

## Call for Participants

# Training for facilitators of online policy dialogue in the youth field

*Online course from 23 August to 31 October 2021*

### The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

The European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity of the Council of Europe - or North-South Centre (NSC) - was created in 1989 as an interface of the Council of Europe, in Europe and abroad, to contribute to build stronger, more resilient and critically aware societies grounded on the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

With over 30 years of experience, the NSC raises awareness about global interdependence and solidarity on the principles of global education and intercultural dialogue and provides a platform for constructive dialogue between Europe and other parts of the world from a win-win perspective.

The North-South Centre develops multilateral, regional, and interregional cooperation projects that include field activities around three main programmatic areas: global education, youth cooperation and women empowerment.

**The Youth Cooperation Programme of the North-South Centre provides capacity strengthening, confidence building and networking opportunities to increase youth participation and foster interregional cooperation in the youth sector.**

In the period 2020-2021 the NSC is implementing the project "Global Youth". The project intends to enhance interregional cooperation between Europe, Middle East and Africa promoting a multilevel governance approach among youth stakeholders.

Within the project, **specific actions aim at improving the quality of the dialogue between Youth-related civil society organisations (CSOs) and institutional representatives, in order to increase awareness about each other's roles for the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.**

### CONTEXT AND PRESENTATION

A sustainable future is guaranteed if young men and women in all their diversity participate meaningfully in decision making processes. Different regional agreements and national youth policies have emphasised on the need to ensure adequate representation of young men and women in governance structures. **However, the youth sector, as a part of civil society, is affected by a persistent shrinking of space for participation in the democratic life.**

The closure of physical spaces of encounter and the pause imposed to international youth mobility projects due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, worsened these conditions in terms of opportunities for young people to participate, advocate for and mainstream their concerns.

**Online consultations and virtual youth events might represent valid alternatives to keep up with a youth agenda that aims at addressing the challenges faced by young people worldwide, in particular those in vulnerable situations.** However, virtual youth events often entail limitations to the time of exposure to different voices, proposals and advocacy actions, to the possibility to interact in a comfortable and safe space with counterparts, and to use informal moments (which represent a strategic advocacy moment during on-site events) to increase confidence and mutual understanding. One of the key messages that emerged in many online events that animated the youth sector last year was that in the current situation it is more difficult to connect with the policy makers and make the voice of young people heard. Hence, **in a general context of shrinking space for civil society, compounded by the challenges posed by Covid-19, youth participation in policy-making processes is at stake.**

The digital dimension represents de facto a new element for the youth sector and for civic participation: one of the guiding principles of the [EU youth Strategy 2019-2027](#) affirms that *“all policies and activities concerning young people should uphold young people’s right to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies affecting them. In this context, policies should be built in recognition of the changes brought about by digital communication affecting democratic and civic participation”*.

However, **if on one side the online dimension represents a new opportunity for digital youth work in terms of inclusion, engagement and transversality of the approaches, it is still far to be an effective forum for policy dialogue between young people and institutional representatives.**

Traditional barriers for meaningful youth participation remain in place also when the political dialogue takes place online: cumbersome mechanisms of consultation, reciprocal misperception between young people and decision makers, lack of interest of young people in a traditional political system, reluctance of policymakers to unconventional forms of participation and lack of innovative strategies to involve young people from vulnerable environments, are challenges that the quick rise of digital communication which the world has witnessed in 2020 have not changed.

Those structural and systemic challenges might either be mitigated or exacerbated by methodological factors: it was acknowledged that factors such as the methodology used, the capacity to tackle sensitive topics, the setting of the space and the attendees’ engagement in the preparatory process, can undermine the fruitfulness of consultation initiatives and other processes of policy development between policy makers and young people.

Hence, **the skills of the facilitators are key in ensuring an effective dialogical process between institutional actors and youngsters towards concrete shared results.** A well-trained facilitator would lead a constructive dialogue, design a suitable space for such a dialogue and guarantee safety and respect for everyone.

If those competences are important in the traditional dialogical settings, they become essential when the political discussion takes place online, where a series of factors (digital fatigue, technical problems,

limited non-verbal communication, etc.) undermine the effectiveness of the conversation and where the intercultural dialogue dimension might be underestimated.

## THE TRAINING COURSE FOR FACILITATORS

The North-South Centre is promoting an online training course in the framework of the project “Global Youth” to increase competences of facilitators of online policy dialogue in the youth field.

**The course will create a group of facilitators for youth dialogue processes and multi-stakeholder events able to provide expertise and support for events where young people and policy makers interact and cooperate.**

The online course intends to develop the skills of professionals facilitating virtual moments of dialogue, consultation and sharing among different youth stakeholders (policy makers, researchers, youth representatives, international organisations, etc.) ensuring a high level of engagement among all the actors.

Through practical exercises and debates, practitioners will also improve their capacity to contribute to issues related to global democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural dialogue, being able to address challenges regarding the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and of the UNSCR 2250 “Youth, Peace and Security”.

**The course will lay on three pillars:**

- **facilitation competences**
- **policy making and policy dialogue knowledge**
- **technical expertise to set up quality online spaces for dialogue.**

**The course intends to achieve the following specific objectives:**

1. To understand the elements that ensure safe and engaging digital environments for youth policy dialogue and youth policy making.
2. To learn strategies that guarantee equal contribution opportunities to all the actors involved taking into consideration the intercultural dimension and the gender mainstreaming perspective.
3. To enhance facilitation competences such as empathy, neutrality, conflict management, active listening, active techniques of questioning, report building and consensus building among others.
4. To understand the role of the facilitator and the different phases of the facilitation process (from the preparation of the event to the final evaluation of the effectiveness of his/her performance).
5. To enhance the capacity of leading the conversation with consideration of the impact public policies have on different publics and sectors of the society, being aware of the Council of Europe’s human rights approach.
6. To be acquainted with the main international youth policy instruments and policy dialogue mechanisms in order to facilitate a youth dialogue around and within them.
7. To be able to work at interregional level and for interregional cooperation within the different international platforms of dialogue promoted by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the African Union and other international organizations.

8. To understand issues related to global democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural dialogue, in order to address challenges regarding the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and of the UNSCR 2250 “Youth, Peace and Security”.

## STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE COURSE

The course is composed of 5 modules:

<b>Module 1 to 3</b>	<b>32 hours of training activities</b>	<b>August-September 2021</b>
<b>Module 4</b>	<b>Up to 8 hours of mentored practical phase where participants will practice facilitation during an online event.</b>	<b>October 2021</b>
<b>Module 5</b>	<b>4 hours dedicated to wrapping up the course and carry out the final evaluation and self-assessment.</b>	<b>October 2021</b>

Participants are expected to complete 90% of the activities to obtain the final certificate.

The course will offer a tailored learner-centred approach following the principle of non-formal education.

The trainers will ensure that different learning styles are respected but also that participants with different technical possibilities and availability can fully follow the course.

**The course is structured in synchronous group sessions and asynchronous (self-guided) moments encompassing a variety of activities:**

- Online sessions
- Interactive presentations
- Case study analyses
- Blog and video inputs
- Quizzes
- Plenary sessions and Small group work
- Online library with resources
- Forum and Interaction on the platform
- Visuals and Graphic Sharing
- Webinars and panel discussions with guests (experts from the field, policy makers etc.)
- Online mock policy dialogue sessions with invited policymakers from various institutions and agencies

Throughout the course participants will have space to practice their skills and receive feedback from the trainers and be part of the peer-to-peer review process with other participants.

**The online course will also be an opportunity for networking and practicing intercultural dialogue among participants from different regions of the world.**

The central digital space for online learning will be a **Moodle platform** where all the materials for learning, video links and spaces for communication among participants will be organised.

Other tools and platforms might be used as well to complement the pedagogical offer.

## Timetable and overview of the course

Dates	Asynchronous learning*	Synchronous sessions **	Module	Content
23 August - 05 Sept	<b>8 hours</b>	<b>Thur. 2 September 16:00 – 18:00 CEST ^</b>	<b>Module 1</b> Introduction, personal experiences and landscape of youth policy developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction, technicalities and sharing expectations and participants' experiences and realities</li> <li>- Quality online environment for youth policy dialogue: policy making and social challenges</li> <li>- Youth policy processes around the world (from local to global)</li> </ul>
06 -19 September	<b>10 hours</b>	<b>Thur. 9 September Thur. 16 September 16:00 – 18:00 CEST</b>	<b>Module 2</b> Facilitating policy dialogue: Principles of participation, engagement in policy processes and role of the facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning a participatory activity following the CoE human rights approach</li> <li>- ensuring engagement and intercultural dialogue in online policy discussions</li> <li>- Key competences of the facilitator</li> <li>- Non-Formal Education in online contexts</li> </ul>
20-26 September	<b>6 hours</b>	<b>Thur. 23 September 16:00 – 18:00 CEST</b>	<b>Module 3</b> Digital skills for online facilitation, tools for online interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practical development of skills for online facilitation</li> <li>- Acquisition of a library of online tools and resources</li> </ul>
27 September - 24 October	Self-organised (max. 8 hours)		<b>Module 4</b> Practicing online facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practice the online facilitation and online youth dialogue in small groups</li> <li>- Peer-review among participants</li> <li>- Feedback and mentoring by trainers</li> </ul>
25 -31 October	<b>2 hours</b>	<b>Thur. 28 October 16:00 – 18:00 CEST</b>	<b>Module 5</b> Conclusion and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment of the competences developed</li> <li>- Identify skills which need to be further strengthened</li> <li>- Evaluation of the learning points</li> <li>- Exploring other opportunities for personal development and other spaces to interact and cooperate with other professionals</li> </ul>
<p>* time foreseen to go through the online resources and to carry out the practical exercises leaving to the participant the choice about the most suitable moment of the week to follow the course.</p> <p>** moments when all participants gather online at the same time for group interactive sessions with the trainers.</p> <p>^ Central European Summer Time (CEST)</p>				

## PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND APPLICATION PROCESS

The course targets **practitioners from Europe, Middle East and Africa** willing to increase the political dialogue and the cooperation efforts within and among regions in the youth field.

The course will be open to **24 practitioners with different profiles and affiliations (freelancer consultants, youth workers, staff members of institutional agencies, political representatives, board members of youth entities.)** in order to reflect and explore also topics related to interregional cooperation and multilevel governance as elements which strengthen the global partnership for sustainable development contributing to more peaceful and inclusive societies.

The participants must already have a **minimum degree of experience in the youth sector running and/or setting up initiatives of political dialogue.**

**To apply, fill in the application form by the 1 August 2021.**

**Selected participants will be notified by email by the 14 August 2021 and are expected to promptly confirm their participation no later than the 17 August.**

### Enquiries and further information:

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