

**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:	WP41		
Event name:	Kick-off Conference COSY		
Type:	Training		
In situ/online:	In situ		
Location:	De Studio, Maarschalk Gerardstraat 4, 2000 Antwerpen (Belgium)		
Date(s):	June 16, 2026 [09h30-17h00]		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.uitdemarge.be/cosy/		
Participants			
Female:	111		
Male:	67		
Non-binary:	25		
From country 1 [name]:	Belgium		
From country 2 [name]:	Netherlands		
From country 3 [name]:	Turkey		
From country 4 [name]:	Iran		
From country 5 [name]:	Chechnya		
From country 6 [name]:	Romania		
From country 7 [name]:	Poland		
...			
Total number of participants:	203	From total number of countries:	7

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

Kick-off Conference of the COSY Project – ‘Youth, Society, and Participation: New Perspectives on Safety’

PARTICIPANTS

Target Group	Description
Youth	Young people from socially vulnerable situations, including participants from diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds
Youth Workers	Frontline practitioners from youth (welfare) organizations in Flanders and the Netherlands
Policy Makers & Government	Representatives of local authorities and public administration in Flanders and the Netherlands
Police	Law enforcement representatives exploring trust-building approaches with young people
Education	Teachers, school counsellors and education professionals
Care & Welfare	Social workers, youth care workers, welfare organizations
Relevant Actors & Stakeholders	Researchers, NGO representatives, urban designers, sport coaches, community practitioners

Overall, we managed to have 3 youngsters present, 47 people professionally active in social institutions, 59 representatives of local authorities and public administration (policy makers) and 94 first and second line youth work practitioners out of a total of 203 live participants.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

The COSY Kick-off Conference pursued three interrelated objectives:

- To create a lasting culture of active democratic youth participation by co-developing tailored methods and supporting local actors involved in democratic decision-making processes.
- To introduce COSY's bottom-up and co-production approaches by actively involving all relevant actors and stakeholders from the outset.
- To promote transnational cooperation by introducing actors and stakeholders to each other and to the COSY project approach.

These objectives respond to a broader policy context: youth behavior in public space is routinely framed as nuisance, non-participation or even threat. COSY challenges this framing by making young people's voices, experiences and strengths the starting point of community safety work — addressing root causes of insecurity and exclusion rather than managing symptoms.

PROGRAMME

Time	Activity	Speaker / Facilitator
09:30 – 10:30	Welcome, coffee/tea, informal networking	Uit De Marge vzw team
10:30 – 11:00	Opening address & Keynote: 'Growing up safe in the city'	Prof. dr. Femke Kaulingfreks, University of Amsterdam (Wibaut Chair on Urban Issues)
11:00 – 12:15	Break-out Round 1 (choice of 8 thematic sessions)	Various facilitators
12:15 – 13:00	Lunch & networking	—
13:00 – 14:15	Break-out Round 2 (second session)	Various facilitators
14:15 – 14:30	Break	—
14:30 – 15:30	Plenary feedback & panel discussion	Moderated plenary
15:30 – 16:00	Closing & call to action	Uit De Marge vzw
16:00 – 17:00	Reception	—

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

— Keynote: Growing Up Safe in the City

Prof. dr. Femke Kaulingfreks (University of Amsterdam, Wibaut Chair on Urban Issues) opened the conference with a keynote examining the conditions under which young people can grow up feeling safe in an urban environment.

Her presentation drew on research illustrating deep-seated mistrust of government institutions among young people growing up in socially vulnerable situations. A recurring image from her fieldwork was that of government as a bird that only descends when it is hungry — a metaphor young people used to describe institutional contact as inherently transactional and extractive rather than supportive.

Key conceptual distinction: physical/procedural vs. relational safety

Kaulingfreks introduced a central analytical distinction that structured much of the day's discussion:

- Physical and procedural safety: the absence of physical danger and the presence of formal rules and enforcement mechanisms.

- Relational safety: the experience of being genuinely seen, heard, and trusted by others in one's environment.

The core argument: physical and procedural safety measures alone are insufficient. Young people only feel truly safe when relational safety is present. This has direct implications for community safety policy — interventions that focus exclusively on surveillance, enforcement and sanctioning risk generating or deepening insecurity rather than addressing it.

— Methodological Framework: Flip Thinking

A second presentation introduced the methodological backbone of the COSY project: 'flip thinking', a creative problem-reframing method developed by Berthold Gunster based on 15 structured strategies.

The central premise is that problems are not defects to be fixed but entry points to new possibilities and structural improvement. Rather than asking 'how do we solve this problem?', flip thinking asks 'what does this problem make possible?'

The 15 strategies were introduced in four clusters:

- From love: Wait, Accept, Reinforce, Respect
- From work: Persevere, Focus, Rethink (purpose)
- From struggle: Eliminate, Import (make the opponent an ally), Collaborate, Seduce
- From play: Display, Role-switch, Disrupt, Reverse

Each break-out session applied one or two of these strategies to a concrete case study involving a young person navigating safety-related challenges.

A particularly noted conceptual innovation from the day: framing safety issues in terms of rest vs. restlessness or convenience vs. discomfort rather than the binary of safe vs. unsafe. This shift opens a dynamic, relational conversation with young people instead of labelling situations or individuals.

— Break-out Sessions: Eight Thematic Lenses on Safety

Eight parallel break-out sessions were offered in two rounds, each using a pseudonymized and realistic case study of a young person to ground discussion. Each session generated insights, identified a key tension field, and formulated a concrete action. Below is a consolidated overview.

Theme	Case & context	Core insights	Key tension	Concrete action
Public Space & Street Culture Presented by Mattias De Backer.	Bilal, 17, Amsterdam Noord: repeatedly displaced from self-organized hangout spots despite attempting formal participation.	Safety for young people is fundamentally relational and territorial. The concept of 'drari' illustrates how shared micro-geography creates belonging. Repeated exclusion outside one's neighborhood reinforces attachment and self-protection.	Young vs. old: 'nuisance' vs. need for public presence. Quick political wins (enforcement) vs. long-term relational investment.	Establish genuine participatory mechanisms; listen actively; install structural processes for taking young people's signals seriously.
Police & Trust	Nora, 20, Amsterdam New-West: stopped calling police after her	Suspicion decreases when professionals do not mirror negative	Professional conduct vs. empathy. Individual	Show empathy; don't take reactions personally; proactively

Presented by Maarten Geraerts.	brother's unjust detention; slowly reappraising through individual contact during nursing internship.	emotions. Professional proximity and communication are key. Perception of police is highly context dependent.	case vs. broader societal role of police.	create encounter moments before conflict arises; develop mutual knowledge of each other's roles and interests.
Education & Safety Presented by Julia Steenwegen.	Cosmina, 15, Grammont: Roma student navigating school conformity vs. community loyalty, whose academic strengths go unrecognized.	Young people navigate three worlds daily (home, street, school). Their safety knowledge is rarely recognized in school. When genuinely asked, young people provide relevant, actionable insights.	Rules vs. care. Home context vs. school expectations.	Stop trying to 'solve' the student; start with their strengths. Citizenship education begins with the question: 'What makes your life here safe or unsafe?'
Online vs. Offline Safety Presented by Naima El Kaddouri.	Daan, 17, Ghent: groomed online after finding community in anonymous forum, now carries unshared burden of shame and fear.	Misuse of trust; experience of powerlessness and failure. Online disinhibition creates vulnerability offline.	Open world vs. unknown world. Silence offline vs. openness online.	Open conversation when behavior changes; mobilize a reliable offline adult; name and reinforce existing strengths.
Gender & Safety Presented by Finn Van Batenburg & Nina Uyttenhove.	Rania, 22, Deurne: followed home from station, routes her life around male harassment while society frames this as her responsibility.	Emotional safety precedes physical safety. The burden of adjustment is consistently placed on women and girls. Listening is a primary intervention.	Rules vs. autonomy. Individual vs. societal responsibility. Safety vs. individual freedom.	Bystander training; creation of safe spaces; establishment of reporting channels with real follow-up.
Sport & Group Dynamics Presented by Saloua El Mazouni & Dounia El Ghayyati Fares.	Sofiane, 16, Borgerhout: skilled footballer enduring toxic locker-room culture; coach indifferent; wears a 'mask'.	Sport provides natural environment for trust-building, positive role models and social skill development. Peer-to-peer coaching and community building are powerful levers. A grey zone exists between performance culture and safety.	Over-protection vs. autonomy. Club financial sustainability vs. quality youth guidance.	Local government: review subsidy structures for youth-focused clubs. Professionalize youth sports coaching.
Youth Care & Vulnerability Presented by Jan Naert.	Imani, 19, Lanaken: survivor of multiple care system transitions, now studying social work and bumping into the	Blind spots exist on both sides — care system and young people. Frustration can be transformed into professional	Collegial loyalty vs. client's best interest. Lived experience vs. professional socialization.	Dare to question existing rules to check whether they still serve their purpose.

	same patterns she experienced.	strength. Focus must shift to client's actual needs rather than organizational logics.		
Public Space & Urban Design Presented by Jolijn De Haene.	Kevin, 14, Dilsen-Stokkem: rural municipality with no youth infrastructure; his formal request for a youth space was ignored for nine months.	Safety is multilayered, objective and subjective, and multi-directional. A bridge function is essential. Interaction matters more than design. Monolithic group reduction is destructive.	Unequal use of public space and infrastructure.	Deploy bridge-builders who communicate actively between different user groups.

— Insights from the Day

Across all eight sessions, three consistent themes emerged:

- Safety is relational, not merely procedural. Young people prioritize being seen and trusted over physical security measures. This was voiced across street culture, education, gender, sport, and care contexts.
- The tension between supervision and freedom is present in every context. Whether in a school corridor, a football changing room, an online forum or a city park, young people navigate systems that oscillate between care and control — and often experience the latter more than the former.
- Young people's signals are not being heard as knowledge. Practitioners, policymakers and institutions repeatedly underestimate the analytical and practical knowledge young people carry about their own safety. COSY's ambition is to change this — treating young people's signals as the entry point for policy, not as problems to manage.

— Plenary Feedback & Panel Discussion

The plenary session brought together findings from all eight break-out groups. Participants noted:

- Mutual understanding between sectors (youth work, police, policy, education) is crucial and was experienced as one of the most valuable aspects of the day — having all parties at the same table was itself a significant outcome.
- Investing in social infrastructure (social organizations, youth workers, community spaces) is a precondition for sustainable safety.
- Young people must be both participants and responsible actors — not merely objects of safety policy.

The panel discussion reinforced the importance of relational safety and the need for structural, rather than symptomatic, approaches to community insecurity.

EVALUATION & PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Evaluation instrument	Digital evaluation form (Microsoft Forms) distributed to all participants at close of conference
Number of responses	34

Overall score (mean, scale 1–10)	6.9 / 10
Plenary sessions (mean, scale 1–5)	3.9 / 5
Break-out sessions (mean, scale 1–5)	3.1 / 5
Facilitation (mean, scale 1–5)	3.8 / 5
Organisation / logistics (mean, scale 1–5)	4.0 / 5

Key Qualitative Findings

- Flip thinking methodology and the rest–restlessness reframing were cited by nearly all respondents as the most valuable takeaway of the day.
- Cross-sector exchange (youth work, policy, police at the same table) was highlighted as a significant added value — a rarity in this field.
- The keynote by Prof. Kaulingfreks and the closing panel were most frequently named as the strongest elements of the conference.
- 17 out of 30 respondents indicated that the conference had partly shifted their perspective on safety vs. insecurity.
- 20 out of 34 respondents indicated they wish to remain actively involved in COSY's follow-up; 12 indicated 'possibly'.

Improvement Points

- Break-out sessions scored notably lower than plenary elements. Several respondents indicated that the flip thinking task was not always sufficiently explained before participants were expected to apply it.
- Participants requested more time for sharing concrete practical signals from their own work — which is precisely the focus of Phase 1 of COSY.

PROJECT FOLLOW-UP & NEXT STEPS

The kick-off conference launched the three-phase COSY project structure:

Phase	Description	Timeline
Phase 1 — Identification	Collecting and interpreting local safety signals from young people and youth workers in their own neighbourhoods across 8 ecosystems in Belgium and the Netherlands.	2026

Phase 2 — Dialogue & Intermediate Spaces	Creating shared, safe spaces for encounter between young people, policymakers and institutions. Inspired by the Library of Intermediate Stories — supporting young people navigating multiple social worlds to tell layered, non-problem narratives.	2026-2027
Phase 3 — Collaboration	Finding concrete, shared solutions for community safety challenges within each ecosystem. Translating signals and stories into policy recommendations and practice tools.	2027–2028

Phase 1 — Preliminary Results

A first cohort of approximately 80 young people evaluated a safety signal capture activity in their neighborhood. Preliminary evaluation results are strongly positive (mean score 8.9/10). Young people reported feeling safe to express their opinions, feeling taken seriously, and feeling that their contribution mattered. The most frequently named safety concerns were: police presence and profiling, feeling unwelcome in public space, experiences of racism, and the removal of play and meeting spaces. Their central message: act on this input — don't just talk about it.

Theoretical & Policy Context

The COSY approach responds to a documented trend, described by criminologist Randy Haers (VUB), in which social problems are increasingly reframed as questions of public order rather than structural inequality. This 'quality of life policing' orientation — originating in the US and spreading across Europe — risks making discomfort invisible while leaving underlying problems intact. In Antwerp alone, the safety budget exceeds €430 million per year, of which more than €300 million goes to policing, while social sector organizations face austerity. COSY explicitly positions itself as a counterweight to this logic — treating young people's safety signals not as threats to manage but as the raw material for inclusive, participatory solutions.

KICK-OFF CONFERENCE COMMUNICATION

Invitation:



Invitation Kick-off
Conference.pdf

Video recap:



CosyKickOff_Recap.m
p4

Socials COSY:

<https://www.instagram.com/uitdemarge/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/uit-de-marge-be/posts/?feedView=all>

Publication Dynamo International:

<https://dynamointernational.org/cosy-quand-la-securite-des-jeunes-se-construit-ensemble/>

Website page:

<https://www.uitdemarge.be/cosy/>

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, certify that the information provided in this Event Documentation Sheet is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Organisation	Uit De Marge vzw
Address	Gitschotellei 119, 2600 Antwerp, Belgium
Contact	cosy@uitdemarge.be
Name & Function	Eva Van den Noortgate Coordinator COSY
Signature	EVdNoortgate
Date	July 14, 2026

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