



# **Youth participation in National Communities – Way for the democratic citizenship**

Report of the study session held by

World Armenian Youth Network /WostAYN/ & European Union of Jewish Students /EUJS/

in co-operation with the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest

12nd April – 18th April 2010



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.



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World Armenian Youth Network /WostAYN/  
M. Baghramyan Ave. 24d, room 907, 0019 Yerevan  
The Republic of Armenia  
Tell: +374 10 581 891, Fax : +374 10 581 891  
E-mail : [wostayn@gmail.com](mailto:wostayn@gmail.com)  
Website: <http://wostayn.comuf.com>

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## **Executive Summary**

The study session „Youth participation in National Communities – Way for the democratic citizenship” aimed to bring together young people - youth workers and leaders to explore and as a result contribute to development of democratic citizenship through active youth participation in national communities.

The study session was organized by World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) and European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS).

The study session included 33 participants, 5 team members, 2 experts-lecturers and 1 educational advisor from EYCB. The diversity of participants were coming from 14 different countries representing either Armenian or Jewish community youth. The participants were youth workers, activists and volunteers with a multiplying power. The study session was held in two languages: English and Russian, which was a good mean for interaction for the participants.

The objectives of the study session were to explore the common understanding of the concept of identity, the living in multi-cultural societies, the realities of Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe, to empower active democratic participation of young people in their community life, develop new forms of youth participation in decision-making processes and support the creation and development of youth networking on local, national and international levels.

The preparation of the study session was done by means of on-line meetings and e-mails inside the team and educational advisor, as well as face to face meeting at the EYCB. After settling the participant profile and spreading the call for participants the team had a preparatory meeting in the EYC in Budapest having a good chance to make the selection of participations, define the team members’ roles as facilitators of the session process, work out the program flow, session outlines, and prepare info package for participants with all necessary information and their tasks to be prepared before coming to the study session.

The first part of the study session actually was dedicated to exploring the similarities and differences of two identity carriers – Armenians and Jews, and after obtaining the understanding of national identity the participants passed to the second step – that was to explore the ways of youth participation in national communities, methods of active inclusion into democratic processes, European structures and institutions supporting youth initiatives etc. Based on this, and the preparation done by the participants before the study session, current methods and activities used were successfully shared. The two steps were facilitated by

methods of group work, discussions, presentations and thematic lectures. Special experts were invited to have a lecture on the role of national community, the key tools of its organizational management, case study of youth participation in democratic processes in some local communities.

The last final part of the study session was carried out by methods of open space. The participants after having shared with their own experience with each other on various aspects of youth participation in their own national communities were provided with a chance to develop possible networks for further cooperation.

The overall aim of the study session was achieved concluding from the detailed analyze of the study session's final evaluation – based on group and individual, daily and final evaluations.

Ongoing evaluation was carried out during the entire session by having reflection groups which was used to continuously correspond the program flow to the expectations and needs of the participants. At the end of the study session both oral and written evaluations were performed. In general, the evaluations were very positive, with an average rating for the study session 70% on a scale from 1 to 100%.

As a follow up the study session the participants managed to work out several activity plans, such as training courses addressed to the empowerment of youth participation in the local communities, campaigns for raising the role of youth in decision making processes in the local and international levels, creating an on-line network of Armenian –Jewish youth workers, etc.

## **Introduction**

The World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) sees active youth participation as a key factor for democratic citizenship and raising the role of the young people in their community directly leads to the better signification of youth role in the youth policy processed on both national and international levels. Organizing a good and qualified youth activity WostAYN tries to make sure that the project become more than just a nice experience, exchange of methods and tools but also it tries to improve the outcome of the further follow up activities.

## **Aims and objectives of the program**

The main **aim** of the Study Session was to contribute to democratic citizenship through active youth participation in national communities.

The **objectives**:

- To explore the common understanding of the concept of identity, nation, the living in multi-cultural societies, the realities of Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe.
- To empower active democratic participation of young people in their community's life, encourage young leaders to become and serve as links between community and public life, develop new forms of youth participation in decision-making processes.
- To enlarge the understanding of democratic citizenship from the perspective of national communities, contribute to integration processes.
- To increase the understanding of Council of Europe, European youth structures and policies, youth field, etc.
- To support the creation and development of youth initiatives, structures, networking on local, national and international levels (WostAYN and EUJS).

## **Profile of the participants**

As part of the program of the study session was based on the participants' experience and the inclusion in their national community, the level of their participation in democratic processes etc.

Not only interested, experienced youth workers, youth leaders were the target but also young people not so much experienced, beginners in youth work who could use this chance for getting experienced in youth activity participation, community inclusion, decision making, etc.

The general profile of the participants varied from those who needed to have good experience with work in national minority communities, international youth projects, who represented either WostAYN or EUJS member organizations, although some places for young people non member to either organizations were also given places as they were viewed as participants - potentially ready to get membership for their organizations.

The participants' profile needed for the study session was the following:

- active member in the organization, dealing with democratic participation in communities, national and international youth projects,
- youth volunteers, leaders, workers, experts - experienced: interested in contributing to the study session with their experience on the topic, who are ready to give and get,
- motivated and interested in taking active part in the study session, and in using the outcome of the study session afterwards,
- able to attend the whole study session.

In addition to the above mentioned points, the gender equality, regional representation was also paid much attention to as well as the diversity of the group and the ability of each participant to use the output of the study session were also considered.

The call for participants was sent to WostAYN and EUJS member organisations, participants in previous WostAYN trainings and activities, as well as partners, guests, and other networks and organisations. In the end we had one participant from non CoE country – Israel selected who had a special permission from DYS and EYCB to participate as a representative of EUJS member organization from Israel.

## **Preparation**

Before the start of the study session the participants were asked to spend some time preparing for the session. As sharing experiences and current practices was an important part of the study session, the participants were asked to spend some time before the study session collecting information about how their organization participates in their community life, what kind of tools and methods the participants used to get integrated in the democratic processes, what empowers youth to become active citizens.

They were also asked to try to collect any educational material concerning the study session's topic, as well as to prepare and bring with them some relevant information about Study Sessions or other training projects that they had been involved in, especially the ones that were addressing national communities, democratic participation, and networking issues.

The team planned to hold a cross-cultural joke evening about Armenian and Jewish people, as both people were famous for many specific things that related to only Armenians and/or Jews. So the team asked to

prepare some funny stories about Armenians and/or Jews to make the warm atmosphere of cross cultural joke evening more interesting and diverse.

The programme also included intercultural evenings of Armenians and Jews the format of which was purposed by the participants themselves and supposed national music, dance, karaoke, identity units' exhibition, kitchen etc.

## Programme Flow



The programme flow was designed to lead the process so that the sessions were logical continuation of each other. The team clearly outlined 4 main logical parts that would direct the flow of the program – National Communities, Democratic Participation, Concept of Citizenship and Partnership.

The first logical part started from the welcome evening ice breaking and group building activities, which was followed by introduction of the programme, presentation of the study session organizers - WostAYN, EUJS, DYS, and CoE. The sessions concerned common understanding of identity and nation, the participants after exploring the units serving bases for identity, sessions on Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe were held.

The second logical step of the programme included the active democratic participation in multicultural society and the role of the communities in public life, challenges and realities of participation, new ways of youth participation.

The finally the last - third part supposed the building of interest groups by using the provided open space for discussions, idea and experience exchange the participants had the chance to process plans for further cooperation and networking, multiplying actions, joint next steps.

Although the programme flow was rather intense and full of pre and post session work the participants had the chance to have free time to visit Armenian and Jewish community centres in the city of Budapest and not to miss the chance to discover Budapest's sightseeing.

An overview of the contents of the study session and a short description of the flow of the sessions is presented below.

## **Detailed programme contents**

### **Day One - Monday**

After the arrival of the participants the first day the programme started by welcome evening.

- Welcome Evening

The participants gathered in the hall and were asked to place them in the regional location of the country they come from, they were supposed to find their space – in neighbourhood with the other participants/countries –in the centre the educational advisor from EYCB was standing trying to serve as possible orientation. This exercise aimed to get the overall geographical layout of the study session participants. The participants introduced themselves and the Armenian or Jewish community of the country they were presenting.

Then this exercise was followed by a couple of name games and ice breakers the participants and the team had prepared for the first day.

### **Day Two – Tuesday**

- Introduction of the session (the team and participants)
- Aims, objectives, background the programme
- Expectations, fears, motivations
- Presentation of the DYS, Council of Europe, WostAYN, EUJS
- Team building activities with hanging eggs
- Presentation of organisations, communities, cross-cultural JOKE evening

The second day started with brief introduction of the team and the participants, then the organizers presented the background of the study session idea, why especially they intended to organize a study session for Armenian and Jewish community youth, what was the main aim of the session and objectives that have brought together young people from 14 countries to share with their skills on youth participation in national communities, and ways for the democratic participation.



As the aims and objectives were settled the flow of the programme brought the participants to the session full of expectation, fears and motivations-contributions. The team members asked the participants to put down on 3 coloured sticking papers at least two main expectations from the session, what they were afraid of and what motivations they had for participation in the study session. Three colours – each standing either for expectation, fears or motivations. The participants stuck the colour papers on the big balloon drawn on a poster – in the down, middle or upper part of the balloon – and further steps were explained for the participants, how they should act during the coming days with their sticking papers if they see that some of their fears, expectations or motivations were met or dropped out.

This session was followed by the presentations of the DYS, CoE, WostAYN, and EUJS. The participants had the chance to get informed about the organizations supporting the realisation of suchlike youth educational activities.



The session of team building activities with hanging eggs was a huge space for the participants to start interaction with each other, try to cooperate and act out a possible solution for the situation they had. The participants were divided into four groups, getting a task to prepare a nest for the egg. An egg was hanging from a high place on a rope and the task of the groups was to build such a nest so that after cutting the rope the egg falls down and didn't break.

The 4 groups were given definite equal amount of materials and time. As the time went the team members were observing the process and an interesting outcome were made. In one group a healthy group dynamics were observed, in the other one not all the participants were participating in the process itself just acted as observers, in the third one 1 person was dominating over the others and was for alone not group decision making. But finally only 3 groups succeeded with the given task. At the end of this session the participants were given time to discuss the positive and negative parts of the group building activity they had, analysing the points needing improvement for further more progressive and effective cooperation.



Presentation of organisations, communities, cross-cultural JOKE evening took place at the end of the second day. Participants with the help of different methods presented their organisations, communities (booklets, leaflets, presentations, posters, videos, oral conversations) and interesting Joke evening summed up the intensive working day. As a result of the Joke evening the young people presenting two ancient nation/people Armenians and Jews found out that there were many similar things, habits and stories between these two identities.

### **Day Three – Wednesday**

- Common understanding of Identity and Nation
- Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe
- Active democratic participation in community and public life
- Intercultural dialogue
- Armenian culture evening

The third working day was quite full and informative. The participants took two lectures delivered by the invited experts - concerning the concept and understanding of identity and nation, national communities and the ways of their participation in the society, democratic processes.

The next session was the presentation of Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe, so the participants applied the materials and shared with the information they had prepared for study session. The presentation of communities was followed by a session which introduced active democratic participation in the national minorities in the public life of the community and in the society they live and act in general. The activities and steps the national minority representatives take in order to lead reasonable intercultural dialogue.



The third day ended with Armenian cultural evening, the participants did it with the help of national dances, songs – in Armenian, due to good preparation all the participants took active participation in the dances, singing Armenian songs, Armenian delicious kitchen, visiting on spot special exhibition of photos „Famous Armenians in the World Community“ accompanied by English translation of Armenian famous poems.

## Day Four – Thursday

- Challenges and realities of participation
- New ways of youth participation
- Open space



The fourth day was very much important one as the participants after having participated on Agree/ Disagree discussions mainly focusing the topic on participation methods, new ways of youth activism. The participants first shared with their own and their organizations’ experience in the field of participation empowering democratic citizenship, then they passed to the ways and methods they would like to have, or process as a result of the study session case studies.

All the second half of the day the participants spent in the open space, where they were very flexy, having the chance to move to the sessions their peers were presenting they had a good space for exchange of ideas, drafting further joint projects, working out new methods of participation in the national communities. Such ideas as shooting a short youth film – young people from different countries should present in a minutes how they interact to build dialogue with other national communities or what have been their most successful practice in participation of community life, etc.

There were also ideas to organize a meeting – conference concerning historical common tragedy of two people - Armenian Great Genocide - Yeghern and Jewish Holocaust.

The day ended with the summary of the proposed initiatives, joint project ideas and a dinner in the town.

## Day Five – Friday

- Cooperation and Networking
- Plan for multiplying action/activities
- Presentation of group work
- Funding opportunities
- Jewish evening - Shabbat

The pre-last day of the study session was dedicated to have such sessions which empowered future cooperation and networking among participations, their organizations, Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe. The fifth day included such activities as the presentation of the Council of Europe and European Youth Foundation, other Youth platforms providing opportunities for the participants to process the initiatives they had and apply for funding. After the session the participants learnt about what youth platforms the Council of Europe had, what kind of youth initiatives it finance, who, when and how can apply for the funding the activities.

After previous day's open space the participants had already formed working groups and started to process their initiative, work out possible aims and objectives for the project ideas, try to find possible foundation to apply for, and make arrangements for partnership with other - not WostAYN and EUJS youth organizations.

As a way of raising participation and developing networking the participants brought forward such ideas as creating social groups of Armenian-Jewish youth, multiply local community level activities back to their countries, share with information concerning international projects by e-group mails, etc.



And the day ended with an interesting presentation of Jewish evening – Shabbat. Sharing with traditional habits, praying, food, dances, songs and Jewish stories the two cultures – Armenian and Jewish – had a good chance to be compared with historical similarities, and cultural unique differences.

## **Day Six - Saturday**

- Free morning (visits to community centres in Budapest)
- Follow up – next steps
- Evaluation, recommendations
- “See you soon” party

The last working day started with visits to community centres in Budapest. The Armenian and Jewish participants had a chance to visit Armenian Cultural Centre in Budapest, the Cross-Stone monument in Budapest dedicated to the Great Genocide of Armenians in 1915. They meet with community members, discussed present issues that they face being a

national minority community, what privileges they were given as a minority by the government of Hungary, their activities, religious and cultural life.

The other group of participants visited Jewish Synagogue in Budapest, had meeting with Jewish community youth and got acquainted with local issues and discussed further ways of cooperation.

As the participants got back in the second part of the day to the European Youth Centre in Budapest, they were given a task to follow up the study session. The aim of the session was to get people start planning on how they can use the results of the study session, personally, in their organizations and between organizations. They presented their ideas and already ready drafted ideas for the next stage of cooperation as the session ended. Some of them had quite well organized project initiatives, some still needed to be processed.

So the last session of the study session was the evaluation part. It was done by two stages individual and group. Detailed evaluation you can find in the Evaluation part of this report.

## **Day Seven - Sunday**

As the study session ended the participants departed, but some of them could not leave as planned caused by the natural anomaly, volcano that erupted in Iceland had spread its smoke over Europe and the airports of almost all European countries were temporally closed for flights. Thanks to the European Youth Centre's efforts and hospitality the participants could get accommodation for the necessary period for stay until their possible flight day. Due to the EYCB professional administrative staff the participants' needing visa prolongation got it by EYCB help. So the participants once more got the vision of united Europe and how well every single problem may be solved by close cooperation and participation in community life.

## **Analyses of the session**

### **Summary of the participants' evaluation**

The participations' evaluation was done by three stages individually and group evaluation.

The participants got the evaluation forms which they filled - evaluating the study session from different aspects: the practical, theoretical messages the sessions had, the two experts' lectures and their practical importance for them, the organizational moments, the administration, accommodation, food etc.



The second stage included a task – to write on a paper the most important things that he/she will take home with him/her in the suitcase and also to remember and recall the things, exercises or session discussions, any activities that they will leave in the EYCB recycle bin. Finishing this task they presented the points they preferred to the other participants and if there were those who were of the same opinion concerning this or that issue- a final evaluating discussion took place among the participants trying to analyze the reason and ways to improve it for the next time. The overall results of the evaluation by the participants were very positive, with an average rating for the study session 70% on a scale from 1 to 100%.

### **Summary of the team’s evaluation**

The team’s evaluation of the study session was based on detailed analyze of participants’ written evaluation forms. They found out that one of the lectures made by the expert was too theoretical and even in some cases it lack the connection with the session with the topic the expert presented. The team members evaluated the session as a successful one but still underlining of the necessity of long and detailed preparation of each session, point by point in order to have a better result than 70% is.

### **Main outcomes of the study session**

The main outcome of the study session may be considered the developed cooperation among Armenian and Jewish participants and the recommendations that the session participants gave to organizers - World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) and European Union of Jewish Students. The study session was a good opportunity for WostAYN to gather youth workers from different European countries and by presenting them the organization and its activity directions to enlarge the network of WostAYN member organizations, besides by cooperating with EUJS – WostAYN had a good experience of working with similar network of young people, learn effective ways of management and international youth platform enlargement and managing methods.

One more outcome of the study session may be considered the wide on-line mass media coverage of the session, due to some participants of the session the on-line newsletters, URL-s and other youth links widely covered the Armenian – Jewish Youth Initiative, the study session mission and its further vision (for the links to the URL-s see Appendix Three).

Besides raising its visibility among participating organizations, WostAYN provided a good opportunity for the participants both to share with their experience, methods and tools for active participation in national communities and obtain new technologies for democratic citizenship through active participation in community social and cultural life. Among the main outcomes may be also listed the future multiplying activities that the participants planned to have back to their communities.

## **Follow-up activities**

### **Individual**

Several participants left the study session with very concrete ideas on how they could use the outcome of the study session. In addition to this, a lot of people were motivated to be more active in their organization and some in the WostAYN and EUJS as well.

### **Member organizations**

The participants of the study session will share the results of the study session with other people in their organizations, and with the help of the developed electronic social network among the session participants the study session should have an effect both in their own and other organizations as well. Some participants planned to introduce the session discussions and their results to their organizations, such as Diaspora youth participation in the projects that tightens the link of motherland and the minority communities in Europe, thus supporting to national identity preservation and its active participation in youth initiatives contributing to the democratic citizenship and cooperation with other community's youth.



## **WostAYN**

The recommendations to the WostAYN based on the study session were presented by the course director to the WostAYN at the Board Meeting in July 2010 and as a result a new idea came out to enlarge WostAYN network to the countries where several participants of the study session expressed their willingness to establish WostAYN branch and work on its cooperation with other youth platforms in their countries.

## **Final conclusions and recommendation**

The final conclusion of the study session is the fact that young people need interaction on international programmes' level in order to discover common issues present in the youth work in communities and share with their experience and best practice. Cooperation and networking among national communities may serve as a tight link for cultural dialogue building and tolerance toward each other as an identity carrier, cultural and social community.

The recommendations were to have thislike initiatives in future as well and work on new concepts contributing to the appraisal of the participative level and the active citizenship of a young person from national minority groups.

## APPENDIX 1. Final Programme

12APR Mon	13 APR Tue	14APR Wed	15APR Thu	16 APR Fry	17 APR Sat	18 APR Sun
08:30-09:30	Breakfast					
Arrival of participants	Introduction session (team and participants); aims and objectives, background; program;	Common understanding of Identity and nation;	Challenges and realities of participation,	Cooperation and Networking	Free morning (visits to community centres)	Departure
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break					
Arrival	icebreaking; Expectations, fears, motivations	Armenian and Jewish communities in Europe	New ways of youth participation	Plan for multiplying action/activities		
13:00:14:30	Lunch					
Arrival	Presentation of the DYS; CoE Presentation of WostAYN, EUJS	Active democratic participation, community and public life	Open space	Presentation of group work	<b>FOLLOW UP-</b> next steps	

16:00-16:30	Coffee Break					
	Team building;	Intercultural dialogue	Open space – continuation	Funding opportunities	Evaluation, recommendations closing	
19:00-20:00	Dinner	Dinner		Dinner	Dinner	
Welcome evening	Presentation of organizations/communities; Cross-cultural-joke evening	Armenian evening	Dinner in town	Jewish evening Shabbat	See you soon... Party!	

## APPENDIX 2.

“Youth Participation in National Communities – Way for the Democratic Citizenship”

WostAYN and EUJS

European Youth Centre Budapest, 12-18 April 2010

### Study Session Participants’ List

<b>N</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Organisation details</b>
1	Arsen Karapetyan	ARMENIA	Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia Address: M. Baghramyan Ave 24d, room 908, 0019 Yerevan Tel/Fax: +374 10 581 891, E-mail : fyca@sci.am Webstie: www.youthclubls.am
2	Astghik Avetisyan	ARMENIA	World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) Address: M. Baghramyan Ave 24d, room 907, 0019 Yerevan Tel/Fax : +37498 581 891, E-mail : wostayn@gmail.com
3	Emma Allakhverdyan	ARMENIA	Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia Address: M. Baghramyan Ave 24d, room 908, 0019 Yerevan Tel/Fax : +374 10 581 891, E-mail: fyca@sci.am Webstie: www.youthclubls.am
4	Karen Ghahramanyan	ARMENIA	United Youth NGO Address: Bagratuniats 21, Yerevan
5	Lilit Kostanyan	ARMENIA	World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) Address: M. Baghramyan Ave 24d, room 907, 0019 Yerevan Tel/Fax : +37498 581 891, E-mail : wostayn@gmail.com
6	Tigran Shadunts	ARMENIA	“Serund Pan-Armenian Youth Centre” Address: 29 Adana Kilikai, 0082 Yerevan Tel : + 374 10 583 040; +374 10 923 634 E-mail: serund@gmail.com
7	Dmitriy Shibayev	AZERBAIDJAN	YLA Address : South Soutet 3, 35, Baku E-mail: yle.org@gmail.com
8	Masha Sykorskaya	BELARUS	Organization’s name : Hyllel Minsk Address : Voronjanskogo 56-1
9	David Mzikyan	GEORGIA	Armenian Students’ Association of Georgia Address : 52 Lasatiani str. Tbilisi 0105 Tel : + 995 32 9958 33 E-mail : asag@armenia.ge, Website: www.armenia.ge
10	Anusch Hess	GERMANY	AGBU-HAIK Address : Rödelheimer Bahnweg 31, 60489 Frankfurt / Main Tel : + 49 69 380 977 8650, Fax : + 49 69 3809 778 659 E-mail : office@haiknet.de, Website: www.haiknet.de
11	Diana Ambarzumjan	GERMANY	AGBU- HAIK Address : Rödelheimer Bahnweg 31, 60489 Frankfurt / Main Tel : + 49 69 380 977 8650,Fax : + 49 69 3809 778 659 E-mail : office@haiknet.de Website: www.haiknet.de
12	Diana Hancaro	GERMANY	AGBU- HAIK Address : Rödelheimer Bahnweg 31, 60489 Frankfurt / Main

			Tel : + 49 69 380 977 8650, Fax : + 49 69 3809 778 659 E-mail : office@haiknet.de, Website: www.haiknet.de
13	Leonid Mechik	GERMANY	World Congress of Russian Jewry Address : Rankestr. 24, 10789 Berlin Tel : + 49 30 2199 6762, E-mail : berlin@wcrj.org
14	Misha Badasyan	GERMANY	Serund Pan-Armenian Youth Centre in Germany E-mail: erde88@gmail.com
15	Kata Nádas	HUNGARY	MEIRIM Tel : + +36 30 531 4161, Fax : + 36 1 250 7809 E-mail : k.nadas@meirim.org
16	Kristina Bouree	HUNGARY	Libertas International Address: Amsterdam, the Netherlands Tel : +31-6-23-23-65-80 E-mail : libertasinternational@gmail.com
17	Yeranyak Oganova	HUNGARY	Armenian community Address: Hungarian Radio, Bródy Sándor u. 5-7., Budapest Armenian Culture Centre, Semmelweis u. 15., Budapest Websites: www.mr4.hu; www.forsolidarity.com
18	Caylee Talpert	ISRAEL	Atzum or AJC Access Address : Beit Moscs, 17, Mesikt Yeshanh str. , Jerusalem E-mail : info@atzum.org Website: www.ajc.org; www.atzum.org
19	Iona Hobosjan	NETHERLANDS	ASV Gladzor Address : Falstaffhof II, 3816 SX Amersfort Tel : + country code rest of the phone number E-mail : info@asvgladzor.nl, Website: www.asvgladzor.nl
20	Anna Bakula	POLAND	Polish Jewish Youth Organisation Address : Kłopotoskiego 31, 03-720 Warsaw Tel : + 48 723 893 976
21	Jan David Spiewak	POLAND	Polish Jewish Youth Organisation Address : Kłopotoskiego 31, 03-720 Warsaw Tel : + 48 723 893 976
22	Magdalena Braniewska	POLAND	Polish Jewish Youth Organisation Address : Kłopotoskiego 31, 03-720 Warsaw Tel : + 48 723 893 976
23	Pawel Kwiecien	POLAND	Open Republic Association against Antisemitism and Xenophobia Address : Krakowskie Przedmiescie 16/18 Lok 1 Tel : + 48 22 828 1121, E-mail : otwarta@otwarta.org Website: www.otwarta.org/english
24	Dorean Horovitz	ROMANIA	OTER / JCC Cluj-Napoca Address : David Franisc 14 E-mail : www.jewish.ro / www.jen.ro
25	Dmitry Shikhin	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Israeli Cultural Centre Address : Tverskaya str. 8 B, Saint Petersburg Tel : + 7 812 719 8756, Email: iccspb@il4u.org.il
26	Elena Tsyvyan	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Hillel St Petersburg Address : St Petersburg, s/ Bolshaya Raznochinnaya 25/a Tel : + 7 812 237 1051 ; +7 801 8/901 303 7266 Website: hillelspb.ru

27	Gayane Grigoryan	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Armenian Cultural Centre in Krasnodar Address : 87/1 Gimnazicheskaya str., Krasnodar 350080 Tel : + 7 861 262 7850, Fax : + 7 861 262 7850 E-mail : office@khachkar.ru; admin@khachkar.ru
28	Janna Kazazyan	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Serund Pan-Armenian Youth Centre in Russia Address : 14th line, 344000, Rostov on Don Tel : + 890 817 30231, E-mail : hayrenik@hayqstan.am
29	Karen Sahakyan	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Serund Pan-Armenian Youth Centre in Russia Tel : + 7985 178 0346, E-mail : karen@bk.ru
30	Sergey Yugov	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Tyumen Research Centre of Orient Address : Tyumen, Lenina 16, 625000
31	Serob Antinyan	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	World Armenian Congress (WAC) Tel : +374 1051 0449, Email: wac@armcongress.org
32	Liliya Sardaryan	UKRAINE	Council of Armenian Youth in Ukraine "Serund" Pan-Armenian Centre in Ukraine Tel : + 38 687 33 5844 E-mail : lily_sardaryan@mail.ru, Website: www.samu.org.ua
33	Lyudmila Sukhareva	UKRAINE	International Visegrad Fund Address : Kralovske udelie 8, Bratislava, Slovakia
<b>The Team</b>			
34	Benjamin Zagzag	BELGIUM	European Union of Jewish Student (EUJS) Address : Avenue Antoine Depage 3, 1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel : +32 2 647 7279, Fax : +32 2 648 2431 E-mail : benjamin@eujs.org
35	Mikael Sardaryan	GERMANY	AGBU-HAIK Tel : +49 17540 33 881, Fax : +49 611 910 3380 E-mail: mikael.sardaryan@haiknet.de
36	Gayane Barseghyan	ARMENIA	World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) Address: Baghramyan ave, 24d, room 907, Yerevan, Armenia Tel: +374 10 581 891, Fax : +374 10 581 891 E-mail : wostayn@gmail.com
37	Simoni Tiano	GREECE	European Union of Jewish Student (EUJS) Address: Avenue Antoine Depage 3, 1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel : +32 2647 7279, Fax : +32 2648 2431 E-mail: simoni@eujs.org
<b>The Lecturers</b>			
38	Stepan Petrosyan	ARMENIA	Ministry of Diaspora Address : Yerevan, Armenia E-mail: info@mindiaspora.am, Website: www.minidiaspora.am
39	Alache Ode	UNITED KINGDOM	National Planning Commission Address : 12 Briar Walk West Byfleet, Surrey KT14 6JS, Tel: +44 7530 776625 E-mail: alache@yahoo.com
<b>Course director</b>			
40	Atom Mkhitarian	ARMENIA	World Armenian Youth Network (WostAYN) Address: Baghramyan Ave, 24d, room 907, Yerevan, Armenia Tel: +374 10 581 891, Fax : +374 10 581 891 E-mail: wostayn@gmail.com
<b>Educational advisor</b>			

41	Zara Lavchyan	HUNGARY	European Youth Centre Budapest Address: Zivatar u. 1-3., 1024 Budapest, Hungary Tel.: +36 14381032, Fax: +36 12124076 E-mail: zara.lavchyan@coe.int
<b>Council of Europe</b>			
42	Zsuzsanna MOLNAR	HUNGARY	European Youth Centre Budapest Zivatar u. 1-3., 1024 Budapest, Hungary Tel.: +36 14381035, Fax: +36 12124076 E-mail: zsuzsanna.molnar@coe.int



### Appendix 3. List of Mass Media making programme visibility

The bellow mentioned Mass Media links wrote about the Study Session thus making the visibility of the session more effective.

<http://www.youth.am/index.php?id=3531&t=12&lang=2>

<http://www.tert.am/am/news/2010/04/16/budapest>

<http://www.a1plus.am/am/social/2010/04/16/budapest>

<http://www.lragir.am/armsrc/print.society34034>

<http://www.panorama.am/am/2010/04/16/hayhrea>

<http://www.aysor.am/am/news/2010/04/16/budapesht-youth/>

