

**ANNEX I:
EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET**

PROJECT	
Participant:	101252945 – Uit de Marge vzw - UdM
PIC number:	892268469
Project name and acronym:	CERV-2025-CITIZENS-CIV - COSY

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	WP3
Event name:	Local community safety signals of young people at risk of being excluded by society/institutionally in Ghent
Type:	Training
In situ/online:	In situ
Location:	Belgium 1. Ghent public space 2. JGIA, Bannierstraat 32, 9000 Ghent
Date(s):	1. 22/08/2026 2. 27/08/2026
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.uitdemarge.be/cosy/
Participants	
Female:	1. 9 2. 0
Male:	1. 8 2. 6
Non-binary:	1. 2 2. 0
From country 1 [name]:	Belgium
...	
Total number of participants:	25

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

1. Introduction and objective of this report

This report accounts for the implementation of Work Package 3 (WP3) of the COSY project — "Local community safety signals of young people in the city of Ghent at risk of being excluded by society/institutionally" — in fulfilment of specific objective SO1 ("Gaining insight into local community safety signals behind the societal safety symptoms") and, more specifically, operational objective OO1.1 ("Discovering and determining societal local community safety signals from and with youngsters").

In line with COSY's Phase 1 methodology, WP3 uses the co-design principle and the flip-thinking Cypher method to give the primary target group — young people at risk of being excluded by society/institutionally — an equal and safe space to voice what causes them to feel unsafe or unsettled (unrest) in their local community, and where and why this occurs. For WP3, this was realized through sustained field-based outreach work by the project worker across several Ghent neighborhoods between 14 April and 22 August 2026, closed off with a validation activity at a barbecue organized at Jong Gent In Actie on 27 August 2026.

This report:

- presents the process toolkit that was used, across the whole COSY project, to determine what qualifies as a local community safety signal;
- briefly situates WP3 within the Ghent ecosystem context already fully sourced and documented in the WP11 report (Ghent, youth workers), to avoid duplicating that material;
- describes the field-based outreach approach used across the reporting period, including an explicit reflection on participant consent and trust;
- documents the two activities organized for WP3 (context, approach, participants);
- provides a consolidated overview of the signals that were captured, and the local context in which they occur.

This report constitutes the underlying material for WP3 deliverable D1-8.2 ("Method(s) to determine what a local community signal is") and for the WP3 monitoring & evaluation report (D1-8.3).

Note on participant counting: the field-based outreach underlying WP3.1 engaged an estimated 70 young people over more than four months, but only 19 of them completed the official COSY participant list, for reasons explained in Section 4.1 below. WP3.2 engaged 23 young people, of whom only 6 signed the participant list. The Event Description Sheet records actual engagement and signed participation separately and transparently, rather than presenting only the signed figure or estimating a precise total.

2. Process toolkit: determining and assessing a local community safety signal

To ensure that all eight COSY ecosystems apply a consistent, transparent and comparable method for identifying local community safety signals — while still allowing tailor-made facilitation per ecosystem and target group — the COSY partnership developed a shared process toolkit. This toolkit was applied by the project worker during the preparation, facilitation and post-processing of both WP3 activities in Ghent. It consists of four complementary instruments, described below.

2.1 Working definition of a local community safety signal

Per the COSY Facilitator Notes, a local community safety signal is defined as:

"A recurring or emerging condition in a specific neighborhood that affects the safety, well-being or inclusion of young people, and which the local community recognizes as deserving attention or action."

A safety signal can relate to physical safety, psychological safety, social exclusion, unsafe public spaces, societal barriers, or (digital) side-effects of community conflicts. Importantly, signals are not individual incidents, but patterns or indicators shared across several young people. To structure the exploration of these signals, the toolkit works with a fixed list of 14 life domains: (1) health, (2) housing, (3) information, (4) justice, (5) mobility, (6) education, (7) public space, (8) police, (9) social media, (10) sport, (11) leisure, (12) wellbeing, (13) gender, and (14) other.

Four working principles apply throughout: voluntary participation, a safe conversational environment, confidentiality, and the leadership of youth voice. As set out in Section 4 below, WP3's outreach approach placed particularly strong emphasis on the first two principles, given the pronounced initial distrust encountered in the field.

2.2 Decision tree "Is it a local community safety signal?"

Every observation raised by youth or youth workers is tested against a five-step decision tree before it is treated as a validated local community safety signal:

- 1. Has a safety concern been observed by youth or youth workers? (if no → not a signal: unrelated to safety)
- 2. Does it affect more than one young person? (if no → not a signal: not associated with the community)
- 3. Is the issue linked to a specific local environment? (if no → not a signal: not associated with local circumstances)
- 4. Is there a pattern or repeated experience? (if no → not a signal: not structurally embedded in the community)
- 5. Could community actors influence the situation? (if no → not a signal: not generated or moderated by the community)

Only observations that pass all five checks (yes/yes/yes/yes/yes) qualify as a confirmed local community safety signal. WP3.2 already reflects the first layer of this filtering: the six most recurring signals gathered during WP3.1's outreach work were deliberately re-tested as statements with a new, independent group of young people, directly probing criterion 4 (pattern/repeated experience).

2.3 Facilitator notes and signal-capturing template

During each activity, the facilitator bundles raw observations per life domain in a structured overview (signal observation → signal exploration on frequency, impact, spread, urgency and change potential → signal validation yes/no), so that no observation is overlooked before validation against the decision tree. The facilitator notes also include a short sketch of the target group present (age, gender, ethnic-cultural background, interests, needs, and living context) and a table to log positive and negative testimonies about contacts with societal institutions.

2.4 Safety Signal Assessment Framework

Once an observation has passed the decision tree, it can be scored using the COSY Safety Signal Assessment Framework, which rates each candidate signal on five dimensions (1 = lowest, 5 = highest):

- Frequency — how often does it occur (from less than once a month to multiple times a day)?
- Impact — how strongly does it affect young people's physical or mental well-being?
- Spread — how many youth groups are affected?
- Urgency — will it worsen without immediate action?
- Change potential — to what extent can local actors influence it?

The combined score (range 5–25) is interpreted as: 5–10 Observation, 11–17 Emerging Signal, 18–25 Confirmed Safety Signal.

2.5 Signal Prioritization Matrix

Finally, validated signals are plotted on the Signal prioritization Matrix, which crosses "impact on youth safety" (low/high) against "ability of the community to act" (low/high), yielding four response strategies: Monitor (low impact / low ability to act), Advocacy or policy dialogue (high impact / low ability to act), Quick community improvements (low impact / high ability to act), and Immediate pilot action (high impact / high ability to act). This matrix will guide the prioritization of signals for Phase 2 (bonding and bridging with policy-makers and representatives of government institutions) and Phase 3 (co-production) of COSY.

3. Ecosystem context: Ghent

A fully sourced ecosystem context for Ghent — covering demography, safety and policing, poverty and prevention, integration policy, and youth policy infrastructure, drawn from Statbel, VRT NWS, the Flemish Agency for Growing Up (Opgroeien/Kind en Gezin), Politiezone Gent and official City of Ghent policy documents — is provided in the WP11 report (Ghent, outreach youth workers) and is not reproduced here in full to avoid duplication.

For reference, the headline figures most directly relevant to WP3's youngster-reported signals are: a city of almost 274,000 residents (early 2026), close to one in three born with a non-Belgian nationality and 34.3% of all residents (51.8% of minors) with a migration background; 1 in 8 residents living in poverty despite seven consecutive years of decline, alongside close to 2,500 people experiencing homelessness in the most recent count; and a municipal youth welfare work landscape structured around the 2020 charter "Jeugdwelzijnswerk: een verbindend verhaal" and dedicated youth street workers active in five neighborhoods. Several of the neighborhoods named directly by young people in WP3 below — including the station area, Overpoort, Brugse Poort, Rabot, Nieuw Gent and Dampoort — overlap closely with the areas prioritized by this existing municipal outreach infrastructure, and with the neighborhoods in which WP11's participating youth welfare organizations (VZW Jong, Jong Gent In Actie, Jeugdstraathoekwerk Gent) are themselves active.

4. Approach: field-based outreach work

Over more than four months (14 April – 22 August 2026), the project worker built relationships with young people through sustained field-based outreach work: being actively present, at varying times of day, at the specific locations across Ghent where young people naturally gather; observing group dynamics, who young people interact with, and what stands out; and initiating contact through shared activities (a game of basketball, a football match, sharing a cigarette) or a direct, low-pressure introduction ("Hi, can I ask you something — are you from Ghent?"; "I'm a youth worker doing some research into what keeps young people from Ghent up at night, can I ask you a few questions?").

This approach deliberately followed young people's own geography and rhythm across the reporting period: April–May focused on Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham, Rabot-Blaisantvest, Brugse Poort and Zuid; June focused on Nieuw Gent and the Sint-Pieters station area; and July–August focused on Dampoort, Sint-Amandsberg and the city center — the latter timing deliberately chosen because far fewer students are present in the center during that period, making it easier to reach non-student young people.

The young people reached through this method were profiled as highly diverse: boys and girls aged 12 to 30, including Flemish young people, young people with a migration background, undocumented young people, homeless/houseless young people, groups of young people who spend their free time on their neighborhood square, young people struggling with addiction, and isolated young people — many of them young people who find little to no connection with the city's existing youth provision and who primarily fill their free time in public space.

Returning repeatedly to the same locations allowed deeper conversations to develop with some young people over time and made it possible to probe certain topics further. Initial contact was often marked by considerable distrust, which gradually reduced as specific young people were met more often.

4.1 Reflection on consent and participant registration

Persuading young people to complete the official COSY participant list proved far from straightforward. Most declined, citing distrust or simply not considering it important: "Isn't it enough that you know what I think — why do I need to put my signature under that?"; "I don't want to give my name, I don't feel like being bothered." A smaller number of young people did, however, recognize a legitimate reason for documentation, on the basis that the project worker should be able to demonstrate that the conversations genuinely took place: "Yeah, of course — if you're earning your living from this, you need to be able to prove it somehow." A further methodological observation concerned how access itself was negotiated in public space: the project worker noted that approaching the older young people present on a square first (typically aged 18–30) made younger people (under 18) more accessible and more willing to talk, since the younger group's own trust in the project worker increased once they saw the older, locally rooted young people engaging. This is recorded here as a signal in its own right: when working in a specific neighborhood, identifying and engaging key older figures (18–30) on a square first is described as a precondition for subsequently reaching younger people there.

Given this pattern, the resulting sample of 19 (WP3.1) and 6 (WP3.2) signed participant lists should be read as a minimum, verifiable baseline rather than as the full extent of engagement; the much larger number of young people actually reached (approximately 70 and 23 respectively) is documented transparently below, consistent with how the underlying source material itself distinguishes between the two.

4.2 Additional reflection: who approaches young people in public space, and who does not

The project worker recorded a striking observation after the full outreach period: at no point during the entire time spent in Ghent's public space was the project worker approached by any societal actor — a youth worker, a police or enforcement officer, a social worker — yet was repeatedly approached to buy drugs or cigarettes, asked for money in and around the station area, and once followed by a car with blacked-out windows. This is recorded in the source material as a plausible reflection of what young people who spend their days in these same public spaces may routinely experience, and is offered as a possible explanation for why a more assertive, outreach-based presence from City services and other formal actors — matching the persistence already shown by informal, often illicit actors in the same public space — might contribute to a stronger general sense of safety for everyone using that space.

5. Activities organised for WP3 in the ecosystem of Ghent

Two activities were organised with young people at risk of being excluded by society/institutionally in Ghent to realise OO1.1: an extended, multi-neighbourhood field-based outreach effort (WP3.1) and a closing validation activity at a barbecue hosted by Jong Gent In Actie (WP3.2). They are reported separately below, numbered WP3.1 and WP3.2.

Event	Date	Location	Format	Participants
WP3.1	14/04/2026 – 22/08/2026	Ghent — multiple neighbourhoods (see Section 4)	Field-based outreach work, followed by a structured survey round on 22/08/2026	Approx. 70 reached; 19 signed the participant list
WP3.2	27/08/2026	Jong Gent In Actie, Bannierstraat 32, Ghent	Barbecue with 6 statements to test the most recurring WP3.1 signals, plus one open question	23 participants; 6 signed the participant list

WP3.1: Field-based outreach work, multiple Ghent neighborhoods

Description

Over more than four months, the project worker engaged in sustained field-based outreach work across several Ghent neighborhoods. This resulted in contact with an estimated 70 young people of highly diverse backgrounds and situations, ranging from young people well embedded in existing youth work to isolated young people, undocumented young people, and homeless/houseless young people.

Signals gathered during this outreach work are presented below in two parts, following the structure of the source material: "Part 1" bundles the raw signals raised in conversation, organized per COSY life domain; "Part 2" presents the results of a structured survey round carried out on 22 August 2026 with young people the project worker had already met several times, covering favorite and least-favorite places, direct experiences of unsafety, sources of support, and policy suggestions.

Safety signals captured (observation stage)

Safety Signal (raw observation)	Frequency of mention	Life domain(s)	Context/ example
Feeling of unsafety among girls, especially in areas with less social control,	Reported across all neighborhoods	Public space/ Gender	Described as prevailing across all neighborhoods visited.

less lighting, or outside their own neighborhood				
Young people repeatedly chased from squares by police or other residents (neighborhood conflicts), leaving them without a fixed meeting spot — unlike young people in (youth) associations, who have their own premises	Recurring	Public space	—	
Gentrification causing long-standing residents to feel like the "newcomer" in their own neighborhood	Reported	Public space / Housing / Other: social dynamics	"I've lived here for 19 years; because of the redevelopment of the neighborhood, we are the last 'original residents' left, but I'm seen as the newcomer by all those young families with their cargo bikes."	
Redevelopment of a square removing young people's ability to gather there, replaced by facilities that do not interest them	Reported	Public space	"We used to all meet on the square; the city redeveloped it, so for a long time we couldn't meet there anymore. Now there are all kinds of other things on the square that don't interest us, and we no longer feel we have a place there."	
Public-space problems, particularly in the afternoon/evening, linked mainly to intoxicated people or people under the influence of substances	Reported	Public space/ Health	—	
Young people frequently bothered near train stations by older men under the influence of drugs or alcohol	Reported	Public space	—	

Considerable weapon possession in public space (knives, handguns)	Reported	Public space	—	
Young people feel safest/most comfortable in their own neighborhood, where they know everyone	Widely reported	Public space/ Wellbeing (protective)	—	
Young people feel unfairly blamed by enforcement services for nuisance caused by tourists (e.g. litter)	Reported	Public space/ Police	—	
Young people do not want younger siblings playing outside, for various reasons (litter, drugs, drunk people)	Reported	Public space/ Wellbeing	—	
Sports clubs are too expensive or full	Reported	Sport	—	
Little consultation with young people before installing sport infrastructure on a square, resulting in equipment poorly suited to their needs	Reported	Sport/ Public space	Example given: calisthenics equipment installed on the Wolterslaan square without prior consultation of young people, resulting in poorly suited equipment.	
Football pitches on neighborhood squares not always well placed or suited to the young people using them	Reported	Sport/ Public space	—	
Difficulty understanding official documents; the language used by the justice system is too complex	Reported	Justice/ Information	—	

Distrust in police due to negative experiences (continuous ID checks, searches in public space, ethnic profiling)	Reported	Police/ Other: race	—	
Being permanently flagged by societal institutions because of past events (once arrested, always checked; a young person's institutional history overrides being seen as someone with a support need)	Reported	Justice/ Other: institutional	—	
High fines create a vicious cycle	Reported	Justice/ Work	"How am I supposed to pay my fine if I can't find work — I'll just start dealing again to pay it off."	
Little trust in teachers due to constant staff turnover	Reported	Education	—	
Extended absence from school due to suspension	Reported	Education	—	
Considerable truancy, or not being enrolled in a school at all	Reported	Education	—	
Segregation within schools (e.g. Flemish students, foreign-background students and "junkies" as separate groups) and between schools ("white" schools versus schools with mostly students of color)	Reported	Education/ Other: race	—	
Among 15–18-year-olds, declining trust in education leads some to look for ways to earn money instead	Reported	Education/ Work	—	

Racism on public transport	Reported	Mobility/ Other: race	—	
Limited public transport provision in certain neighborhoods	Reported	Mobility	—	
Girls feel very uncomfortable on overcrowded trams/buses (unwanted touching) and uncomfortable taking a tram late at night due to being approached by unknown men	Reported	Mobility/ Gender	—	
Trade in illegal goods via social media	Reported	Social media/ Other: crimes & felonies	—	
TikTok challenges becoming increasingly extreme, tending toward "nihilistic extremism"	Reported	Social media/ Wellbeing	Young people are given tasks in exchange for money, which must be filmed and sent in; at a later stage this can turn into blackmail (comply, or the previously filmed material is sent to the police).	
Persistent bullying via social media does not stop (including circulating videos and photos)	Reported	Social media/ Other: social dynamics	—	
Stereotypes and role patterns embedded in young people's social-media algorithms (radicalizing, polarizing influencers)	Reported	Social media/ Gender	—	
Need for many more places where young people can simply walk in 24/7 (e.g. to play chess, chill, work on a CV, try out sport, be creative)	Reported	Leisure	—	

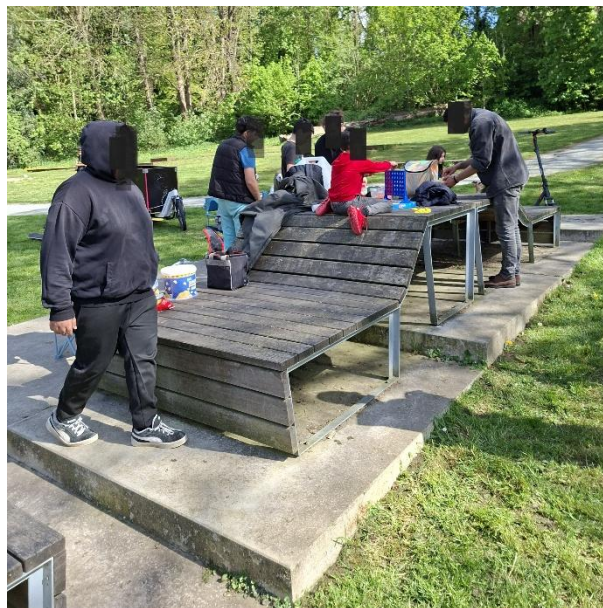
Some young people's day only really starts around 23:00, by which time most youth (welfare) work has already closed	Reported	Leisure	—	
Too many young people for the already-substantial mainstream provision	Reported	Leisure/ Other: institutional	—	
Young people move between different Ghent neighborhoods rather than staying only in their own, also attending youth work elsewhere	Reported	Leisure/ Public space	—	
Widespread use of scooters/steps and fatbikes among young people (13–14 years), used partly to show off and ride around	Reported	Leisure/ Mobility	—	
Exploitative renting arrangements in the broad sense	Reported	Housing	Example: paying to sleep on a sofa, but only between 22:00 and 08:00.	
Discrimination in the housing market combined with a very limited supply	Reported	Housing/ Other: race	"There's a flat available, I go to view it and see a queue of 30 people, mostly Flemish ones, I'll never get that flat."	
Major shortage of shelter provision for homeless/houseless young people	Reported	Housing	Being chased away from, for example, under a bicycle shelter and having to search again for a new place to sleep.	
Many sofa-surfers, particularly among young people leaving institutional care and newcomers	Reported	Housing	—	
Considerable vacancies in the city (offices, etc.) that	Reported	Housing	—	

could serve as shelter space for homeless/houseless people				
Frequent moving leads to little connection with others in the neighborhood	Reported	Housing/ Other: social dynamics	—	
Need for many more trusted figures in public space who can help with a meal, a place to sleep, work	Reported	Wellbeing/ Other: social dynamics (protective)	—	
Hunger: many young people report not having a proper meal every day	Widely reported	Wellbeing/ Health	—	
Racism seen as normalized ("that's just how it is")	Reported	Wellbeing/ Other: race	—	
Initial distrust among young people with migration roots when approached by a Flemish project worker	Reported	Wellbeing/ Other: social dynamics	—	
THC vapes used without a clear understanding of what is being inhaled	Reported	Health/ Wellbeing	—	
Need for an "open house" for young people to freshen up, rest, and get help with paperwork	Reported	Wellbeing/ Other: institutional	—	
Tension between newcomers and 2nd/3rd-generation young people with a migration background	Reported	Wellbeing/ Other: social dynamics	Established residents describe having worked hard to become part of society, and feel that the recent, larger influx of newcomers (often from the same ethnic-cultural background) means they are once again	

			treated the way they were on first arriving.	
Language barrier: many young people (from as young as 13–15) present in public space do not speak Dutch	Reported	Wellbeing/ Education/ Information	—	
Young people connected to youth (welfare) work describe Ghent as a safe city; young people with no such connection give a markedly different, more negative assessment	Reported	Wellbeing	—	
Lack of awareness of what is available in the city across different life domains	Reported	Information	—	
Strong pressure around appearance (branded tracksuits, branded shoes, a good haircut), sometimes met by buying counterfeit goods to be able to show off	Reported	Wellbeing/ Social media	—	
Considerable sales of cigarettes imported from abroad, by and among young people (including young people travelling from Brussels specifically to sell cigarettes)	Reported	Other: crimes & felonies	—	
Little room to talk about gender diversity within certain groups	Reported	Gender	"The non-binary box on the participant list is a waste of ink."	
Drastic drop in income and sense of purpose after	Reported	Work/ Wellbeing	"When I was selling drugs I earned up to €6,000 a week; I got arrested, and now I have to work for less than €2,000 a month. I'm	

leaving the drug trade for regular work			bored — I used to be able to do all kinds of things with my friends with the money I made, now I'm standing here without a cent to my name."
Homeless newcomers are often victimized within micro-criminal networks	Reported	Wellbeing/ Other: crimes & felonies	Used as runners for larger dealers.
Need for greater mental resilience training regarding racism and discrimination	Reported	Wellbeing	—
From age 18, many young people must suddenly find their own way independently (housing, work, leisure)	Reported	Wellbeing/ Housing/ Work	—

Photos







Part 2: Structured survey round (22/08/2026)

Part 2 — Question 1: favorite place, square or neighborhood, and why

Most young people named their own neighborhood as their favorite, and the place where they feel "safest" — a framing that itself sparked lively discussion among participants, e.g.: "How can you say Brugse Poort is your favorite neighborhood, there's nothing but problems there?" — "I know everyone in the neighborhood, I've never had problems there."

- Bijloke: pleasant experiences
- Pierkespark: cosy, good memories
- Brugse Poort: social cohesion, "I know everyone here"
- Sint-Jacobs: pleasant with friends, things to do
- Watersportbaan: beautiful views and sports opportunities
- Citadelpark: pleasant with friends
- City centre: always something happening
- Ledebergplein: lots of food and lots of friends
- Sint-Amandsberg: lots of food options and friends
- Baudelo: quiet, beautiful, friends
- De Krook: the social aspect, many young people, few checks

Part 2 — Question 2: least favorite place, square or neighborhood, and why

- Citadelpark: "If I'm alone, I will never walk through the park alone — you always get bothered there" (the same signal was raised for Brugse Poort, Baudelo and Muide)
- Vlasmarkt: especially in the evening/night, drunk people cause a nuisance

- Sint-Pieters (station area): constantly being bothered (people asking for money or cigarettes and not accepting no for an answer), an impersonal area where you don't know people; frequent conflicts on the square, poor lighting; extremely busy during the day
- Brugse Poort: alcohol, drugs, bad experiences; dangerous to be robbed there alone at night
- Overpoort: racism, fights, alcohol, bad atmosphere, very uncomfortable to walk through when busy (being touched, stared at); a same-sex couple cannot walk hand in hand there without being harassed, including physical assault, by far-right young people
- Keizerpark: an odd atmosphere
- Zuid: many problems — alcohol, drugs, a specific street known for glass/needles, extortion; "you get pulled off your bike there"
- Rabot: dangerous individuals approaching you to buy or sell drugs
- Dampoort: many "lost" people in the evening (substance use, homelessness)

Part 2 — Question 3: do you ever feel unsafe in the city?

- On public transport, especially as a girl alone (unwanted touching, uncomfortable conversations)
- Frequent arguments and fights in the city
- Considerable conflict in certain neighborhoods: "the environment makes young people behave that way too"
- "Bad vibe in certain neighborhoods, but I wouldn't necessarily say I've felt properly unsafe myself"
- "Not really unsafe — the city is our home, but you do have to be careful who you associate with"
- "Unsafety isn't down to the city, it's down to the people"
- Certain housing blocks genuinely feel unsafe (drugs, extortion)
- "I mostly stay in my own neighborhood, I know everyone here, it's safe"
- Larger groups of young people can come across as quite threatening
- "If I suddenly see people in my neighborhood who aren't usually there, I do feel a bit unsafe"
- Many girls named the area around Dampoort station as unsafe after dark
- "Overpoort is really unsafe — racism, fighting, drunk people who bother or follow you"

Part 2 — Question 4: who do you turn to for advice, guidance or help if you have a problem?

- Family and friends
- VZW Jong
- Jong Gent In Actie
- Youth street-corner work
- The youth worker at the neighborhood center
- Trusted figures at school
- Overkop

Part 2 — Question 4 (continued): those without a clear point of contact, and access barriers

A considerable number of young people said they did not immediately know who to turn to, or where they could go; they suggested it would help if more youth workers came to talk with young people directly, to build more trusted relationships this way.

Other young people mentioned long waiting times before an appointment takes place (waiting lists, etc.).

Access is also described as depending on the type of problem: several girls said they would not go to the police in cases of transgressive behavior, since this would mean having to repeat the same story multiple times to different people over several weeks, with little sense that anything is actually done as a result.

Part 2 — Question 5: if you could change one thing for young people in Ghent, what would it be?

- More affordable mental health care and shorter waiting lists
- Make school affordable
- Higher penalties for transgressive behaviour
- More places where young people can pursue individual interests (e.g. a house that is always open to play chess or have a chat with someone)
- Make public transport affordable (one pass for all Ghent residents)
- Housing is far too expensive — make it possible for people to live more affordably
- More activities, since current provision is always in the same places
- Alcohol is very present in nightlife venues, but some young people are not permitted by their families to go to such places — more nightlife provision for Muslim young people specifically
- More street lighting and cleaner neighborhoods (currently: rats, litter, dark alleyways)
- More places to get food and drink for free
- More attention to mopeds in the city (current infrastructure focuses mainly on bicycles and cars)
- Listen more to young people and act on what they want
- Stop organizing school altogether — it isn't relevant anyway (view expressed by one participant)
- More youth work and more places where young people can gather 24/7
- Places to sleep and freshen up
- More trusted figures who can offer advice and help with finding work or housing
- More targeted policing (e.g. in Overpoort, where fights are frequent), rather than checks concentrated on young people with a migration background on the square because of their skin color, while plenty of Flemish young people display genuinely extreme behavior

Additional reflection (see also Section 4.2)

At no point during the entire outreach period was the project worker approached by any societal actor (a youth worker, an enforcement officer, a social worker); the project worker was, however, repeatedly approached to buy drugs and cigarettes, asked for money in and around the station area, and once followed by a car with blacked-out windows. This is offered in the source material as a plausible reflection of what young people who spend their days in these same public spaces may experience routinely, and as a possible argument for a more assertive, outreach-based presence from City services matching the persistence already shown by informal and often illicit actors in the same public space.

WP3.2: Barbecue validation activity, Jong Gent In Actie

Description

To close off the WP3 signal-gathering period, the project worker organized a barbecue at Jong Gent In Actie. The six most recurring signals identified during the WP3.1 outreach work were reformulated as statements; young people could indicate whether they agreed or disagreed and explain why. An additional open question was asked: "If you were mayor of Ghent tomorrow, what would you change in the city for young people?" Participation in the activity was linked to the barbecue itself: once a young person had gone through the questions, they received a token for a merguez sandwich. As in WP3.1, actual attendance (23) is recorded separately from the number of young people willing to sign the official participant list (6), for the same reasons of distrust documented in Section 4.1.

Statement 1 "I know young people who do not have a fixed place to sleep."

Statement tested (derived from WP3.1 signals)	Response from young people at the barbecue (WP3.2)
Housing insecurity/homelessness among peers	Most young people said no one in their own group was in this situation, but were aware that such situations exist elsewhere in the city. A smaller number said they personally know young people without a fixed place to sleep.

Statement 2 "I have been sent away from a square by police, residents, or other young people."

Statement tested (derived from WP3.1 signals)	Response from young people at the barbecue (WP3.2)
Being chased from public meeting places	Most young people aged 12–23 recognized this situation and said they had themselves been chased away from a square or park at some point. Older participants (23–30) said no one — not even the police — could chase them away from a square.

Statement 3 "I have experienced racism on public transport (bus, tram, train)."

Statement tested (derived from WP3.1 signals)	Response from young people at the barbecue (WP3.2)
Racism/discrimination on public transport	The conversation quickly broadened to racism in general. Two young people said they had not personally experienced racism, though they had experienced discrimination. Others said racism occurs everywhere, not only on public transport. The statement itself was recognized by most participants.

Statement 4 "Ghent is a safe city for all young people."

Statement tested (derived from WP3.1 signals)	Response from young people at the barbecue (WP3.2)
General sense of safety in Ghent	Some young people (mostly the older participants) answered yes. Most answered no, particularly the younger participants (under 18). Some were unsure, saying it depends on which neighborhood and which situation you end up in.

Statement 5 "There are enough activities and places in Ghent for young people to go to."

Statement tested (derived from WP3.1 signals)	Response from young people at the barbecue (WP3.2)
Sufficiency of youth provision and meeting places	Most young people said it works well for them personally that they can go to Jong Gent In Actie, and that this is not a problem for them. They did note, however, that many other young people need more activities, and especially more trusted figures who can support them across different areas of life.

Statement 6 "I feel 'Belgian'."

Statement tested (derived from WP3.1 signals)	Response from young people at the barbecue (WP3.2)
National identity and belonging	Only two young people said they feel "Belgian". Most said no, and named their own background instead (Albanian, Turkish, Moroccan, Bulgarian, among others). Some young people said they do not feel fully at home anywhere: "Here in Belgium I'm seen as a foreigner, even though I've lived here my whole life. If I visit family in Morocco, I'm seen as a tourist."

Open question "If you were mayor of Ghent tomorrow, what would you change for young people in the city?"

- Cheaper food
- Free sports provision
- Stop continuous identity checks of young people (ethnic profiling)
- More say in the design of neighborhood parks and squares
- More youth work provision and activities
- Build young people's mental resilience

- Better justice system for young people aged 12–18 — more opportunities to make amends after offending behavior, instead of fines, which end up punishing parents rather than the young person
- Free sandwiches provided at every school

Photo



6. Consolidated overview of identified signals and context

Together, the two WP3 activities engaged an estimated 93 young people at risk of being excluded by society/institutionally in Ghent (approximately 70 through sustained outreach in WP3.1, and 23 at the closing barbecue in WP3.2), of whom 25 in total signed the official COSY participant list (19 and 6 respectively). This gap between actual engagement and signed participation is itself a documented finding of WP3 (Section 4.1) rather than a data-quality limitation to be minimized. The table below consolidates the recurring themes across both activities per COSY life domain.

Life domain/ theme	Signals raised in	Cross-activity observation
Police/ justice	WP3.1, WP3.2	Ethnic profiling, excessive/repeated ID checks and searches, and a sense of being permanently flagged after a single past incident are raised extensively in WP3.1 and independently re-confirmed in WP3.2 (Statement 2, and the open mayoral question, where ethnic profiling was named directly). Girls' specific reluctance to report transgressive

		behavior to police, due to repeated retelling with no visible outcome, is a distinct and serious sub-signal within this theme.	
Gender unsafety in public space and on transport	WP3.1 (raw signals and survey Q1–Q3), WP3.2	One of the most consistently and severely documented themes: girls report discomfort and unsafety in specific neighborhoods (especially after dark), on overcrowded or late-night public transport, and in named locations such as Overpoort, Citadelpark and the Sint-Pieters station area, with WP3.1's survey producing detailed, location-specific first-hand testimony, including an account of homophobic violence in Overpoort against a same-sex couple.	
Being chased from public meeting places/ lack of a fixed hangout spot	WP3.1, WP3.2	Confirmed independently in both activities: WP3.1 documents this as a recurring raw signal and situates it against redevelopment of squares removing existing meeting places; WP3.2's Statement 2 shows a striking age split, with younger participants (12–23) recognizing being chased away while older participants (23–30) report that no one, including police, can make them leave a square — directly consistent with WP3.1's own methodological observation (Section 4.1) that older, locally rooted young people hold more standing in public space than younger ones.	
Housing insecurity and homelessness	WP3.1, WP3.2	Extensively documented in WP3.1 (exploitative renting, housing-market discrimination, shelter shortages, sofa-surfing, vacancy that could be repurposed) and independently confirmed, with more caution, in WP3.2's Statement 1, where most young people said they did not personally know someone without a	

		fixed place to sleep but were aware such situations exist in the city.	
Racism and discrimination across institutions	WP3.1, WP3.2	Raised in nearly every life domain in WP3.1 (education, housing, transport, work, everyday public space) and independently and strongly re-confirmed in WP3.2's Statement 3, where the conversation broadened spontaneously from public transport to racism as a general, cross-cutting experience; WP3.2's Statement 6 (national identity) adds an important related dimension — most participants do not identify as "Belgian" and several described feeling permanently treated as an outsider in both Belgium and their family's country of origin.	
Belonging to and safety within one's own neighborhood	WP3.1 (survey Q1, Q3), WP3.2 (Statement 4)	A consistent, protective-factor-type signal: young people across both activities describe their own neighborhood as where they feel safest, "because I know everyone here" — even for neighborhoods (e.g. Brugse Poort) that other young people, or outside observers, might consider risky, illustrating that familiarity and social connectedness, more than the physical neighborhood itself, drive the sense of safety.	
Education: trust, segregation, and disengagement	WP3.1	A well-documented cluster covering teacher turnover, suspensions, truancy, and segregation both within and between schools ("white" vs. non-white schools; internal groupings along ethnic lines) — closely echoing similar education signals raised independently in other WP1-8 and WP9-16 reports.	
Need for accessible, flexible, trusted meeting spaces and figures	WP3.1, WP3.2	A strong, consistently confirmed "ask" across both activities: WP3.1 documents demand for a 24/7 open space and more trusted adult figures able to help with practical needs (food,	

		sleep, paperwork), while WP3.2's mayoral question directly echoes this (more youth work provision, more say over public space design) alongside WP3.1's own observation that Jong Gent In Actie itself already functions as exactly this kind of trusted space for its regular participants.	
Hunger and material insecurity	WP3.1	A serious, widely reported signal: many young people report not having a proper meal every day, echoed in the mayoral wish list (WP3.2) for free food provision at schools and in the city.	
Social media: extortion, extremism, and algorithmic radicalization	WP3.1	A particularly severe sub-signal within this theme concerns social-media-based extortion schemes escalating from paid "challenges" into blackmail threats referencing police involvement, alongside broader concerns about increasingly extreme TikTok content and radicalizing/polarizing algorithmic influence.	

6.1 Value of the WP3.2 validation approach

WP3.2's design — reformulating WP3.1's six most recurring signals as statements and testing them with an independent group of 23 young people — provides a valuable, lower-cost analogue to the professional cross-validation approach used in WP11 (Ghent, youth workers) and WP12 (Grammont, youth workers), applied here directly with a second group of young people rather than with professionals. Five of the six statements (housing insecurity, being chased from public space, transport-related racism, general safety, and sufficiency of youth provision) were substantively confirmed as recognizable, with WP3.2 additionally surfacing a notable age-based divergence in how being chased from public space is experienced (Section 6, row 3) and a new, distinct signal on national identity and belonging (Statement 6) not explicitly present in the WP3.1 raw signal list.

6.2 Context of the two activities within the Ghent ecosystem

As set out in Section 3, several of the specific neighborhoods named directly and repeatedly by young people across both WP3 activities — the Sint-Pieters/Dampoort station areas, Overpoort, Brugse Poort, Rabot, Zuid and Nieuw Gent — closely track the areas already prioritized by Ghent's own municipal youth welfare infrastructure (the 2020 "Jeugdwelzijnswerk: een verbindend verhaal" charter and the five neighborhoods covered by dedicated youth street workers), and match the operating areas of the same organizations consulted directly for their professional perspective in WP11 (VZW Jong, Jong Gent In Actie,

Jeugdstraathoekwerk Gent). This strong geographic and organizational overlap between WP3 (youngsters) and WP11 (youth workers) provides a valuable basis for triangulating signals across both perspectives in Phase 2.

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