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“VOICES OF YOUTH”

Report of the study session held by **DON BOSCO YOUTH-NET**

in co-operation with the

Youth Department of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest,

[20-24 June 2022]

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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Executive summary

First we will introduce you to Don Bosco Youth-Net, organiser of the study session. There will also be the needs analysis and the background of the study session. After that there are the aims and objectives of the study session and the profile of participants, followed by the link with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. Then the educational flow of the programme will be described as a mix of non-formal methods and our 'see-judge-act-method'. After that, the main topic of the study session will be discussed: advocacy. It starts from a theoretical perspective and goes to the actual advocacy campaigns developed by the participants. Next up in this document there is information about the policy documents and the lecturers. Before discussing the main results, there is also information about our daily reflection groups and evaluation as well as information about the spirituality throughout the programme.

Introduction

The study session "Voices of Youth" was organised by Don Bosco Youth-Net (DBYN) in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. It was held between 20th – 24th June 2022 at the European Youth Centre in Budapest (EYCB). This report offers insights into the background of the session, the host organisations' approach on the topic and contents, the process and the programme, as well as on the outcomes of the study session, reflecting on how they will be integrated into the work of the organisation.



Don Bosco Youth-Net is an international network of Salesian youth work offices and youth organisations which work in the style of Don Bosco. The network assembles 18 organisations, who cater for over 125.000 children and young people in 16 European countries. The task of the network is to create and promote international activities for and by young and to create possibilities for member organisations to share their good practices and start-up new projects together.

Needs analysis

In 2018, DBYN started a broad consultation with its members and member organisations in order to look into the causes of a noticeable decrease in the level of participation of its young members. The consultation process revealed three problems in relation to citizenship and youth participation:

1. young people do not know how to approach local authorities and ask for their support or they feel that public authorities in general are not interested in cooperating with youth;
2. the feeling that they are too little to change anything or that a single action would not make any difference blocks young people's initiatives and keeps them trapped in the same thinking pattern;
3. most young people are unaware of how information and communication technologies could be used to meaningfully participate.

Don Bosco Youth-Net works with young people facing fewer opportunities. It provides non-formal education through inclusive youth work. Despite having a strong organisational competence in developing, implementing and disseminating effective learning programmes for youth and youth

workers (volunteers & professionals), it lacked the tradition of advocating for the needs of young people. Since a few years, we started to advocate for the voice of our young people (EYF, COMECE, etc.). This is done by the members of our Pool of Youth Representatives. These are past participants in DBYN activities that know the network very well. They also participated in our previous study session on advocacy in 2019 in the EYCB. Since DBYN is only starting with the advocacy work, we wanted to develop it further, hence this study session. One of the objectives of this study session was to find more young people to join our Pool of Youth Representatives. Another objective was to focus on online advocacy, since the online world gained much more importance during the pandemic.

DBYN noticed that it is easier for young people to get organised and to concert their actions around specific causes at local level, than it is to get involved at European level. When it comes to advocating at Europe level, young people seem to encounter several obstacles, including but not limited to: lack of knowledge on how European actors work and on the tools to use, lack of experience and trust to communicate with decision-makers and the lack of skills needed to influence political actors and diverse stakeholders.

Human Rights Education is a topic that we address in every activity within DBYN. This leads to a wider pool of young people to be interested in and to be involved in advocacy either in their local organisations or on a European level. As such, we have a diverse group of participants with a variety in profiles and interests: spirituality, social entrepreneurship, and education. We see this diversity as a strength for the future advocacy work of these young people and for our network.

The support of the EYC, the educational advisor and the external trainer is always an added value in these training courses.

Background to the study session

DBYN has been implementing its Master Plan for 2021-2023, which aims among other at promoting non-formal education as a roadmap to youth autonomy and active citizenship, and, at advocating for youth autonomy and active citizenship. The first step was taken in 2018, when DBYN organised a study session in collaboration with EYCB, to develop the young participants' skills and knowledge on advocacy for human rights education. This was an entry-level study session. In 2019 DBYN organised another study session on advocacy at the EYCB aimed at the intermediate level. The study session in 2022 was again aimed at an entry-level.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the proposed study session is to continue the work of DBYN volunteers in the area of representation through building capacity for Human Rights Advocacy. The objectives are as follows:

1. To strengthen the Human Rights advocacy potential of local volunteers in DBYN member organisations and to institutionalise the representation work of DBYN as a network.
2. To develop deeper understanding of Human Rights based approach for advocacy and build DBYN's capacity for delivering training and support to its member organisations in this field.

3. To give youth information, know-how and practical tools on advocacy to successfully participate in social change and influence decisions, for example through work/volunteering in civil society and politics.
4. To develop participants' competences necessary for successful Human Rights advocacy at all levels, and encourage them to take on future engagements as youth representatives for DBYN.
5. To create Human Rights advocacy campaigns that will train our advocates to be relevant on the Internet and on different social media platforms on a local or international level.

Profile of participants

The participants of this study session are expected to become active in developing and implementing advocacy actions within our network and in their local realities. These actions can include development of campaigns, representation assignments in local and national youth councils, support of policy development within member organisations, training local and national volunteers in advocacy and the human rights-based approach. Apart from this, they can get involved in DBYN's pool of youth representatives, representing the network towards international institutions and civil society organisations. In order to attain this outcome, we put forward following profile:

- 18 – 30 years' old
- Active English knowledge
- Active in local member/partner organisations of DBYN
- Ideally with experience in inclusion work
- Ideally with experience in European and/or International youth work
- Interest in advocacy work
- Interest in the topic of Human Rights
- Being able to act a multiplier within the local community and/or DBYN after the activity

Our member organisations, although stemming from the same movement, are very diverse in terms of target groups, actions, working styles, etc. We managed to have this diversity strongly present in the selection of participants.

The group of selected participants included 19 young people, 11 male, 8 female and 0 other. Two participants were either a member of the Pool of Youth Representatives or had participated in the study session on advocacy organised in 2019. 5 participants were not representing a member organisation of DBYN, but organisations we are partnering with. The participants were aged between 18-30 years old, with the exception of one participant aged 37.

Link to the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

This study session mainly contributed to achieving the Council of Europe's youth sector's priorities "Revitalising pluralistic democracy" and "Access to Rights". For "Revitalising pluralistic democracy", we implemented the following programme orientations:

- Advocating for the right of young people to exercise their right to assemble and to freely form, join and be active in associations, expanding the space for youth civil organisations to develop and advancing young people's participation in political processes
- Understanding the impact of artificial intelligence and supporting youth participation in artificial intelligence and Internet governance processes
- Implementation of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life by developing the capacity of youth organisations to facilitate participation of young people in decision-making processes at local level, with a focus on young people in rural areas, from minorities, or vulnerable groups
- Understanding and addressing the impact of climate crisis and environmental degradation on young people and democracy.

To work on young people's "Access to rights", we implemented the following programme orientations:

- Implementing the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2016\)7](#) on young people's access to rights
- Human rights education with young people (continuing the Human Rights Education Youth Programme)
- Information, data and media literacy with children and young people
- Addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people and the exercise of social rights, including physical and mental health.

Our external trainer also introduced the participants to "Democracy here. Democracy now." and to the "No hate speech" campaign. He also presented basic knowledge about the structures and the working methods of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, as a follow up on the introduction that was given to us by the director of the EYCB. In a later stage, we introduced the participants to COMPASS and to other useful publications.

The study session also contributed to "removing barriers for youth civil society to organise itself and participate" by helping the young participants build advocacy skills, and by making them aware of the power they have when they have concrete goals and tools to achieve them. As revealed by the evaluation forms, participants acquired thorough knowledge of a process for doing advocacy work step-by-step, designed and tested by DBYN, and knowledge on concrete advocacy tools and instruments.

Programme

The study session was based on non-formal education methods and used a mixture of the methodologies used by DBYN. The trainers from DBYN used their experience from other DBYN activities to present the different sessions and topics.

The study session lasted only five days, therefore the flow was designed around the principle of efficacy, aiming to create the appropriate atmosphere quickly and to build the spirit towards in-depth discussions and concrete actions on the topic of advocacy. Following the SEE-JUDGE-ACT methodology, the first day gave room for the **SEE**-phase, introducing participants to the rationale of the study session, the organisations involved and the objectives of the session. Once the participants got into the “advocacy mood” and reached common ground on the key concepts of youth advocacy and youth advocates, a process of mapping local realities and transferring them to the European level was initiated.

The **JUDGE**-phase was built on two dimensions: (i) tools and instruments and (ii) advocacy skills. The tool and instruments session block included policy instruments used at European level by the Council of Europe, the European Union, policy instruments of DBYN, and concrete examples of advocacy campaigns, expert input and best practices in the field. The advocacy skills identified by the participants were pursued through personal assessment.

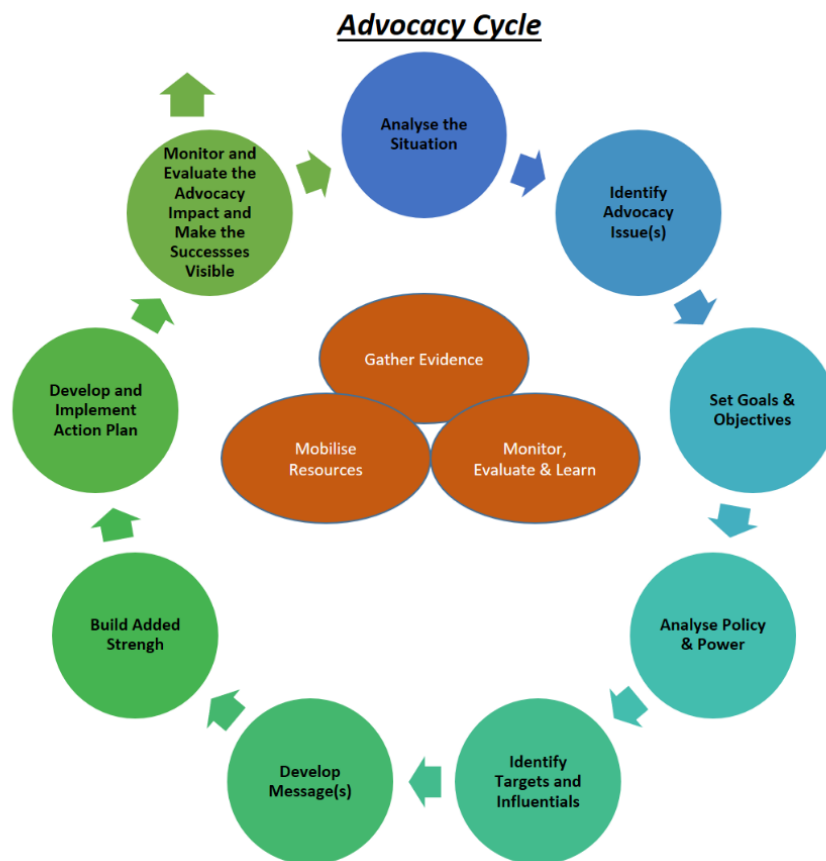
During the **ACT**-phase the focus was on transferring the learning points to organisation level. The participants organised campaigns for a topic they care about. They worked late at night during their free time, showing that they really cared about their campaigns.

DBYN is a faith-based organisation, therefore spirituality was an important part in the programme. Each day started and ended with a reflection session for “good morning” and “good night”. In addition to this, reflection groups were set up every evening to debrief on the main feelings and learning points of the day, to evaluate the gains, losses and changes participants wanted to see and to create a group feeling.

Advocacy

Defining the main concept, that of advocacy, was one of the tasks the participants had during a session. In small groups, they had to come up with their own definitions. After that they had to come up with one definition for the whole group. We introduced them to some definitions from other organisations but focused on the fact that advocacy is a concept and a process and that no definition is complete.

Advocacy cycle



To ensure a good understanding of the concept of advocacy, we used a simple yet effective instrument: the advocacy cycle. This is an instrument developed by DBYN during previous educational activities on advocacy in cooperation with the Council of Europe. It is a step-by-step roadmap to doing advocacy work and it became the core instrument for the rest of the study session as participants used it to identify the steps in all the examples and good practices presented. They also used it for their own advocacy campaigns. Five topics were chosen by the participants: sustainability, violence against women, science and ethics, refugees, and mental health.

The group working on sustainability wanted to implement a campaign towards youth work organisations that operate on an international level. Their main focus was the travelling for international projects. Now the main aim of the organisation is to travel in the cheapest way, but it would be better to rethink that and focus on the greenest ways of travelling. The group working on violence against women wanted to campaign for the same justice, fines, and court sentences for offenders across Europe. They will work closely with the experts from Eduxo to make their campaign really happen. The group working on science and ethics wanted to campaign in the university in Munich. They wanted to aim for more ethical dimensions in the research of the science community. This would be a win-win situation where students feel safer to do research and science projects, and where the results of their research would be accounted for. The next group had a campaign with the title 'be the second stop', aimed at advocating for the rights of refugees. They wanted to campaign with and for refugees, towards youth movements and governments, aimed at more inclusion of refugees in society. The last group worked on the topic of mental health. They wanted to focus on prevention, during and after the pandemic. The campaign is aimed at young people who were

suffering from isolation, depression, anxiety etc. during the pandemic. The main aim for the campaign was to break the stigma about mental health between young people.

The overall conclusion was that advocacy work at local and at international level had different arenas and stakeholders which were relevant to each, that was why the first step in the cycle was considered crucial. They understood the cycles as one step being built on the top of the other and saw the importance of adapting the “to-Dos” in the cycle according to each situation.

Policy instruments and lecturers

A large block of sessions was dedicated to policy instruments. This included the exploration of the policy instruments of the Council of Europe and examples of advocacy action of DBYN. We also had our lecturers for presenting a good practice of advocacy. The experts from Don Bosco Green Alliance were present online and they introduced us to advocacy for the environment and for sustainability, within the perspective of Don Bosco. They explained their ways of developing online advocacy campaigns through the example of their campaign for World Earth Day 2022. The experts from Eduxo were present in the EYCB. They introduced us to their topic of ‘Loveducation’, explaining how they develop online and offline campaigns. The next day they were still present to help the participants develop their own advocacy campaigns.

With the help of our external trainer, the participants learnt about “Democracy here. Democracy now.” and about the “No hate speech movement”. The session on policy instruments included also the “Compass” – manual for human rights education with young people, a comprehensive presentation of the co-management system of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and the exploration of the principles for effective youth participation explained in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

Reflection groups and evaluation

The reflection groups were used as a method of providing time and space for participants to get together and to reflect in smaller groups and all individually on the learning points of the day, the feelings they had and what changes they would like to bring. The idea was for participants to feel more at ease in a small, familiar group and create the intimacy needed for introspection but also sharing strong feelings, both positive and negative with the others. The reflection groups were also a useful tool for evaluating the day and for the team of facilitators to get feedback. The facilitators shared the most important feedback during their evening meetings and applied it for the sessions of the next days.

The reflection groups were a daily moment of evaluation. We also had a final evaluation moment on the last day. The participants took an anonymous questionnaire and had the chance to share their final feedback for the team.

Spirituality

As DBYN is a faith-based organisation, part of the programmes was dedicated to reflection and prayer. Participants were given the responsibility to prepare a “good morning” or a “good night”, a short moment of reflection to start or end the day with. This is a tradition we have in all DBYN activities, following the heritage of Don Bosco himself. In the last day we also had a mass together. One of the participants was a Salesian priest and he was happy to organise this for the group. In the mornings, he organised optional mass for the participants.

Results and conclusions

Main results for DBYN

The study session has been a valuable activity in the annual programme of the organisation. First of all, it has strengthened the advocacy work of the organisation, building on the knowledge acquired so far and enriching it with new perspectives and a deeper grounding in the policy documents of the Council of Europe.

More specifically, for DBYN it built on the previous outcomes of their study sessions and supported the implementation of their Master Plan. It will also feed into the next study session DBYN is planning for 2023.

Among the most important outcomes of the study session we would also mention the fact that more people became interested in joining DBYN’s pool of youth representatives. In addition to this, the participants were keen on bringing back in their local organisations what they had learnt and multiply the experience.

Main results for the participants

The formal and informal feedback the participants gave revealed the study session was a rewarding and enriching experience for more than 90% of them. Participants indicated that they became more aware of the fact that they were already doing advocacy work and that advocacy can be done with small steps and at levels. They felt their knowledge on advocacy was more structured after the study session and that they became more aware and clearer about the purpose they followed in the work they did. The study session tackled topics that were relevant for young people and the participants felt they had space and time to talk about them – this helped build their European spirit and gave them a feeling of belonging to a larger more diverse group.

The following competences were in focus throughout the study session:

Knowledge of an advocacy cycle	a process for doing advocacy work step-by-step, designed and tested by DBYN
Knowledge of concrete	Recommendation on young people’s access to rights, Compass Manual on Human Rights Education for young people,

advocacy tools and instruments	“Democracy here. democracy now.” No hate speech movement
Planning, organising and perseverance	Becoming aware that changes at European level take time, can go through complex processes and this requires consistency and perseverance on the side of those who want to achieve change;
Practical experience	Real experiencing of how mechanisms of advocacy work in practice at European level through the development of realistic campaigns.
Empowerment	The feeling that young people have a voice and they are listened to – very inclusive space – everybody respected the fact that it was a very diverse group with diverse backgrounds.

Follow-up

DBYN will update its pool of youth representatives with the interested participants. The campaigns created by the participants will be followed up on by DBYN and by Eduxo, our lecturers. They were interested in three out of five campaigns. If the participants want to really implement their campaigns, this will be supported by DBYN and Eduxo.

Annexes

Programme

Sunday, 19 June 2022

Arrival of participants

Team meeting

19:00 Dinner

20:30 Welcome evening with a first personal assessment

22:00 Good evening - *a moment of reflection to close the day*

Monday, 20 June 2022

- 09:15 Good morning - *a moment of reflection to start the day*
- 09:30 Opening with Introduction to Study Session and Don Bosco Youth-Net,
Intro of aims & objectives of the Study Session / Expectations & programme
- 11:00 Break
- 11:30 Team Building activity – *to get to know each other*
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Defining “Advocacy” – *to build a common understanding of the main concept of the study session*
- 16:30 Break
- 17:00 Mapping local realities on youth advocacy – *to exchange about the personal experiences of the participants*
- 18:30 Reflection groups guided by the team
- 19:00 Dinner
- 20:30 Where are you local? - Intercultural evening
- 22:00 Good evening - *a moment of reflection to close the day*

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

- 09:15 Good morning - *a moment of reflection to start the day*
- 09:30 Human rights based approach on advocacy – *building a common framework*
- 11:00 Break
- 11:30 Human rights based approach on advocacy – *building a common framework*
- 13:00 Lunch break
- 14:30 Online advocacy – *building a common framework and exploring good examples*
- 16:30 Break
- 17:00 Advocacy: sharing of tools and resources
- 18:30 Reflection groups guided by the team
- 19:00 Dinner
- 20:30 Free evening, informal time together
- 22:00 Good evening - *a moment of reflection to close the day*

Wednesday, 22 June 2022

09:15 Good morning - *a moment of reflection to start the day*

09:30 Expert session from Eduxo, "*Making change happen: advocacy and participation*".

Expert 1: ISABELLA SOFIA DE GREGORIO, president of Eduxo.

Expert 2: DEBORAH CONSERVA, volunteer at Eduxo.

11:00 Break

11:30 Expert session from Don Bosco Green Alliance (online)
Expert: LEANNE DSOUZA

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Teamwork – *participants develop campaigns in small groups*

16:30 Break

17:00 Teamwork – *participants develop campaigns in small groups*

18:30 Reflection groups guided by the team

19:00 Dinner

22:00 Good evening - *a moment of reflection to close the day*

Free evening, informal time together

Thursday, 23 June 2022

09:15 Good morning - *a moment of reflection to start the day*

09:30 Teamwork – *participants develop campaigns in small groups*

11:00 Break

11:30 Campaign slam – *participants introduce their campaigns to the group*

13:00 Lunch break

Free Afternoon in the city

Dinner in the city

Free evening, informal time together

Friday, 24 June 2022

09:15 Good morning - *a moment of reflection to start the day*
09:30 Final personal assessment
11:00 Break
11:30 Evaluation of the week
13:00 Lunch
14:30 Preparation of mass and cleaning of the meeting room(s)
16:30 Break
17:00 Closing and mass
19:00 Dinner
20:30 Farewell party, informal time together
22:00 Good evening - *a moment of reflection to close the day*

Saturday 25 June 2022

Departure

List of participants

ARMENIA

Hasmik Arakelyan	European Youth Press www.youthpress.org
Harutyun Tsatryan	European Youth Press www.youthpress.org
Vahram Vardanyan	European Youth Press www.youthpress.org

BELGIUM

Rani Mein	Jeugddienst Don Bosco https://www.jeugddienstdonbosco.be/
Sophie Janssens	Jeugddienst Don Bosco https://www.jeugddienstdonbosco.be/

FRANCE

Roman Ipatov	European Youth Press
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Roman Kulemin	www.youthpress.org European Youth Press www.youthpress.org
GERMANY	
Thomas Roesch	Aktionszentrum Benediktbeuern https://www.aktionszentrum.de/
ITALY	
Gabriele Giovagnoli	Turismo Giovanile Sociale http://www.turismogiovanilesociale.it/
Lorenzo Napoli	Turismo Giovanile Sociale http://www.turismogiovanilesociale.it/
Martina Lomen	Salesiani per il Sociale APS www.salesianiperilsociale.it
Davide Pernice	Salesiani per il Sociale APS www.salesianiperilsociale.it
Danilo Leggio	Salesiani per il Sociale APS www.salesianiperilsociale.it
LITHUANIA	
Ryan Oliver Bautista	Don Bosco Youth-Net https://www.donboscoyouth.net/
MALTA	
Mireya Bugeja Cuschieri	SPYS http://spysmalta.org/
Anthea Borg	SPYS http://spysmalta.org/
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	
Peter Krajčovič	DOMKA https://www.domka.sk/
SPAIN	
Silvia González Navazo	Confe Don Bosco https://www.confedonbosco.org/
Raquel Moratalla Zabala	Confe Don Bosco https://www.confedonbosco.org/

Preparatory team

Lisa Tereza Gut
Louis Debono
Francesco Buscema

Lecturers

Isabella Sofia De Gregorio	President, Eduxo
Deborah Conserva	Volunteer, Eduxo
Leann Dsouza from	Responsible for communication, Don Bosco Green Alliance

Course director: Liesbet Perdieus

Educational advisor: Enrico Elefante

References used

<https://www.donboscoyouth.net/few-words-and-a-lot-of-action.html> : document on the working style of DBYN.

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016806a93e2 : the recommendation about young people's access to rights.

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805cf01f : Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

<https://www.youthforum.org/news/advocacy-handbook>

http://donbosconetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/09/Advocacy_from_a_Salesian_perspective_ENG_FINAL_GCJun18.pdf

Visibility of the study session

<https://www.donboscoyouth.net/calendar.html>

The information was published on DBYN's website. But most participants knew about the study session through their local member organisations, who we contacted via email.