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Budapest, 8 August 2022

Training Course on Essentials of Non-Formal Education for organisers and facilitators of study sessions at the European Youth Centres and of projects supported by the European Youth Foundation



European Youth Centre Strasbourg
9-14 May 2022

Activity Report

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Executive Summary

The training course on essentials of non-formal education aimed at supporting organisers of study sessions and EYF-funded activities in implementing quality non-formal education activities with a multiplying effect building on Council of Europe principles. It took place from 9 to 14 of May 2022 and was hosted in the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. Co-organised by the European Youth Foundation and the Education and Training Department, the course brought together 28 participants from 12 countries who were trainers, facilitators or organisers of upcoming study sessions held in the European Youth Centres or activities receiving support of the EYF. Participants were in a position to transfer the knowledge gained during the training to the teams carrying out these activities in the next years and had some previous experience with non-formal education methodology (as trainers, facilitators or participants) and motivation to develop their competences. Throughout the course, participants explored concepts and processes related to non-formal education such as facilitation, programme design, evaluation, learning theories as well as Council of Europe tools and principles including the Manual for Facilitators and the quality standards in non-formal education.

Aim and objectives

Aim:

To support organisers of study sessions and EYF-supported activities in implementing quality intercultural non-formal education activities with a multiplying effect building on standards of the Council of Europe youth sector.

Objectives:

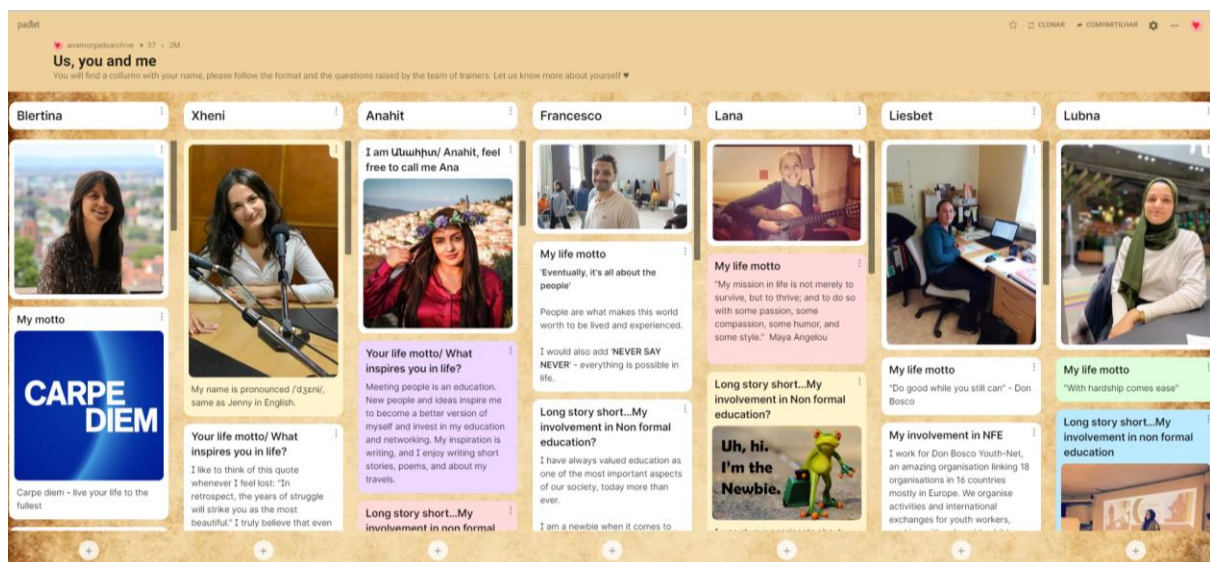
- To foster a common understanding of the essential approaches and methodologies in non-formal education as applied in the European Youth Centres and in the European Youth Foundation
- To strengthen participants' competences in using non-formal education with young people, including the key understanding, skills and attitudes required for running educational activities
- To share best practices on implementation of study sessions or EYF supported activities
- To support participants in increasing their understanding of the full project cycle in organising a non-formal education activity in relation to the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, including the application process, implementation, and reporting
- To explore how study sessions and activities supported through the EYF can have a multiplying impact
- To get familiar with the existing tools and manuals produced by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, and the principles, standards, and priorities they build on, and reflect on their practical use in upcoming activities

Diversity of the group of participants

The training course brought together a very diverse group of participants. Some of them represented international organisations that were organising their study sessions at one of the Council or Europe's Youth Centres, others were nominated by grassroots, local organisations that were planning or expecting to implement EYF-funded pilot activities. Similarly, some participants had been working with non-formal education for more than 9 years, the majority had only recently started being involved in non-formal learning driven activities. The diversity of the group was also noticeable in terms of age, the youngest participant being 19 and the oldest 35 at the time of the course. The roles of participants in their own organisations varied from volunteers that were involved punctually in projects to experienced trainers and facilitators or staff members.

Training Storyline - the training's flow in action

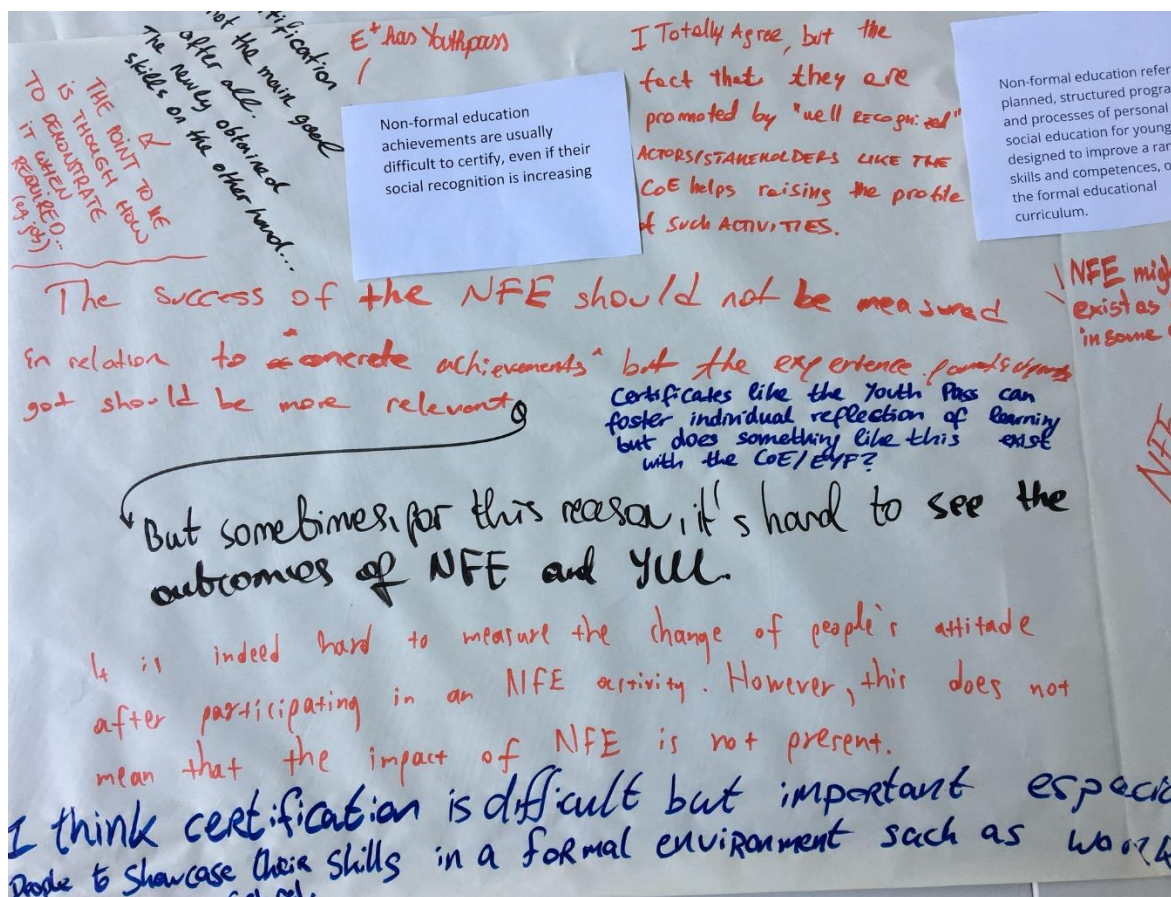
The learning journey of this training course started on the online learning platform of the Council of Europe where participants were invited to get to know each other virtually as well as to (re)discover and/or test their knowledge about the European Youth Foundation.



The training team and participants met in person for the first time on the evening of the arrival day when they got to know each other through a series of name games and ice-breakers.

The **first training day** was meant to introduce participants to the concept of the course as well as to some of the key concepts related to non-formal learning. After learning more about the background, the reasoning behind the organisation of the training course and its programme, participants were invited to visit the Museum of Discoveries. Hosting an exquisite collection of interactive art pieces that became alive once the first visitor stepped inside, the museum became richer every minute. While *the silent discussion* about the definitions of non-formal education attracted particular attention with its diverse inputs and a series of written feedback loops, *the timeline* offered a display of events and participants' experiences in working in the non-formal learning sector, similarly to *the oscillating thermometer*. *The priorities of the Youth Department* were also a popular section of the museum where

conversations were sparked by the connection between the institutional approach to youth work and the visitors' local realities. At some point, the busiest corner of the museum was *the Postcard wall* where visitors created their own postcards displaying the issues and target groups they work with. After such an intense morning, participants were invited to join the team of trainers on a learning afternoon adventure. In order to decide how they want to work together throughout the week, participants were presented with the experience of crossing a Magic Swamp. Before reflecting on the day, how it unfolded and what they got from it, participants had the opportunity to look at learning as a process, visualising the Comfort Zone - Learning Zone theory and sharing the connections they made with their own experiences both as learners and educators. This first intense day was concluded by an intercultural storytelling evening.



Picture: participants brainstorming on what NFE is, as part of the Museum of Discoveries

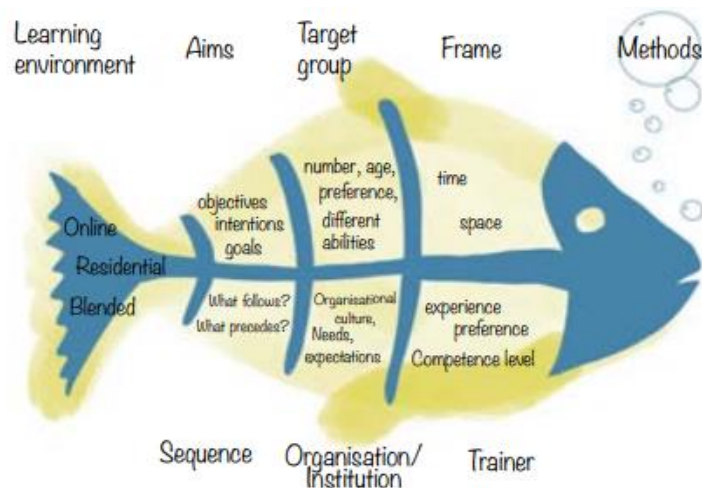
The intensity of the course could only increase the **second day** when participants were invited to dive deeper in the key concepts related to non-formal learning. During the first part of the morning they explored through experiences the differences between formal, non-formal and informal learning, getting a sense of the main principles that are behind each one of them and what emotions and reactions they evoke. Before lunch they became familiar with and experienced Kolb's Learning Cycle in action through an activity from Compassito, "The battle for the orange". And it was again with action that participants were welcomed in the second part of the day when they joined the open air Take a Step Forward. After the reflection on the activity, a model of debriefing was introduced and they were given the possibility to practice and build their own sequences of questions that would help them unpack the learning of those

participating in such activities. The activity also served to discover and reflect on HRE in practice, as many participants worked on issues related to inclusion and non-discrimination.



Picture: Take a step forward on day 2

After having touched upon some of the underpinnings of non-formal learning, the **third day** of the course enabled participants to imagine concrete and practical dimensions of working in non-formal learning settings. They started by exploring the challenges faced by educators when organising activities with young people. Participants then moved on to decoding project objectives and identifying activities that, assembled together, could result in a logical and sequential programme flow. Working in small groups, they designed a programme for a given set of objectives and had the opportunity to compare and see each other's perspectives. Here, participants left with the idea that there are many ways to organise the programme flow to reach the same objectives, but elements like the group's needs, the setting and the team's competences play a key role. Following a copious lunch, trainers insisted on the importance of food, food for thought of course, and invited participants to observe a rare and intellectually delicious fish, one that evokes the process of choosing the "right" methods to be used during an activity. The recipe for this dish can be found in the [T-Kit 6 on Training Essentials](#).



On **day four**, keeping the analogy from the previous day alive, the cherry on top of the cake was added. The morning session enabled participants to foster their understanding of the role of the facilitator and their most important skills by drawing the “perfect” facilitator and writing around their body the facilitators’ competences (head for *knowledge*, heart for attitudes/*values* and hands for *skills*). The groups were then challenged to come up with solutions to some common difficult situations a facilitator can face and by the end of morning there was an open floor for questions and participants received their very own Manual for Facilitators! The free afternoon was a good opportunity for participants to relax, visit Strasbourg and recover after the intense first few days of the course.

The **fifth day**, labelled “Quality”, allowed participants to deepen their understanding of the political and thematic priorities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. This happened through a process in which participants identified and compared topics they are working on. They could then reflect on the relevance of their work in relation to the Youth Department’s priorities by identifying the specific priorities their activities were responding to. They were also introduced to the “Democracy Here, Democracy Now” campaign and were made aware of the many ways in which they could link up their organisations’ work to the campaign. The morning ended with participants taking the role of content masters through a teamwork lecture (cooperative learning) in order to cover several elements from the Council of Europe Youth Department’s quality standards in organising non-formal education activities as well as the Guidelines on gender equality in the Council of Europe youth activities. The first afternoon session seemed cropped from a television’s studio as participants took their seats in front of a giant TV set that aired the EYF TV show, ‘Rising Stars of Europe’. As soon as the show was over, feeding participants with crucial information about the way European Youth Foundation works and the support it provides to youth organisations, a massive World Cafe process started and enabled participants to reflect and learn about EYF’s gender perspective and inclusion approach, its youth dimension, its reporting and financial processes, the expected impact of its funded projects and their typical projects cycle, as well as the key elements of study sessions. As usual, the day closed with a reflection on learning: every day a different method according to the day’s flow.

The **last day** was meant to close the learning journey of participants during the training course. It started with laying down the foundation on educational materials and political instruments that the Council of Europe puts at the disposal of educators. Participants discovered the specially designed Toolkits, the Compass and other manuals as well as Recommendations and other human rights instruments and, with the use of a Jamboard, they contributed to the enlargement of the list of resources by sharing their own instruments, tools and resources. From here on, the process focused on imagining the future of their next steps and activities to multiply the NFE training impact through a guided visualisation. Participants shared their dreams in pairs and through the means of an exhibition of creative action plans. The afternoon was dedicated to closing the reflection groups as well as to sparking their thoughts in relation to their learning process by moving through a reflection garden covering the moments that touched their heart during the week, the lessons they plan to take home or the changes that they may apply to their practice as a result of their participation in the course. After a series of silent theatre plays that captured some of their conclusions, the training course ended with a review of the week’s programme, participants’ expectations, the review of the thermometer they discovered in the Museum the very first day, the sending of messages via the flower garden metaphor and finally, with filling in the written evaluation form.

It was a week to remember for participants and also for trainers, showing that learning in non-formal settings never stops, regardless of age and roles.

Flow of the days

Day 1: Introduction to the group and learning styles

Day 2: What is NFE?

Day 3: NFE and my work

Day 4: Facilitator's competences

Day 5: Quality in NFE activities

Day 6: Reflection and closing

Results of the evaluation

This section of the report is an account of the main findings from the perspective of participants and the team of trainers.

General overview of the participants' evaluations

The overall evaluation of the course by those participants who shared their written feedback with the team was very positive. This conclusion results from the general level of satisfaction with the course, an average score of 4.45 points out of 5 was recorded, similar to the extent to which participants' expectations were met (4.4 points). Similarly, participants rated the achievement of the training objectives with an average of 4.33 points. Only one out of 6 objectives (the objective regarding sharing best practices on the implementation of study sessions or EYF funded activities) scored below this average (3.81 points). The team of trainers also recognised that this objective was not fully addressed in the programme.

Generally speaking, the flow of the course was perceived as smooth, natural, well structured, having a good balance and pace. Participants pointed out the efforts of the trainers to improve it, to adapt it to the speed of the group, one participant mentioning that there was "*space to express my thoughts, feelings and knowledge inclusively*". At the same time, participants also identified the need to eventually participate in sessions that were announced initially such as the one focusing on emotions in non-formal settings and which was replaced after the adjustment of the programme. One participant also pointed out that the first four days could have been enough for focusing on non-formal learning and did not understand the role of the last 2 working days. Finally, the practice of morning reflections concerning the previous days was appreciated and was perceived as giving "*a sense of 'smoother flow' to the whole programme*" and one participant mentioned that the flow "*was one of the course's strongest points*".

Participants also provided their feedback on the methods and approaches employed by the team of trainers during the course. They found that the methods were "*adequate to the context, inclusive and well-planned*", as well as "*creative and diverse*". For some participants "*some activities were a bit very common*" or "*not clearly linked to the learning outcomes or group specifics*". While one participant found that there was "*a lot of indoor group work with discussing, sitting and quite similar approach*", another one "*thought that this is the approach we should also have when we are running our activities with young people*". Overall, the comments were positive and as one participant pointed out, the combination of methods were "*a good example of NFE, we learned from it through experiential learning*".

Understanding of NFE

The participation in this training course brought different benefits to different participants from the perspective of their understanding of NFE. While for some participants the course did not bring anything new or simply confirmed their already existing understanding, for some of them it helped them structure and organise their knowledge. Participants also mentioned starting to find new angles to NFE, having more examples, tools and methods or having a broader and more colourful perception of NFE, seeing it "*not only as a methodology, but also as a way of understanding education and empowerment*". The theoretical underpinnings as well as the concepts behind NFE and their usefulness in different contexts was also another change reported by participants. Similarly, participants also referred to having learned how to structure

a NFE activity as well as to seeing NFE as a professional approach to learning and as “*complementary to other ways of learning*”.

Quality standards

While several participants mentioned having been already familiar with the Council of Europe quality standards at the time of the course, the majority of participants reported newly gained awareness or changes in how they understood them. These changes range from participants being now aware of their level of detail to understanding how high they are, from realising they were not giving them enough attention to realising the compromises made to decrease the budgets of past events and the need to retain the quality and not give it away for the sake of implementing a project. For those that were not familiar with the set of standards, they reported knowing what they are, where they can find them and how to apply them when devising and implementing an NFE activity.

Objectives and flow

The results reported in relation to Objectives and Flow are, to a great extent, similar to those related to participants’ understanding of NFE. Several participants mentioned not having had knowledge on these concepts before and that this course was a foundational one for them while several saw the course as a good reminder or a confirmation of what they already knew. At the same time, the majority of participants made reference to how the course enabled them to realise that they need to be more concise, precise and realistic when defining objectives and that clear objectives are essential for the creation (and steps) of a programme flow. The clarity of the framework and structure that can be applied to designing the educational objectives and the programme of future activities was also mentioned as a benefit.

Missing Elements

When reviewing the training course, participants identified several elements that were missing. The majority noticed a general lack of energy in the room, the need for more interaction, warm up activities and energisers. The need for taking more time to go deeper in certain aspects and concepts as well as to tackle other topics besides human rights education (e.g. critical thinking, global citizenship education, etc.) was also underlined. Similarly, participants pointed out the need for practising being in the shoes of the facilitator and for sharing experiences and good practices, including by the trainers. Last, but not least, they also expressed the desire to “learn more about inclusive approaches in NFE”. These are all elements that could be considered for a new edition of this TC, or when relevant, for another TC. This time around, it was decided not to make this course a training of trainers, but the wish for this kind of opportunity is reflected in the evaluations.

Using the learning outcomes

When asked how they plan to use what they learnt after the training course, an overwhelming number of participants mentioned their intention to apply their learning in the framework of their upcoming activities - study sessions, pilot activities, local activities for young people or any future projects. The second most significant answer refers to informing, explaining or training the team members and colleagues from their own organisations. This element will remain significant given the fact that participants will have to work in teams with people who did not participate in this training. The multiplying effect is key to the relevance of this course.

Concluding points

- The training course was generally evaluated as a success
- The team had to adapt the programme and the methods to fit the needs of the group in terms of abilities and experience
- The training tackled NFE from a general perspective inside the Council of Europe, specificities (deadlines, procedures) relating to EYF-funds and study sessions were only lightly covered given the mixed group
- Manuals and guidelines for implementation of NFE activities were introduced to support participants in multiplying the information to their teams and to search for more information independently
- The online phase was short to ensure participation, but a more elaborated online module could be considered for the future



Annex 1: Reflection in action - adapting the course to the group's needs

The group of participants was characterised by being a mixed-ability group; there was a participant in a wheelchair with reduced use of his arms and hands and three Deaf participants.

On the first day, as part of an energiser, participants had to organise themselves according to different criteria. One of those was “experience in using NFE”, which highlighted that participants’ experiences ranged from being new to NFE to being involved for 9 years in the NFE field. This, coupled with the on-site observations of each training team member and feedback from participants themselves, led to a series of reviews and adaptations of the content and the methods to suit the needs of participants.

Over the course of the week the trainers adapted the learning sessions to create an inclusive experience to the highest degree possible. They were supported all throughout by a team of international sign language interpreters.

Below are a few of the adjustments that were operated in order to work in a non-formal mixed-ability learning setting:

- Prioritising small group work in order to ensure a high degree of participation from all participants
- Mixed moments of discussion/presentations and individual work to ensure breaks from participants having to continuously look at interpreters.
(e.g. silent floor methods or individual work)
- Ensuring the interpreters and the Deaf participants can see each other and that the background behind the interpreters is not too bright.
- Making sure the hearing participants don't block the visual field between Deaf participants and interpreters; this may happen after the oral instructions of an activity are given and the hearing participants get up before the interpreters finish interpreting. Also during more energetic activities that require moving this may be taken into consideration.
- When more than one person spoke during an activity (e.g., this happened during the EYF TV show “Rising Stars of Europe” on day five) it was important to have one interpreter for each person.
- Slowing down the pace of activities. For instance:
 - Talking with longer pauses between ideas to ensure time for interpretation,
 - Allowing pauses in presentations for participants to take notes when sign language is used,

- Pausing between slides if using a power-point presentation to allow time to read,
 - Taking time between speaking turns during debriefings and other sharing moments,
 - Being aware of the “power of the voice” in the plenary sessions (and others as well) and making sure turns are not given based on who “speaks first”,
 - When using written language, making sure it is short and easy to read
 - Starting each day with a moment of reflection on the previous day’s learning as this allows for information being processed in the spare time, and questions from the previous day are still given space the following morning.
- Ensuring that participants with limited mobility are supported either by other participants or by team members in exercises that include moving or writing
 - Thinking about the use of space in a way that is not tiring for those with reduced mobility, especially when several rooms or floors are used
 - Encouraging the use of computers or electronic devices for activities requiring writing
 - Using artistic activities in order to allow participants to express themselves in more creative ways

Concrete adaptations that were made to answer the needs of the group

- **A silent play**, to introduce the principles of the Kolb learning cycle. Rather than a lecture, two trainers created a silent play, with cue cards explaining what was happening and how the learning cycle works in a simplified way. This was followed up by a debrief with participants.
- **An individual museum tour**. On the first day, participants worked individually in a “museum” where they could interact with different tasks displayed on the walls and tables.
- **Silent floor activities**. For example, when looking at the skills of a facilitator, participants were divided into teams, each with a flip chart with the outline of a person, and on the sheet, they would silently stick notes linked to competences and skills of trainers. They could interact by adding love hearts or a ‘+1’ to indicate support. Following this, participants could move around to see what other groups put together, and similarly could interact by adding questions on sticky notes.
- **Guided visualisation**. A new format was developed for this activity that enabled all participants to close their eyes during the visualisation, if they wanted. The visualisation was described in a power-point presentation and the team created a web mechanism using strings that participants held in their hands and that connected everyone in one common point. Every time participants had to open their eyes to read

a new slide the facilitator would move the central point and the movement would reach participants, informing them they could open their eyes to read the new slide and close them again until the next movement.

- **Vision gallery.** In order to reflect on their learning, participants were invited to create an art piece that symbolised what they had learned, and what comes next for them beyond the training. This was a silent activity. Participants could draw, paint, sketch, write a story or a poem or create a collage using old magazines. Over the lunch break all the works of art were displayed, and participants were given the time to see each other's visions, and could comment, ask questions or reply using sticky notes.
- **Group work.** Group work was used to assist participants to work in smaller groups, and each group was always planned to mix participants to the extent possible/needed, but still ensuring enough interpreters where needed.
- **Online tools.** E-tools like google docs worked well to make the learning more accessible. When using google docs, the team would print out the contribution to be added to other flip charts.

Annex 2: List of participants

Albania

Blertina Kloka	Together for Life
Xheni Borakaj	Albanian Committee of Medical Students ACMS

Armenia

Anahit Babkenyan	Uniting Bridge NGO
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Belgium

Francesco Bottegal	Mijarc Europe
Lana Cop	European Youth Forum
Liesbet Perdieu	Don Bosco Youth-Net
Lubna Mehdi	European Union of the Deaf Youth
Lucia Parruci	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization UNPO
Sheila-Ann Riek	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization UNPO

France

Ekrem Sahin	EMU Youth
Don Surangani Sabina Kulathunga	European Union of the Deaf Youth
Ibtihelle Ban Mrad	Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations

Georgia

Dea Abuladze	Praxis for Change / HREYN
Stanislav Mezhdoyan	WostAYN
Tamar Pilpani	Initiative For Civil Society

Germany

Alexandra Person	European Playwork Association
Burak Barut	Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations
Martin Siemen	Rural Youth Europe

Greece

Michail Chatzimimikos	Youth Empowerment Center
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Ireland

Adam Lambe	Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions
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Lydia Mendes European Union of the Deaf Youth

Portugal

Mariana Carrajola Omnis Factum Associação

Viviana Mirezi DYPALL Network

Serbia

Edin Djerlek Omladinski Centar Euni

Maja Žilić Initiative for Human Rights

Spain

Matías María Rubio La Bardal NGO

Türkiye

Goksel Ucak ENIL YOUTH

Serkan Can International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY)

Educational team

Ana Afonso, trainer/consultant

Ana Morgado, trainer/consultant

Sergiu-Bogdan Imre, trainer/consultant

Robert Stakelum, trainer/consultant

Council of Europe secretariat

Rui Gomes, head of Education and Training Division, Youth Department

Ida Kreutzman, Educational Advisor

Kiia Huttunen, Programme Assistant

Mara Georgescu, Senior educational support officer, European Youth Foundation

Margit Barna, Project officer, European Youth Foundation

Aleksandra Dunay, Trainee, Youth Department