

6th Summer Academy Perspectives

01.06.2021 - 30.08.2021

CHALLENGES

This summer academy programme of Institute Perspectives was designed to deal with several challenges that come with working in marginalized areas of Europe, and more specifically Bulgaria. When making a social integration and activation project involving European youth, special attention should be given to the risks of marginalization based on potential sources of discriminations such as ethnic origins (Turkish minority regarding Bulgaria's case), gender, sexual orientation, religion or political positions.

Socioeconomic exclusion and democratic exclusion go hand in hand. Youth struggling with disadvantages are generally less active citizens and have less trust in institutions. Europe cannot afford wasted talent, social exclusion or disengagement among its youth. For young people to reap the benefits of EU actions, those need to reflect their aspirations, potential and creativity, and respond to their needs. Hence, European values were quite challenged when acknowledging the background of the European youth our program was designed for. In the towns of Svishtov, Ispirih and Razboyna in Bulgaria, several issues were identified to work around. These were mainly social and geographical exclusion from the main national hubs, which lead to poor access to public services, mainly transportation services and health services, as well as limited access to free time activities and occupations. In addition to these, the youth of Razboyna also had to face an additional challenge coming from their religious and ethnic background. Coming from a Turkish - Muslim community inside Bulgaria, challenges linked to religious and ethnic discrimination were also faced and needed to be addressed. The youth encountered were henceforth at first distrustful of European and national institutions regarding their ability to address the challenges they faced, and the program was designed in order to bring a solution to these challenges.

SOLUTION

As mentioned before, this summer academy was meant to find and implement solutions to the problems faced by the Bulgarian youth from small towns and rural areas. We thus created a 1 month long program designed to enable this youth by giving them entertaining and new experiences that would bring them new experiences, skills and mindsets while teaching them about European values. This 1 month program was divided into 4 weeks of 4 work days (from Monday to Thursday), in which 8 different topics were discussed, in a span of 2 days each. The eight topics were named Introduction and Knowing, Social Skills, Young

Citizenship, Peace and Tolerance, Education and Free Time, Ecology and Environment, Digitalization and Emotional Intelligence. Through these eight 2-days work sessions with the youth, these subjects were discovered and discussed with educational sessions and courses, physical activities and more, that will now be discussed.

The 6 interns taking part in the program were divided into two groups of 3, which then went to the two towns of Isperih and Razboyna respectively for two weeks before switching places for the last two weeks.

ACTIVITIES

All implemented activities were specially designed to meet the needs of the marginalized society in Isperih and Raybozna as well as to achieve the key competencies of the European Union.

One of the main outputs of the project was the sharing of common European values through educational activities which were divided into 8 specific topics.

The program started with a lighter topic Introduction and Knowing, which has been a starting point for getting to know each other and icebreaking activities.

In the second topic, Social skills, were demonstrated different types of behaviour hand in hand with roleplaying. Youngsters also experienced going through a debate within specific fields to incentivize and enhance the abilities to debate, argue and discuss with their opponents in a harmless environment.

Young citizenship was specially prepared for youths to take an action and let them to perceive problems they face in their neighborhood by preparing a documentary about youth life in the town. The goal was letting them perceive the reality of the places and possibly finding solutions, making a real change that could benefit their town and society.

In the middle of the Academy the topic of Peace and Tolerance has been implemented to cover a necessity of general knowledge about the United Nation Organization and the countries involved in it by active discussion and interactive non-formal educational methods.

Fifth topic named Education and Free time specifically follows the previous demanding topic, in which participants and animators experienced roleplaying by switching their roles to better understand each other and the positions they have in the society.

Ecology and Environment is one of the key topics responding to the environmental convictions of the Bulgarian reality. By using various methods

youths gained a general insight to the main ecological issues and they also turned it into action by ecological friendly activities around their towns.

The Digitalization topic was presented to ensure knowledge about internet security and its tools. Youths were put into action by making a survey in their towns and finished with analysis using different interactive digital tools.

The last topic of the Academy named Emotional Intelligence was designed to empower the group to act individually as powerfully as in a group. Through using various creative methods they have experienced activities enhancing their self esteem and understanding their role in the society as active citizens and unique individualities with specific backgrounds and needs at the same time.

TOWNS

Svishtov – is a town in northern Bulgaria, located in Veliko Tarnovo Province on the right bank of the Danube river. With a population of 26 thousand inhabitants, the town is the second largest in the province. The majority of Svishtov’s population professes Orthodoxy. The office of “Institute Perspectives” organization is located in Svishtov: this is where the interns from 5 different countries were working on creation and development of “6th Summer Academy Perspectives” program. It is a compact and cosy town, however, has its problems, such as outdated digital technology, transport communication with other cities and narrow opportunities for youth leisure.

Isperih – is a town in northeastern Bulgaria, part of Razgrad Province, situated in the central part of the Ludogorie region. It is the administrative centre of the eponymous Isperih Municipality. As of June 2020, the town has a population of 8,763 inhabitants. The town has a mixed population of Bulgarians and Turks, with an Orthodox church and a mosque being present. The Second part of 6th Summer Academy Perspectives project was implemented In Isperih. The town has all the same problems as Svishtov, but it is worth adding a few more to the list: poor access to public services and weak public infrastructure.

Razboyna – is a village in Ruen Municipality, in Burgas Province, in southeastern Bulgaria. As of June 2020, the village has a population of 889 inhabitants. The religion professed in the village of Razboyna is Islam. It should be noted that local people belong to the Turkish minority and use Turkish language for daily communication. Despite this, minority people know Bulgarian language, but do not use it much. The third part of 6th Summer Academy Perspectives” project was implemented in Razboyna. The infrastructure of this village cannot be called developed: there are some cafes, small shops, mosque,

office, and primary school. Razboyna has no pharmacy, nurse, digital technologies. Transport communication with other cities is weak: only some busses to Sunny Beach and Burgas. Local people (especially young ones) have no place for leisure except for forests, mosque and local bar. The quality of education leaves much to be desired: young people are forced to learn a lot on their own in order to acquire good knowledge.

ENGAGES YOUTH

73 young children and teenagers took part in the program, with a desire to learn and contribute more frequently to the society, who were engaged in the activities in their free time of summer to improve their life experience and acquire news skills. Aged between 6 to 17 years old and coming from the 3 towns (or villages: Svishtov, Isparih and Razboyna) and with different backgrounds and social conditions besides multiple cultural environments and religious beliefs, they worked together on the program that was made in their cities to reach their goals and make the best use of their free time in the summer.

26 parents and relatives also took part in the program, and had a big part on the engagement and functioning of the activities of the Summer Academy learning process, using their free time to contribute positively to the activities and encouraging the youth to take part in the society in between the learning process and sessions. Therefore, engaging young people was cornerstone of the future EU youth policy cooperation.

LEARNING ACHIVEMENTS :

For the learning process, non formal education and engaging activities were used to significantly grow the English speaking and social skills, for example in English like foreign language the group of users are better in pronunciation, fluid conversation, and vocabulary.

The classes focused on citizenship, ecology, recycling, European ways of behavior, emotional control and understanding of policies, in addition to a greater connection and inclusion with society, developing skills focused on personal and emotional development, digital competences, cultural awareness were the basics pillars of the program schedule. Through this program, the youngsters developed new competences in the way the EU recommended it in its Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning. The youngsters thus made useful use of their Multilingual competence, literacy skills, developed, their digital competences and skills, as well as their personal, social, and “learning to learn” competences through the program. Finally, they grew into more involved

and aware citizens of the EU, using different social and cultural approaches to interact with their peers and with the interns.

IMPACT:

On a personal level the impact of the 6th Summer Academy Perspectives encouraged the kids and teenagers of Razboyna and Isperih to speak more English than before the activities. They have in general more curiosity to learn more about other cultures in Europe.

At the local level, residents of the town become more hopeful and motivated as they see the youth participating in activities and acquiring knowledge and new skills during socio educational workshops or summer healthy leisure and free time.

Eventually, the residents started identifying more with European culture at a Community level.