



Executive Summary

BRIDGE Evaluation Report

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

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.