

Asociacija "Aktyvus jaunimas"

E-booklet: Democracy through Dialogue not Conflict

Results of Erasmus+ meeting between youth and policy makers in
Kaunas & Vilnius, Lithuania



Democracy through
Dialogue not
Conflict



Erasmus+

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2 INTRODUCTION

War in Ukraine, ‘frozen’ conflicts in Moldova and Georgia are a concern not only for politicians and journalists, but also youth. There are numerous problems to which young people and their work can be a solution. Yet such approach has to be supported and promoted. With this in mind **Active Youth Association** has gathered young people and policy makers from these countries, as well as Slovakia and Italy, for an 8 days long meeting.

Project ‘**Democracy through Dialogue not Conflict**’ had a goal to find ways to reduce the social divisions in the before mentioned countries and also incentivise the young to take more responsibility for their countries’ future. It took place from the 9th to the 18th of June, 2015 in Kaunas and Vilnius, Lithuania and was funded by the **Erasmus+** programme. More than 40 people (aged 18-30) from 6 countries were invited.

To achieve this goal, the participants were asked to create fresh initiatives on the given topics (with a significant degree of freedom allowed). *The given topics were:*

1. EU's strategy on countering the propaganda from certain foreign-backed media outlets in the EU itself & Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. What measures should the EU employ as a whole?
2. Youth organisations/NGOs as a solution to social divisions in conflict and/or post-conflict regions of the EaP countries. How can they change the minds of the local young?
3. How can Erasmus+ programme (EU's support for learning & youth initiatives) help in EaP countries' problem regions?
4. What technical help should the EU provide for the EaP countries in order to most efficiently & effectively reduce the foreign influence and destabilisation efforts?

Of course, before that the meeting had a number of non-formal education activities scheduled, *which along with their aims are listed at the bottom of this report*. The participants’ initiatives were pitched in the Foreign Affairs’ Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania and evaluated against the set criteria (sheet used by the policy makers/experts - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/6xEvaluation-sheet.docx>). 6 youth groups have taken the stage, whose pitches may be found below. After lengthy discussions, a group named ‘**KillAganda**’ was chosen as the winner.

3 INITIATIVES PROPOSED

The list ordering is completely random and does not reflect the scores acquired during the event.

- **KillAganda** - a mobile application that sends push up messages, notification, flashes about recent news from all over the world. These can then be rated by users. *More at the 3.1 below;*
- **Voice for EaP** - internet platform “Online Academy”;
- **YOU+** - improving English skills & European values of the youth in the Republic of Moldova;
- **Young People in Action** - Collaboration with companies for making more internship places for young specialists from each post conflict region;

- [Generation for a Bright Future](#) – innovative summer camps in Georgia;
- [ENG Solutions](#) - special support towards EaP countries through the creation of an online English educational/teaching platform in order to increase English knowledge in the region.

3.1 WINNING INITIATIVE

KillAganda – a mobile application showing the opinion of global users for particular news pieces or media channels. In a way it's a tool to learn the truth and sort out the false information otherwise known as propaganda.

Application consists of two parts:

1. **The list of media channels** based (and filtered) on the user ratings.

The app would act as a platform and would allow the user to read the news from different media channels worldwide. After reading the piece, the user could then rate it as good (**green checkmark**) or bad (**red stop sign**). The weighted average of the ratings (expressed as a red to green column, where the red pole would mean 'rubbish') would be seen to all the users and also impact the 'killaganda' rating of the media channel itself. This rating shown on a scale from 1 to 5 **yellow stars** would imply how likely the channel is to publish fake news (where 5 stars would mean next to zero likelihood of propaganda). To make such filtering more accurate and sensible, the ratings of users from the country in which the news event has happened would be allocated a much bigger weight in the final weighted average score of the news piece.

Furthermore, the articles shown to the user would be personalised based on his/her location or chosen categories. The application would also have machine learning capabilities and would over time show the most relevant news at the top following smart built-in algorithms.

2. **User-made newsroom**, where the user would have a chance to upload the piece of news (from his/her city/region/country) him-/herself. These would then be a subject to other user ratings as well.

The application would be based on a 'free trial-freemium' monetisation model. All the registered users would get 7 days of use for free and then would either lose the chance to rate/upload their own news or would have to pay a small (monthly) fee to retain all the functionality. This way '**KillAganda**' would not only avoid being spammed, but also be able to sustain itself.

Please note, that while the above information about the mobile application (at sub-section 3.1) may be shared/copied, it remains the property of the authors.

4 RESULTS, INSPIRATION AND FUTURE WORK

Even though the project action has ended, the result dissemination continues. The press-release both in Lithuanian and English have been already shared on numerous sources:

- <http://democracy-dialogue.org/2015/06/25/democracy-through-dialogue-not-conflict-press-release/>
- Lithuanian: <http://activeyouth.lt/2015/06/25/democracy-through-dialogue-not-conflict-pranesimas-spaudai/>

Various videos and other material on EaP, its issues & viable solutions to those, as well as youth in public life/politics produced during the meeting will be continuously posted on the website of the project: democracy-dialogue.org.

However, the biggest impact of the project is felt on the participants and partner organisations: 1) Project photos (especially, the [photo-wall](#)) created are shared or used as their profile pictures on social networks (some using the official hashtag of the project: **#demokaunas2015**); 2) blog posts and testimonials on their experience are being made by the participants; 3) Facebook chat and [group](#) created during the action is still alive and full of ideas for further work. To show that the project was inspirational and incentivised the youth to work for its goals, selected quotes of the participants are provided below:

“The new information and all experience I gathered during this project inspired me to believe in bright future for Moldova (just like Lithuanians did long time ago).”

“I had a great time at the Foreign Affairs' Ministry where we had to present our projects and then we had the chance to hear from the politicians, who with the biggest pleasure answered our questions and shared their points of view regarding the Eastern Europe problems. People from this country inspired me by showing to the world that they could do it. This also motivated me to start the change in my country - Moldova, because now I know it is possible.”

“Personally, it was an amazing and unforgettable experience of sharing EU values and future plans.”

“The debates in the Foreign Affairs ministry were great because we had the opportunity to ask questions that have no answers in my country.”

All the participants' posts and experience can be found at our [blog](#).

5 PROJECT EVALUATION

The increase of participating youngsters' knowledge on the topic was a key objective of the meeting. To assess that in numbers, we have provided a [knowledge assessment](#) on the first day, where the participants were asked (among other questions) anonymously to self-grade (from 1 to 10, where 10 means absolute) their initial knowledge. On the last day, they were similarly asked to give a grade to their then knowledge. These assessments have shown **an increase +2.31 grade points or 46%** (from 5.07 to 7.38) on average in the knowledge of EaP, its goals, problems, etc.

Additionally, the last day's assessment asked to evaluate the project, when considering the gained knowledge, fun, interest, etc. A **final grade of 8.12** (scale from 1 to 10) were given (35 anonymous votes). Such evaluation was achieved by a good management, concept and sensible activities of the project, *all of which may be found below*.

“Great, well organised, interesting activities, optimal time planning. Well prepared and different food.”

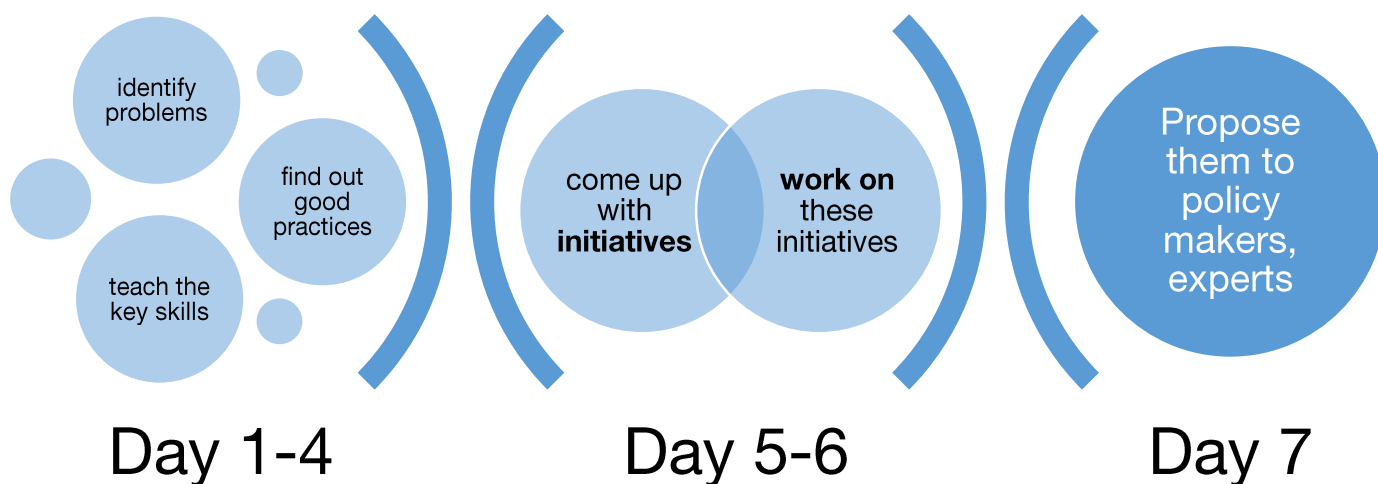
6 CONCEPT & SCHEDULE

The main objectives of the project were to: 1) **identify** the most severe problems, that could potentially be solved by youth; 2) **find out** good examples of international and domestic youth cooperation and work in rural and/or post-conflict areas; 3) **teach** the key skills needed for campaigning and proposing initiatives; 4) **come up with initiatives** regarding youth participation in the decision making processes; 5) **campaign for** collaboration of youth NGOs and public institutions; 6) **propose** initiatives to the relevant policy makers across the involved countries and beyond.

To achieve these objectives, the action was divided into three parts:

- Day 1 through 4 – first three objectives (identify problems, find out good practices & acquire the key skills)
- Day 5 and 6 –develop initiatives and, subsequently, improve these
- Day 7 – propose the initiatives to the policy makers
- Day 8 – closure

To get a better picture, an explanatory diagram and the project’s schedule are given below:



Project’s schedule - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/schedule-for-participants.pdf> (most of the activities may be found in the sub-section below)

6.1 ACTIVITIES – EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

1. Participants' current knowledge assessment on Eastern Partnership, its goals, problems, etc. - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Current-Knowledge-assessment-DDC.pdf>
2. Information session on the topic of the project, which also includes the results and the analysis of the current knowledge assessment - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Info-session-DDC.pdf>
3. The rules and list of topics for discussions in non-formal environment (World Café method) - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/World-cafe-DDC.pdf>
4. Interactive workshop, which analyses the issues of LGBT in the EaP countries (and the EU's stance on those), which tend to be used to fracture the societies - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/DDC1.pptx>
5. An interactive workshop, which focuses on the problem of propaganda, counter-propaganda and what is the best solution when dealing with those - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/DDC2.pptx>
6. Interactive workshop exploring the relationship between general English proficiency and country's wealth (in terms of GDP per capita) in selected post-communist European countries - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/DDC3.pptx>
7. With the help of this grouping activity, the participants were grouped with like-minded people in order to smoothen the teamwork and efficiency when coming up with the initiatives - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Grouping-DDC.pdf>
8. Fun activity to create an 'Own Organisation'. This is to give some shell for the task groups, as well as to foster their creativity and team-building - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Organisation-DDC.pdf>
9. Template for preparing the initiatives, discussing them with the policy makers/experts and then finalising for the pitch - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/initiatives-DDC.pdf>
10. Template for the policy maker/expert to improve (if necessary) the initiative being prepared by the participants - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Initiatives-template-PM.pdf>
11. Information for initiative's pitch preparation - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/pitch-DDC.pdf>
12. Sheet used by the policy makers/experts to evaluate the initiatives pitched by the participants - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/6xEvaluation-sheet.docx>

6.2 COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

1. Moldova: Question of Transnistria & possible reunification with Romania - <https://prezi.com/vngyzvouxij1/future-of-moldova-question-of-transnistria-possible-union/>
2. Ukraine: Foreign backed-propaganda and ensuing social divisions - <https://prezi.com/ugsfxvjndl6/russian-state-media-propaganda-and-ensuing-social-visions-in-ukraine/>
3. Lithuania: Direct impact of the conflict in Ukraine - <https://prezi.com/ehwjyc430qtj/lietuvos-rytas/>
4. Slovakia: Media, politicians & people on relationship with Russia - <http://democracy-dialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Slovak-presentation-last-version.pdf>