

PARTINRIO

A Successful Action 5.1 Story

PARTICIPAÇÃO

DEMOCRACIA

POLÍTICA

CIDADANIA

INCLUSÃO

CRIATIVIDADE



A Project That Turned Out Far
More Than Just An Action ...



INTRODUCTION

Around 900 people participated in the event **PARTINRIO**. This project involved all 14 villages of the county where:

- The participants discovered opportunities and limitations within the concept of participative democracy.
- 'Empowerment' of the participants was promoted within their role as citizens in local, national and global context.
- Participants were offered not only a concrete experience, but also practical tools and resources for future use.
- Future cooperation within the field of participative democracy was promoted between the present participants.
- Different themes were discussed, being democracy, policy making, entrepreneurship and many more.

This project was especially focusing young people, in order to have a needed critical mass that could start sooner in life to have a more active citizens' role.

The project **PARTINRIO** gave a voice to the young people within our county throughout workshops, all based upon the model of Non Formal Education. At this point I thank Produções Fixe, who was our partner in this project.

Looking back, words are too few to describe **PARTINRIO**!

Nuno Malta
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Between 01/08/12 and 31/12/12, the city hall Rio Maior promoted an action 5.1, National Youth Meeting of the Youth in Action Programme, within its whole county. Throughout 2 seminars of 2 days each and a series of 20 workshops divided over the 14 local communities of the county on participative democracy, the city hall aimed to design a youth policymaking document through a structured dialogue between policymakers and young people, with commonly agreed recommendations. This project intended to bridge the current gap between young people and the policymakers and increase participation of young people (active citizenship), as well as the promotion of entrepreneurship and increased employability of young people through their participation and competence building. On the other side, it intended to offer the policymakers an opportunity to better understand young peoples' opinions and needs. The whole project was designed based upon non formal learning principles, using workshops, lectures and debates. The participative model CLEAR was used as a backbone frame.

This project happened in close cooperation with local youth groups, youth associations, different political fractions and social networks. The project intended to involve directly around 70 policymakers from the different local realities, as well as an estimated 300 young people between 15 & 30 years throughout the process, besides other interested people.

This booklet has been created to share good practices and outcomes of this project in the hope this might stimulate others to start a similar process, building upon our experiences, our designed strategy, successful outcomes and the different challenges we encountered.



THE SET UP

PARTINRIO (PARTicipation + INclusion + RIO Maior) had three well defined phases, below described.

■ PLANNING AND PREPARATION

We started from a need analyse, realising that the participation of young people within our county in relation to policymaking was reduced to the very minimum and that the existing infrastructures for promoting youth participation were insufficient and not effective, neither efficient. There was a need for a holistic approach, involving not only policymakers and young people, but also the 14 surrounding villages within the county of Rio Maior. A strategic plan (= an application 5.1 within YiA) was designed involving all the different stakeholders from the beginning to create a Structured Dialogue.

The initiators of the project: Counsellor for Youth Affairs and the Youth Department of Rio Maior had individual meetings with every local authority of the 14 villages as preparation of the global project and the existing youth association network.

An expert group of youth work trainers was approached for the educational set up of the full project cycle and the running of the different planned workshops and seminars.

■ IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITY

3 phases are clearly distinguished

Phase 1: 2 days seminar to introduce the whole project and have a common kick off with young people and politicians. On centralised level: the seminar takes place in the city centre.

Phase 2: 20 workshops on participative democracy (Plan B – Produções Fixe Lda) are implemented in the 14 villages and the city centre, decentralising the project and bringing the topic directly in the environment of the local policymakers and young people of the different villages, aiming to increase the participation by eliminating distance as a limitation.

Phase 3: Closure at central level with a 2 days seminar and start of the follow up plans.



■ EVALUATION

Even though there was an on-going evaluation during all the different phases in order to adapt to reality and to create the expected and desired 'critical mass' for a long lasting impact of **PARTINRIO**, a complete evaluation and assessment of the outcomes is happening the months after the project is completed due to its place in a long term participation strategy.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES!

Within the county with a global population around 21.300 habitants, around 900 young people and politicians have been directly involved in some or all of the stages of the project. Being 1 involved out of every 24 persons living here, we label this a very strong result. Especially considering the innovative character, the challenges we faced (during the implementation) and the relative small budget (around 20.000 Euro) to make this happen.

FEW CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF SOME OUTCOMES:

- Young people started a school parliament within their school, putting participative democracy in practice within their own daily environment.
- There has been a significant increased presence on the political assemblies of the different villages by young people. This results in the effect that young people are in progress of being considered a real and serious partner in policymaking. In one of the villages, a volunteer action for cleaning up the streets of the village was a direct result of those young people, in cooperation with the local policymakers.
- The Youth Department of Rio Maior realised and understood how the Youth in Action Programme can be used as a tool to work on different levels with young people. They have supported a local group of young people between 13 & 16 years old to apply for a youth exchange, and are currently developing the start of a wide EVS sending and hosting structure, besides the promotion and support of young groups for the use of different European mobility programmes.
- In one village, a group of young volunteers dressed up in Christmas spirit and brought the end of year greetings by the local authority from house to house, in an animated atmosphere.
- The use of the Non Formal Educational approach has given recognition to the real potential of learning of this approach. Whereas it was previously quite unknown in many of the rural villages (and city as well), it is now well understood.



BUT NOT WITHOUT CHALLENGES ...

During the process, we felt a resistance from both groups involved in the process, young people and policymakers. For future similar projects, we therefore also wish to point out certain aspects that can and will influence the outcomes of similar projects.

THE RESISTANCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The **Disbelief** that this project is and can be the 'real deal'. Young people are not involved in current policymaking as such and have never been consulted and involved on a regular base. Based upon this previous experience, young people easily discard these kinds of projects as 'another' similar and temporary happening, without a real impact and future.

The **Disinterest** for projects which mention certain terminology (e.g. politics) due to the negative connotation these words carry for many young people. Young people easily associate politics with aspects as 'corruption', 'manipulation' and 'dishonesty'.

Traditionally, the young people are not used to be asked to participate and to have an opinion which is really heard, and in best case also implemented. This 'habit' translates itself in a more unmotivated approach towards the project and many young people don't even realise they are actually being invited to 'really' participate.

THE AMBIGUITY OF POLICYMAKERS

Even though policymakers are –in theory- eager to have an active participation in the policymaking by the population in general, we notice that in practice, this is not always equally true. Where on one hand, certain policymakers complain that the population is not interested in participation and that this is a big lack, the same policymakers avoid actively supporting a process that could actually make this happen. More participation means also more sharing of decision making and more efforts that need to be made to come to a full democratic process. In many cases it is easier to complain about the lack of participation than to support the process itself.

The **Disbelief** by local policymakers in the possible success of this project has also undermined the many efforts made by the initiators of this project. One of the key players to reach many young people in the rather isolated villages in a direct way and on low-step-in level, were the local policymakers.

THE DIFFERENCE IN THEORY & PRACTICE

"In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice, they are not." Even a fine and elaborated, well prepared project encounters unexpected surprises, we were not an exception.



A NEW AND PERMANENT MOVEMENT PARTINRIO ...

And most important, as a direct outcome of the project, a permanent movement **PARTINRIO** has been set up between politicians and young people. With a central core group and already several fractions in different villages.

The group has defined itself as:

PARTINRIO is an active movement that through encounters of politicians and young people, wishes to accomplish social changes in order to create a reality that answers to our expectations.

A set of values has been decided, being:

- What it will be, it will be
- It remains within a Non Formal Educational setting
- Active listening and speaking
- Each one contributes from their own position (politician – young person)
- Whoever comes, is the right person to be there



A BACKBONE DOCUMENT: THE MODEL “CLEAR”

CLEAR: An auditing tool for citizen participation at the local level

The CLEAR tool exists to help local governments and other organisations or groups at the local level to better understand public participation in their localities. It is a diagnostic tool: one which helps public bodies to identify particular strengths and problems with participation in their localities and, subsequently, to consider more comprehensive strategies for enhancing public participation.

The CLEAR tool develops from a framework for understanding public participation which argues that participation is most successful where citizens:

- C** *an do* – that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate;
- L** *ike to* – that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- E** *nabled to* – that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation;
- A** *sked to* – that is, are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- R** *esponded to* – that is, see evidence that their views have been considered.

The tool is organised around these five headings and provides a focus for individuals to explore participation in their community.

The CLEAR model was developed by the Local Governance Research Unit, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK (Vivien Lowndes & Lawrence Pratchett) in cooperation with the University of Manchester, UK (Gerry Stoker). September 2006.

http://www.europeanchallenge.eu/media/papers/ws1_Keynote_Lowndes_and_Pratchett_CLEARdf



EDUCATIONAL BOARDGAME “PLAN B”

During the 2nd phase of the implementation phase of **PARTINRIO**, we used “Plan B” as the main workshop. As the title above reveals, it is much more than just a game. An educational board game is basically an exercise, using techniques based mainly on board-games, which focuses on passing information. This information can be related to clear knowledge on a subject or knowledge of feelings, emotions and attitudes (from yourself and others). Our experience showed that young people and adults retain and have a better understanding of information gained through this type of activity which in turn aids analysis. The main advantage of PLAN B is that however the feelings and actions are authentic and real; everything happens in simulated reality and has therefore only personal consequences (according to the facilitation process in the debriefing and the individuals’ capacity to learn). We have run Plan B with mixed groups, where both policymakers and young people together faced this ‘educational adventure’.



WHAT IS INSIDE PLAN B?

The aim of this exercise is to expose and explore interactions/attitudes between different groups which have received the same challenge. To explore one's own behaviour in decision-making and the consequences of these actions in the created society.

The players are confronted with the complexity of a society; create and build their own dream-society and while playing, experience how hard this is.

Different sub themes that are linked:

- The role of the politician in society
- Active citizenship
- The refugee issue
- Civilisation versus nature
- Mutual understanding and cooperation



Background reading on Plan B:

http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Publications/Coyote/10/simulated_reality.pdf

REFERENCE PERSONS

Below list of people who can be contacted to provide you first-hand experience and opinions in relation to the project. Don't hesitate to contact any of the below people who were part of the start of the current movement **PARTINRIO** as permanent outcomes of this project.

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