BUILDING OUR CITIZEN MUSCLE

SALTO-YOUTH
PARTICIPATION
RESOURCE CENTRE

Education and Culture

FOREWORD

SALTO-Youth stands for 'Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the Youth in Action programme'. A network of eight SALTO-Youth Resource Centres has been created by the European Commission to contribute to the implementation of the European 'Youth in Action' programme.

The SALTO-Youth network aims to support European 'Youth in Action' projects in permanent priority areas such as Participation, European Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, and Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, by offering Training and Cooperation activities and Information tools for National Agencies and the beneficiaries and promoters of the programme within the European Union and in third-country regions such as Euro-Med, South-East and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The SALTO-Youth network provides resources, information and training for National Agencies and European young people and youth workers. The network has a common website – www.salto-youth.net – where a variety of resources and online tools can be found, such as the European Training Calendar, OTLAS – a Tool for Partner Finding, the Best Practice Projects Database, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, and the database of youth field trainers active at European level (Trainers Online for Youth) etc.

The SALTO-Youth Participation Resource Centre was set up in 2003 and since then, has been undertaking diverse activities in order to support young people and youth organisations in the field of participation. The Resource Centre has cooperated closely with National Agencies and experienced European trainers to promote youth initiatives and youth democracy projects as a tool for the active participation of young people in society. As far as youth democracy projects are concerned, the Resource Centre has already published a booklet entitled 'Put your imprint on society' aimed at supporting young people willing to set up a youth democracy project. It has also put a lot of effort into implementing a training module (Get Involved) aimed at supporting young people to improve their project management skills for the development of youth democracy projects.

It has been ten years since the creation of the Resource Centre and it now seems to be the right time to publish a new booklet on the management of youth democracy projects, taking into account the latest developments and trying to pave the way for the future of this sub-action under the future programme for youth. The SALTO-Youth Participation team would like to thank all those who kindly contributed to this publication by providing useful tips and testimonies based on their experience with youth democracy projects. We hope you will find it useful.

FATIMA LAANAN & RALUCA DIROESCU
SALTO-Participation Coordinator and Officer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2

PEDAGOGIC BOOKLET ON YOUTH DEMOCRACY PROJECTS

SUB ACTION 1.3 OF THE YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

4

INTRODUCTION

1
www.theworldcafe.com/tools.html
2
www.artofhosting.org

In parallel with compiling this booklet I am also in the middle of running a Youth Democracy project on sustainable development. After so many projects in which I took part as a trainer with the task of, inter alia, giving input, this is the first time we have designed a project with the explicit aim of supporting the learning process of the participants (and ours) by 'only' creating the space to empower and inspire young people to get into action by experiencing methods like the World Café[1]. World Café is one of the methods encompassed by the Art of Hosting[2] approach which believes that in today's world the challenges we meet are so complex that true answers can only be found if we build on the collective knowledge (wisdom) that lies in our groups and communities and can be brought about by methods that facilitate real dialogue. Instead of falling into the trap described in the short tale of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody we have to start 'building our citizens' muscle', and discover all the possibilities we have to make the world around us a better place.

Similarly, Youth Democracy projects (sub-action 1.3 of the 'Youth in Action' programme) do not aim to teach young people the official EU definition of democracy; in fact we can rarely find an explicit definition of democracy in policy documents. Democracy is more often described in terms of its procedures, structures and institutions. In relation to the foreign policy of the EU regarding democracy support, the Czech and Swedish EU presidencies have launched a debate on a European consensus on democracy. Whether the EU should define a notion of democracy still remains a question. The founder of modern Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, said in the 1920s that we might have democracy, but we still lack democrats. In my opinion, in today's Europe, with its multifaceted challenges, it means that we need to continue our ongoing debate on what democracy means for us – we constantly need to share and negotiate how we want to live together, based on what values, following which procedures. Youth Democracy projects offer an excellent opportunity, space and support for this ongoing and never-ending process.

EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, ANYBODY AND NOBODY

This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

Youth Democracy Projects introduced new themes and issues to the YiA Programme, such as the role of young people in decision-making and participation in local democracy. It stimulated the creativity of youth organisa-tions to work on these issues.

MARK SNIJDER
1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (NL)

This action enhanced the demo-cratic dimension of the programme and further supported youth participation in democratic life. It gave young people the possibility to engage in creative and innovative activities related to representa-tive democracy and democratic processes, but also to discuss with decision-makers the issues that they were interested in and really affected them. I believe that young people and local communities greatly benefitted from this action, given the considerably low levels of participation of young people in democracy nowadays. These projects created the space for young people to influence the democratic process and make their voice heard.

ANNA LYTRA
1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (CY)

6

At the same time, due to the relatively new nature of this sub-action, even the interim evaluation of the 'Youth in Action' Programme concluded that it should be better explained and given more visibility in order for youth organizations and other stakeholders to fully see its relevance and potential. Four years ago there was a publication produced by SALTO Participation promot-ing the sub-action, clarifying what a Youth Democracy project should look like, and giving some general advice on how to develop a youth democracy project. Now SALTO Participation has decided it is high time to take a look back at the experience that has been accumulated since then, with the aim of supporting future applicants in the period that is still left from the programme, but also aiming to encourage youth organizations to continue working with the issues connected to democracy and participation – in, or outside the framework of the 'Youth in Action' Programme (and its successor programme).

Action 1.3. – Youth Democracy Projects is a sub-action without direct antecedents, as there was no similar sub-action under the previous youth programmes of the European Union, namely the Youth and 'Youth for Europe' Programmes. At the same time the participation of young people has been on the agenda of the European youth policy for a long time, and has been supported in various ways: [3]

[3]
For more information on policy documents related to participation please see: www.salto-youth.net/ downloads/4-17-2615/ youth participation policy documents.pdf

- As a transversal priority throughout the different actions: non-formal learning, through experi-ence, learning by doing, by getting involved;
- As a pedagogical principle, methodology, participatory practices;
- As a political priority: topic-content wise, taking part in democratic life.

It made dialogue and social cooperation possible between public authorities and citizens, especially young people. It also created an opportunity to exchange law and administration solutions existing in different countries.

MIKOŁAJ RÓŻYCKI

Action 1. project officer (PL)

It offers a lot of freedom for applicants to design a project according to the needs and wishes of the young people involved. It offers a way to work locally and internationally at the same time. It offers decision makers the opportunity to involve the young people in their municipality in the policy-making.

MARK SNIJDER

1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (NL)

8

As a background to Youth Democracy Projects, in 2003–2004, there were two calls for long term (24 months long) pilot projects that tackled the subject of youth participation. There were 47 projects realized, with a total budget of €4,6 million, min. 35% of co-funding.

During the planning of the Youth in Action Programme, European citizenship and the participation of young people emerged as a new priority. Action 1.3 was established in 2007 under the 'Youth in Action' Programme with the objective of supporting the implementation of Youth Democracy projects that allow the pooling of ideas, experiences and methodologies from projects or activities at local, regional, national or European level, in order to improve young people's participation.

The sub-action supports the participation of young people at various levels, from local to international. It allows young people to learn about democratic procedures, to become active citizens in their local communities, to learn how to make themselves heard. We can encourage young people to participate in democratic life in various ways: not only by supporting them in improving their knowledge about democracy, but also in developing their skills and forming their attitudes.

Knowledge can refer to how different forms of democracy function in general or how the local government works, but we can also talk about different forms, possibilities and good practices of youth participation. [4] Skills development can refer to all the skills that are necessary for being able to live in a democratic community, such as empathy, assertiveness, problem solving skills, or the ability to solve conflicts in a 'win-win' way. Modern democracy involves a community of people of equal dignity, where citizens decide the common aspects of their lives in free public debates. Youth Democracy projects can support young people in critically analysing the current political or social issues – independently from how the media or political parties present them – and formulating their own opinions about them in order to take part in debates.

4
For further reading on Youth Participation see: Jans, Marc & De Backer, Kurt: Youth(-work) and Social Participation 'Elements for a practical theory'. Brussels, Flemish Youth Council 'JeP!' – 2002. Research report on social participation in Belgium, dealing with young people, youth work and all stakeholders

A greater awareness of what democracy and civic engagement means. Opening up opportunities to explore many aspects of democracy and civic engagement. It also provided the opportunity for groups to work with organisations they may have not naturally approached to develop projects with. For example, youth groups working with schools, or digital media organisations or health organisations in Ireland. It provides an opportunity to plan longer strategies and project durations.

TRISHA DALTON

Action 1. project officer (IE)

Higher visibility of the programme priority participation of young people and opportunity for beneficiaries to engage in the topic by setting up a youth democracy project.

Thanks to the open format of youth democracy projects beneficiaries are able to set up their individual project which fits best to their target group and situation.

Better knowledge about participation of young people and participation obstacles in Europe – beneficiaries are able to set up a network of partner organisations involved in the topic and can use this network for further cooperation.

The cooperation between partners with different profile is prioritized; meaning a network between informal groups, the NGO sector and the official sector is promoted via this action.

BARBARA SCHMIDT, NINA SCHMIDT

Action 1.2, 1.3 project officers (DE)

I think that this sub-action can and has been used to widen the understanding of one of the 'Youth in Action' priorities – participation. It has supported the understanding that participation is not and does not always have to be connected only with politics and that the will to understand and participate in society does not make a person automatically a politician (which often is something that most of the nowadays young people rather want to stay far from). I think and hope that through this sub-action young people have gained a greater understanding of the society and its functions by giving them a positive click. I believe that this has a big potential to make societies stronger and more united, so that there would be less of them who stand aside and do not see their active part in society.

NELE METS

Action 1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (EE)

10

Talking about attitude: proactivity, openness and consciousness come to mind; consciousness about our values, our acts and their possible consequences; and the insight that, although as individuals we are very different and unique, as human beings, we are all the same.

Youth Democracy projects create space for all this to happen and offer a unique opportunity to implement a long term project reflecting local needs. Of the different sub-actions of the 'Youth in Action' Programme, this is the one where there are almost no formal criteria for the activities (regarding the type of activity, its length, frequency... etc.) therefore allowing for creativity and for the project to be embedded in the real-life context of local youth. This freedom, at the same time, challenges the applicants; they find it difficult to give shape to their project idea or they feel uncertain whether what they planned fits the sub-action or not. In the 2nd and the 4th chapter we would like to offer some ideas about how to plan such a project and also project examples that can serve as a source of inspiration.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Promoters must be:
- a non-profit, non-governmental organization;
- a local, regional public body;
- an informal group of young people;
- a body active at European level in youth work;
- there have to be 2 promoters per country, who can be affiliated to each other or to a common network, but have to be independent from each other regarding decision-making, implementing and financing their operation;
- legally residing in programme countries.

Participants:
- young people aged between 18-30, legally resident in one of the programme countries;
- decision-makers, experts can be involved regardless their age and their geographical background;
- at least 16 participants have to be involved.

SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES

These include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. They are linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.

In fact:
- knowledge of how to maintain personal and social well-being;
- awareness of basic concepts relating to individuals, groups, work organisations, gender equality, society and culture;
- understanding of different cultures and how a national cultural identity interacts with a European identity;
- ability to communicate in different environments, to express and understand different viewpoints, to negotiate and be able to create confidence, to feel empathy;
- ability to cope with stress and frustration and to express it in a constructive way;
- interest in socio-economic development and intercultural communication;
- ability to value diversity and respect others, to overcome prejudices and to compromise;
- knowledge of the concepts of democracy, citizenship, civil rights and awareness of their application at local, regional, national, European and international level.

12
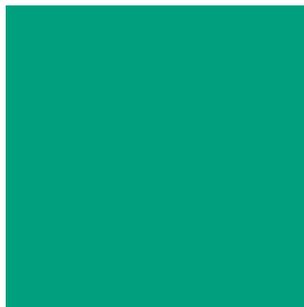
Duration of the project:
- 3-18 months.

Activity(ies):
- the duration of the activity(ies) is not specified;
- the programme of the activity must be attached to the application form.

Funding:
- max. 75% of the eligible costs;
- in-kind contribution can be part of the co-financing.

For further details on the eligibility criteria please consult the Programme Guide or your National Agency.

So far, in the framework of the Youth in Action Programme 818 youth democracy projects have been supported. Even though the Programme is not over yet, it is good to look at what this action has brought to its direct and indirect beneficiaries. Based on the experience of National Agency officers, youth democracy projects have provided the means to:

- raise awareness on what democracy and civic engagement mean: that voting is not the one and only right we can practice as citizens;
- widen the general understanding of participation from politics to taking part in shaping the life of our local community;
- youth organizations to explore the ways in which young people can take part in local decision-making;
- embed a long term project with several activities and an international dimension into the needs of local youth work and target groups;
- create cooperation between different sectors: civic society, public institutions, the educational sector.

According to the results of the interim evaluation of the Youth in Action Programme, among all the sub-actions, youth democracy projects have the highest contribution (71%) to the development of civic competences.

SETTING UP A YOUTH DEMOCRACY PROJECT

14

DEMOCRACY

When we take a look at the word 'democracy', we get to know that the original Greek word consists of two elements: *dêmos*, which means 'people' and *krátos* which means 'force' or 'power', altogether meaning the rule of the people. We should not forget though that people (*dêmos*) in Athens equated exclusively to a certain group of free men who were born there… Slaves, women and men who were not born in Athens were excluded from taking part in the *rule of people*.

We can look at the history of democracy from this viewpoint: how the concept of 'citizen' has become more and more inclusive throughout the centuries… To take the example of women, the right to vote was given to them in most countries only in the 20th century, e.g. in Austria in 1918, in Turkey in 1930, in Switzerland in 1971, and in some countries women are still not entitled to vote.

To go back to Athenian democracy, we also have to mention the Greek thinking about citizenship education: people were considered to be born *idiōtēs*, 'idiots' – in its original meaning, a 'person who does not care about public affairs, but just their own' (a private person, an individual). While growing up, through education, a person could become a citizen and take part in the rule of people. It is only since relatively recently that young people have been considered to be among those 'people' (dêmos) who can express their needs and are able to do something about it… In most countries, the right to vote is given to young people at the age of 18 – but there are discussions and initiatives to lower the voting age to 16.

Nevertheless, it could be one of the key results of youth democracy projects to enable young people to discover that taking part in elections is not the one and only thing they can do to take responsibility and action for shaping their own lives and the world around them. In fact, many policies that are influencing their lives – like transport or education – are decided and implemented at local level without young people even knowing about it, let alone giving their opinions and suggestions on how to best tailor these policies to their own needs.

Some months ago I was giving a workshop on e-participation in the framework of a conference. The young people with whom I was reflecting had not been involved in youth work before, so we started to clarify the concept of participation, what it meant for us, how we could describe it. We had a very interesting talk from 'whatever you do is participation' to 'there should be a passive way of participation – like when I am part of a group but instead of acting I just observe, or when I am reading a blog but not contributing to it'… In fact, it is easy to get lost when we start going around the word, as indeed, whenever I participate in something, I participate… Therefore I would suggest to approach from the intentions (aims) and the impact of our acts. For that we can use a metaphor from the world of football, where the four main roles are: player, coach, commentator, spectator.

The commentator usually describes what s/he has seen happening: interpreting, criticizing or praising it. S/he is focusing on the past (what happened), judges it but has no impact on the game.

The spectator is watching, maybe encouraging the players. S/he also focuses on the past (what happened), and this way has no impact on the game. (Of course her/his encouraging words may influence the players but still it will be the player who will decide whether to act upon those words or not, and not the spectator…)

The player is in action, creating results. S/he lives in the present and has a 100% impact on the game.

The coach focuses on the future, creates strategies, sees the possibilities and aims to increase the fitness of the players. Again, s/he has no direct impact on the game, even though her/his words might influence the acts of the players.

This metaphor shows very simply that we can take many roles in our lives, in our communities, but in fact, only if we undertake the role of the player, can we have a direct impact. There is no such option as 'passive participation'. To play the game and influence its results means that you can not avoid going into action, moving and sometimes even sweating. Youth workers, as 'coaches' have an essential role in inspiring young people to go into action, and find the playing field they want to participate in.

16
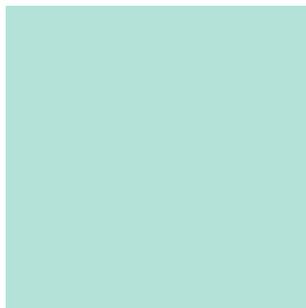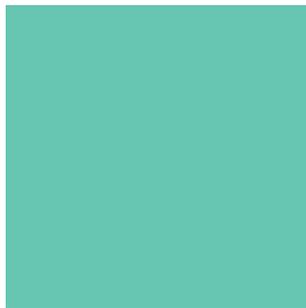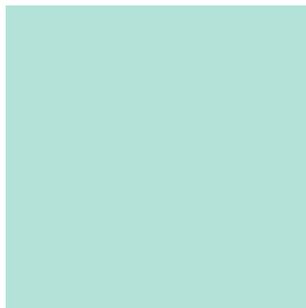
PARTICIPATION

5
'Have your say!' – Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Council of Europe, 2008

6
Discussing Global Issues: What is participation?, UNICEF, United Kingdom 2004, p.1

7
The revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, May 2003

8
'Have your say!' – Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Council of Europe, 2008 , p.8

Participation is a key word when talking about youth democracy projects. There are many publications about this subject, and , inter alia, the manual 'Have your say!' [5] offers an excellent summary on youth participation, with guiding questions that could be used for reflection when planning a youth democracy project. To avoid duplication, here we will give just a short reference on participation.

An inclusive definition of participation is the following: 'Participation is about talking and listening, expressing your own views and listening while others express theirs. It can mean working together for a solution or a course of action. Participating does not just mean becoming a young activist, it can also mean taking advantage of opportunities that are being offered, like joining clubs to learn a new skill, or groups that feel strongly about an issue.' [6]

From this general definition of youth participation let's go to a specific one as defined by the Preamble of the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life: 'Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.' [7]

When building up a youth democracy project, this is the definition we recommend to work with, as it 'goes beyond a narrow understanding of youth participation as a political involvement only or engagement in the youth councils,' which has been mirrored in many applications handed under this sub-action. It approaches participation from the *intention of having an impact*: '[Participation is about] having influence on and responsibility for decisions and actions that have impact on lives of young people or are simply important to them. Therefore in practice this could mean voting in local elections as well as setting up a youth organisation or an internet forum that will deal with issues like creative ways of spending free time or exchanging information relating to hobbies and interests.' [8]

PROJECT PLANNING

The SALTO Participation Resource Centre produced a publication [9] in 2008 with the intention of defining what a Youth Democracy project is, providing tips for project implementation, giving some examples of realized projects and transferring the concepts of the 'Get Involved' training course and 'Let's meet for Participation' seminar initiated by the Resource Centre to support the development of projects and partnerships under Action 1.3.

In the 'Put your Imprint on Society' publication you can find tools to support project planning and checklists to see whether the planned project meets the quality criteria of youth democracy projects. Here we mainly refer to the principal challenges based on the experience of different stakeholders (beneficiaries, N.A. officers…), and giving some tips, tools and methods to facilitate the preparation and the planning of projects.

We can start planning our project from many initial points. It can be the group of young people with whom we work: what we see in terms of practice and skills regarding participation in public life, or approaches to democracy. According to the Resolution of the Council of the European Union and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States for effective participation in society, young people must acquire and develop key competences necessary for lifelong learning, especially communication skills, e-skills, learning to learn, social and civic competences, as well as cultural awareness and expression; participation also encourages the acquisition of key competences.

We can also start from the problems and needs that are present in the local community and convince young people to explore these problems and work on possible solutions involving decision-makers. In any case, we need to begin with a needs analysis, and the more we involve young people in it, the more our project will be based on their needs and embedded in the local reality.

18

PROJECT MANAGEMENT STEPS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A YOUTH DEMOCRACY PROJECT

1. ## WHY?
Needs analysis:
Why this project is needed?

For whom is it needed?

2. ## WHAT FOR?
Defining the aim:
What is the project for?
Guiding questions
Our aim is…
Defining the objectives
Guiding question

3. ## HOW?
Defining the methodology
Guiding questions
Planning
Implementation
Follow-up

4. ## RESOURCES?
Guiding questions
Resources needed

5. ## PARTNERSHIP
Countries
Promoters

6. ## THE TITLE OF THE PROJECT

20

STEP 1.
HOW?

NEEDS ANALYSIS

WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?
WHO NEEDS IT?

What are the challenges faced by the young people in the community you live in? What are their priorities, their main needs?

Have the challenges mentioned been dealt with before and what is *innovative* about your idea?

Who will the target group(s) of your project be? Please specify who you are going to work with (age group, characteristics of the target group)

Are your objectives

S PECIFIC,
M EASURABLE,
A CHIEVABLE,
R EALISTIC,
T IMELY

?

22

STEP 2.
WHAT FOR?

DEFINING THE AIM

WHAT IS THE PROJECT FOR?

The aims should be expressed in one or very few sentences that contain the essence of the project.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is your project for? (reason)
- What do you want to achieve/change (within your community, region)? (impact)

OUR AIM IS...

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVES

So, concretely, how are you going to achieve the aim of your project?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What necessary steps do you need to take in order to achieve the aim?
- What should young people learn during the project?
- What would the possible outcomes of the project be?

- To ....
- To ....
- To ....
- To ...

STEP 3.
HOW?

DEFINING THE METHODOLOGY

ACTIVITIES – HOW?

Think about possible activities which might help to achieve your objectives and lead you towards reaching the aim of the project.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- When are you going to do what?
- What will be done for preparation, implementation and evaluation?
- Which activities will be done at local level and which at international level?
- Are all your objectives covered by the activities?

PLANNING

Involvement of young people in the preparation process,at local and international level.

IMPLEMENTATION

Programme/list of activities (workshops, discussions, …) corresponding to the defined objectives and the quality criteria; aiming at 'visibility'.

FOLLOW-UP

- To spread the outcomes of the project (in your own community and in the communities of the partners/participants), share best practises;
- Which activities are going to follow-up your project (initiatives of participants, communities).

24

STEP 4.
RESOURCES

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What kind of materials are needed for your activities? Which ones do you already have and which do you need to buy?

- What equipment might be needed? Are you planning to rent or buy it?

- What spaces are needed for running the activities? Do you own them? Do you need to rent them?

- Will you need any external people like trainers, consultants?

RESOURCES NEEDED

- ....

- ....

- ....

STEP 5.
PARTNERSHIP

COUNTRIES

....
....
....
....
....
....

PROMOTERS

....
....
....
....
....
....

STEP 6.
THE TITLE OF THE PROJECT

....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
..

26

Youth Democracy projects can be used for the benefit of many aspects:

- *To try out new practices in relevant topics.*
- *To enlarge knowledge of participation and society and its benefits, functions etc.*
- *To widen knowledge of how society functions and the possibilities of making an impact.*
- *To try out a society simulation.*
- *To engage different target groups in society.*
- *To improve the involvement of young people in the planning and functioning of their local government, school, youth centre etc.*
- *To build up a stable network and cooperation between different partners or to strengthen the existing ones in the context of youth participation.*
- *To support social studies classes in schools.*
- *To raise interest in and offer competences to encourage active citizenship.*
- *To enlarge young people's understanding of how they see society.*
- *To build a sustainable society etc.*

NELE METS

Action 1.2, 1.3, 5.1
project officer (EE)

One major challenge is the fact that YDP do not have many criteria; because of this beneficiaries have lots of freedom to design their project themselves, which is great, but sometimes difficult as well for new organisations especially. Besides, a challenge is to have the combination of local level and international level; this could be the strength of YDP, but is sometimes hard to achieve within a project.

MARK SNIJDER

1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (NL)

Another challenge is to make a youth democracy project where partners from both countries are really deeply involved, do activities together, online and also separately in their home countries. Often project applicants tend to plan activities only in one country or only when partner groups meet. That might lead to the (double) youth exchanges with the participation theme and will lessen the possibility to have a combination of different methods and activities in one project. The quality of the project increases significantly if project makers plan and carry out the activities that support the aim and the content of the project also separately in their own countries. It also enlarges the number of the indirect participants and leads to a stronger impact.

NELE METS

Action 1.2, 1.3, 5.1
project officer (EE)

28

CHALLENGES TO MEET

OPEN FORMAT OF THE PROJECT

As mentioned before, in this sub-action the duration and frequency of activities are not limited at all, which is a big opportunity for the promoters to tailor the project to their needs. At the same time, so much freedom might be challenging, especially as there have not yet been so many projects that could be used as examples. This has resulted in many applications handed in resembling a youth initiative or a training/youth exchange on democracy. A youth exchange or a youth initiative clearly depends on its respective sub-action (1.1., 1.2), nevertheless a training on democracy can be part of a Youth Democracy project, if the added element of youth democracy projects can be found; in itself a training course is usually not enough to fulfil the requirements of the sub-action. In the 4th chapter we have listed four projects that show a variety of different activities that could be realized in a Youth Democracy project, and could be used for inspiration.

DOUBLE PARTNERSHIP

The fact that Youth democracy projects require a double partnership is a challenge for many applicants. There might be different reasons behind this:

- A partnership of organizations that have a different legal status is a priority in YDP, which might be very enriching for the project (it is very clear e.g. in the case of a local council and a youth NGO, a youth NGO and an informal group of young people, a school and an NGO, etc.) but because of the different organisational cultures, procedures, communication style (and speed) it might be frustrating as well. The only remedy for avoiding such frustration is to allow enough time – counted in days rather than in hours – to get to know each other, clarify the aims, the working methods, the values, etc. The efficiency of the process might be supported by an outside facilitator. And remember: where there is resistance, there might be learning as well!

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO FIND A COMMON GROUND

EXPERIENCE	Please share among the group: • What motivated you/motivates you to work with and for youth participation? • Your connection/relation to youth participation in general. • A concrete example of a youth participation project that you have been involved in in the past *(if you haven't been involved so far, feel free to describe a project that you have heard about and you liked/were inspired by)*.

COMMON GROUND	Please discuss:
	• During the previous discussion (about experience) did your group identify any common elements concerning:
	  – the values that brought you and keep you into the field of youth participation?
	  – your general connection/relation to youth participation?
	  – past projects that you have been involved in?
	• What are these elements? Please clarify.
	• How can these common elements (if any) help you with partnership building/future partnerships?

ADDED VALUE	Knowing the framework of and the possibilities offered through Action 1.3 'Youth Democracy projects', what is the added value that a possible future project under this action will bring to the existing practice (your practice) of youth participation with regard to: • Active participation of young people. • Impact on the local communities/local environment. • European citizenship/values of a European priority

One of the major challenges is the fact that these projects require the commitment on behalf of the young people for a relatively long period of time, as well as a strong coordination and good partnership between the 2 partners at national level, but also between the European partners. Another challenge is to manage to involve decision-makers in the project and achieve a real and sustainable impact on the community.

ANNA LYTRA

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (CY)

30

• The project idea originates from one organization and the partner has been 'taken aboard' to fulfil this 'dream'. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Probably the best way is to get a vague project idea and then fine-tune it with the possible partners, or even before formulating a project idea, look for partners who have detected the same need in their local reality and would like to work with it.

COMBINING THE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

As it is already challenging to tackle the subject of young people and democracy, while managing a double national partnership, it happens that less energy and focus is left for designing the international dimension of the project. In many cases there is a strong local dimension in one of the partner countries, and the international partners are invited to join one element of this local process. Even though, in this way, the international dimension is present in the project, it is not used to its full potential. These dimensions should not be seen separately, but as completing each other; look for the added value the international dimension can bring to your project.

The added value of the international dimension can be:
• to exchange experiences and inspire good practices;
• to disseminate results in a wider circle;
• to reach a higher number of stakeholders;
• to increase the quality of achievement by the synergy of partners (having a different profile, set of competence), etc.

Another piece of advice could be to use the already existing networks from other youth projects i.e. related to the cooperation between twin cities, which can raise your chances of being supported by the city as well.

The *time* and availability of decision-makers is usually limited.	How can you make your communication well-structured, and to the point?
There is a difference between youth *language* and that of the decision-makers.	How to make yourself understood? Check if you are using expressions that are natural for you, but that people outside the world of youth/youth work might not know or would use differently! Also, see if you can use the style, integrate the 'buzz-words' decision-makers are using!
Something might have already happened in this issue/field. *(antecedents)*	How can you check? Get informed, and in your communication refer to the antecedents!
Implementing measures, however obvious the benefits to the community might seem, usually *cost* money.	Think it over: what are the costs (material/immaterial) of the measures you would suggest and what are the benefits (short and long term)? You can use this information in your argumentation.
Who else shares our opinion? Are there any *surveys, the results of which could support your cause?*	It might be that a sociological survey/research has been made in your town which tackles the same issues that are relevant for you. Remember that conducting a survey or organizing focus groups is a possible activity that might be supported in the framework of your Youth Democracy project as well!
How to *approach* decision-makers?	Practically: Check the possibilities: consulting hours, public committee meetings etc. Attitude-wise: Remember that by sharing your suggestions on how to improve things in the local community you support the work of decision-makers.
How to *follow-up* your initiatives?	Once the relationship has been established and the suggestions discussed, the process is still not over … It is equally important that you find out how you can follow-up your initiatives, agreeing on a time/way to follow-up.

CO-FINANCING

The relatively low co-financing (25% of a whole project budget) keeps some organizations from applying. As rules and possibilities for co-financing are different in each country, here we just give some points to consider:

- remember that the 25% has to be divided between all partner organizations;
- check with your National Agency the rules related to in-kind contribution which could cover part of the project;
- even though other community funds cannot be used for financing the 25%, other funds could be a possibility (again, consult your National Agency about it);
- some local municipalities have a fund especially for co-financing projects;
- for further ideas on fundraising there is a publication available: T-kit on 'Funding and financial management' [10].

10
youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/
youth-partnership/
publications/T-kits/9/Tkit_9_EN

INVOLVING DECISION-MAKERS

Perhaps the most challenging element of a youth democracy projects is involving decision-makers as this is the know-how most youth organizations lack. Involving decision-makers is not an obligatory element of a Youth Democracy project, and sometimes one can come to the conclusion in the planning phase of the project that it might be the next step in a long term process, but according to the needs' analysis and the local reality there are other priorities. But if you decide to go for it, there are a set of practical aspects you should take into consideration in order to manage your communication and cooperation effectively.

The city of Hanover has a lot of possibilities for the participation of youth people: in schools, in institutions of youth support and in politics. These projects are, on one hand, organized by the city management, and, on the other hand, by a lot of social clubs and institutions, which are working in an integrative and participative way. The experiences in this participative way of working are more than good and that is the reason why we support such projects, financially as well. The dialogue with and participation of young people in infrastructure and social structures is important and necessary for a city development in the future, where young people like to live and get a perspective for their own life and future.

In Hanover we have a project for example, that has the name 'Pimp Your Town', a simulation game, in which students take over the town hall once a year and 'Die Jugend soll Ideen für ihre Stadt entwickeln'. develop ideas for their city. They are taking the place of a politician, develop ideas, discuss and decide about them. The experience is, that the involved young people are really positively astonished about the democratic structures. They enjoy to participate and to engage in politics.

My own advice for a successful participation of decision-makers in youth democracy projects is to create a turning round of the roles. The fact of another perspective produces an understanding of each other and a positive learning effect. This looking in another direction means a constructive working together and means that the ideas and solutions for all the participants are really effective and sustainable.

REGINE KRAMAREK

Mayor of Hanover

34

COOPERATION WITH DECISION-MAKERS

LESSONS LEARNED BY A LOCAL YOUTH COUNCIL

The VE-GA Association started their children and youth civil development programme for Szentes town and region (Hungary) in 1992. The concept was developed by an expert team in a year, and then put up for extensive discussion. Realization of the programme was intended for a duration of ten years, in well defined steps.

For the first four years, the creation of a financial, legal and institutional framework was planned. The two following years were dedicated to the creation and development of a town children – youth – and adult supporter 'round table', with the purpose of establishing the bases for the election and operation of a teenage youth council in the town. The four following years were dedicated to the council's consolidation.

The concept was accepted and supported by the Town Council. Under the auspices of the project, the following were established: a town student club in a basement, as the headquarters of the organization; a training centre in a village nearby, and a foundation, as an independent support organization. As part of the process, the Children and Student Round Table was founded in 1996, and, in 1998, the Youth and Student Government of Szentes, which, as a special minority council, has been officially taking part in the operations of Szentes Town Council since 2001, even appearing in a chapter of the council's Institute Rules and Regulations.

Accordingly, we can conclude the following in connection with forming and maintaining cooperation with decision-makers:

My experience has been encouraging regarding the participation of young people. We get young people to attend council meetings and committees – I have young people as a mentor with me ever since I have been a councillor for 30 years. I have also been involved with several local charities where we have encouraged young people aged between 20-25 to become trustees and sit of boards distributing local grants.

I have found many fascinated at the breath of projects we undertake and enjoy the aspect of councillors acting as individual and community advocates. I have always advocated that democracy should not be taken for granted and we all have a duty to vote and actively participate.

STEVEN RADFORD

City Councillor, Leader of
Liberal Party Group Liverpool

SOME BASIC CONDITIONS REQUIRED BY TOWN COUNCILS IN ORDER TO ACCEPT A YOUTH COUNCIL

- Continuous updates about the youth council, and ensuring that the youth council's activities produce results also desirable for the town council;
- The most important decisions regarding the youth council should always be under the town council's control and there should be real (significant, prominent) decision-making situations in this area;
- They require spectacular events and programmes that publicly represent a successful town leadership;
- It should be perceptible and assessable that the operation of the youth council significantly contributes to the work of solving problems and fulfilling the needs of the young people. (Authenticity is a must, i.e. the representatives must actually be young);
- The youth council should not require (much) money from the town, but acquire and manage its own funds in a professional way;
- Youth representatives should take part in the adult council's work. They should be present at committee and council meetings – usually when questions regarding young people are discussed – they should state an opinion, take sides and answer questions. (This is, though, mainly a formal requirement, as anywhere else in the world, it is less desired that young people give 'extra work' to the town council.)

RMSOS FRAMEWORK

APPROACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

The charter's approach to participation is based on the five keywords mentioned in the preamble:

- Right;
- Means;
- Space;
- Opportunity;
- Support.

This is known as a RMSOS approach (RMSOS comes from the first letters of the five key words). It is based on the principle that meaningful youth participation can only take place when the right conditions are created and all the actors undertaking participatory work have the responsibility of ensuring that these conditions are fulfilled.

SUPPORT

RIGHT

OPPORTUNITY

MEANS

SPACE
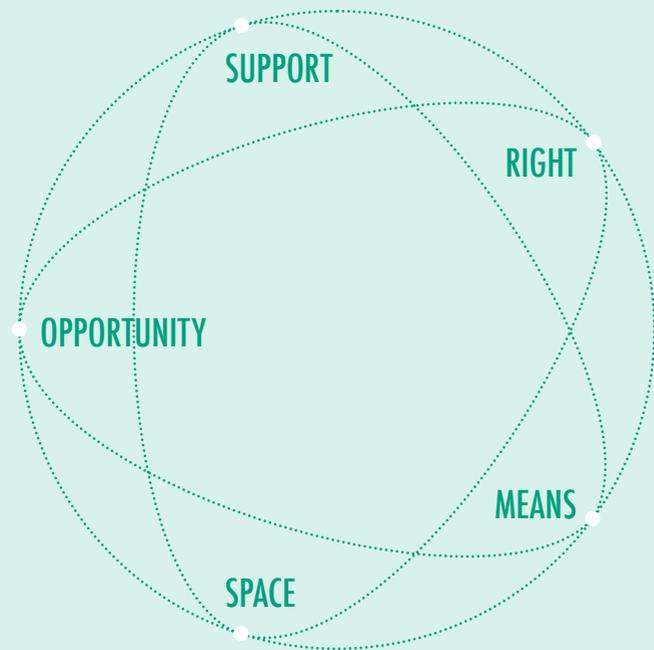
RIGHT

Young people have an implicit right to participate and, as has already been mentioned in Chapter 1, it is referred to as a human right or citizen right. Ideally, there should be a law at local and/or regional level stating that young people have to be consulted and have the right to participate in issues, actions and decisions affecting them. But even in communities, where no such laws officially exist, young people have the right to participate. In other words, it is not dependent on the local or regional authorities to grant such a right, but it is a fundamental right that all young people have and should demand.

Young people should be active in promoting their rights. In practice this means much more than influencing local decisions by consultations or voting; it implies that the activities, projects or organisations should be promoting rights that young people have in all areas of life (as they are necessary for meaningful involvement), not only civil or political rights, but also social, economic or cultural ones.

MEANS

Life can be more difficult for young people who have insufficient resources in life (e.g. financial) and live in poverty due to unemployment or difficult circumstances. This may mean that their basic needs like food or shelter are lacking, which may make them feel isolated or left out of society. It is natural that in such circumstances a young person's priority is to try to look for different ways of securing the missing resources and s/he might find it much more difficult to participate in the life of an organisation or community due to simple factors like a lack of time or motivation.

Therefore, supporting young people to get involved means ensuring that their basic living conditions are met. These include sufficient social security, education, housing, healthcare, transportation, know-how or access to technology.

SPACE

Young people need physical space in which to meet, spend time or organise their own activities. As far as participation in school activities or other organised curricula is concerned, there are usually facilities provided (in classrooms, gyms, youth clubs), but it is much more difficult for young people to find a space to meet if they are interested in getting involved in some non-organised initiatives. That is why more and more often we see the internet being used by young people as a space to get in touch with other like-minded people to exchange views and even set up projects.

But the RMSOS factor is not only about physical space, it is much more about the space to participate within the institutional framework of policy making. This essentially means that young people's views, recommendations and conclusions should have a real impact on the decisions that are made. Very often young people are invited to participate in processes, but in fact they have little possibility to impact and shape the final outcome. This is what is called token representation.

OPPORTUNITY

In order to be able to participate actively, young people need to be provided with the opportunity to do so. This means for example that young people must have easy access to information about how to get involved, what are the opportunities available and where. When they know what is going on in their local community in terms of youth participation they can make informed decisions about their involvement. Sometimes young people do not participate, not because they have no interest, but simply because they never get the information about existing opportunities. Secondly, the events, decision-making processes and systems need to be youth friendly.

There should be not only space for young people within these processes and structures, but the way they are organised and they work should be such that young people can understand them and fully contribute if they wish. It is therefore important to ensure, for example, that young people have the opportunity to participate in terms of having sufficient time and supportive structures.

SUPPORT

Young people have lots of talent and a great potential to participate, but without some necessary support their involvement might not be as efficient as it could be. Therefore they should have access to a number of support measures. These include, for example, financial, moral and institutional support, at a number of different levels – personal, organisational or local community level. Ideally, local authorities should provide adequate support in terms of finances to cover expenses and structural costs, but still in many communities youth issues do not have a priority status in terms of local financial management.

Moreover, young people need to have access to moral support and advice. This can be provided, for example, by a person referred to in the revised Charter as a guarantor, or otherwise by a youth worker or other professional who has the necessary experience and expertise in working in the field of youth-adults partnership or working with young people. Lastly, the institution as a whole or a community needs to support and recognise the importance and contribution of youth participation, not only for young people, but for public authorities and society in general.

REQUIREMENTS TO ESTABLISH A PARTNERSHIP

There are some further conditions though to establish a true partnership between a youth and an adult council:

- It must be clear that the young people alone, however assertive and efficient they are, simply cannot meet all the above mentioned expectations of the adult council.
- It is a minimum, but not necessarily sufficient, requirement to have an adult supporter, who is an expert in both council procedures and youth issues. It is really a well-prepared mentoring (civil) body that can significantly contribute to a successfully operating youth council. Initially, this organization should build up a working partnership with the town council. Together, they should create a concept that enables the creation and operation of a youth council.
- In our opinion, it is simply not possible in any other way, as a town council is not an institution for the education of democracy. They cannot really relate to a youth council, even if it were their designated task to do so – which in reality it is not,. A formal partnership in itself is a minor, but explicit act of generosity on the part of an adult council.

CONDITIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE OPERATION

11
For a theoretical framework on conditions for participation check the RMSOS model as well, which elements are also reflected in the history of this youth council.

It is a serious task to define the framework[11] of the youth council's activities, to draw its boundaries, and to define the necessary physical and human-resources environment. It is only possible to apply to the adult council for financial and moral – or even political support, or to fend off attacks of the same nature along these lines. There should be no illusions: the operation of a proper youth council always generates clashes, even conflicts. These, though, at the same time, make it appear more substantial.

40

The Youth and Student Government of Szentes is an emphatically self-governing body. It is a public, but not event-organizing, nor a civil or 'political' organization. Even though these questions are meticulously clarified from time to time, the same debates keep turning up again and again around these issues. Regarding physical conditions, self-sufficiently equipped community spaces, educational and training facilities are needed. Maintenance should not be fully financially dependent on the adult council. In terms of human resources, in the long run, a youth council can only operate efficiently in close symbiosis with a wide circle of other youth organisations and communities.

HOW TO ENSURE TRUE COOPERATION AND ACTUAL RESULTS?

Why should the adult council's expectations always be over-fulfilled in order to realize effective cooperation? Most importantly, the adult council should regularly be presented with ideas on significant matters, in a positive way, with results, meaningful offers, actual problems, and, at the same time, with opportunities and successful activities. This is not without risk though, as people – especially those in public authority – usually dislike it when they are presented with ready-made situations!

As a typical example of the above – or rather part of it – The Youth and Student Government of Szentes developed and proposed an initiative in 2000, describing how they could appear in the Institute Rules and Regulations of the adult Town Council as a special minority council. Since then, this is the only youth council in Hungary which is – in an originated legal status – actually a council!

42
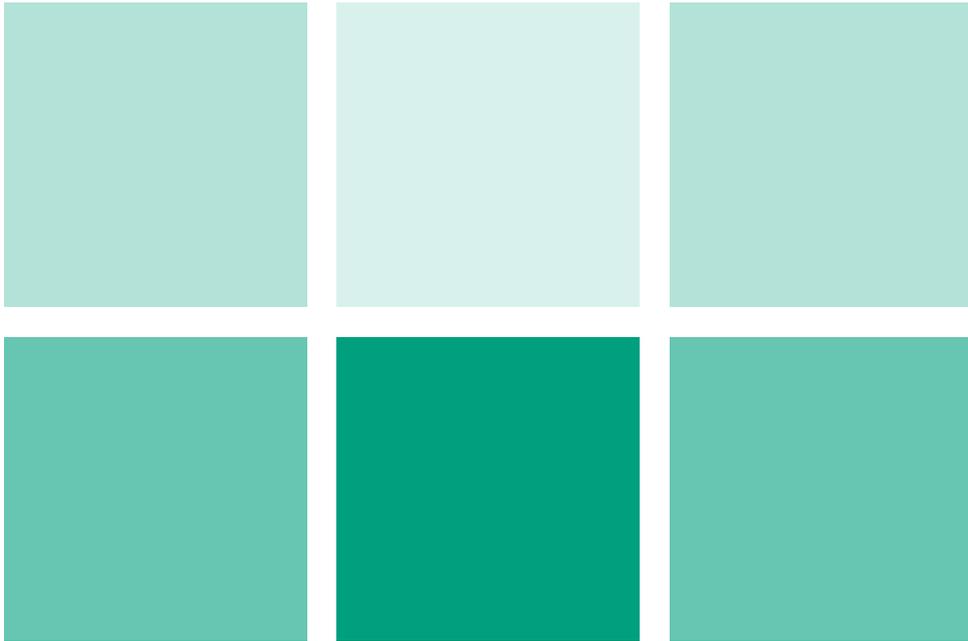
From the e-learning point of view the Video Volunteers (ViVo) project showed that self-directed learning is a key issue. It seems that young people (independently from their social, cultural, economic background) are using online media and form ideas based on this. 'Unactive' young people are highly participating in websites and social media. In contrast with this, adult educators, teachers, programme managers, parents make efforts to cut them off from these platforms to ensure their learning, social participation and so on. What we found out is that to approach young people through the platforms where they are active, in order to involve and educate them is rather beneficial for all. They are capable to learn very fast, participate as peer educators and come up with innovative ideas. Educators can be there to give support on the topic of their learning, focus them and point out dangers or misunderstandings. The facilitating approach brings strong learning for educator and learner as well.

KRISZTINA ZSIDAY

project manager
(Egyesek Youth Association, Hungary).

44

E-PARTICIPATION

When talking about participation, mention should also be made of the technological developments that offer new opportunities for youth work to involve young people in non-formal activities, aiming to inspire them to participate. With a simple approach we can define e-participation as ICT-supported participation, with all the advantages and disadvantages that the use of ICT tools can bring.

Without attempting to be too comprehensive, let's see what forms e-participation can offer and how we can integrate them into a youth democracy project.

- e-learning: following online learning processes, created by professionals (educational videos, online learning platforms, etc.);
- creating and sharing content: self-directed participation via social media (blogs, Twitter, Vimeo, Facebook, etc.);
- virtual environments;
- reflecting and analysing content: individually-focused and self-directed via online media (blogging, opinion pools, forums, etc.).

Before sharing some ideas, let me cite here a Hungarian saying, which says that it's better to find a matching button for a coat, instead of starting with a button, and then buying a matching coat for it… This also goes for ICT tools: first we should pinpoint the interests, needs and the target group our project would like to address and then choose the appropriate ICT tools for them. With this in mind, let's see what opportunities ICT tools can offer youth projects. There are many dimensions of a project in which we can integrate ICT tools. Just to name a few: planning, recruiting participants, internal-external communication, providing visibility and the dissemination of results, evaluation and, above all these, to run non-formal learning activities. This last one is often underestimated and forgotten based on the preconceptions and misinterpretations of adult educators towards online tools and social media. In all these aspects the use of ICT tools is more and more popular, but there are a lot more untapped opportunities for educational aspects.

In my opinion our youth programmes can only be successful if we use the tools young people use. In our experience keeping in touch by e-mail does not work anymore, but as almost all the young people have a phone with a Facebook application on it, Facebook is our most efficient communication channel with them.

In our youth democracy project our plan was that the young people, who create the Sustain-e-Village, will communicate with each other mainly in this virtual space. This may sound a bit ambivalent: in a project that tackles the subject of environmental protection and sustainability, we want young people to get tied to their computers. But it turned out that we can manage it in a way that it does not cause dependency. We see now, that the fact that young people had participated in more personal meetings before 'going' to the virtual space was indispensable in order to be able to lead a meaningful dialogue there as well. The 12-day long youth camp at the beginning of the project created trust and group cohesion, and the regular project meetings afterwards help to digest what happened in the online environment and at the same time the energy coming out of the meeting gives further momentum to the online process.

The Sustain-e-Village would have started right after the 12-day camp, but to our surprise the expectations of the young people towards this virtual space were very high and they planned the village to be as close to life as possible. This meant a lot more programming to be done than it was planned, which caused some delay in our original action plan. In this period we have used Facebook in order not to lose the activity in the group, which we were afraid of because of the delay. This task required a lot of energy, someone had to take care of it from the project staff but we also involved participants in it.

SÁNDOR INÁNTSY-PAP

project manager (Kárpátokért Association, Hungary)

46

AN EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATED ONLINE MEDIA EDUCATION OF YOUTH

The Video Volunteers project [12] used online tools for the above-mentioned tasks (networking, communication, promotion, etc.) and above this offered educational processes for young people and youth workers. For this, online trainings (e-mail, Facebook, vimeo), discussion groups (closed Facebook groups, email list, Skype meetings, Twitter) informal online meetings (Facebook groups, Skype), coaching (Skype, e-mails, chats) were offered. All these were connected to real life activities, such as exchanges, trainings, flash mobs, meetings, conferences, etc. The online tools prepared the events, offered follow-up activities, coaching, mentoring, and provided further ways of participation, keeping young people active and involved.

The youngsters who joined the programme learned to tackle their personal issues in a social context, communicate and share them with a broad audience. This was mainly done by creating videos about both their own issues, and topics connected to other real life activities, for example organizing flashmobs based on their social interests, running focus group interviews on youth participation and media, running workshops for disadvantaged young people and much more. In this way they acted in and for their communities using media as means of expression, and a dissemination tool and method to involve others. The short videos with a social message they wanted to convey, were distributed mainly using social media sites. [13]

Virtual environments: Learning can take place not only in online but also in virtual environments, like the growingly popular second life (SL) an open code software, that offers a lot of 'place' not only for entertainment but also for education. The advantage of SL is that with it we can design our virtual environment and 'meet' with our avatars, talking, listening and seeing each other. It is becoming increasingly popular to organize a conference in the offline world, and a parallel one in an SL environment, or exclusively in the SL. This is something one can also do during a youth democracy project: organize the exchange of experiences in the SL after the meeting of local decision-makers in all the partner countries.

THE LEARNING CIRCLE OF KOLB

This graph helps us to understand the different stages of learning and we can also use it for planning our activities in order to ensure efficient learning. [14] Learning can start from different places: in school we usually start from theories, in non-formal learning usually with having an *experience* during a workshop, a voluntary activity, etc. After having an experience we need to get out of it, so we can look at it. Getting out of the experience can happen by sharing what happened, how you felt, what you experienced (*reflecting*). From the concrete experience moving to a more general level we can make *conclusions* (it works like this...), or build *theories* (if... yes). Upon our conclusion we make decisions, *plans*: whether we would like to do something different, or on the contrary repeat something because it worked. Then again we start doing, this way we get *new experience* and the circle starts again... This is something we can keep in mind when designing our youth democracy project.

14
David A. Kolb, Roger Fry 1975

NEW EXPERIENCE

What can you do about it?
What else can you do?
Do you want
to work with it?
How do you want
to continue?

NEW BEHAVIOUR

EXPERIENCE

WHAT TO ASK YOURSELF TO GET THROUGH THESE CHECK POINTS

Ask for the facts, reality check.
What did you see, hear,
experience, do?

THEORY/CONCLUSION

Look at it objectively...
What did you get out of it?
What did you learn?
Connect it to other situations:
Do you recognize it in your life?
What is the lesson/result?
What was successful?

REFLECTION

What did you feel?
What did you think?
How did it effect you?
What does it make you feel?

We can make use of such a virtual environment for longer term projects as well: e.g. the Kárpátokért Association has been running a youth democracy project since spring 2012. In this project Hungarian and Romanian young people met for a 12 day youth camp to learn about sustainable living and acquire the skills needed for democratic co-habitation. They built their own village with all the professions (farmers, bakers, etc.) and functions (mayor, judge, etc.) presented, and got it up and running. After the youth camp was over, the village was transported into a virtual environment, where the young people have continued to organise the life of their community for the past year, negotiating with each other, solving conflicts, making decisions.

- Opinion pools: surveys to explore needs and ideas locally in the group of young people.
- Forums: (based on the results of the survey) discuss relevant issues in the local community.
- Blogs: to support and encourage young people to reflect on experiences and share insights and other learning experiences, thus involving a wider group in the project.

We can encounter the so called 'blended learning' solution increasingly used in non-formal learning. We call it 'blended' as during the learning process we combine personal, face-to-face learning events with distant or e-learning phases. It is worth including an e-learning phase into our youth democracy project i.e. when we would like to transmit bigger amounts of factual knowledge. For example, young people when learning about human rights, may participate in a training that gives insights into and experiences of human rights, and an e-learning course that introduces the basic documents and treaties, the national situation related to human rights, and gives out some case studies for further analysis based on what has been learnt in the previous chapters. This usage of e-learning mainly aims to transmit certain knowledge to participants, but we can facilitate different phases of experimental learning online as well, as happened in the above mentioned ViVo Project:
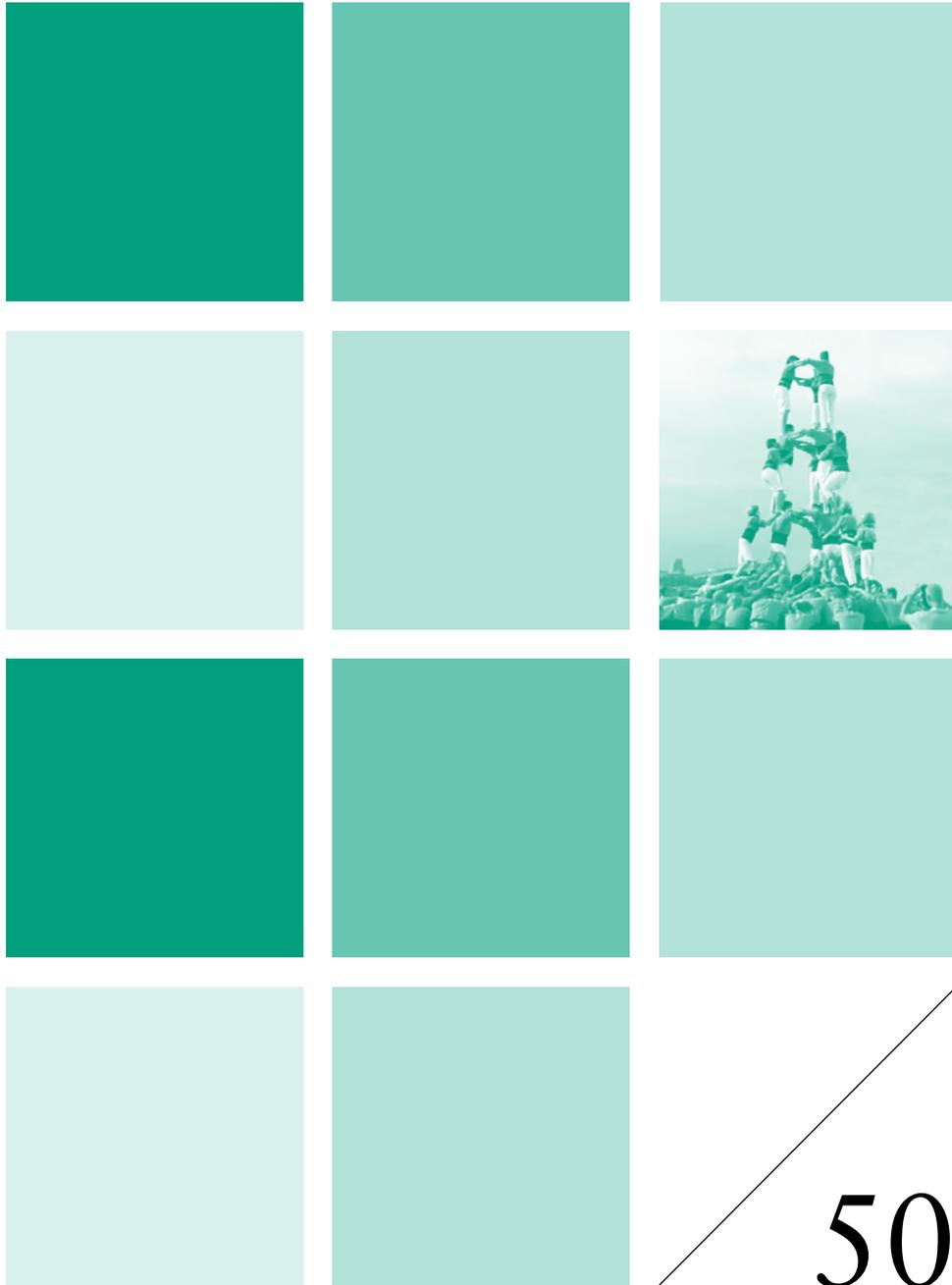
- Experience: before the training course – offering an online session to take pictures and share them with others on Facebook, receiving and giving feedback. Later on, during the training: following it up and searching for tools, rules, methods to make better pictures (in terms of quality, and message).
- Reflecting: sharing videos made during the exchange; online place to run reflection on the process after a few weeks.
- Conclusion: producing a publication about young people and their experiences in the Vivo project. The content and pictures were organised and managed online with young people.
- Theories: writing articles on youth work and media, shared in e-mails and then published in the ViVo publication from peer educators.

Here you can see the learning spiral together with some questions that might support young people (and any learner) in getting from one stage to another. Remember that learning can start anywhere along the spiral and sometimes it does happen that we jump from one stage to the other, leaving out a step. It is also true that – related to their learning style – some people will find reflecting easier then drawing conclusions and vice versa, while others can hardly wait to jump to a new experience instead of 'talking and talking'. Generally it is worth completing all the steps though, otherwise we keep repeating the same things, without learning from what we do and experience.

In a group situation, it might also be the case that one participant is talking from the experience stage , another from theory and another from new behaviour. In this case the role of the facilitator is to help synchronise the group with a common line to follow. For this it is important to understand and accept that everyone has their own learning style. We need to be patient and open to those who are at a different stage, and also willing to step out of our own style and cover all the steps.

50

CHALLENGES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ELECTION

JOB EXPERIENCE

SOCIAL MEDIA

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

A good focus – both in objectives and in activities – on ways to stimulate young people in having a say in what happens in their environment. A good combination of local impact and international exchange.

MARK SNIJDER

1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (NL)
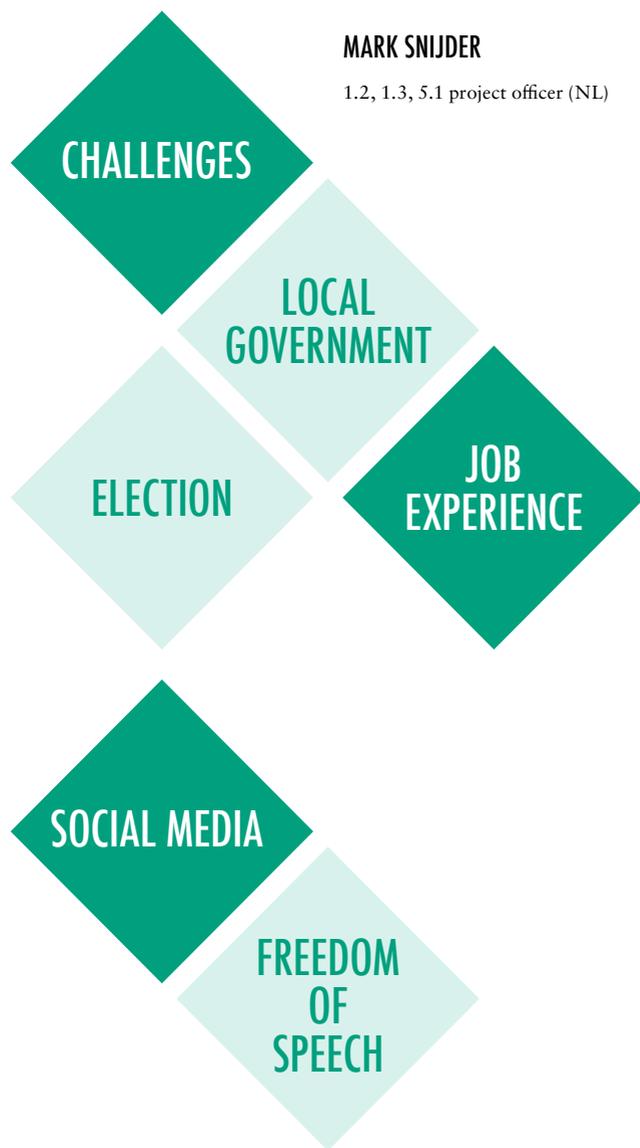
- *Focus on youth participation and democratic participation in the society.*
- *Strong partnership between all partners actively involved.*
- *Activities in both/each project countries.*
- *This means that the project has more than one activity.*
- *There are also activities that are carried out by the project partners separately.*
- *Use of the potential that internet gives for publicity, communication and exchange of best practices.*
- *Participants of the project are used as multi-players to involve/impact more young people and other stakeholders.*
- *Methods used are explained and disseminated, so that methods will become easy to use and adapt also by others who want to tackle the topic.*
- *Good DEOR (dissemination and exploitation of results).*

NELE METS

Action 1.2, 1.3, 5.1 project officer (EE)

52

METHODS — BRAINSTORMING ON THE POSSIBLE LINKS BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND DEMOCRACY

Creative domino planning

AIM	To explore and widen the selection of topics
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	8-16
TIMING	90 minutes + 90 minutes (Carousel part)
STRUCTURE	1. Divide into two groups: one group collects needs and interests of young people. The other group collects elements (that we find important, or that we find lacking) related to democracy. For example: – young people: social media, community places, challenges, knowledge of foreign languages, trust, getting job-experience, inspiring leaders, etc. – democracy: election, representation, local government, freedom of speech, equal opportunities, reconciliation, etc. 2. Put these two categories on papers on the floor; participants play with them like dominos, exploring existing relations between them. 3. Participants decide one by one which grouping of concepts is appealing to them as a basis for a project idea and write down their first thoughts about it. 4. Carousel: participants sit down in two circles (inner circle, outer circle), sitting in front of each other. In 4-5 rounds (outer circle moves to the right after each round) they talk about their idea, their partner asks questions and gives feedback and further ideas. 5. Short feedback in plenary about the results of the process.
OUTCOME	Project ideas
MATERIALS NEEDED	Colored A4 paper, markers, free space on the floor. For the carousel: chairs.

TALKING ABOUT DEMOCRACY

AIM	To support participants in grasping the concept of democracy, in creating their definition of it
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	8-16
TIMING	90-120 minutes
STRUCTURE	– Discussing different citations about democracy in small groups – Sharing insights in the plenary – If time allows we can sum up the discussion by creating a symbol of democracy together (Can we find the lowest common multiple?)
OUTCOME	Provocative exercise to make participants think about the essential elements of democracy. Participants usually finish the exercise with a lot of questions and realize how unclear this concept is. Therefore it is good to follow-up the exercise by allowing some time to digest, and go deeper for the second time.
MATERIALS NEEDED	Quotations/sayings on democracy, preferably mirroring different approaches/values.

EXAMPLES

– *Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard*. – H. L. Mencken (1880 – 1956)
– Democracy is the rule of the majority.
– Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. Democracy allows people to participate equally – either directly or through elected representatives – in the proposal, development, and creation of laws.
– *Democracy means government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.* – Dictionary.com
– *Democracy, for example, arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal. Oligarchy is based on the notion that those who are unequal in one respect are in all respects unequal; being unequal, that is, in property, they suppose themselves to be unequal absolutely. The democrats think that as they are equal they ought to be equal in all things; while the oligarchs, under the idea that they are unequal, claim too much, which is one form of inequality.* – Aristotle
– *Democracy; in which you say what you like and do what you're told.* – Gerald Barry

WHAT MAKES A GOOD YOUTH DEMOCRACY PROJECT?

I hope that all the above mentioned, together with the project examples in the 4th Chapter give an idea of what makes a good Youth Democracy project. To further support the planning of successful projects, you can read the ideas of N.A. officers on what makes a good Youth Democracy project based on their experience, and use the Quality Criteria Grid developed in the framework of the 'Get Involved' training course as well.

Part of the
SALTO-Youth Participation
'Get Involved' Training course

QUALITY CRITERIA GRID CHECK LIST

PARTICIPATORY WORKING METHODS	YES	NO
Is there clear evidence of young people's involvement in the project?		
Does the project answer to their needs and interests?		
Are the groups of young people planning and realising the project themselves?		

DIVERSITY OF ACTORS AND NETWORKING DIMENSION (EXCHANGE OF PRACTICES)		
Are the partner groups representing a diverse variety of actors from different areas of activity (e.g. local authority, NGO, local initiatives, etc)?		
Is there clear evidence that the project was prepared in co-operation with all the partners?		
Does the project allow partners to exchange methods, ideas, and share practices in the field of youth participation?		

IMPACT	YES	NO
Does the project meet specific needs or interests of the partners' local communities?		
Will the project have a long term impact at local and European level?		
Will the project raise awareness about the concept of active citizenship and participation of young people?		

EUROPEAN DIMENSION AND YOUTH IN ACTION PRIORITIES	YES	NO
Does the project help participants to understand their role as part of the present and future of Europe?		
Does it tackle a theme of European interest? Or promote values of European priority? Or reflect a common concern for European society? Or use experiences from other European countries?		

Does the project reflect one of the general priorities of the Youth in Action Programme (i.e. participation of young people, cultural diversity, European citizenship and social inclusion) or the specific priority themes of this Action which are the future of Europe and the political priorities identified in the field of European youth policy?		

INNOVATION		
Is the project about something new for the groups of participants?		
Is the project about something new for the local communities involved?		
Does the project implement/experience new participatory methods?		

EVALUATION & FOLLOW UP		
Do the partner groups/participants regularly (ongoing process) evaluate the implementation of the project?		
Does the project foresee any activity or measure to be taken after its implementation?		

VISIBILITY AND DISSEMINATION OF THE PROJECT RESULTS		
Does the project foresee any activity or measure to be taken after the project implementation?		
Does the project include a communication plan to disseminate the achievements of the projects to a wider audience (e.g. via press conferences, production of multimedia tools, publication of the results on a blog, etc.)?		

LEARNING EXPERIENCE		
Does the project follow the principles of non-formal learning?		
Will the project allow participants to learn something and to increase their awareness of the international context in which they live?		
Will the project help participants to understand European democratic processes and more particularly the mechanisms of national and European representative structures?		

SUPPORT

As described in the previous chapter, youth democracy projects offer a lot of opportunities but also might involve some challenges for the organizers when deciding to realize one. It is good to know that there is a variety of support available – let's look at some of the options.
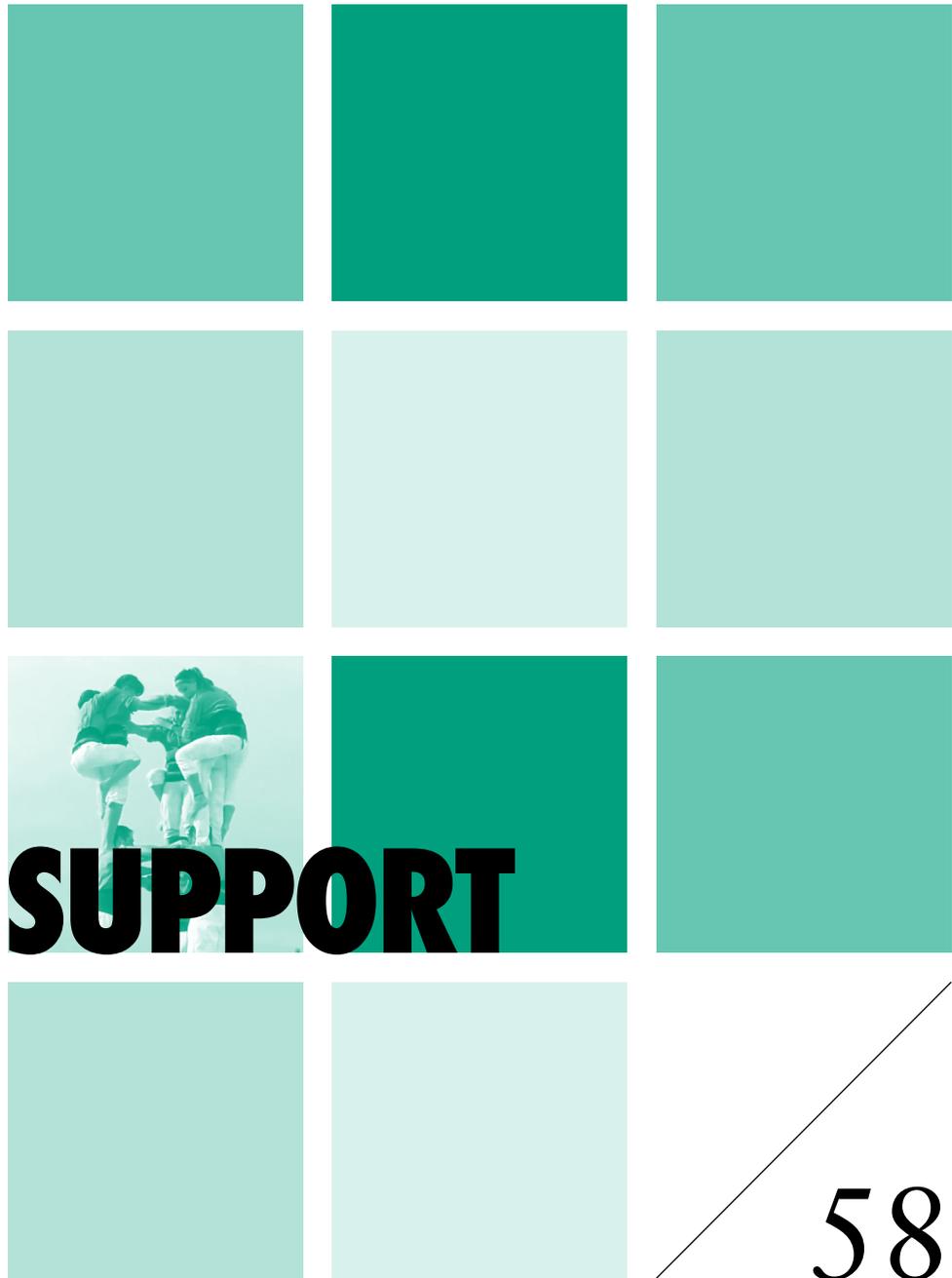
EUROPEAN COMMISSION

[15] ec.europa.eu/youth/orphans/contact-list_en.htm#sectECO

The Commission's role is to ensure the smooth and effective management of the 'Youth in Action' programme and to monitor its implementation at national and European level. The Commission [15] is also responsible for ensuring the coherence of the Programme, while further developing its various actions, particularly by elaborating an overall strategy and priorities.

Furthermore, the Commission seeks to guarantee the visibility of the EU action in the field of youth, as well as the effective dissemination and exploitation of the results of the 'Youth in Action' Programme.

'YOUTH IN ACTION' NATIONAL AGENCIES

Their primary role is to promote and implement the Programme at national level. Each National Agency acts as a link between the European Commission, project promoters and the young people themselves, and is a key contact point. The Agencies are responsible for disseminating general information about the Youth in Action programme, as well as encouraging and facilitating the implementation of projects. They are also responsible for the selection of projects according to the criteria set by the European Commission, and the national priorities. In order to support project promoters and increase the quality of projects, they organise different kinds of training activities, reflecting the reality of national youth work. You can consult them about your project idea, about the formal criteria, and so on.

EURODESK NETWORK

[16] all offices and their contact details: ec.europa.eu/youth/orphans/contact-list_en.htm#sectNAS

Eurodesk [16] is a free information service providing young people and those who work with them with information on EU funding and opportunities to work, study, volunteer and travel in Europe. As a European network with approximately 3000 partners, who actively communicate with each other on a daily basis, it can be used very effectively for finding international partners for your youth democracy project.

58

SALTO PARTICIPATION RESOURCE CENTRE

The Resource Centre [17] undertakes diverse activities in order to support young people and youth organisations in the field of participation.

Alongside its work of promoting the concept of participation of young people as a transversal pedagogical principle, SALTO Participation provides support for Action 1.2 and 1.3 through different tools, activities and processes. Besides the resources and support provided to youth workers, the Resource Centre has initiated a specific approach to address its support measures to young people directly. This includes youth user-friendly information material – booklets, the annual magazine, DVDs.

In addition to these tools, SALTO Participation has designed training modules such as 'Get in Net' and 'Get Involved' which are addressed directly to young people willing to realise their own projects under Youth Initiatives or Youth Democracy Projects.

PUBLICATIONS

SALTO Participation publishes an annual magazine and has produced, inter alia, a publication on youth democracy projects (Put your imprint on society) [18], which is followed by this booklet.

SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

The Resource Centre undertook the coordination of the long term process (described later on) to increase the quality and quantity of youth democracy projects in four partner countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania) whose National Agencies initiated them.

TRAININGS

Together with interested National Agencies, SALTO Participation has been regularly organizing the 'Get Involved' training course on the development of youth democracy projects (also described below). We would like to mention here the European training calendar [19] listing training courses tackling the issue of participation/democracy organized by the SALTO-Youth Network and National Agencies.

TOOLS

a tool for partner finding (OTLAS) [20] managed by SALTO Information, the Compendium (Best Practice Database) of Youth Democracy projects [21], a collection of on – and offline resources in the field of participation [22].

SALTO-YOUTH NETWORK

SALTO stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the 'Youth in Action' programme. The SALTO-Youth Resource Centre network [23] is a support structure set up by the European Commission in 2000, with the aim of contributing to the quality of initially the YOUTH – and later the Youth in Action Programme. It consists of eight Resource Centres, which are hosted by National Agencies situated in different European countries, providing information, educational tools and training to cover the thematic, regional and structural priority areas of the Programme. Additionally, the network acts as an intermediary, linking the institutions, organisations and individuals managing or benefiting from the Programme.

The 8 SALTO resource centres are as follows:

- SALTO Eastern Europe & Caucasus Resource Centre;

- SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre;

- SALTO Euromed Resource Centre;

- SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre;

- SALTO South-East Europe Resource Centre;

- SALTO Training & Cooperation Resource Centre;

- SALTO Information Resource Centre;

- SALTO Participation Resource Centre.

LONG TERM COOPERATION PROJECT

INCREASE THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF YOUTH DEMOCRACY PROJECTS

In January 2010 the Austrian, Czech, Hungarian and Lithuanian National Agencies concluded that next to the low number of applications handed in, it was a common experience in all countries that applicants had found it difficult to meet the formal and quality criteria of the 1.3 sub-action. In order to improve this situation, a long-term process was initiated to increase the quality and quantity of youth democracy projects. The process was designed with all the partner countries involved, but gave space to take local needs and national realities into account.

The long term cooperation was coordinated by the SALTO Participation Resource Centre with the involvement of an international facilitator. At national level, the coordinators of the 1.3 sub-action were closely cooperating with national facilitators, planning and implementing the different elements of the process together.

Based on these experiences, described on the left, the elements of the long term process were decided while reflecting on which challenges should be handled at national level, which ones at international level, which ones at both levels.

During the meeting with National Facilitators the concept of the National Training Course was shaped. The aim was to take participants through a similar learning process at national level and prepare them to participate in the International Contact Making Seminar: having a project idea and a national partner.

Before and after the different meetings, national facilitators provided the participants with coaching and individual support . Based on the experiences of the long term process, the following recommendations were formulated as good practices to follow in a similar long term development process:

ELEMENT OF THE PROCESS

PREPARATION MEETING

ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

MEETING OF THE FACILITATORS

NATIONAL TRAINING COURSE

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT MAKING SEMINAR

MIDTERM EVALUATION MEETING

ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

CLOSING REPORT

The preparation meeting aimed to formulate a common platform and design the process. Besides this, partner countries introduced their national situations and identified the next steps at national level. National Agency officers identified the following common challenges in the field of youth democracy projects:

- In general, applicants find it difficult to meet the formal and quality criteria; therefore many instead choose to apply to other sub-actions or where available, other programmes than the 'Youth In Action' Programme;

- It is difficult for A 1.3 to be understood by young people, which results in a low involvement on their part;

- Low level of involvement is also true for local and regional politicians due to the fact that many youth NGOs possess little knowledge and experience of how to involve decision-makers;

- There is a narrow view with a 'political' understanding of what can be done under a youth democracy project, therefore many submitted projects are about simulating the functioning of an EU institution;

- Some young people are kept from applying by the fear of involvement in politics;

- As there is no tradition of youth democracy projects, and at the same time the sub-action gives a lot of freedom to design the shape of the project, it is difficult for future applicants to imagine what a youth democracy project could look like;

- Therefore there are many youth democracy applications that come shaped as Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2) (according to the setting and theme).

64

SHARING INFORMATION

- Staying in touch with organisations involved according to needs by phone, e-mail, Skype;

- Using Facebook groups, or newsletters to share information on what happened with the organizations involved (approved applications, experiences of implementation), in order to motivate further actions;

- After the national trainings/CMS setting up an interactive webpage to stay in touch and share documents used during the meeting.

PROVIDING SUPPORT

- Regularly providing Skype-consultation on the planned project before deadlines;

- Following-up the participant's Action Plans after the national training course and the international contact making seminar;

- Support for establishing/developing national partnerships (facilitation);

- Close cooperation at national level between actors with different experiences: programme coordinators, evaluators of applications, ex-beneficiaries, etc. in order to be able to answer all types of questions from future applicants;

- Support and ensure the understanding and involvement of other members back home in the organizations after the training course/CMS.

CHALLENGES	MEASURES TAKEN
Low visibility of the A1.3	Info-days, promotional materials[24], publications
Low interest in the sub-action	Targeted recruitment Exploring the reason(s) behind and act on it. (see related measures below)
Difficulty of finding partners	National training courses, direct search using the network of NAs and facilitators
Clarification of the concept of YDP	National training courses, info-days, methodological booklets, compendium of project examples Clarifying the difference between 1.2, 1.3 and 5.1 projects (through info-days and educational events, booklets)
Co-financing	Collecting and publishing good practices
Little knowledge of how to involve decision-makers	Exchange of experiences, thematic sessions in the contact-making seminar (CMS)

[24]
www.wordle.net
We used, for example, this free
website to create promo-postcards
which look like a cloud of words.

66

USING THE POTENTIAL OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- Tailored CMS built on the results (strengths/issues to be further clarified) arising from the national trainings;

- Continuous cooperation/consultation of all actors involved (N.A. – N.F., trainers, SALTO/IF) provides efficient problem-solving, and a real tailored process;

- Sharing experiences between countries (how to follow-up project groups);

- Support for building or development of international partnership by finding partners, facilitate the solving of problems which arise during communication/cooperation in the international project groups, etc.;

- Sharing good practices in general.

LESSONS LEARNED

- National realities might be (and usually are) very diverse, which can be fruitful, but may also create some challenges (i.e. in some countries youth organizations of political parties may actively be participating in the YiA programme, while in others it has a negative perception.);

- Even though most of us working with young people do not think that the result of our work can be expressed in numbers, putting some indicator (i.e. expected increase of applications handed in in each country) of the expected end result of such a process might be motivating, and can help to evaluate what has been achieved.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In the case of such a challenging sub-action, where a promoter has to deal with several challenges at the same time – a bigger proportion of co-financing, new concepts, double partnerships, and even freedom regarding format– such international cooperation might provide essential support. Simply, when there are so many issues to solve, one is tempted to give up more easily, especially when something does not seem to work smoothly, and go back to more familiar 'routes'. Such problems might be general ones, like communication problems in the international cooperation process, but there might be specific ones as well, which are related to the nature of the sub-action. In this case the national facilitators together with N.A. programme coordinators can intervene, by providing direct or indirect support to help promoters to go forward.

PUSH AND PULL STRATEGIES

It is advisable to find a balance between push and pull strategies when working with the organisations involved in any developmental process. By the push strategy we mean any kind of support which is 'pushed' onto the organizations, like 'obligatory' elements when wishing to participate in the long term process: trainings, contact making seminars, info-days, monitoring of project ideas… And by the pull strategy we mean the possibilities that organizations were provided with to enable them to pull out information (if they wish): setting up a webpage to exchange experiences, publishing a methodological book-let, or a handbook with basic information and project experiences, start a Q&A forum with the representatives of the NA about the formal and the quality criteria.

68

My key learning points were related to group work. Sharing the experience and knowledge with other participants gave me a total new perspective of the action itself. To see and hear a lot of good examples and to share possibilities of joint projects was that 'thing' for me during the training course. Actually, after great group sessions and inputs from trainers, as well as from other participants, we have created a couple of project ideas and 4 of them were applied like concrete 1.3. projects. All 4 of them were approved. I'm happy to say that we are still implementing all 4 of them and preparing new ones for the next deadline. The experience and meeting up with people who share the same ideas were very fruitful and vital for future projects.

HRVOJE KOVAČ

(HR) – 2012

My key learning points during the training were learning in a non-formal way through games and theory that helped me to get more of and to learn more about youth democracy projects. All sessions were very well planned and organized. We had the opportunity to work and develop different activities together with trainers so all the group was willing to participate and the quality results of our work were more than great.

This training gave me the opportunity, space and support to learn and develop new skills and knowledge in order to become more active, to participate more in the community and to work more in this field. It supported intercultural learning and civil dialogue through individual work, group work and workshops which helped me a lot. I developed new ideas, communicated with people from other countries which resulted in a preparation of a new project with organization partners that were on this training; and games and sessions that I was part of, now I am also using the games that I learned during the training course in my own workshops for young people.

JELENA BATELIĆ

(CR) – 2011

Although I participated in the training course many years ago, when I organized a 1.3 project last summer, I used the 'scale of participation' with the youngsters and also the Youthpass, that I had discovered during the Get Involved training course. The distance given by these both tools is very interesting, I find.

CLAIRE FAUCHER

(FR) – 2008

My key learning points during the 'Get Involved' training: Getting familiar with the European programme for young people, building up a network for future projects, experiencing Europe and the value of an European dimension in youth projects, the complexity of European projects.

How I used what I have learnt: We did one YiA 1.3 project and still use the benefits of that in making other youth participation projects in The Netherlands. The training was my start of 'going Europe' and I'm more and more active in this field and building more projects also in other EU programmes.

GUUS BREMER

(NL) – 2008

70

'GET INVOLVED' TRAINING COURSE

GET INV(ALL)VED!

So far, 'Get involved' has amply contributed to shaping the 'art & practice' of youth democracy projects; it has actually created and nurtured strong links between the 'what it sounds like' and 'how in practice it could be' stages. 'Get involved' is a training course for youth workers/leaders/policy makers who want to develop youth democracy projects with young people. It aims to foster the competences necessary for carrying out such projects and has been implemented in several European countries ten times:

- 2007 – Turkey (Antalya),
  30 participants coming from 14 countries;

- 2008 – Spain (Pamplona),
  25 participants – 13 countries;

- 2009 – Portugal (Castelo Branco),
  25 participants – 14 countries;

- 2009 – Czech Republic (Dubovice, Pelhrimov),
  15 participants – 07 countries;

- 2010 – Latvia (Sigulda),
  22 participants – 12 countries;

- 2011 – Bulgaria (Sofia),
  26 participants – 12 countries;

- 2011 – Romania (Predeal),
  19 participants – 12 countries;

- 2012 – UK/Northern Ireland (Belfast),
  24 participants – 13 countries;

- 2012 – Turkey (Adrasan),
  19 participants – 07 countries;

- 2013 – Romania (Bucharest),
  24 participants.

'Get involved', has it really helped young people to be more involved, to have a say and make a difference? While keeping in mind the difficulties of monitoring the follow-up of projects which occurred during the training courses, we reckon that competences and motivation have greatly increased. Concluding from the evaluation of all 10 previous courses, partnerships and networking have been fostered, ideas have been elaborated and fine-tuned, the concept of youth participation has been deeply comprehended while its practice in different countries has raised interest and curiosity and inspired many. In parallel, the knowledge of the 'Youth in Action' programme has increased, inter-cultural sensitivity has been cultivated and the feeling of being a citizen of the European Union has been nourished. But there is still a long way to go…

The current social, economic, cultural and political situation – defined by such major issues as increased unemployment, extension of the 'young age', rapid development of new media/ICTs, a decline in interest in political processes alongside the growth, in some countries, of extreme political parties – has shaped further the curriculum of the course, issues of which the training team has been firmly aware and ready to act upon.

The widely held belief (and for a big proportion of the young population, undeniably true) that politicians have/will never listen to young people is always a motivational obstacle that we are asked to face; but good examples from different countries (and, rather surprisingly for holders of this belief, from their respective countries), play a significant role in changing this attitude. Still, decaying interest in political processes is probably sourced in what has been illustratively described as 'deaf democracy' so the above mentioned belief is probably valid in several parts of the continent. More than a few times during our training courses, we came across figures related to shaping youth policy (either participants or external speakers/contributors) who genuinely expressed their interest in such actions and who are ready to push things forward. Not only will they listen, but they expect and need to be told! Who wouldn't like to realize his/her full potential? Justifiably, through a rather long held experience of SALTO-Youth Participation, young people would; definitely! Young people are ready to get inv(all)ved!

ATHANASIOS KREZIOS
IVA HAVLICKOVA

Get Involved trainers

72
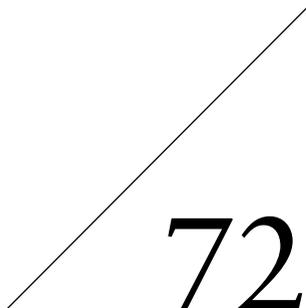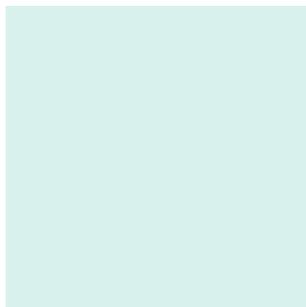
It comprises a participatory, experiential and dynamic learning infrastructure. Participants are invited to explore and cooperate in the field of youth participation. Good practices are presented and exchanged in order to inspire – without, however, restricting the creativity and individuality of the participants. Quality is sought practically, with concrete actions to be taken and measures to be applied. Youthpass , the Key Competences and self assessment have been integrally inserted into the curriculum. The elaboration of project ideas and the creation of an action plan highlight the importance of following up the learning fostered by the training course.

A core element of the 'Get involved' curriculum is the elaboration and development of project ideas. Their quality and content has so far shown that possible obscure points (such as those described above) become crystal clear and that deep conceptual understanding is achieved and leads to innovation.
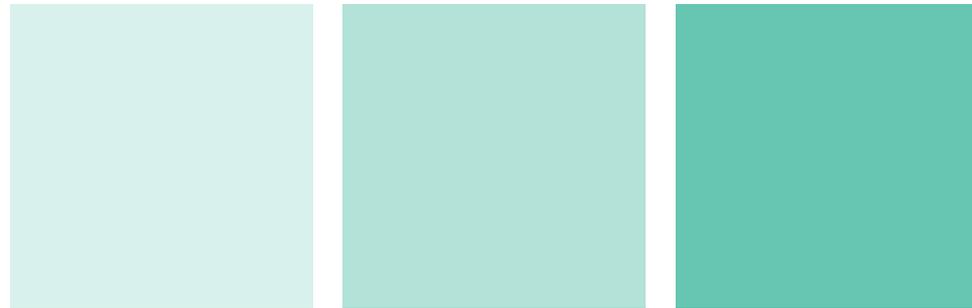
BEST PRACTICE PROJECTS
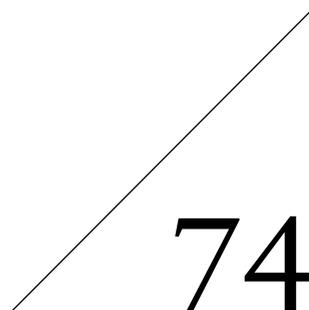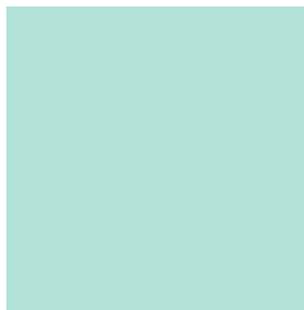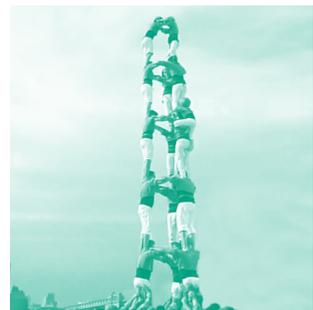
Out of many great projects these were selected as examples to show:

- The variety of *starting points* from which a Youth Democracy project can be built: different interpretation of youth participation on the side of youth/decision-makers, the existence of discriminatory behaviours regarding women, lack of participation possibilities in schools, low interest in public issues, etc.;

- How *creative* you can be in the framework of the sub-action regarding the activities: Debates, round tables, regional youth forums, job shadowing, simulations, research, skill building trainings for young people, visits of city councils/youth committee meetings, info stand in a festival, drama workshops, training on youth participation for youth workers, and so on…;

- That is possible to realize *small scale projects* working with a small community on deep, attitude-related issues, but also *big scale ones* in various venues involving more than a thousand participants.

ESTONIAN AND LATVIAN YOUNGSTERS HOP ON A YOUTH PARTICIPATION SUBWAY TOGETHER WITH DECISION-MAKERS

MOTIVATION

The main motivation for the YDP came from the head specialist of youth work in Viljandi County Government, who wanted to raise the awareness about youth participation at the Viljandi County level both among young people and decision-makers. According to the findings of a survey that she conducted in early 2009 among the decision-makers and young people in Viljandi County, it appeared that both sides have a different understanding of what youth participation is.

The decision-makers thought more about the passive form of youth participation – where young people are the consumers and participants of youth work services. However, young people themselves saw youth participation from the active participation side – they wanted the right and opportunities to take part in decision-making processes and have their say about what is going on in their municipalities.

Thus the idea of raising awareness about youth participation in Viljandi County level grow bigger and was formed in a project together with North-Latvian municipalities where knowledge and awareness about youth participation and its possibilities is even lower than in the municipalities of Viljandi County. This project was born out of the real needs of young people themselves.

Duration
18 months

Applicant
Viljandi County
Government (Estonia)

Partner organizations
Viljandi County Youth
Council (Estonia), Valka Youth
Council (Latvia), Atbalsts
Valkas Gimenem (Latvia)

76

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

Viljandi County Government and Viljandi County Youth Council in Estonia together with 2 organizations in North-Latvia carried out a unique 1,5-year-long pilot youth democracy project Estonian and Latvian youngsters hop on a youth participation subway together with decision-makers from February 2010 to July 2011.

The aim of the project was to raise the awareness about youth participation and engagement on local level through a variety of engaging activities that had strong non-formal education elements.

The project was unique in the sense that it was targeted to 3 main target groups who determine the development of youth participation and engagement in community / municipality level: young people, youth workers and heads of municipalities.

ACTIVITIES REALIZED

All the activities carried out during the project aimed at bringing these parties together and enhancing the dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation between them. The project activities were carried out in all 15 local municipalities of Viljandi County in Estonia and in 15 local municipalities of North-Latvia bordering Estonia.

The activities of the project included opening event, debating trainings for youngsters, debates, round tables, sports games, simulation games and community activities between decision-makers and young people, regional youth forums, youth exchanges between Estonian and Latvian youngsters, job shadowing of young people in youth councils and decision-makers, motivating speakers for decision-makers, team meetings, final event, analysis seminars and youth participation training for other youth workers.

RESULTS

The outcomes, lessons learned and good practices were also distributed in a larger scale to the specialists working with young people both in Estonia and Latvia through 7 educational videos of the School of Youth Participation spread throughout Internet and YouTube.

The project was driven by the idea that the activities carried out during the project would bring young people and decision-makers closer to each other so that the young people would not be afraid to have their say and that decision-makers would not forget what kind of potential for the development of community young people carry and what is their role in the survival of rural regions and communities.

The overall number of activities carried out during 18 months was 83 activities engaging Estonian municipalities and 62 activities engaging Latvian municipalities. Altogether there were 138 different activities carried out during the project (this does not include team meetings and working meetings).

As for the participants, in different activities there were around 2100 participants altogether in different activities from the Estonian side and around 1100 participants from the Latvian side. This included 1020 youngsters of which 663 were from the Estonian side and 357 from the Latvian side; and around 120 decision-makers.

LONG TERM IMPACT

One could say that the impact of this project is quite difficult to measure as it was aimed at changing something very deep inside people. It was targeted not only at raising awareness about the issue, but also at giving them skills to engage each other and talk about issues that matter to them. It was aimed at building the right attitude towards youth participation. And it did not only mean building or supporting the growth of the decision-makers' attitudes, but also the young people's attitudes.

78

During the discussions we experienced how most young people brought out what they admire and love about their home. Regardless of their young age they were very sharp in noticing it and also in bringing out the things that in their opinion needed to be changed. We saw heads of municipalities who took the time for these discussions and got inspired by their content and quality . While explaining how the local municipality works one could see that they are proud of having taking the responsibility to lead a particular municipality and deal with everyday matters to guarantee a good life for their citizens.

Based on the activities we carried out both on Estonian and Latvian level we realized that it was important to raise this topic in given time and place with given people. It was time-relevant. We saw that when you bring attention to the topic, discuss about it then we also start thinking about it and the thoughts brought out around the tables do not remain there, but they are carried further to homes, schools, youth organizations and municipalities. Young people who went home after the discussions took the topics also to their parents, engaged them to care about what is going on around them. This also had an impact on the whole community at large encouraging or making them think about how they could contribute to their community as more active citizens.

As the publicity of the project activities was also put up in different community centres, then it raised also questions and awareness of other community members about the issue of the dialogue between young people and decision-makers. In addition teachers became more acknowledgeable about the issue as a lot of activities were carried out in schools. Also, while carrying out the activities we learned that in several municipalities there were additional activities carried out between young people and decision-makers and the engaging methods introduced during the project used by the decision-makers in dealing with other topics concerning their communities.

DEMO-VILLAGE

MOTIVATION

We detected a local problem in the village: violence against women and anti-democratic behaviours were very dominant. That is why we started Demo Village. Moreover, think about a village that does not have any market, school, library, internet and other social facilities. Demo Village took place in such a deserted village. The young people there found the facilities and they changed their lives.

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- To let the women living in the village know what democracy is.
- To practice democracy-based tasks with men and women in the village.
- To make young people interact and exchange information with European young people.
- To let people see the living democracy.

ACTIVITIES REALIZED

- The Simulation of a Multi-Party system and elections (young candidates gave speeches to be elected).
- Electing the youth leader of the village.
- Social Kitchen Act: men cooking for women
- Wall Newspaper: weekly updated.
- Democracy Tree: drawing what democracy means for them, and formulate a wish around it.
- Drama workshops in the village: together with our German partners.
- Education of women's rights: workshops with caricatures: how they understand women's rights.

- Democracy Library: they collected books and afterwards the library was opened, the key of the library was given to women.
- Watching movies about democracy (there had not been a cinema in the village before).
- Organizing a Demo-Fest: eating, singing together.

RESULTS

- All women joined the acts.
- We managed to involve adults, and also the imam and the muftar (head of the neighbourhood) into our activities.
- In the library, even now there are young people and they read.
- Young people got to know different cultures and countries.
- Young women realized their rights.

LONG TERM IMPACT

- We started a tradition of the Demo Village Meetings Days. We have drama acts, reading hours etc.
- The library and wall newspaper still work.
- Some young people started writing in a magazine and they published their own newspaper in their schools. Some women took an active role in the library we set up in the village, they generated some cultural and local courses based on handmade things like carpets, dresses etc.

DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOLS

MOTIVATION

A group of Irish young people had asked us to help them in creating a better school council in their school, as they felt they had no input in their school at all. Also, in our organisation they received a lot of leadership training, and they were encouraged to participate at all levels of the organisation. They ended up extremely disillusioned and badly behaved in school as they felt not listened to and appreciated at all.

On the other hand, a group of Italian students, presented the issue that even though they have a very well structured democratic system, very few students were participating in it. Many didn't realize how extraordinary it is to have such a system, and had low expectations about their capacity to use it efficiently.

When the 1.3 sub-action became part of the YiA Programme we realized that this is what we could use to help these young people. We also realized that we could not just go to the schools and simply try to change them, but instead we needed to understand the situation more clearly together with the students: for this reason we decided to base the project on research.

GOALS

To research the participative system in schools and ultimately to improve these systems and to equip young people to be part of it.

Duration
18 months

Applicant
Fishbowl Youth (Ireland)

Partner organizations
Ireland:
Scariff Community College,
Scariff YouthReach,
Italy:
Associazione Culturale
Binario Uno, Liceo Scientifico
Nomentano, Il Monastero,
Cooperativa sociale eureka

82

ACTIVITIES REALIZED

- Preparation with the core group:
  - meetings, preparing the workshops and research, what is democracy?

- Introduction of the project to the schools:
  - meeting with principal,
  - defining cooperation terms with the teachers.

- Introduction of the project to the students:
  - meeting 1: intro to our NGO's, and team building,
  - meeting 2: deeper into what is democracy, comparison between different governing and decision-making,
  - systems,
  - meeting 3: introduction of the entire project with all its aspects.

- Starting to work with the group that chose to be participants:
  - in Italy the entire class was going to take part so they carried on exploring their governing system and the skills they need to make it work.

- Advance Planning Visit for the Exchange.

- Preparation for the exchange and the exchange:
  - meetings with participants,
  - meeting the parents,
  - preparing workshops for exchange.

- The exchange was really the preparation of the project non-formal methods were used to explore what democracy is, to experience democratic systems, to role-play how we can find solutions to problems and how to implement research:
  - we started exploring what system is used in our schools,
  - school and school systems were compared,
  - skill building: what skills are needed for this project.

- Skill building continues in own country
  workshops on the different aspects of the project.

- Meeting in Ireland:
  – prepare the research,
  – what do we need to research,
  – what do we need to ask,
  – how will we ask it,
  – develop a logo,
  – what will we do with the documentary,
    how will we structure it?
  – visit school and NGO,
  – see a local attraction.

- Research:
  – finalise the questionnaires,
  – introduce the project to the
    wider school community,
  – hand out questionnaires to
    teachers and students,
  – put results into computer.

Well I'm happy to inform you with our new principal the student council was reinvented with the work we did. As for democracy I got more involved in college as a class representative in Tralee. Here we strongly believe in democracy and its equality for all. I wouldn't have gone for it if I hadn't done the democracy project. It really helped build my confidence and interpersonal skills because we were constantly working together, and also public speaking because of all the presentations.

Oh yeah, I learned from the presentations in class and speaking in front of my class keeping contact with the student council and being able to speak to lectures on behalf of my class mates if problems emerge. All of it really comes back to you when it is needed and as for interacting with different nationalities that was the best thing ever to learn and it really should be the one thing highlighted from doing projects like this one.

Students

- Meeting in Italy:
  – finish computer input,
  – create flowcharts,
  – work with the results,
  – create 'problem trees' to find solutions,
  – visit school in Rome and experience an assembly.

- Meetings:
  – to work with the results,
  – type up the work from Italy:
    was all on flipcharts?
  – to finalise the documentary,
  – return to the story board,
  – interviews,
  – editing.

- Final meeting in Ireland:
  – prepare the final evening,
  – to clarify the outcomes of the overall project,
  – evaluating the project,
  – discussing and preparing follow up.

- Final evening with local politicians, youth service and VEC.

- Prepare final report, finances and booklet.

RESULTS

Undertaking this journey and looking at democracy from so many different angles, with so many different people, and implemented in such different ways, we had to come to the conclusion that democracy is not as straight forward as we thought it was at the beginning of the project. As one of the participants during the evaluation said: 'the more I learn about democracy the less I understand it!' It came to be clear that different cultural realities required different approaches, and that it was impossible to identify just one perfect model.

84

What also became clear is that democracy needs people feeling responsible and interested enough to understand, implement and guard it, and that people need to be educated in order to be able to do so. Being prepared to question commonly accepted believes is at the centre of this, to do the questioning one needs courage and a firm believe in the legitimacy of it. For instance not that long ago the democratic system did not allow women a right to vote, now that seems medieval to us… maybe in the future we find it very strange that young people were not allowed to vote! It also turned out that even though change is desired by many, but the responsibility and the workload that comes with equal rights might be demotivating for some.

Overall the participants did learn a lot, have recognised the weaknesses in the system and come up with very helpful real ways to deal with them and work with them. Moreover, the process offered them valuable skills of research, analysis, group work and planning which are applicable to a wide variety of fields and which still today are used by the participants.

The Italian students came to a new appreciation of their system, and understood how much its efficiency is directly connected with their active participation, training and pro-activeness. They came to the conclusion that a basic tenant of democracy is plurality of information: they therefore created a new schools newspaper, making them the first school in Rome, with two newspapers and therefore a more pluralistic information. The other newspaper greatly improved due to the 'competition' and they have been both active long after the project was finished.

Many participants still nowadays remember the project fondly, quoting it's impact in making them interested in travelling, discovering other cultures, and finding new ways to achieve a positive impact. It also was particularly interesting to see them use many of the methodologies which were used or shown, in their own projects (among which the newspaper) after the end of the project.

86

I firmly believe that the students gained a wide variety of valuable skills, such as, organising research, negotiating with others on their team, communicating, social skills (dealing with lack of commitment from others at times, dealing with Italian students unfamiliar with their way of doing things).

A teacher involved

LONG TERM IMPACT

The long term impact is hard to gage, for the Irish organization it helped a lot to get noticed regionally and locally (in school). What worked against us is the fact that we did not manage to get enough support from parents, and when young people had everything prepared to make steps for improvement (after the project was finished) this was stopped by parents as they wanted their kids only focus on 'proper' school work.

In the Italian school we faced the same problem, but from the teachers who felt that the project had been in part a distraction and during its course sometimes blamed it for the lack of academic results of the students. In this sense, the lack of collaboration from the teachers and principal, made it hard to achieve a sustainable long term impact on the school even though we are confident that we achieved excellent results in the personal development of the participants. We think that developing the project from the beginning, making an effort to involve the teachers from the beginning, could in the future make a similar project even more successful.

The young people that stayed connected to the Irish organization became very much part of it and organized many events afterwards. Also the two junior leaders both went on EVS after the project was finished. They had built up their courage to do so. These two received very intense leadership training, and are now senior leaders in our organization.

The Irish school did not change much afterwards, as both the principal and the vice principal, who had been very involved and supportive retired and left the school after the project was finished. In Italy the same problem took place: many of the people involved in the project retired, and the constant tendency to change principal makes it hard to have continuity.

VOX IUVENTUTIS (THE VOICE OF YOUTH)

MOTIVATION

Together with our partners we had a project idea that aimed at giving solutions to local problems of our youngsters. We were all working with young people who were already active in public and social activities either in their schools (high school or university) as student representatives or in their local communities as young helpers. We agreed with our partners that their interest in public issues and the commitment to be active in sharing their opinions is very low, even though they are already more active than their peers. We supposed that the reason for this is that the system of public representation is not authentic for them as they have hardly any knowledge of the local, regional or national democratic mechanisms. They have opinion on different issues and they are ready to share these but they do not know where and how to express these and how to get feedback (if there is any). The group got together to analyse the reasons behind this and to work on possible solutions for strengthening public commitment and active participation, increasing social consciousness and strengthening opinion-shaping among young people. Then we searched for the potential funding opportunities and decided to apply for support in the framework of YIA 1.3. We have heard about this sub-action earlier, but because of the relatively high co-financing, we were not planning to submit an application under this call. However when we realized that the project idea is matching so well, we got together with our partners to see how the co-financing can be managed. Finally we submitted the project for the call.

Duration
14 months

Applicant
Hang-Kép (Sound-Picture)
Association (Hungary)

Partner organizations
Hungary:
Hajdúsági Hallgatókért és Civilekért
Egyesület (HAHA Association)
Romania:
Uniunea Studentilor Maghiare
din judetul Bihor (Hungarian
Students' Union from Bihor) and
Asociatia pentru Tinerii si Studentii
din Partium (Association for
Youth and Student in Partium)

88

GOALS

The Vox Iuventutis (The Voice of Youth) was a 14 month-long programme with the aim of strengthening public commitment and active participation, increasing social consciousness and strengthening opinion-shaping among young people. The project was implemented by 4 organisations (Debrecen, Hungary and Oradea, Romania) directly involving 37 young people, who were the catalyst of the activities. Our goal was to make the young participants experience how to increase the effects of representation and to initiate their wish for active participation. Our goal was also to strengthen the cooperation of the participating organisations and to work on different models or methods that can be used by other organisations in youth work.

ACTIVITIES REALIZED

The 37 directly involved young people in the project worked on different issues in the framework of seminars by using non-formal learning methods. These issues were such as: the role of municipalities, youth interest validation, the effect of media on consumption, media consciousness and the space of youth voice. During the seminars they had discussions, consultations, interviews with several decision makers, advisors, public actors and journalists on issues in which they are interested. They visited the sittings of the city councils in Debrecen and Oradea and made notes on the democratic mechanisms. Besides the attention raising on the voice of the youth, they had interactions with local politicians and made interviews on youth issues. The group was also visiting youth committee meetings in order to experience how the negotiations and first level decisions are carried out and prepared for the general assembly. They disseminated the results of the project through their own youth channels to their peers and also by using classic media channels, like press releases and TV interviews they informed the local inhabitants also through the mass media.

The young participants developed their democratic skills in a camp. They had workshops on delivering public speech to different target groups. Besides the team building activities, they also prepared for a youth festival where they operated an 'I have opinion!' democracy tent, full of playful activities on democracy to involve more youngsters. These activities included 'I have opinion' T-shirt painting, giant democracy ludo, caricature making and they also operated an information desk where the visitors of the festival could get information on their rights and on the actions of the Youth in Action Programme. At the festival they also set up a stage where the youngsters could share their opinion on different youth policy questions.

The activities of the stage were prepared by the participants on the bases of the seminars and the camp. These included dispute activities, 'media manipulation' and an open stage where people could freely talk about the issues they are concerned about. The audience could vote, using red and green coloured bier mats, to express if they agreed or disagreed with the speech. During the 4 days of the festival over 500 young people registered at the tent and even more participated at the activities of the open stage. The participants prepared several films on the activities of the project. These were shared on different community portals and at several youth meetings. The activities of the seminars have already been taken over my some of the local high school youth councils and were carried out by the pupils.

90

RESULTS

As a result of the project the directly involved young people became more aware of the democratic mechanisms of Hungary and Romania; they could form opinion on the functioning of representative democracy. They also became able to address stakeholders with questions, which they consider important for their everyday lives and for their future. They also developed their communication skills and they put into practice how to speak in front of a large audience and how to involve them to express their opinions. The participants became the multipliers of the project and this way more and more school groups, student unions and NGOs are using the non-formal methods of the project in order to strengthen public commitment and active participation among young people.

LONG TERM IMPACT

The young participants improved their democratic competences and got personal experiences as well and these initiated them to be more active as citizens and increased their participation in their local community. These competences will also help them in their personal careers. They reached over 500 young people during the project and had great effect on them during the activities (democracy tent, open stage, attention-raising games). During the project they learnt how to communicate with the media and this knowledge helps the groups in giving more publicity to their activities. The videos and the developed tools of the different activities are available online and several organisations have already used them since the end of the project. The participants and the partner organisations have been asked to lead democracy workshops for other young people too.

LINKS RESOURCES

RESOURCES PUBLISHED BY EX-BENEFICIARIES

MOUNTMELLICK YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Young people developed a booklet to make it easier for other youth groups to set up a youth council and hold democratic elections. The young people designed their resource *Unlaois Ur Voice* as they were holding elections for the first youth council in the organisation. The resource is made up the essential elements that they thought others could benefit from if having democratic elections in their organisations. They sourced the information from the internet and through the second level support service, from a Student Council support person. The resource is the end result to a year of work for the young people whose project theme was 'Empowering young people to have a voice.'

www.mountmellick
development.com/
youth-development-centre-
page54135.html

FISHBOWL YOUTH

Movie and a booklet about the results of the youth democracy project 'Democracy in School'. The booklet describes our project and it is aimed at youth organisations interested in implementing such a project. The publication incorporates the flow, tips for organisations, some outcomes, and information about how to support youth participation in such a project.

fishbowlyouth.org/the-project/
democracy-movie

fishbowlyouth.org/
democracy-project

T-KIT SERIES

- T-Kit – Training Essentials:
  Goran Buldioski – Cecilia Grimaldi – Sonja
  Mitter – Gavan Titley – Georges Wagner
  Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2002.

  youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/
  youth-partnership/
  publications/T-kits/6/Tkit_6_EN

- T-Kit – Educational Evaluation in Youth Field:
  Paul Kloosterman – Kerstin Giebel – Ozgehan Senyuva
  Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2007.

  youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/
  youth-partnership/
  publications/T-kits/10/Tkit_10_EN

- T-Kit – Funding & Financial Management:
  Jonathan Bowyer – André Deridder – Kinga Kerekes
  Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2004.

  youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/
  youth-partnership/
  publications/T-kits/9/Tkit_9_EN

- T-Kit – Project management:
  Bernard Abrignani – Rui Gomes – Dirk de Vilder
  Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000.

  youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/
  youth-partnership/
  publications/T-kits/3/Tkit_3_EN

PUBLICATIONS, BACKGROUND MATERIALS ON PARTICIPATION

PROGRAMME GUIDE OF THE YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

ec.europa.eu/youth/
youth-in-action-programme/
programme-guide_en.htm

'REVISED EUROPEAN CHARTER ON THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL LIFE'

www.salto-youth.net/
download/1510/Revised
European Charter on the
Participation of YP.pdf

YOUTHPASS

www.youthpass.eu

'HAVE YOUR SAY!'

Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Council of Europe publishing, 2008.

www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/.../
Have_your_say_en.pdf

PUT YOUR IMPRINT ON SOCIETY!

www.salto-youth.net/
downloads/4-17-1697/
salto_mag_Final.pdf

OTHER SALTO PUBLICATIONS ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION

www.salto-youth.net/
rc/participation/
participationpublications

POLICY DOCUMENTS ON PARTICIPATION

(list prepared by SALTO Participation)

www.salto-youth.net/
downloads/4-17 2615/youth
participation policy documents.pdf

FORUM21

European Journal on Child and Youth Policy, 2003/04 – 2011/06 Council of Europe

www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/resources/
forum_21/forum_EN.asp

JANS, MARC & DE BACKER, KURT: YOUTH(-WORK) AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Elements for a practical theory. Research report on social participation in Belgium, dealing with young people, youth work and all stakeholders, Brussels, Flemish Youth Council – JeP!, 2002.

www.salto-youth.net/tools/
toolbox/tool/youth-work-and-
social-participation-elements-
for-a-practical-theory.373

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

This document does not necessarily express the official views of the
European Commission or the organisations and people cooperating with
the 'Youth in Action' institutions. 'Building our citizen muscle' aims to be
a practical youth work publication and not an official policy document.
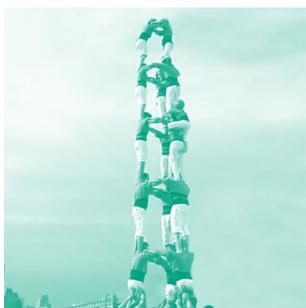
SUB-ACTION
1.3 OF THE
'YOUTH ACTION'
PROGRAMME 2013