exchanges should continue involving young people in the co-design, facilitation and evaluation of activities. Embedding youth participation throughout the process ensures that discussions remain grounded in children's lived experiences and rights.

Facilitate direct international youth exchange

While interviews with youth ambassadors from Ireland and Greece successfully incorporated international youth perspectives, only the Dutch youth ambassadors participated in person. Future exchanges should explore opportunities to enable direct participation by young people from all participating countries. Facilitating peer-to-peer dialogue would enrich discussions and further strengthen the international dimension of youth participation.

Continue integrating lived experience into policy discussions

Participants consistently valued hearing directly from young people with lived experience of diversion. Future activities should continue using interviews, testimonies and facilitated discussions to ensure that policy debates remain grounded in children's experiences and perspectives.

Strengthen feedback loops with young people

Young people should not only contribute to discussions but also be informed about how their perspectives have influenced project outcomes. Future projects should therefore establish clear feedback mechanisms, demonstrating how young people's recommendations have informed policy discussions, project outputs and future activities.

7.3 On European Cooperation

Continue developing the European Youth Diversion Network

The evaluation demonstrates strong support for continued international collaboration. Future initiatives should build on the relationships established through BRIDGE by facilitating regular exchanges, joint learning activities and collaborative policy discussions that extend beyond individual projects.

Promote adaptation instead of replication

The exchange highlighted that promising practices cannot simply be transferred between countries with different legal traditions and institutional contexts. Future cooperation should therefore focus on identifying transferable principles rather than replicating specific diversion models, supporting countries in adapting promising practices to their own legal and organisational realities.

Strengthen collaboration between research and practice

The exchange highlighted the benefits of combining academic research with professional expertise. Future European initiatives should continue fostering partnerships between researchers, practitioners and policymakers to support evidence-informed policy development.

7.4 On Impact Monitoring

The present evaluation focused primarily on the immediate outcomes of the BRIDGE Exchange Meeting. Future evaluations should seek to examine whether the knowledge and professional networks developed through exchange meetings translate into observable changes in organisational practice, inter-organisational collaboration and policy development. To better understand the longer-term impact of future exchange activities, a structured monitoring framework is recommended.

Future evaluations could consider monitoring impact across three time horizons:

Timeframe	Suggested indicators
Short-term (immediately after the exchange)	Knowledge gain, participant satisfaction, quality of discussions, perceived relevance, new professional contacts established.

Timeframe	Suggested indicators
Medium-term (6–12 months)	Application of lessons learned within organisations, continued collaboration between participants, dissemination activities, incorporation of comparative insights into professional practice.
Long-term (1–3 years)	Joint projects and research initiatives, development of European networks, citations, contributions to policy discussions, implementation of new diversion practices, sustained international cooperation.

Future monitoring could combine follow-up surveys, interviews with participants and documentation of collaborative activities to assess how exchange meetings contribute to lasting professional learning, organisational development and policy innovation. Such an approach would not only strengthen the evidence base for future Network activities but also support the continued development of an impactful European community of practice on youth diversion.

Collectively, these recommendations build on the findings of the present evaluation and provide practical guidance for the continued development of transnational exchange activities on youth diversion. They are intended not only to strengthen future iterations of the BRIDGE methodology but also to support the broader development of evidence-informed, child-centred and collaborative approaches to youth diversion across Europe.

8. Conclusion

The BRIDGE Exchange Meeting was established to strengthen mutual learning, foster transnational collaboration and contribute to the continued development of child-friendly youth diversion across Europe. The findings presented in this evaluation demonstrate that the exchange successfully achieved these objectives. Participants reported increased knowledge of diversion systems in the participating countries, developed a broader understanding of international child rights standards, and identified new opportunities for strengthening diversion policy and practice within their own national contexts.

The evaluation further highlights the value of bringing together practitioners, policymakers, researchers and young people with lived experience in a single exchange programme. By combining comparative research, professional dialogue and youth participation, BRIDGE created an environment in which participants were able to exchange knowledge, critically reflect on their own assumptions and learn from alternative approaches to youth diversion and youth justice. The active involvement of youth ambassadors ensured that discussions remained connected to the lived experiences of the children and young people whom diversion policies are ultimately intended to serve.

Beyond its immediate learning outcomes, the exchange meeting contributed to strengthening professional relationships between the participating organisations and laid the foundations for continued European cooperation. Participants expressed a clear willingness to continue sharing knowledge, exchanging promising practices and working together to advance evidence-informed, child-centred approaches to diversion. The comparative Needs Assessment, this Evaluation Report, the accompanying Policy Brief and the Sustainability and Scale-up Plan together provide a solid foundation upon which future collaboration can build.

While this evaluation primarily captures the immediate outcomes of the exchange meeting, it also demonstrates the potential of transnational mutual learning as a mechanism for supporting policy innovation, professional development and cross-border cooperation. Continued monitoring will be important to assess the longer-term impact of these activities on policy and practice. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that BRIDGE successfully laid the foundations for continued dialogue and collaboration on youth diversion in Europe, contributing to the broader ambition of ensuring that every child has access to effective, rights-based and child-friendly responses when coming into contact with the justice system.

Appendices

Appendix 1: PRE-test questions

General details

*Which country are you from?

*How many years of experience do you have with youth justice / youth work / youth diversion?

Youth Diversion in general

*How familiar are you with youth diversion?

Not at all familiar

Very familiar

1

2

3

4

5

*How familiar are you with the contents of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to youth diversion?

Not at all familiar

Very familiar

1

2

3

4

5

*What aspects of youth diversion are you most interested in?

Attitude towards Youth Diversion

*To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

I think it is very important to apply youth diversion in my own country.

1

2

3

4

5

I think we should use youth diversion more than we already do.

1

2

3

4

5

I know possible ways to expand the current youth diversion program in my own country.

1

2

3

4

5

I think youth diversion is more effective than punishment in preventing re-offending.

1

2

3

4

5

International Youth Diversion policies

*To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Irish youth justice system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I am familiar with the main strengths of the Irish youth diversion system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Irish youth diversion system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Dutch youth justice system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I am familiar with the main strengths of the Dutch youth diversion system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Dutch youth diversion system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I know what kind of diversion measures and services can be implemented in the Greek youth justice system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I am familiar with the main strengths of the Greek youth diversion system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
I am familiar with the limitations and challenges of the Greek youth diversion system.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

Expectations of BRIDGE

*What do you expect of BRIDGE?

*What do you hope to take away from BRIDGE?

End of survey.

Appendix 2: POST-test questions

* To assess knowledge gain, the same questions were used as in the pre-test. See Appendix 1 for details.

BRIDGE exchange meeting organization

*Overall, how would you rate the BRIDGE exchange meeting?

Very poor

Very good

☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5

*How would you rate the overall management of the exchange meeting?
(Timings, venues, food, coordinations, transport, accomodation etc.)

Very poor

Very good

☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5

*To what extent were the venues and facilities adequate and comfortable?

Not at all

To a great extent

☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5

*To what extent was the pre-event communication clear and informative?

Not at all

To a great extent

☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5

*To what extent was the purpose of the programme clear beforehand?

Not at all

To a great extent

☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5

Please feel free to provide any further comments and suggestions that may improve the quality of exchanges for future projects:

BRIDGE exchange meeting contents

*To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
There was a good balance between the various activities, such as presentations, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
The participants were relevant and well-matched to the purpose of the exchange meeting.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Participation and interaction during the activities were actively encouraged.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
BRIDGE was effective in facilitating knowledge exchange among participants.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
The findings of the Needs Assessment were useful for me.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
The discussions on comparative insights were useful for me.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
The youth led activity was effective in providing insights into current practices of youth diversion.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

*Which topics or elements of the BRIDGE exchange did you find particularly useful?

*Were there any aspects, topics or participants you felt were missing from the programme?

BRIDGE exchange meeting outcomes

*To what extent was the BRIDGE exchange valuable to you?

Not at all

To a great extent

1

2

3

4

5

*To what extent has your participation in BRIDGE confirmed or changed your perspective about diversion?

Not at all

To a great extent

1

2

3

4

5

Please elaborate:

*Which key insights did you find most valuable from your participation in BRIDGE? Please elaborate:

*Did you gain any valuable tips or insights from the participants of the BRIDGE meeting? If so, please elaborate:

*Will you apply any new insights learned at BRIDGE in your work? If so, please elaborate:

*Are there any subjects mentioned in the BRIDGE exchange you would like to learn more about? If so, please elaborate:

Are there any other things you would like to mention?

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Interview instructions

This interview guide has been developed based on the key themes that will also be discussed during the Bridge Meeting:

- Legal safeguards
- Diversity and equal access for all youth
- Restorative justice
- Child participation and agency

At the end of the interview, there also will be questions related to the overall process.

The interview is semi-structured, which means you are encouraged to ask follow-up questions and/or explore topics more in depth if they seem relevant or valuable for improving diversion practices.

The aim is to capture the youth ambassador's perspective on these themes — not to conduct a personal case study. Please avoid focusing too much on the young person's individual situation. Instead, guide the conversation toward the recommendations they can offer for the future, based on their lived experience.

**text in italics is for interviewer's reference only and should not be read out loud.*

1. Introduction

Elaborate on why the interview is taking place and tell about the BRIDGE exchange meeting. It is also important to state that the youth ambassador cannot give incorrect answers. The goal is to understand their experiences and ideas, not to evaluate or judge their responses.

2. Informed consent

Please state the following to the youth ambassador:

- *Confidentiality and anonymity:* Everything shared during this interview is confidential. Your responses will be anonymized and will not be linked to your identity.
- *Voluntary participation:* you are not required to share anything you're uncomfortable with. You may skip any question, stop the interview at any time, or withdraw from participation later on.
- *Recording consent:* I would like to record the interview to ensure accurate documentation of your input. The recording will not be shared and will only be used internally for analysis purposes.

3. Testimonial

Start with a testimonial; begin the interview by inviting the youth ambassador to share how their diversion journey has unfolded. Please note: they do not need to explain why they entered the diversion process.

- ➔ *If relevant or interesting topics come up – especially those related to the BRIDGE meeting – feel free to explore them further.*

4. The comparative insights of BRIDGE

Explain that the following question will be based on the comparative insights of BRIDGE, you can say for example:

During BRIDGE, we'll be talking about a few key themes that come from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention outlines what children need to be treated fairly and safely. Since you've been through a (form of) diversion process yourself, we're really interested in hearing your thoughts on these themes.

Legal safeguards:

By Law, you have the right to be clearly informed in advance about what it means for you to go through a diversion process, and what that process will look like.

What was your experience with this?

Possible follow-up questions:

- Did you feel well informed at the start?
- Do you think this should have been done differently? Or are there things you think could be improved?

Diversity and equal access for all youth:

Did you feel like you were treated fairly – in the same way others would be treated in your situation?

Restorative justice:

A diversion process is meant to give young people a chance to learn and take responsibility for their actions – and that often includes some form of repairing the harm that was done.

In your case, was there any kind of restorative action? For example, paying damages, offering an apology, or having a conversation with the victim? *(or any other restorative measure)*

Follow-up questions:

- How did you experience this / how did you feel about this?
- Did it feel like things were truly resolved afterwards?
- If you could do it over again, would you want anything to be different?
- Do you have any other recommendations for restorative actions?

Child participation and agency:

The UN convention of the Rights of the Child doesn't just say that children should be supported – it also says they have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them. It is important that they're listened to and included in choices about their own process.

- How did you experience this?

Follow-up questions;

- Did you feel like you were involved in making decisions?
- Were there moments when it felt like others were making decisions for you, without including you?
- Were there things that made it harder for you to speak up or share your opinion?

5. Diversion programme: do's and don'ts and recommendations

These are the final questions of the interview and leave space to touch on any interesting insights or recommendations from the youth ambassador.

- Were there any moments or aspects that stood out to you or made a strong impression, during your diversion measure / process?
- What do you think worked well, and what didn't?
- What do you wish adults understood better about young people who go through a diversion measure / process?
- If you were the head of the Justice department and you could change anything about the whole (diversion) process – what's the first thing you'd change?

6. Wrapping up and end of the interview