

Final report

Training Course on Structured Participation in Democratic Processes

Hamamet, Tunisia,

1-8 May 2016

1. SPDP at a glance:

- **Background and context**

In the context of Euro-Arab and Mediterranean Youth Co-operation activities in recent years, youth NGOs and youth-led civil society organisations have expressed a clear demand for new capacity-building activities aimed at developing their competencies in the field of democratic citizenship and participation in political life.

In 2016, 3rd edition of Structured Participation in Democratic Processes took place. The training activity was organised by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in the framework of the 4th Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship and in parallel with other activities organised by partners such as the National Youth Observatory of Tunisia, the League of Arab States, Anna Lindh Foundation, the Italian National Youth Council and the Catalan National Youth Council. The Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship (MedUni) is one of the flagship events of the Euro-Arab and Mediterranean Youth co-operation programme of the North-South Centre (NSC) of the Council of Europe. It is also the youngest university of the Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship¹ facilitated by the NSC in partnership with other relevant stakeholders from Europe and Southern Mediterranean regions.

- **Objectives**

For the 2016 edition of the SPDP Training course, the objectives (as revised by the pedagogical team) have been the following:

- To reflect about our individual and organisational practice of democratic citizenship (participation and representation in decision/ policy-making) and build an understanding of its global dimension.
- To create the opportunity for the participants to share and discuss good practices of youth structures development and Structured Participation in Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region.
- To get acquainted with different principles, channels and opportunities to further develop:
 - the Structured Participation initiatives and mechanisms;

- the organisation of the youth movement mainly in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region.
- To create a space for quadrilogue actors to exchange views, experiences and expectations for on youth structured participation in democratic processes
- To engage young people and youth organisations in the intra and inter-regional co-operation.
- To create the opportunity for participants to design a concrete - and autonomous - SPDP follow-up action.

Each of the training sessions was also designed to respond to a set of more specific learning objectives, that have been guiding the choice of content and methods.

- **Participants and trainers**

The participants selection was carried out by the North-South Centre. The group was diverse, representing both regions (Europe - CoE member States and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean) and a broad variety of organisations. There were several common denominators for participants, outlined in the selection criteria:

- Being actively involved in a youth organisation (local, national, regional, international) as representatives, volunteers, trainers and/or youth workers;
- Aged between 18-30 years old;
- Being involved in an organisation, project or initiative that aims at the participation of young people in democratic governance/decision and policy making;

Also the pedagogical team was identified by the North-South Centre. It was composed in a way that allowed to combine diverse fields of expertise. Trainers also represented both regions. It is worth mentioning, that there were two of the team members were participants in North-South Centre trainings in 2015.

Below a detailed list of participants and team composition:

Participants		
LOPEZ	Sergio	Asociación FONDO NATURAL
BEN MANSOUR	Nihal	Institut de l'Engagement
MESKAUSKAITE	Ruta	OBESSU
MICKOSKI	Dimche	Youth Initiative for Human Rights
LANTAI	Judit	National Youth Council of Hungary
WALLACE	Ayoade	The Ubele Initiative (ADYNE)
PINTO	Joana	Portuguese National Youth Council (CNJ)
DUZHA	Olsi	Institute of Training and Career
ROHNER	Beat	Youth Parliament St. Gallen
ALTAKRITI	Rawan	Jozour NGO for Building Syrian Civil Society
TAYLIAKH	Mohammad	Shoruq Organization
BEN CHEIKHA	Haifa	Association méditerranéenne pour la promotion de la paix et les droits humanitaires
ZAKARNEH	Osaed	Bait Al-Hikmah Foundation For Youth
NABIL SALEK	Salma	Development No Borders (DNB)
BAKIT	Marouane	Makers of Hope for Human Rights
AMEUR	Meriem	AMSED

Pedagogical team

JAKUBEK	Ela	OBESSU
GULYAS	Barnabás	Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils
BEN NEJMA	Ahmed	Action Associative / Local & Global
ANBAR	Maram	Club de Madrid

2. Dive into SPDP:

- **Expectations of participants**

At the beginning of the training course, the participants were invited to share their expectations. This was taken into consideration by the team, thus was one of the factors shaping the training overall. The main categories and elements of expectations included:

- **content related:** to learn more about the democratic process from the experience of the participants and talking more about the youth participation in these processes, to explore different forms of structured participation (in theory and in practice as well), to know more about democracy, to explore good practices of structured participation, learning new tools to improve youth participation in the long term, sharing different approaches to youth working in other regions, learn /reflect on how to adapt these mechanisms to the different levels of participation with people from different backgrounds
- **results and follow-up related:** to work on follow up activities after the training, to come

up with new tools to encourage youth in my country to participate in the democratic process and share experiences, building new partnerships across the Mediterranean sea, to find future partners for cooperation

- **training proces related:** to learn some new fun methodologies of training by doing stuff, to be active and productive during the sessions, to exchange on our cultures, to have fun

- **Programme flow and content overview**

The programme have been designed by the team in a way that allowed building common understanding of topics, that the training course touched upon, sparked an exchange and debate, and finally, made participants ready to prepare their follow-up action plans for implementation after the training. Additionally, elements related to the group process have been a part of the programme. As the SPDP training was embeded into the broader context of the Mediteranean University, sessions of the University were an important component of the programme. Also, taking advanted of other activities running in parallel, two join sessions with other activities took place (one on quadrilogue, and one of gender perspective in democratic participation).

Content wise, the week took participants through exploring diverse aspects of democracy (historical evolution of the term and its implications, understading of democracy depending on the context, democratic and participatory aspects in governance of organisations), models of participation, pre-conditions to effective youth participation, structures of participation, the topic of inclusion in the context of participation. A full day during the week was dedicated to buidling follow-up project by participants, with individual mentoring sessions from the trainers, as well as an extra session on funding opportunities.

- **Methodology and methods**

The training methodology was based on non-formal education and on a number of successful experiences of training for youth workers and youth leaders developed by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. The educational model was largely inspired by the Global Education Guidelines, systematized by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and by the new framework provided by Council of Europe Recommendation on education for global interdependence and solidarity.

The team designed each individual sessions using a variety of educational methods such as: thematic, methodological and political inputs and discussions, guidelines and reference documents, simulation exercises, group dynamics, interactive role plays, examples of good practices, etc. The use of experiential methods and workshops will strengthen the practical and

pedagogical side of the course. In addition to the work of the pedagogical team, invited guests and experts provided proposals for reflection and share good practices.

- **Outcomes and expected results**

Given the participatory nature of the training course, most of the outcomes have been created by the participants themselves. Undoubtedly, the most important ones are the action plans for the follow-up projects, prepared in international (in most of the cases inter-regional) teams. The projects developed by participants covered:

- a research into youth participation in both regions, followed by a youth exchange,
- a project of developing participatory structure for secondary school students,
- a project on raising quality of participation within the structures of National Youth Councils in both regions,
- a project on participation in the context of youth unemployment, with study-visits and dialogue with policy makers,
- establishing a series of debate clubs, accompanied by a publication of a handbook and a training of trainers

Detailed summary of the projects is annexed.

An important set of outcomes are registered notes from participants discussions on their understanding of concepts that the training course have been touching upon, namely, the Structured Participation and the Democratic Processes. Below the summary of the discussions – they include exchange of ideas, questions raised (sometimes without an answer, as the topic remained debatable):

Non-organized participation and thus non-structured is more organic „less-filtered” and still not „visible” □ Question on that: 1. What about non-structured? 2. Requires flexibility? Comment on that: less controlled-less convenient.

Not everybody is able to work efficiently according to structures. □ Question on that: 1. Who creates the structure? (Someone asked ‘Who’ and 3 other people expressed his/her agreement with that) Comments: In what order? Fixed?

Do we need to analyse the power that effect on democratic processes? Answer: Yes.

Does structured always mean democratic? Comment on it: And the other way around?

Comment on structured participation: Should be carefully understood and practised.

Comment on democratic processes: Democratic processes are integrated processes.

Link between structured participation and democratic processes. Democratic Processes need Structured Participation, and Democratic Process is the result of Structured Participation. Also some keywords related: responsibility, satisfaction.

Single comments around the topic: Rules and Regulations. The “key stone” is having an active civil society. Can’t guarantee inclusive outcomes that fully represent all opinions. The way democratic processes organize structured participation processes not always assure democratic and inclusive participation.

Single unanswered questions:

- *Where does the terminology come from?*
- *What were the original intentions of those who created these processes?*
- *How did they represent?*
- *Does structured participation reinforces democratic processes or does it just vaguely validate them?*
- *Does structured participation really mean that is common with democratic processes?*
- *Is democracy really grass root friendly and structured participation helps to reach out?*
- *Does structured participation increase involvement of youth in decision-making processes?*
- *Does having a structure of participation make democratic processes more inclusive? Question on that: And more “democratic”?*
- *Can democracy exist without structured participation? Comment on that: NO. Question on that: What was born first? The chicken or the egg?*

Another interesting set of outcomes comes from the discussion on the gender perspective in participation. The session, implemented jointly with the **Training Course on Challenging Stereotypes and Identities to promote Gender Equality**, explored roles and perspectives of different stakeholders on obstacles and solutions to women participation:

- ***From perspective of government:***

Challenges are: Lack of trainings about advocacy. Lack of trust and the interest of parties. Power is much in the hand of men. Resources: women earn lower wage, than men. Knowledge: No quotas for women members of parliament.

Solutions: Make it easier for CSO's to provide trainings in political participation. Roundtable discussions. Law on quota for women. Confidence building.

- ***From perspective of media/new-media:***

Solutions: Trainings should be provided for media workers on gender issues. Using popular culture (known series, celebrities etc.) to reach out and create awareness. Educate students on gender. Work with campaigns on social media, hash tags etc. Documentaries showing good examples, women leading the way. International networks. Street Actions. Discovery channel: woman.

- ***From perspective of local authorities:***

Solutions. Trainings of local agents from different aspects: Political understanding; media as a tool; role models; campaign advocating; local trainings; campaign raising awareness.

- ***From the perspective of educators:***

Obstacles: Stereotypes (about women, non-formal education). Societal norms-religion norms. Out-dated and rigid curriculum influenced by tradition. Bad infrastructure. Hidden costs of education.

Solutions: Gender education in the formal curriculum. Partnership between formal and non-formal education system.

- ***From the perspective of other CSO's:***

Obstacles: Culture. Mentality – low awareness about importance of participation. Stereotypes. No will to participate. Political environment is not accessible. Legal framework. Religious aspects. Payment and recognition gap. Low level of education. Media coverage of women- and its communication.

Tools-Strategy channels- ways of measurements. Needs assessments. Local councils focusing on women issues.

The expected results of the training course were the following:

- young activists are trained and equipped with tools related with Structured Participation;
- quadrilogue actors are mobilised to participate in panel discussions addressing the target group and tackling pertinent relevant and topical themes related to Structured

Participation;

- proposals and recommendations for improved dialogue and interaction are put forward by participants;
- young people and youth organisations develop joint actions with other quadrilogue actors or between peers and promote intra and inter-regional co-operation;
- network, partnership and peer-learning between youth organisations are reinforced;

The training course has provided the framework for those results to develop further. A long-term assessment is necessary to define the impact of those results.

- **Participants and team evaluation**

The training course was evaluated both by participants and by the team.

The participants evaluation included several steps, that were looking into different aspects of the training course: an evaluation form, that recorded participants evaluation on a scale and collected detailed feedback (see annex), an evaluation exercise, giving insight on individual learning outcomes, lastly, there was an oral evaluation, with visual elements, that allowed evaluating the personal experience within the group.

Below a summary of the evaluation exercise („personal footsteps”), outlining the learning outcomes signaled by the participants:

- Learned about the ladder of participation
- Breaking stereotypes
- New ways of learning
- New partnerships
- Awareness of the quality of participation promoted by structures where I usually participate
- Trainer’s style inspired me and I’ll adapt
- New live to start up with
- Different perspectives about the World.
- Ready to take a stand about the structures/processes I don’t want to collaborate anymore
- Learnt more about the pre-conditions (of youth participation)
- Self-assessment
- Other country’s realities
- Realities of youth participation in EuroMed region
- Self-confidence
- Non-formal education activities
- Fundraising opportunities
- How to address different stakeholders
- Listening to opinions of others and considering them actually
- Different cultural approaches to same questions
- Activity planning
- Realistic projects

- Inter-regional dialogue is possible without “paternalism”
- New fun methodologies for activities
- Always on the way to understand others
- Learnt more about the stakeholders

As for the team evaluation, the details have been shared with the North-South Centre. The main conclusion this, after the 3rd edition, the SDPD training course have developed its specific shape, and it is an important activity to hold in the future, especially in the context of the Euro-Med cooperation. The team have also appreciated the support received from the North - South Centre team throughout the whole process.