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OUTSPOKEN

Advocacy for Youth Participation

Study Session

Report of the study session held by
FEMYSO
The Forum of European Muslim Youth and Students Organisation
in cooperation with the
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
2 - 6 March 2020

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.

1. Executive summary

FEMYSO's advocacy study session brought together 30 participants from 16 different countries to learn and share their experiences on advocacy. A range of sessions were organised to equip participants with the skills they expected to gain from this study session with a focus on the rights of Muslims and minority communities, as well as youth participation. Through non-formal education methods, the participants acquired skills in stakeholder mapping, lobbying, communications, and campaigning, all while delving into the topics in-depth through practical exercises. They were also introduced to the Council of Europe as an institution, as well as the benefits and possibilities it can offer for youth. In addition to the youth sector of the Council of Europe, the participants got to know better the INGO Conference and the Congress of Local and Regional authorities, which can also make an important contribution to their work on advocacy. Two guest speakers, Samayya Afzal and Yusuf Hasan, attended the study session during the week to offer their expertise on working with decision-makers, on how to engage with the media and project management.

The sessions built up towards designing of an advocacy project, taking into consideration all tools that were provided, and creating a solution to some of the key issues that were identified as challenges for their communities as a group. Seven groups tackled issues ranging from inclusion in education, women in sports, mental health, sustainability and consumerism, and more Muslim representation in politics and the media. The presentations were held at the Palais of the Council of Europe building. Each participant contributed from their perspective thus making the projects unique, tailored, and replicable. All participants are expected to implement them in the near future through their local youth organisations, with the support from FEMYSO.

The overall feedback from the participants was very positive. They were able to learn and build their skills and became better prepared to design and run more advocacy projects locally that address the needs of their respective communities. They particularly appreciated the workshops that helps them in structuring their messages clearly and approaching the correct stakeholders in pitching their ideas, as well as, the wider discussions to understand the Human Rights and youth participation frameworks.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank several people involved in making this study session successful. Stefan Manevski, from the European Youth Centre, for being our fantastic Educational Advisor, his support and enthusiasm brought creativity and expertise to the study session. We would like to thank Nina Kapoor for all her cooperation with logistical and administrative issues hence making the process smooth for us all. Our guest speakers Samayya Afzal and Yusuf Hassan are thanked for their kind participation and time dedicated to support the participants.

We would also like to thank the Executive Committee of FEMYSO for their support throughout the process and for visiting during the last few days of the session to share their valuable tips and advice to participants, while also being part of the feedback panel for the projects/campaigns presentations. A huge *thank you* goes to the participants themselves for their enthusiasm, dedication, and hard work throughout the week in making the *Outspoken Study Session* successful. Finally, appreciation also goes to the Preparatory Team who dedicated their time and creative minds to put together a wholesome study session.

2. Introduction

The main aim of the study session was to provide the participants with the necessary skills to improve youth participation by exploring ways to connect local issues with the work of the Council of Europe, notably the Youth Department, the Congress of regional and local authorities, and the INGO Conference. This Study Session was proposed in a time when the civic space is shrinking and there is a need to equip young people with the tools and understanding of different mechanisms available within Council of Europe's statutory bodies and elsewhere, to enhance young people's participation in the wider society.

Objectives of the Study Session:

The study session's aim was to improve youth participation by exploring ways to connect local issues with the work of the Council of Europe, especially its Youth sector, the Congress and INGO Conference. Its objectives were:

1. To build common understanding of how the Council of Europe works with young people, and how it promotes youth participation
2. To plan and prepare potential advocacy projects which relate young people to the Council of Europe's work, mainly the Charter on Youth Participation in local and regional life
3. To build capacity of young people to run various advocacy initiatives through skills such as public speaking, organising, communication, negotiation etc.
4. To explore existing resources and examples available at European level, how to use these for local level youth participation initiatives
5. To map issues that people face as key barriers to access their rights and building critical awareness on the roles and networking opportunities to work on addressing these barriers.
6. To prepare participants to act as 'youth ambassadors' in their local context.

The Study Session started with introduction to the key theoretical and practical concepts such as advocacy, youth participation and human rights. At the beginning, the team also proposed different moments of bonding and team building. The participants had the opportunity to exchange views and analyse the main challenges they face in their respective countries with regards to young people's participation (**day one**), and they were introduced to key theoretical aspects of strategic advocacy, negotiation, and communication skills (**days two and three**).

The Study Session also provided the participants with an opportunity to discover the European Youth Foundation (EYF), the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities, and the INGO Conference. In addition, the participants had the opportunity to further their knowledge in specifically designed parallel workshops (**day four**).

Building on the knowledge, tools, and skills learned thus far, the participants were given the chance to develop their projects in small groups with close mentorship of both experts and the preparatory team. The projects were later presented at the Palais de l'Europe (**days four and five**).

Thanks to the participants' enthusiasm and proactive participation, and thanks to the facilities provided by the EYCS, the Study Session turned out to be a success in many ways. From the many project ideas created (**days four and five**), a few have already been officially launched by the time this report was written.

3. Programme – inputs and discussions

Background

Since the study session application was submitted to the last programme draft, the team went through an intense reflection process to come up with a relevant and relatable programme for the *Outspoken Advocacy Study Session*. It was indeed most important to keep in mind the reality of our members and how much FEMYSO's Member Organisations have access to advocacy platforms and opportunities.

The team quickly came to realise that the needs were very diverse. The participants came from all corners of Europe, from very different contexts, experiences, and with a lot of different expectations.

One way the team wanted to approach the activity was to get as much input from the participants as possible. Starting by getting their expectations through the application process, then have them introduce themselves and their work virtually before meeting in Strasbourg. Once we were all together, the preparatory process showed us that we created a good basis which could be used during the presential workshop sessions and interactive sessions and which encouraged the participants to share their expertise and give mutual feedback. The aim of creating a safe space was successfully met and this is what enabled all the interactivity and the culture of exchange that developed over the next few days.

Another important aspect of the methodology was to make sure it is as creative and innovative as possible, to follow the guidelines of non-formal education, and not to descend into academic teaching. The team applied in the programme as much as possible the different Council of Europe resources on Human Rights Education and youth participation so that we can secure experiential learning for the participants. The programme contained several educational sessions based on Compass and Have your say manual, which included role plays, public speaking and other activities where participants had to put in practice their experience and learn new skills.

The Study Session was an opportunity for all participants to get inspired by each other, as well as by the guest speakers who joined us throughout the week. We were honoured to welcome Samayya Afzal and Yusuf Hassan as well as virtually meet and exchange with Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey, former Bosnia and Herzegovina ambassador to the United Nations (UN). These were very valued times to exchange with the experts and for participants to ask them any specific questions they had.

The concept of Advocacy

To be able to work together on this topic, the team along with participants explored their understanding of the term *advocacy*. Participants were put into smaller groups which allowed them to explore and discuss advocacy projects they have personally been involved in. These discussions were very interesting, as it was clear to see the differences and diversity in the understanding of the word itself and how it manifests into real world action. It was also a great opportunity for participants to exchange best practices, points of experiences, and advice amongst each other. This session was very stimulating so much so that it was extended to maximise its benefit to participants.

A group exercise was conducted where Participants were given a list of expressions orientated around advocacy. The idea behind this exercise was for the participants to explore the idea of advocacy but also to get an understanding of other participants and the diverse perceptions of advocacy they have or hold. This was an effective way in challenging ideas, breaking

misconceptions, and talking about challenges whilst sharing insight from one another's wisdom.

Sharing experiences, a pre-condition to build a group

Whilst preparing for the study session, there was a particular emphasis on the experiences of the participant which served as a reflection throughout the activity. The week was full of opportunities for participants to talk about their work, their contexts, and their motivations.

The cultural evening on Monday night, which, lasted a bit longer than expected as there were many amazing contributions, was a great occasion to get to know each other. Some participants represented their organisations while some presented their countries, their favourite food or their local slang. Prior to their arrival, we asked participants to prepare and bring what they would like to share in order to represent their country. We were very pleased with how involved and excited they all got! This entertaining session also provided us with a diversity of snacks that were then enjoyed throughout the week and appreciated especially in the most intense working times.

As explained before, many of the sessions included smaller working groups that lead the participants towards sharing elements of their work, their organisations, campaigns, or local contexts. These sessions were always to the taste of the participants, and they wanted them to last longer. The main interest of these sessions was for all participants to have a more global understanding of the situation in different European areas. It was a pleasure to conclude that the participants could quickly relate to each other, advise each other, share experiences, and eventually widen their horizons.

The team used one of the evenings as a 'Storytelling' session. It started by online communication with a very inspirational advocate that was already known to some of the participants. Former UN Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey joined over Skype and told us about his work with the UN, cross-collaboration opportunities, and why we should all be inspired by each other to be active and make a change.

We then encouraged participants to share some of their most valuable stories about themselves or inspirations they take from others. It was a very beautiful informal session where some of the participants came to share their personal projects, they had yet kept secret. Others shared their life-changing experiences which motivated them to be active in society and be actors for change. This session strongly contributed in having the whole group gel very well and build a bond that until now is very strong.

Access to rights for young people

The participants were introduced with the Youth Sector of the Council of Europe whose main aim is to support young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote, and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Some of the activities, resources and tools of the Council of Europe's youth sector are specifically important for advocating for youth participation and better access to rights for young people:

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2015) presents concrete ideas and instruments that can be used by young people, youth organisations, local authorities, and other groups and institutions involved in participation work. The charter consists of three parts relating to different aspects of youth participation at a local level: sectoral policies, instruments for youth participation, and institutional participation by young people in local and regional affairs. Accompanying the Charter is "[Have Your Say! Manual](#)" which provides step-by-step answers to the questions: "What do I do with the charter?"; "How do I use it in practice?"; or "Why should I be interested in this document?". It does this

through a collection of reflections and questions that can help those working at a local level to find their own ways of achieving meaningful participation by young people. The manual can be a great start for those interested to work on advocating for youth participation.

The [Recommendation on young people's access to rights](#) underlines that youth organisations and youth work have a critical role to play in ensuring young people's access to rights and supporting young people to be active citizens, therefore all forms of youth participation should be supported by authorities on different levels. The participants understood how call upon this Recommendation when they plan their advocacy initiatives.

The European Youth Foundation can support educational projects linked with advocacy in 4 types of grants open to youth-led organisations:

- [International activities](#) (open to all except local NGOs)
- [Annual work plans](#) (only open to international NGOs/networks, can include pilot activities)
- [Pilot activities](#) (open to local, national, regional NGOs/networks)
- [Structural grants](#) (open to international and regional NGOs/networks)

Analysing, Mapping, Organising

As a base for any advocacy project, the participants first were introduced to the structure of an advocacy plan. The advocacy project should start with an aim and the structure of the project becomes the path to a successful change!

The participants of the Study Session came from various backgrounds and gathered diverse experiences and skills. It was, therefore, very interesting to go through the process of developing an advocacy project together.

At the beginning, the participants identified the following key issues as challenges for their communities:

1. Inclusion in education – this topic includes challenges such as working against discrimination in education, access to education and creating a safe learning environment for Muslim students.
2. Women in sports – many Muslim women would like to do sports, but due to legal regulations which are unrelated to sports, they cannot access the gyms, swimming pools, sports halls, or other sports grounds.
3. Mental health – some Muslim youth would feel safer to approach a psychologist who is able to understand and provide support with the respect of the religious belonging to the young person.
4. Sustainability and consumerism – as a global challenge, Muslim youth organisations should have a strong role to promote sustainable lifestyles and challenge excessive consumerism.
5. Muslim representation in politics and the media – it is important to make sure that the politics and media of today reflects the diversity of societies, making sure that there are Muslim role models in media and that the media and politics challenges the prejudices instead of igniting divisions.

Following the identification of challenges, the participants had a chance to learn more about lobbying, again based on the different understandings from their prior experiences. The team had the privilege of welcoming Samayya Afzal, an expert in advocacy and campaigning, who led a session on lobbying, networking, and organising. Samayya is an experienced community outreach manager currently working in the UK Parliament, with a demonstrated history of working in civil society, campaigns and diversity, mainly on anti-racism and anti-discrimination issues. She managed to reflect on the different mechanisms used to develop one's advocacy plan and gave access to some very practical tools to use when putting together a campaign.

The participants were then split into smaller groups and came up with guidelines for potential future projects. Samayya was very approachable to participants who enjoyed completely the interaction and asking her different questions on practical examples of campaigning, lobbying and advocacy activities.

One lasting memory will definitely be the Compass activity – [A mosque in Sleepyville](#). As a plenary, participants were assigned roles to enact during this exercise. They were given time to prepare and came back ready to defend their ideas. It was exciting, fun, and an extremely practical exercise. The feedback session appeared to be very valuable as participants and the preparatory team were able to exchange what could have been done differently and how to better plan the advocacy process. This led to inspiring reflections like “*I come to understand the whole topic of advocacy way better after this exercise!*”.

A few other topics like stakeholder mapping or negotiation strategy and skills were addressed in a more activity-oriented approach. The participants got introduced with some of the key approaches in advocacy such as stakeholder mapping, analysing influence and monitoring of the advocacy process. Participants were asked to establish realistic stakeholder maps for their own countries, organisations, or regions. It was yet another opportunity to spot some similarities and differences between the contexts represented.

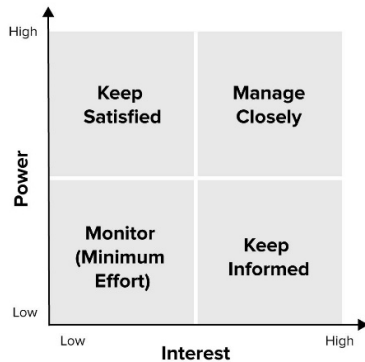
Stakeholder Mapping

The participants conducted different mapping activities of stakeholders for their advocacy activities, and they identified the following groups:

- Government / line
- ministries
- Local self-government / local authorities
- Political parties
- Public figures
- Donor institutions
- Intergovernmental and international organisations
- Civil society organisations
- Research institutes and think tanks
- Academia
- Experts
- Beneficiary communities
- Beneficiary groups
- Media
- Private sector
- Celebrities
- Religious and other informal leaders
- Non-formal groups
- Problem specific stakeholder groups

After mapping, the next step was to analyse and select stakeholders to actively work with later in the project. Power / Interest Matrix is commonly used for prioritisation of stakeholder:

Figure 1: Power/Interest Matrix for Stakeholder Prioritization



Adapted from Mendelow, A.L. (1981). 'Environmental Scanning - The Impact of the Stakeholder Concept,' ICIS 1981 Proceedings, 20.

The Power Interest Matrix is used in the following way: Each stakeholder from stakeholder list is placed as a dot on the coordination system composed of Power and Interest axis: Power axis describe ability of the stakeholder to influence decision making process in problem relevant, stakeholder with higher power is located higher on the vertical axes.

Interest axis describe the importance of the problem for the stakeholder – the higher interest shows higher importance the stakeholder gives to the problem.

As seen on the graphics, the stakeholders can be placed into four sub-groups:

“Manage Closely”

Stakeholders in this sub-group have the most power and are highly interested in the topic of the project. They should be closely managed and main activities of the advocacy project should target it. If not managed properly stakeholders in this group can easily ensure project failure.

“Keep Satisfied”

Stakeholders in this group as well have high level of power but are less interested in the topic of the project. They should be kept in the loop and satisfied, to avoid them turning into blockers and using their power to create obstacles and challenges for the project. Stakeholders in this group can become strong allies in your advocacy project if the urgency of the problem and importance of your cause is explained and lobbied for.

“Keep Informed”

This sub-group is highly interested in the problem matter / topic of the project, but lack power to influence the decision making. This sub-group often includes right holders’ groups, individual CSOs, and other interested parties that do not have high influence on decision making processes. Building capacity of these stakeholders (supporters) and creating coalitions among them can increase their power and move them to “Manage Closely” sub-group.

“Monitor”

Stakeholders in this group can represent different sectors of society. They have some relation to the project, but have rather low interest to it and low influence on the decision making. They should be informed about project major achievements / updates, invited to large events, but without spamming. As the name suggests, stakeholders in this group should be monitored for status changes, e.g. if their interest changes or their influence / power over decision making processes.

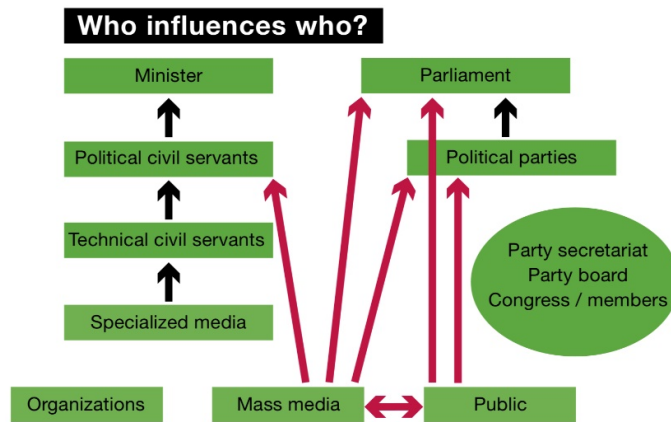
Advocacy and influence

In the process of planning the advocacy activities, it is important to identify relevant decision-makers and their positions, interests and motivations. Some of the following questions can be useful in this process:

- What are the objectives and interests of the decision-maker?
- What solutions can we offer which are of interest to the decision-maker?
- What phase in the decision-making process has the decision- maker arrived at?
- What are the procedures for decision-making?

- How do decision-makers perceive your organisation, network or coalition?
- How do decision-makers perceive your target group and their issues?

As the figure shows, breaking down the layers of decision-making as much as possible provides the organisations who intend to do advocacy, with more and better opportunities to target their lobbying and advocacy interventions and to identify key relations of influence (red lines). Sometimes it might be enough and easier to approach those who have influence over a decision-maker, rather than approaching a decision maker directly.



Monitoring of advocacy projects

Monitoring of advocacy projects checks on progress of the activities and their immediate results (outputs). Especially in advocacy projects monitoring and evaluation is crucial to regularly check for achievements, changing external context, and to adapt the project's intervention accordingly.

Monitoring is conducted throughout the project. Different tools are used to conduct monitoring:

- Action plan implementation reports
- Meeting records and other project documentation
- Media coverage
- Correspondence with team members and key stakeholders
- Case studies
- Focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys with beneficiaries and key stakeholders
- Monitoring of policy documentation.

Monitoring should check:

- If project activities are implemented according to the action plan,
- If implementation of project activities results with planned outputs,
- If changes should be introduced to improve the project.

Evaluation of the project can use similar tools and methods, but checks for:

- Are project objectives achieved? If yes, to what level it can be attributed to the project?
- Is there any change in the situation of beneficiaries? Is it better? If not, how can the advocacy project be improved to make positive change?
- Was the project efficient, effective and sustainable?
- What should be done next?

Monitoring and evaluation provide valuable input for further activities and increase effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

The advocate skillset

To further support the participants to develop soft skills for advocacy, the programme included practical sessions and parallel workshops on different topics.

One session was dedicated to communication skills in advocacy. From being able to convince an audience to preparing a speech, the participants were put in different situations where they had to practice their communication skills and learn from this experience. The public speaking exercise covered both, a writing exercise, and a delivery exercise. Public speaking with feedback is a very effective opportunity for an exchange where participants and facilitators gave feedback on each other's performances in a very constructive way. This was also the occasion to hear everyone speak out and support overcoming shyness by articulate a point and presenting it for a group of peers.

The next day followed with some more practical skills with a simultaneous workshop session including:

- Online Advocacy (Platform and Tools, Social Media)

The session explored some online tools for advocacy, starting from tools to manage the process and also tools to design an online campaign.

- Crisis Management

The activity looked into ways to manage specific crisis situations, how to best react in different cases and to keep the focus of the advocacy campaign.

- Thinking Outside the Box

This workshop contained some artistic activities to motivate lateral thinking which can be helpful in situations when the advocates might need new ideas.

- Media in Advocacy

This session was delivered by our guest speaker Yusuf Hassan who gave some really interesting and practical tools on how to reach out to media outlets, how uncomplicated it is, and why we should be proactive in this way.

Participants were able to attend 2 workshops out of 4 and were encouraged to share the things they learned with others during the group project time.

Youth participation in the Council of Europe beyond the youth sector

As part of the programme, the participants had the opportunity to engage and discuss with specific bodies within the Council of Europe:

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The participants found out about the Youth Delegates programme, where the Congress has invited young people from different backgrounds – youth activists, youth workers, students, young politicians – to take part in its sessions, to have their say in the debates and to exchange with Congress members on the issues on the agenda. Since 2016, as an integral part of their participation, youth delegates have been required to develop their own projects at local and regional level in between the sessions.

INGO Conference

Since 2019, the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe also started a Youth Delegates programme, inviting 5 young people representing their member NGO to take an active part, as in the INGO Conference's sessions. Being a youth delegate for a year can give a unique opportunity to gain international experience, become a part of a diverse group of young activists, network and make an impact by stimulating the debates from a youth perspective thereby highlighting and strengthening the Conference of INGOs' commitment to youth empowerment.

Group projects

One central focus of the whole Study Session was to put in practice the time, the people and skills gained throughout the week to cross-collaborate, and develop plans for follow-up projects.

On Thursday, based on a group reflection that happened earlier during the week, the participants split into 6 groups to work on certain topics they were most passionate about.

The topics they chose to work on were:

1. Mental Health in Muslim communities
2. Female Inclusion in Sports
3. Decolonisation of Education
4. Student Politics Representation
5. Green Up and Consumerism
6. Platform of European Women Voices and Stories
7. Muslim Media Representation

As the afternoon started, Yusuf Hassan gave an inspirational speech on the role of youth to bring a positive change, consequently encouraging participants not to wait but act towards a better Europe and better societies for all. It was a great way to kick into the intense working sessions that followed, where participants gathered in their chosen groups and worked hard to come up with a project proposal by the next morning. Rules were simple: use your time, your skills, all resources available, and think big!

The Groups then presented their work on Friday morning at the Palais de l'Europe. *And they did not disappoint us!*

4. Follow-up activities

The 7 groups developed their group projects with the intention to put them to practice beyond the study session and launch these advocacy campaigns after they are back home. Therefore, these seven group projects are the follow-up activities to the Outspoken study session.

1) Live Green, Live the Deen

This project aims to address the over-consumption in European Muslim youth communities through partnering up with youth organisations and influential stakeholders to take up a challenge to reduce consumption in their activities. Through a three-phased process, they plan to create a short-term challenge, followed by selecting good-practice communities as examples to then spread the concept to other countries.

2) Show Me Your Book

This project will try to tackle the issue of a biased and Eurocentric approach to education, especially in regard to the history syllabus and the absence of acknowledgment of the diversifying influence in Europe today. As its short-term approach, it aims to raise awareness about the issue and portray to the general public the consequences of this issue for children in the European education systems. The next phase aims to create a toolkit with which practical changes will be analysed in their contexts to set the standards for a non-biased history teaching. In the final stage, it intends to receive endorsement and implementation of the toolkit by the Ministries of Education. The project includes creative ways of presentation, a research component to push the agenda and make the campaign successful, and a policy motion in place to be presented to policy-makers.

3) SheSports

This France based campaign aims to curb the exclusion of Muslim women in sports which has been in place due to the several restrictions, policy changes, and political attitudes in the country. During its three phases, the campaign aims to raise awareness by involving several stakeholders, and ultimately change policy to allow women in the hijab to play sports. The

project has already kick-started by creating social media accounts on Instagram and Twitter, and they have been able to involve already at the presentation stage, both FEMYSO, CCIF (Collectif Contre l'islamophobie en France) and EMF (Etudiants Musulmans de France) to support their campaign and be their key stakeholders. As a project empowering Muslim woman, it was conveniently launched on the 8th of March on International Women's Day and given exposure to through the Council of Europe social media platforms.

4) Catapult: Bridging the Gap - Political Representation

This project tackles the theme of the lack of representation of Muslims in the political arena, focusing specifically on the Dutch context as a start, which exacerbates stigmatisation in the society. With the upcoming elections in May 2021, the campaign aims to primarily increase Muslim representation through a grassroots approach, followed by scouting the right candidates for the next election, and ultimately create a pool of highly skilled trainers, so that they can train future candidates as effectively as possible. The project has carefully planned out their implementation approach, finances, and communications elements as well as their branding.

5) What About Politics?

This project aims to rebuild Muslim youth's trust in their national political systems. Their short term goals include a very robust and thought-through social media campaign. In the next phase, the aim is to enhance the social media campaign to include more ambitious content and involve stakeholders including influencers to push their relevant messages. They also aim to involve religious leaders to talk about the importance of politics and active citizenship. Their five-year long-term plan aims to increase the voting rate of young Muslims by 15%. This project brought some creative element to it by filming an informative video. The messaging element needs a bit more work, however, the intention for the project is realistic.

6) Mental Health Campaign

This project aims to bridge the gap and end the stigma on mental health within the Muslim community due to the lack of awareness and inability to address the problems. The approach was taken to address the community leaders and heads of mosques (Imams) directly on the importance of the issue to further disseminate the message to the wider community. Over 20 interviews were carried out in which young people were asked about two scenarios on how they would ask for help. This campaign starts by creating awareness about mental health in the community and the space to discuss these issues. Following this, Imams will be involved to deliver these messages in large gatherings (a sermon for Imams was included as a product ready for use). Finally, an exhibition will be organised on World Mental Health Day in October 2020 to increase awareness to a larger audience. No policy change was asked for as the problem persists within the European Muslim communities, however, various stakeholders would be involved in reaching the aims, such as the Muslim Council of Britain.

7) Women of Europa

The lack of representation of both Muslims and women are tackled in this advocacy project. The aim is to represent minorities better by platforming a counter-narrative in which they can share their own stories with a focus on women, giving particular preference to ethnic minority women who are experiencing multiple discrimination. The project's first phase sees a social media campaign highlighting personal stories, followed by an inter-European dialogue on both the lack of representation and the misrepresentation of women. Finally, the project aims to reach a scale of popularity that allows the stories of women which are often ignored to appear attractive to conventional media outlets, thus increasing the reporting on women, and improving its standard. During the presentation, the social media campaign had already been

launched, branded, and its content created. Stakeholders were mapped through a media map and ally key journalists were identified in the development of the project.

Beyond the Study Session:

After the study session, as the COVID-19 situation escalated throughout Europe, FEMYSO started a new campaign called Outbreak of Generosity. It was initiated and led by Nourhene Mahmmoudi and involves quite a few other participants from the Outspoken Study Session. The campaign created toolkits in over 15 languages to promote youth participation and involvement in helping their communities cope through this crisis. Tasks involved shopping for those in the risk groups and elderly populations, calling friends and those suffering in isolation, sending letters, or any other acts of kindness, in cities all across Europe. The campaign, so far, has reached different stakeholders who have gotten on board and supported this Europe wide initiative.

Find the social media of the campaign on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)!

The preparatory team also started organizing **Friday Feels** online reflection sessions on Friday evenings for the participants to share their experiences and support each other through the tough times in self-isolation. Most participants join the session and the lively discussion via Zoom. Each week participants are chosen to provide a reminder and reflect with their peers. This way they are also able to showcase the communication skills they've learnt from the study session.

5. Results and Conclusions

The Study Session was very successful and intense with all our participants evaluating the content and process as exceeding their expectations. The preparatory team also agrees with this observation. The activity had excellent participation process and the participants have put magnificent efforts to learn, exchange and get the best out of being together for the week. The sessions of the activity allowed for complex dialogue to take place between participants from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. It allowed for fruitful discussions on the issues they face as young activists in their local communities and as a group of young people in the wider European context. What was particularly insightful about the conversations and discussions that took place was that issues were always followed up by methods to implement their solutions based on the opportunities presented.

The team found that for a lot of the participants, the content delivered was very new, as well as the non-formal education approach that was used. We believe this was very successful as it allowed the learning process to be more creative and strengthened the engagement with the participants consistently. Through this approach of learning, the team was able to drive complex concepts of advocacy (such as lobbying, strategic mapping, etc) in a manner where participants not only understood the content but were able to engage with it critically. This was very important for us as an organisation as this would encourage participants to think about the elements of advocacy in context to their regions. The study session would potentially fuel their motivation to apply and share the skills and knowledge they've gained back as multipliers in their organisations or communities. Both FEMYSO and the Council of Europe also shared ways how they can support the participants in their follow-up advocacy work.

The non-formal education was appreciated as an approach for learning by the participants. In general, they enjoyed especially when having discussions, building their individual and group conclusions and follow-up actions in areas of advocacy that include community engagement and organising, stakeholder management and monitoring, and pushing important causes with the right messages.

An important aspect of the study session, which the team identified amongst all participants, was the confidence with which they approached and engaged in sessions. This was very

important for the preparatory team because it would further strengthen participants to action their causes and campaigns in their localities and as cross-collaborative efforts in wider European society. They were able to grasp and engage with concepts like stakeholder analysis, strategic advocacy, effective campaigning, all of which gave them tools that they could then use to further strengthen their causes and expand their reach in and beyond their communities. The participants were introduced with specific tools such as messaging, time management, the art of how to devise a stakeholder matrix, public speaking, and community organising.

On the fourth and fifth day of the study session, all participants worked on projects or campaigns on key issues that were faced by European youth with some focus on minority communities in particular. All groups made impressive pitch of their projects and campaigns where they incorporated the tools and key elements of what was presented to them about advocacy. The preparatory team and members of the FEMYSO Executive Committee were present to hear the presentations and these ideas were taken on board by FEMYSO to help develop further and support their implementation amongst member organisations across Europe. There were two projects in particular that demonstrated exceptional use of creativity as well as the knowledge shared during the Study Session (Show Me Your Book and SheSport). We were very encouraged that some groups wanted to continue with their projects and FEMYSO is more than happy to support them. The participants were also interested to use the resources of the Council of Europe also for their projects.

Furthermore, what was very encouraging to see that the participants were able to get together across different parts of Europe and apply the skills that they gained from the study session. This was beautifully demonstrated during the global pandemic of COVID-19 where participants initiated the campaign 'Outbreak of Generosity' with the support of FEMYSO. This campaign was created to support those who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic. It aimed to spread messages of solidarity, purism, strength, community cohesion, and tolerance. It successfully promoted messages that incorporated these concepts, and participants used the tools that we provided such as community organising, networking, and campaigning. They were able to engage a diverse range of organisations and stakeholders from across Europe to participate. It further demonstrated that the tools and knowledge the participants acquired during the study session could help them advocate for a cause effectively with limited resources.

The participants of the study session and FEMYSO believe that the Council of Europe and all other European institutions are extremely important in helping them raise their voices and causes, particularly those that are to do with rights and liberties. This includes the empowerment of female voices in European society, particularly those from minority communities. As part of creating an inclusive society, FEMYSO believes the Council of Europe must continue to work and build on structures and policies that actively promote participation to ensure that representation is at the core of building a peaceful and inclusive society. Youth engagement and participation is currently a profound issue within European societies. Young people are experiencing exclusion from civil society spaces or apathy towards institutions due to a lack of relatability and relevance to the conversations being held within and amongst the institutions.

FEMYSO is willing to work and collaborate further with the Council of Europe on future study sessions that unite around the issue of youth engagement and participation, as well as themes of inclusive societies and tolerance through networks of many minority groups across Europe that FEMYSO has access to. The Council of Europe and its European Youth Centres, as well as, the European Youth Foundation are key partners to help bring about this change particularly on a policy making level with the engagement of FEMYSO on an advisory basis. The partnership development and coordination with the European Youth Foundation were very important as we found that it has galvanised participants to further develop their projects and campaigns with the added value of resource and wisdom that was also offered.

Appendices

→ Programme



DDP-YD/ETD(2020) 25

14 February 2020, Strasbourg

Study session

“Outspoken: Advocacy for Youth Participation”

Study session organised by FEMYSO – Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg,
2-6 March 2020

Programme

Sunday, 1 March

Arrival of participants

19:00 Dinner

20:45 Welcome evening at the Bel'Lounge

Monday, 2 March

9:15 Opening and Introduction to the Study Session

Welcome by Tina MULCAHY, *Executive Director of the EYCS*

Aims & objectives of the Study Session / Expectations & programme

Presentation of the co-organisers of the Study Session

10:45 Break

11:00 Team Building Activities

12:45 Lunch and *Prayer*

14:15 Introduction to the Council of Europe and its youth sector

Youth for Democracy programme

15:15 Understanding Youth Participation and Young People's Access to Rights

Introduction to the Charter for youth participation in Local and regional life

15:45 Break

16:15 Mapping and prioritising the main challenges for youth participants based on the participants experiences
18:00 Reflection groups
19:00 Dinner
20:30 Multicultural evening

Tuesday, 3 March

9:15 Introduction to advocacy
Comparative case studies from advocacy on young people's access to rights
10:45 Break
11:15 How to effectively lobby, network and organise, input and exchange with Samayya AFZAL, expert in communication, British Parliament
Cross-collaboration
12:45 Lunch and *Prayer*
14:15 Strategic advocacy – Setting up an advocacy plan

- Stakeholder mapping and analysis
- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

15:45 Break
16:15 Working with decision makers
Negotiation and communication skills
18:00 Reflection groups
19:00 Dinner
20:30 Storytelling evening

Wednesday, 4 March

9:15 Campaigning 1.01
Mobilising others in a campaign
10:45 Break
11:00 Communication skills in Advocacy
12:45 Lunch and Prayer
Free time
19:30 Dinner in town

Thursday, 5 March

9:15 Parallel workshops on project development

1. Online advocacy, platforms and tools, social media
2. Project management & effective planning
3. Crisis management
4. Thinking outside the box

11:15 Break
11:30 European Youth Foundation, funding opportunities for projects related to youth participation and advocacy for young people's access to rights, input by Marcio BARCELOS
12:15 The INGO Conference of the Council of Europe and its work on access to rights, input and exchange with Anna RURKA, president of the INGO Conference
12:45 Lunch and *Prayer*
14:15 Development of follow-up projects based on advocacy and campaigning, examples and exchange with Hassan YUSUF, Chatham House think-thank
In small mentoring groups / 16:00 Coffee break included
18:00 Reflection groups

19:00 Dinner

Friday, 6 March

Departure from the European Youth Centre to the Palais de l'Europe at 8:40 – bring your badge

10:00 Presenting the project proposals for follow-up activities

11:30 Opportunities for youth participation in other Council of Europe institutions:

- *Congress youth delegates programme, Antonella CRICHIGNO, Co-Secretary ai. to the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress of Local and regional authorities*
- *Youth Delegates at the INGO Conference, Rareş CRĂIUȚ, Bureau member of the INGO Conference*

12:45 Lunch and *Prayer*

14:30 Follow-up support by FEMYSO – Youth Ambassador programme

Follow-up support by the Council of Europe – Education and Training resources and upcoming activities of the youth sector

16:00 Break

16:30 Conclusions from the study session

Evaluation of the activity

17:30 Closing of the study session

19:00 Farewell dinner and party

“Outspoken: Advocacy for Youth Participation”

Study session organised by the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) in cooperation with the European Youth Centre Strasbourg

2-6 March 2020

European Youth Centre Strasbourg, France

List of participants

Participants

Albania

Erald SKURA, Ardhmeria
Fatime STOJKU, Ardhmeria

Belgium

Esmanur ASLAN, IGMG

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Lamija BALTA
Fadil UMIHANIC

Denmark

Ahmad Massood POPAL

Finland

Abdoullah YOUSFI, NMF

France

Ibtihelle BEN MRAD, FEMYSO
Aicha EL BOUAJAJI, EMF
Florence POUILLY, FEMYSO

Germany

Billal Omer HIGO, RAMSA
Anas MISSAOUI
Burak OZTURK, IGMG
Enise YILMAZ, IGMG

Italy

Nourhene MAHMOUDI, GMI

Moldova

Wail SINDIANY, Assalam

Netherlands

Oumaima EL GHOULBZOURI, MSA
NL
Oumaima HAJRI, MSA
NL
Mustafa SENNER, IGMG

Poland

Medin BAJRAMI, FRI

Spain

Doha MOHAMED FATHY

Turkey

Muhammed TAHIRI

Sweden

Aram ALBARZNGI, GUM

United Kingdom

Omar ABU QALBAIN
Lubaba KHALID, FOSIS
Govan RASHID, MABY
Maria ZITOUT

Lecturers

Samayya AFZAL, team of Zarah Sultana MP of the British Parliament
Hassan YUSUF, Chatham House think-tank

Guests

Hania CHALAL, Strasbourg section of FEMYSO

Preparatory team

Nadia EL FAROUKHI (Course Director)
Youssef HIMMAT
Akiqul HOQUE
Farahsaad SHAHID

Council of Europe

Anna RURKA, President of the INGO Conference
Rareş CRĂIUȚ, Bureau member of the INGO Conference
Antonella CRICHIGNO, Co-Secretary ai. to the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress of Local and regional authorities
Jane CROIZER, Secretariat of the INGO Conference
Marcio BARCELOS, European Youth Foundation
Stefan MANEVSKI, Educational Advisor, Youth Department
Nina KAPOOR, Programme Assistant, Youth Department

Visibility

List of links where information about the study session was posted online to ensure visibility

Facebook posts:

[Day 1](#)

[Day 2](#)

[Day 3](#)

[Day 4](#)

[Day 5](#)

[Overview](#)

[Group Projects](#)

Instagram posts:

Day 1 https://www.instagram.com/p/B_At0wJzHk/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Day 2 https://www.instagram.com/p/B_DWHMDH-PA/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Day 3 https://www.instagram.com/p/B_F3K78HC_P/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Day 4 https://www.instagram.com/p/B_IZ7syHMqR/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Day 5 https://www.instagram.com/p/B_NnrNgJgxd/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

GroupProjects https://www.instagram.com/p/B_QOloxp-hG/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Prep Team https://www.instagram.com/p/B_S0KPFBFXa/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Sum-up Video https://www.instagram.com/p/B_VpuNVJi2U/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

CoE website

[Advocacy study session ends with 7 campaign proposals - News \(coe.int\)](#)

Posts from pax

A few posts by our participants and team

https://www.instagram.com/p/B9evKhOg3tS9apAjwGb6RgZtg8akX54_2Y0B9o0/

https://www.instagram.com/p/B-SGeJ_pzqDHRfMrxscQZ4tEEAWC1OhANIPZMq0/

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B9-B-VGJkAZflnABU2xugz99T5LtPo8UEYBFD80/>

Video

<https://www.facebook.com/femyso.org/videos/231053254643403/>