

DEMOCRACY BEYOND VOTING

# INTRODUCING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS TO YOUTH



A TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH WORKERS & TEACHERS



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## IMPRINT

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# DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN YOUTH WORK: AN ANSWER TO THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY

One of the main aims of education - formal and non-formal - is to prepare and empower young people to participate and to function in a 'democratic society' as active citizens. This is the area of the social and civic competences - two of eight areas of key competences described in the recommendations set by the Council of European Union\*.

Often civic education in schools is limited only to the theoretical aspect of these competences, e.g. how traditional electoral systems and representative political institutions work. In many European schools there are democratic institutions (e.g. student councils), aimed at giving the students the possibility to practice these civic skills. However, very often their limitation is that they are representative bodies and only allow a few students to take part in the decision making about the school. A similar situation occurs with youth bodies supporting local governments (like youth city councils). In most of the schools and municipalities, the rest of the youth community are rather passive observers and recipients of top-down arrangements. In this way, school as a context reflects the typical way citizens function in contemporary systems of representative democracy. Just as many citizens have a negligible sense of influence over what happens in their country, many students have no sense of agency over things that happen in their own school.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SITUATION ON THE SCHOOL AND LOCAL LEVEL?

- Democracy is seen as a mechanism that allows only a few people to have real influence on the decision making process.
- Lack of trust among students - school is perceived as an adult-led institution.
- An effect on the attitude towards democratic institutions in general - e.g. a crisis of trust towards democracy among young people.
- Decreasing level of social engagement among youth and young adults in most European countries.

## WHAT COULD BE A SOLUTION?

- Showing youngsters possibilities of getting involved in decision making on various levels (school, local government, local activism).
- Making schools more inclusive - student councils and democratic institutions should embrace the whole school community into decision making processes.
- Engaging youth in democratic initiatives that reach beyond the electoral process - in schools and local communities.
- Using tools for involving youth in democratic processes that are adapted to their age, perception and needs (e.g. digital tools).

\* [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST\\_9009\\_2018\\_INIT&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_9009_2018_INIT&from=EN)

## **WHAT ARE DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION?**

'Democratic innovations' are participatory processes that enable and empower people to be involved in the decision-making and policy-making of their communities and institutions, at the local, regional or national level beyond traditional voting (a different synonymous term used for such processes is civic participation). This approach was developed as an answer for the democracy crisis in the world. The diagnosis of this crisis was that citizens are disappointed by democracy because they do not feel real influence on the issues that matter to them. They see democracy as a game for the rich and elites but not for "regular people". We believe that the answer to this crisis is not authoritarianism but rather more democracy and power to the people.

## **WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT ABOUT AND HOW TO USE IT?**

This toolkit supports you in introducing the topic of democratic innovations in your work with youth and applying participatory approaches. This toolkit proposes a set of non-formal education activities and methods to introduce this topic to young people aged 12-20 with the aim to inspire them to participate more in the decision-making of their schools and communities.

We address the following 3 kinds of democratic innovations that can be introduced in different contexts of youth work:

- Participatory budgeting
- Citizens' assemblies
- Self-organised youth groups & digital participation tools

For each of these 3 innovations this toolkit contains following elements:

- 3 short videos presenting each democratic innovations from 3 countries - Germany, Spain (Catalunya) and Poland. Each video presents participatory mechanisms that allow people to take part in decision making processes and could be presented as an example of good practice.
- A set of 3 activities to be held with youth practising each democratic innovation. Each activity is linked to one video. Activities are intended for groups of young people in schools and youth groups. Every activity is meant to be implemented by a teacher or youth worker and contains detailed step by step descriptions. Activities are of different lengths (from 45 minutes to a few hours). Some of them introduce a given democratic innovation to young people. Most of them, however, contain elements of joint decision-making.
- This toolkit is meant to serve your everyday work - you can choose how many activities you will use and customise them to your (and your group's) needs.

Presented methods and examples of activities are not the only solutions, just as there are no complete ways to solve the problem of a democratic crisis, nor are there end-all be-all answers to various challenges of contemporary times. This toolkit is meant to be the first step for you on the journey to introduce democratic innovations as a topic in your work with youth - we wish you good luck!

## HOW DO WE START WORKING WITH YOUTH IN A PARTICIPATORY WAY?

Participation and democratic innovations are not only difficult terms - it is also a big challenge to work with young people in this way. Using activities and videos from this toolkit is not a guarantee of making your youth group, class or school fully participatory and democratic. Hence the question: How do we develop democracy in youth work? How do we broaden the understanding of democracy among young people?

### **Sense of security within the group**

This is a fundamental rule, we cannot count on any real inclusion and cooperation, until we make people feel safe in the group and trust each other and the teacher/trainer.

How can you achieve this?

- Establish rules (contract) in cooperation with the group and stick to them, be consistent in keeping them.
- React to all kinds of mocking behaviour or aggression that diminish other people.
- Make everybody feel important in the group - give equal opportunity to speak, appreciate the presence and activity of each person.
- Give people the opportunity to express themselves and their opinion - ask them about what they would like to talk about, what is currently their concern and interest. Listen, without judgement, encourage speaking.
- Take the voice of young people seriously.
- Ensure consistency and rhythm - e.g. a similar meeting agenda, repeated monthly summaries, repeated steps or questions in group discussions.
- Openly discuss challenges and conflicts - maybe it is not the most pleasant, but when disputes and conflicts are not discussed in the group forum, they can cause insecurity and divisions between members.

### **Sense of community**

People in the group should feel like a community, and they should be able to communicate openly and without violence.

How can you achieve this?

- Nurture visible signs of community - e.g. the selected name of the group / class, coat of arms, jointly developed space / room, T-shirts with a logo, etc.
- Conduct exercises or integration activities in the newly formed group.
- Provide time for casual conversations.
- Adopt the point of view of youth. Talk about what is important to them to work effectively. Remember that students use smartphones for working, finding information or taking notes, so consider allowing this during your time together.
- Celebrate together even small successes, taking time for rest, spending time in non-formal circumstances. Simply going out to a cafe or a park together can make a difference.
- Give responsibility for the various elements. This may include taking care of the common space, organising holidays or events, conducting meetings or monitoring activities. Start with smaller things, hand over the bigger ones gradually - you may find that over time the group begins to manage most of the things themselves.

### **Clear purpose**

Young people should understand why and how they will work or make decisions. In order to get involved, people need to understand the goal and see it as important to themselves.

How can you achieve this?

- Define and clearly state the goals - both at the level of the lesson (what will be learned in this lesson? what you should understand after this lesson?) and at the level of activities (what will be the result of this discussion? what do we want to achieve by organising this event?). It can be proposed by an adult or - in more participatory way - established with young people.
- Talk to young people about their individual goals - what they themselves want to achieve by participating in a specific activity. Help them define and write down individual goals (make a separate meeting to discuss this issue). It is good to come back to these goals together after some time and check which ones have been achieved and which have not.
- In the case of more complex activities consisting of several elements or stages, it is necessary to clearly show (e.g. in a graphic) what will happen when, as well as other key information (how, when, who, where).

### **Equal opportunities for everyone to participate**

This applies both to everyday work and particular activities or decisions of the group.

How can you achieve this?

- Make sure that everyone understands the messages addressed to them - verbal, written or pictorial (due to language differences, disability or other factors that may affect the understanding of the information). If you identify communication barriers in your class or group, think about how they can be minimised to facilitate the inclusion of these students.
- Create opportunities to speak for those who remain silent in group discussions (e.g. not only verbal discussions on plenary, also writing opinions, discussions in pairs, the use of digital tools).
- Provide opportunities to ask questions, encourage and support asking these questions and make students feel that they are really important.

### **Give as much responsibility as possible to young people.**

You should create a space for participation, giving young people proper tools. But with time and growing confidence teachers/trainers should step back and give more and more responsibilities to the young people themselves (e.g. organising and conducting meetings, setting goals, planning activities, etc.).

## CARDINAL SINS OF PARTICIPATION

Participatory work with youth and experimenting with democratic innovations certainly involves benefits, but it can also be a source of challenges. It is easy to confuse participation with pseudo-participation, meaning that activities are meant to be democratic and youth-led, but in fact the adults are the main actors and decision-makers. Among the cardinal sins of participation we can distinguish:

**MANIPULATION** - directly or indirectly imposing the opinion of adults on young people. This can be done by suggesting or presenting young people only selected arguments or information in a way to support the opinion of adults. It can also be done by supporting those youth voices that meet our expectations but ignoring others.

To avoid manipulation, ask yourself:

- Am I really curious about young people's opinions, needs and ideas?
- Am I ready to deviate from my original ideas, if young people propose something else?
- Do I make sure that everyone has access to all the information, not only supporting my point of view?

**TOKENISM** - involving some representatives of a vulnerable group (e.g. young, disabled, ethnic minorities, immigrants) to show how inclusive the group is but not giving them real influence on the decisions.

To avoid tokenism, ask yourself:

- Do I make sure that all students have equal opportunities to participate, speak out in a given activity or make decisions (taking into account people of different ages, skills, characters, needs, and disabilities)?
- Do I want to limit or hinder the participation of people I consider "difficult" or have a different opinion?
- Do I privilege certain members of a vulnerable group by giving them more speaking time or being quick to show my agreement?

**DECORATION/IRRELEVANCE** - leaving only a small field for the voice and participation of young people, in matters that are not very important or where the voice of young people has little influence on the decision or action.

To avoid decoration, ask yourself:

- Are the activities in which I want to involve youth really important to them?
- Are these issues arising from the real needs and ideas of young people?

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH WORK?

- The school or local community becomes better fit to the needs of young people.
- The sense of young people's belonging to the school or community and their motivation to engage in school/community life strengthens.
- Self-governing youth groups reduce the amount of work of adults (e.g. young people in school could solve some problems by themselves without engaging adults; they could gather information about students' needs and come up with ideas by themselves).
- Development of ideas that individuals could not create by themselves.
- Strengthening social and civic skills (communication, argumentation, consensus making, discussing needs, cooperation) that can only be taught by practice.
- Learning to verify and select information - as to make decisions young people need to analyse different options, assess information and decide which are crucial in their particular case.
- Boosting creativity and independent thinking.



# PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING



# PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING – WHAT IS IT (AND WHAT IS IT NOT) ABOUT?

Participatory budgets (PBs) are collective decision-making processes in which residents and members of communities decide together how to spend a part of the public budget to finance their own ideas and proposals. This democratic process was initially initiated by the Workers' Party in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989 where local communities could participate in the whole process of the design of the local budget – from being involved in creating proposals to forming the final shape of the budget. This mechanism created conditions for education, empowerment and engagement of the community beyond voting and had a positive impact on the level of inclusion of previously excluded socio-economic groups. The idea of PB started to spread very quickly around the world in the early 2000s. In many current cases, the amounts of money intended for the projects directly submitted by citizens rarely exceed 1% of investment expenditure.

Generally the process of a PB follows these steps:

1. **Design the PB process:** the team who is responsible for organising and conducting the process creates a document stipulating the rules and regulations: who will be eligible to submit projects, what are the criteria of the projects, how the final decision will look like.
2. **Communicate:** ensuring broad communication and promotion of the PB allows for the inclusion of groups who are typically underrepresented and excluded from the decision-making.
3. **Brainstorm ideas:** through online or offline meetings, citizens are encouraged to share and discuss their ideas for projects. Community members need to be provided with transparent and sufficient information.
4. **Develop proposals:** community members develop the ideas into feasible proposals. Participants should be able to consult experts and have access to the relevant expert knowledge.
5. **Promote the proposals.**
6. **Vote:** residents vote on the proposals that best serve the community's needs.
7. **Fund and implement winning projects:** after announcing the results, ideas are then implemented by the organisers of the process (usually the public administration/institution in collaboration with members of the community).

The goal of organising such a process – beyond wasting less money and resources on pointless and failed public investments – is to bring about more far-reaching social change.



# PARTICIPATORY BUDGET IN SCHOOL

## POLAND



Scan QR code  
or click on the image  
to watch the video



### Context

In 2022, students from a highschool in Warsaw participated in a School of Democracy project. One of the tasks in this project was to create a School Participatory Budget (PB).

The high school's management has allocated 5.000 polish zloty (approximately 1.000 EUR) towards this goal. A team of students active in the Student Council organised the entire process - from the creation of the regulations to the implementation of the winning project.



### How does it work?

1. Students from the Student Council (organisers) initiated the process and asked the school's management to allocate part of the school's budget in this initiative.
2. The Student Council planned the whole process and created regulations.
3. Organisers promoted the idea of PB in their school - hung posters, posted on social media and made an announcement on the school radio station.
4. Each student could make a proposal for the project (including cost estimation) and give it to organisers.
5. All the projects were promoted on posters, social media and in the school's radio.
6. The Student Council gathered votes from every school community member and counted them.
7. The winning project was announced to the school community.
8. The school's management paid for the winning project.



### Why did we choose this example?

Students rarely feel like they have a say in what is happening in their school, especially when it comes to spending money. This innovation can be an inspiration for students to recreate a similar process in their school.



## Workshop

 **Duration: 45 minutes**

*Main objective:* Students learn about Participatory Budget and discover advantages and possible difficulties of the process.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Students know what is a Participatory Budget.
- Students know that PB can work on different levels - schools, neighbourhoods, cities, etc.
- Students understand the advantages of the PB process as well as its difficulties.



## Materials

- The video about participatory budget in school
- A device on which to watch the video (TV/laptop/projector) with internet connection
- Post-its
- Flipchart/blackboard
- Printed handouts



## Steps

### ❶ Introduction (10 min.)

Tell your students what will be the topic of the lesson. Ask them questions:

- Have they ever heard about PB?
- Have they participated in PB in any way?
- What are their initial thoughts when they hear about PB?

### ❷ Comment on their answers

If the topic is fairly new to the group, tell them that there will be a lot of exciting information to learn. If they have some knowledge on Participatory Budget, you can appreciate it and tell them that they will learn more about how Participatory Budgets are created.

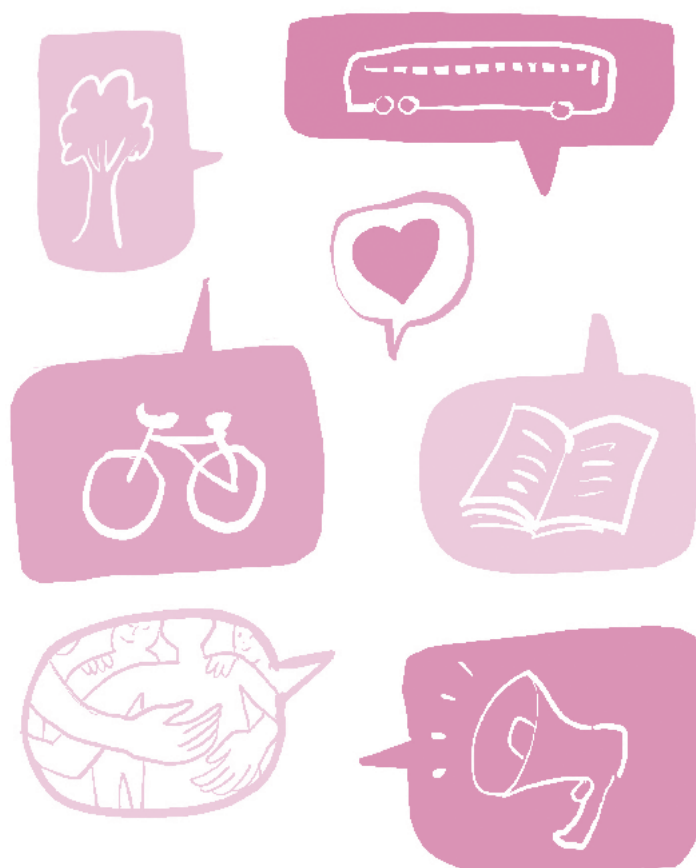
### ❸ Video and working in groups (15 min.)

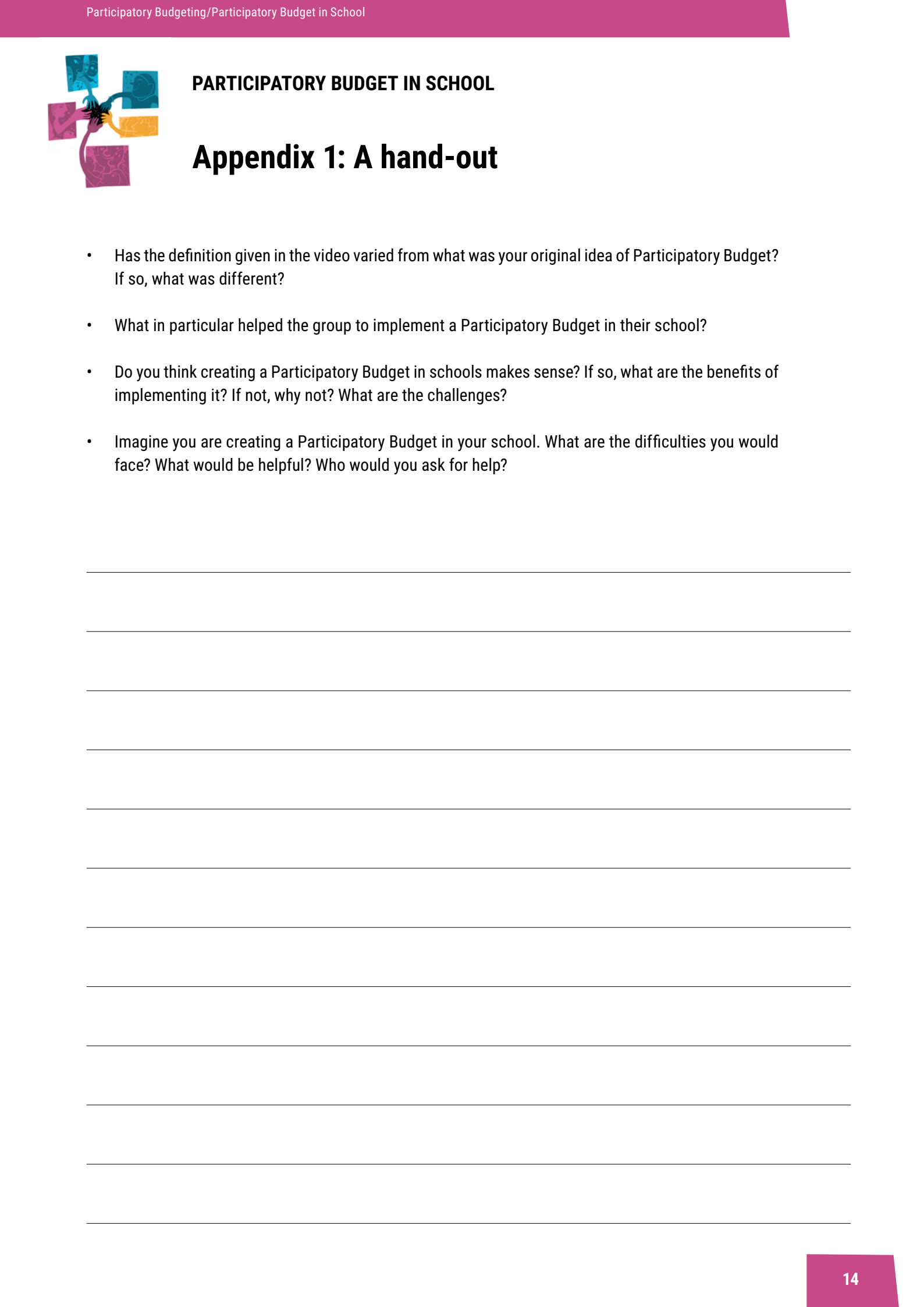
- Tell the group that you will watch a video about PB in schools.
- Divide students into groups of 3-4 people. Give each group a hand-out [Appendix]. Ask them to read the questions before watching the video.
- Watch the video about Participatory Budget in school with the group.
- Ask the students to discuss the questions in their groups and write down their answers together as a group.

#### ④ Discussion in the class (20 min.)

Start the discussion by reminding students the definition of Participatory Budget given in the video. Participatory budgeting is a form of citizen participation in which citizens or a community from a specific group are involved in the process of deciding how public money is spent. It strengthens civil society by giving individuals an opportunity to impact their community. Refer to the association map they have created at the beginning. Which points on the map were close to the definition? Which ones were different from the definition?

- Ask the students how they understand the definition - how would they paraphrase the definition in their own words.
  - Ask groups questions 2 and 3 from the hand-out and summarise their answers on the blackboard/flipchart.
  - Talk to students about their ideas in point 4 from the flipchart. If students seem interested in the idea, you can suggest a separate meeting on this topic.
  - Invite the group to do their own research after class. They can either:
    - research Participatory Budgets in their community - maybe there is one in their town, neighbourhood?
- or
- research interesting Participatory Budgets ideas in the world - is there a place where PB is a core way to decide on how money is spent?





## Appendix 1: A hand-out

- [illegible]



# EBERSWALDE CITIZENS' BUDGET

GERMANY



Scan QR code  
or click on the image  
to watch the video



## Context:

Eberswalde is a city with 40.000 inhabitants, located in Brandenburg (Germany), about 40 km from Berlin. Since 2008, the city has organised the "Eberswalde Citizens' Budget" once a year. This participatory budget allows all the residents of Eberswalde from 14 years, regardless of their nationality, to make proposals on how they would like to shape the life in all areas of their city and use the 100.000 EUR made available to them.



## How does it work?

The procedure of the Eberswalde Citizens' Budget is simple. First, proposals can be submitted all year round until June 30th in writing, by telephone, orally and electronically. These proposals are then examined (costs, responsibility, feasibility) by the administration experts. On the 'decision day', the people of Eberswalde can then vote directly on the proposals submitted (online and offline). With the citizen's budget of at least 100.000 EUR the most popular and therefore selected proposals can be then implemented until these funds are exhausted. A submitted project may cost a maximum of 15.000 EUR.



## Why did we choose this example?

The "Eberswalde Citizens' Budget" is one of the first direct democratic citizen budgets and oldest participatory budgets in Germany. The submission and voting procedures have inspired several other cities in Brandenburg and Germany.



## Workshop

### Participatory Budget starts from a project!

**Duration: 4-5 hours**

*Main objective:* Participants discuss the opportunities and challenges of civil society engagement based on the example of the Participatory Budget in Eberswalde.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Participants learn about the democratic innovation of participatory budgeting.
- Participants learn how to develop a project idea.
- Participants learn how to present a project idea and promote it.



### Materials:

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Crayons
- Ballot box
- Device to show a video
- Chocolate bars
- Appendix 1: Questionnaire „Strengths and talents“.
- Appendix 2: Guideline „How to develop and promote a project idea“.
- Appendix 3: Ballot paper



### Steps

#### ❶ Introduction (15 min.)

Introduce the topic of democratic innovations in general and participatory budgeting in particular (see introduction of the toolkit). Give an overview of the objectives of the workshop and steps of the activity.

#### ❷ Empowerment (15 min.)

Give each person a printed Appendix 1. Ask all participants to fill in a short questionnaire about personal strengths and talents. Encourage them to add to the list any of their strengths and talents that come to mind.

Ask everyone to read out one of their talents. This step is to show the participants that they all have strengths and talents that can be useful in developing a project idea.

#### ❸ Developing a project idea (1 hour)

Send the participants into groups of 4-6 people. Distribute Appendix 2 and explain each step on it. Observe groups while working, facilitate and answer questions if necessary.



#### ④ **Discussing Video** (40 min.)

Shortly introduce a topic of Participatory Budgeting (see: Introduction of this chapter). Show the video about PB in Eberswalde.

After watching the video, start a discussion about participatory budgeting and give the opportunity to ask comprehension questions:

- What do you think about this democratic innovation? Do you see advantages and disadvantages?\*
- Would you like to participate in a participatory budgeting process in your community/school?
- What do you think about the fact that in the video young people are allowed to vote at the age of 14. Is this the right age? Should nationality play a role?
- Who should generally be allowed to participate and who should not?

#### **Strengths**

- Active citizenship is promoted.
- Awareness of community needs is raised among citizens and authorities.
- Democratic procedures are introduced and practised.
- Low-income groups and neighbourhoods can receive more attention and resources.

#### **Vulnerabilities**

- Civil society gets into a competitive situation instead of acting cooperatively.
- Project promoters who are left empty-handed may be discouraged.
- If the amount of funds to be distributed is too low, citizens might get the impression that authorities are faking participation.
- Citizens may be more interested in short- or medium-term projects, which makes it difficult to initiate discussions about long-term planning.
- It could easily slip into a popularity contest, where people convince their friends and families to come out and vote for their proposal. The one with the most friends wins.

#### ⑤ **Presentation of a project idea and voting** (1h - 1,5h - depending on how many groups there are)

Ask groups to present their project ideas and have everyone take notes. Remind participants of the criteria before the presentations start. Give each group equal time for presenting their project.

After the presentation of the projects, distribute a ballot paper to each group (Appendix 3). Each group can distribute a certain number of votes, similar to the procedure in the video.

Recommended procedure for voting:

Each group gets  $x^*$  votes to distribute  $*x = \text{number of project ideas} \times 2$ .

A maximum of half of the possible votes may be allocated per project. You may also vote for your own project. (Example: With 4 project ideas, a total of 8 votes may be awarded and a maximum of 4 for one project).

Ask one participant from each group to join the team that will count the votes. The result will be announced by the team and each group will receive chocolate in proportion to the votes received.

Example: 1 vote = a chocolate bar

## ⑥ Reflection (20 min.)

Discuss with the group following topics:

### 1. Developing a project idea together:

What was it like to develop a project idea together? What was fun? What was difficult? Were the criteria helpful?

### 2. Democratically agreeing on a project idea:

How did you agree on the idea you presented at the end? (By majority vote? By seeking consensus? By compromise?) Was it a fair (democratic) process? Why? Why not? Was it an inclusive process? How or how not?

### 3. Voting on the best project idea:

Was it easy or difficult to distribute the votes? Was the process fair? Did everyone have the same chances? Did sympathy with the group members play a role? Which criteria were particularly important? Did the way of presentation play a role? Is it okay if project ideas (almost) come up empty? Is the voting procedure the best way to choose the best idea? Or what other possibilities could a city (school) offer to give citizens (students) the opportunity to realise their ideas?

### 4. Discussing the democratic innovation of participatory budgeting:

Should all cities and municipalities be obliged to distribute a certain share of their budget in this way? How high should the share be?

## ⑦ Get really involved (optional) (30 min.)

Ask the participants if they would like to implement their project. What would it take? Let them talk about it in their project groups and present their decision afterwards. Do not put pressure on them. Every result is welcome. If you have time and resources, you can support them in putting the project idea into practice.





## EBERSWALDE CITIZENS' BUDGET

# Appendix 1: Strengths and talents

Here you will find some suggestions for strengths and talents that can be important in developing project ideas.

Please do not be modest. Tick off all the strengths and talents you have. It is important to be aware of your own strengths and talents and the strengths and talents of others before starting a joint project.

(10 = this statement is completely true; 1 = this statement is not true at all)

- I have a lot of imagination and often come up with funny ideas.
- I am good at working with others on new ideas.
- I am good at listening when others present their ideas.
- I am good at agreeing with others on a plan or project.
- I am good at persuading others to join me.
- I am good at finding out who could support a plan or project.
- I am good at drawing and making posters.
- I can tell when something is missing or when something should be done differently.
- I am good at playing games.
- I am good at putting groups in a good mood
- I am very patient when something doesn't work right away.
- I have a lot of stamina.


Other strengths and talents you have:




## EBERSWALDE CITIZENS' BUDGET

# Appendix 2: How to develop a project idea

❶ Please go together in groups of 4-6 people and read out your strengths and talents to each other. (5 - 10 min.)

❷ Think together about what you would like to do. Is there a particular need, such as a playground or schoolyard that would benefit from beautification, or would you like to improve your school day or free time in a different way? Brainstorm ideas on a flipchart. Everyone is allowed to express the craziest ideas and all ideas are first written down without comment. (10-15 min.)

❸ Now decide democratically which idea you would like to pursue further. (10-15 min.)

Please look at the following criteria. Which criteria are particularly important?

1. Is the project idea feasible for those involved? (Realistic)
2. Is the project idea interesting and useful for many or few? (Attractive)
3. Is the project idea new, exciting and fun (innovative and creative)?
4. Can anyone participate? (Inclusive and participative)

❹ Now it's time to make the chosen idea more concrete. (20-30 min.)

Discuss and take some notes. These questions can help you:

1. What will be better or different after this project is completed?
2. What excites us most about this project?
3. What steps do we need to take to achieve this goal?
4. When could it start and when would it be finished?
5. Who will benefit from this project?
6. Who will be involved in this project? Who will be responsible?
7. Who could support us and possibly even participate?
8. Do we need financial support for this project? If so, how much and for what?

❺ Please design a poster together that represents your project well. Very important: a good title! Focus on the goals and use symbols to illustrate your idea. (You will have 5 minutes later to present your project using this poster). (15-20 min.)



## EBERSWALDE CITIZENS' BUDGET

# Appendix 3: Ballot sheet

**Please distribute your votes among the projects according to the following rules:**

Each group gets twice as many votes to distribute as there are projects.

A project may receive a maximum of half of all possible votes. You are of course allowed to vote for your own project.

You can look at the criteria again before the vote and you are also welcome to add your own new criteria.

1. Is the project idea feasible for those involved? (Realistic)
2. Is the project idea interesting and useful for many or few? (Attractive)
3. Is the project idea new, exciting and fun (innovative and creative)?
4. Can anyone participate? (Inclusive and participative)
- 5 ...
6. ...
7. ...

*Please cut the paper here and put your group ballot paper in the ballot box.*

## Vote:

Project idea 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Project idea 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Project idea 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Project idea 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Project idea 5: \_\_\_\_\_



# YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGET OF LA GARROTXA

CATALONIA



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## Context:

This project led by the Ideal-Oficina Jove de la Garrotxa is part of a series of actions and activities that aim to encourage the participation of young people and their empowerment.

The youth club of La Garrotxa encourages all young people aged 12 to 29 to submit proposals in order to invest 10.000 EUR from the Olot City Council Youth Budget in the activities chosen, proposed and managed by the young people themselves.

From 2018, projects have been allocated to two age groups. 5.000 EUR is allocated to all projects submitted by young people aged 12 to 16, and another 5.000 EUR is allocated to proposals submitted by young people aged 17 to 29. Each proposal can cost a maximum of 1.200 EUR.

After voting, young people who have submitted the chosen proposals are responsible for managing and organising the project with the support and facilitation of the youth workers.



## How does it work?

Step 1: Presenting and communicating participatory budgets.

Step 2: Preparing, validating and presenting the proposals by the young people.

Step 3: Holding an assembly where the proposals are explained, possible collaborations between projects are seen and the project's ideas are revised.

Step 4: Project querying: ensuring the project complies with the regulations and final validation.

Step 5: Voting on Proposals.

Step 6: Joint implementation (between the administration and young people) of the project.



## Why did we choose this example?

In these participatory budgets, administration can make 10% of the youth budget available for young people to make their own proposals. Youth has real impact, as proposals have to be implemented between the administration and young people.



## Workshop

### Let's create participatory budgeting! A simulation for youth

🕒 **Duration: 3,5 hours + breaks**

*Main objective:* Participants learn how to develop a Participatory Budget (PB) step by step.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Participants learn about the participatory budget process.
- Participants discuss how to make PB more inclusive.
- Participants learn how to organise a participatory budget.



## Materials:

- Black board, white board or big sheet of paper
- Pens
- Post-its in different colours
- A device on which to watch the video (TV/laptop/projector) with internet connection
- Printed Appendix 1 and 2



## Steps

### 1 Introduction (10 min.)

Tell participants that today you will talk about Participatory Budgets. Ask questions:

- Have you ever heard about Participatory Budgets? How would you define a Participatory Budget?
- Have you ever participated in PB? If so, in what way?

Explain that a Participatory Budget is a process in which a smaller community (e.g. a locality, a school, an organisation) decides what to spend a certain proportion of common funds on. Underline that PB is not only about voting - there are multiple steps and people involved in the whole process.

### 2 Video (20 min.)

Give each participant 2 post-it notes (2 different colours) and a pen. Tell them that in a minute you will watch together a video about the Participatory Budget in Garrotxa - a region in Catalonia (Spain). Their task is to watch the video carefully and write on the post-it notes answers to the following questions:

- What do you think is most interesting about this process?
- What is your main question about this PB or PB in general?

After watching the video, gather all post-it notes and put them on the flipchart, sorting similar notes together. Answer all the questions regarding PB in Garrotxa and PB (see: descriptions in the toolkit) and if you lack knowledge in some part - admit it and invite students to research this after the workshops.

**③ Introduction to the simulation (15 min.)**

Divide participants into smaller groups (3-5 people in each group). Tell them that during these workshops they will play the role of organisers of a PB. Each group represents a different organising team. They will go through most of the steps that organisers of a real PB have to go through.

- Give each team a printed copy of Appendix 1.
- Discuss with the group the four main rules of a Participatory Budget and make sure everybody understands them.
- Give each group a printed copy of a made up scenario (Appendix 2) and ask them to read it carefully. Say, that they will go through each step of organising the PB during this workshop and that for each step you will give them a task.

**④ Regulations (45 min.)**

Tell the groups that their first task is to create a first draft of rules. Give each group flipchart paper and pens. The rules should answer the following questions:

- Who is the organiser of the PB and where does the money come from?
- Who is in the initiative group?
- Who can submit the ideas? How do the organisers verify if a person is eligible to do this?
- How much money will be spent? How much can one project cost?
- What should be included in a project proposal?
- How can a person submit a proposal?
- How much time do people have to submit the proposals? Who approves or rejects the projects? How much time do people get to correct their projects?
- How will the projects be chosen? Who can participate in voting?

After 30 minutes (or after everyone has finished) discuss the regulations together. Give participants a chance to explain their decision and to discuss why groups have made similar or different decisions. Summarise: This is a crucial task done during the organising of a PB, and in real life establishing the rules can last a few weeks.

**⑤ Promotion (60 min.)**

Tell the groups that now they have to inform the people of Faketown that a PB is happening in their community. In order to do that, each group has to record a short video or radio announcement\* (up to 3 minutes), where they explain:

- a) What is PB
- b) What are rules in this PB
- c) Where the community can learn more about it

Give groups 35 minutes to record the video and after that, each group can present their video to the whole group. Discuss together, what should be included in the videos and what groups would do if they had a bigger budget and more time.

\*If you do not have equipment needed for this activity, you can ask the groups to create posters instead of videos.



## ⑥ Gathering ideas, promoting projects and voting (30 min.)

Tell the groups that they have been asked by the city council to make this process accessible to every citizen of Faketown. The groups that they should especially think about include: teenagers/elders/immigrants/people without internet access /people with disabilities.

Give them 3 main questions:

- How do you help those groups submit their ideas?
- How do you inform those groups about voting possibilities for these projects?
- How do you provide those groups equal access to voting?

After 15 minutes, ask each group to read their ideas out loud. Underline that we cannot talk about democracy until we give everybody an equal chance to contribute.

## ⑦ Summary (30 min.)

Congratulate all the groups for their great work. Say that in real life organisers have a lot more time to think about these steps and to create the process of a PB, but hopefully this gave them a glimpse into how PB works from the inside.

Divide participants into pairs (try to have people from different groups in each pair). In pairs, ask participants to discuss the following questions:

- What was the most interesting part of today's workshop?
- What is the best part of organising a PB? What is the hardest?
- What is the most important thing I have learned today?

After 10 minutes of working in pairs, ask participants to share some of their thoughts about the workshop and about PB in general.

Say that even in a young age they can organise a PB - e.g. in their schools, youth groups and communities. They can always become an initiative group and promote these ideas amongst their friends and families.





## YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGET OF LA GARROTXA

# Appendix 1: How to organise a Participatory Budget?

Participatory Budget is a process in which a smaller community (e.g. a town, a school, an organisation) decides what to spend a certain proportion of common funds on.

Organisers should follow 4 main rules, while creating PB:

- 1** **TRANSPARENCY** The rules are clear and simple; everyone has full knowledge of the process; the way of submitting ideas and voting does not exceed the competence of the residents.
- 2** **EQUALITY** Everyone has the same right to submit projects and vote. Representatives of each group that make up the community are involved in setting the rules.
- 3** **UNIVERSALITY** The whole community is included in the budget.
- 4** **VOLUNTARISM** Both participation in the project team and submitting ideas or voting is voluntary.

### How to organise a Participatory budget? Step by step instructions

#### 1. Establishing the rules

The group initiating the participatory budget (initiative group) makes clear rules and formulates them in short and clear regulations.

#### 2. Promoting the budget

The initiative group disseminates information about the budget and invites the community to participate.

#### 3. Gathering ideas

The initiative group gathers all the ideas, reviews them and checks if they are in accordance with the regulations. The group approves a project if it is in accordance with regulations, rejects a project if it clearly violates regulations (e.g. the aim of the project is illegal) or gives notes and time to make corrections (e.g. a project lacks estimation of costs).

#### 4. Promoting projects

The initiative group should provide everybody an equal opportunity to promote their projects and to learn about projects. The team should organise space - both physical (e.g. bulletin board) and online (social media, dedicated website) where ideas can be presented. They can also organise an event where the community can learn about the projects and talk about them.

#### 5. Organising voting

The initiative group should organise a democratic voting process, where every eligible person can cast a vote and has the same opportunity as others to do so. Organisers should also establish a clear procedure for counting votes and making sure all the rules are understandable.

#### 6. Implementation of projects

The initiative group is responsible for elected projects to be implemented and for all the community to be informed about the final stage.

**REMEMBER!** The aim of the PB is not only spending money but also creating an opportunity for the community to share and discuss their ideas, to hear the voices of people and groups that normally are excluded from decision making processes and to integrate the community.



## YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGET OF LA GARROTXA

# Appendix 2: Scenario to organise a Participatory Budget in Faketown

You are a group of residents of Faketown that have initiated a process of PB in your town. A mayor and the city council have approved your proposal, and now you are responsible for the execution of the entire process.

Here is the information that you have:

- The total budget is 500.000 EUR.
- Projects should not cost more than 50.000 EUR.
- The community of Faketown is diverse - there are people of different ages and ethnic groups, people with disabilities and health issues. The city council has asked you to include everybody in this process!

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# CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY



# CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY - WHAT IS IT (AND WHAT IS IT NOT) ABOUT?

Citizens' assemblies (CAs) are bodies of citizens who come together to deliberate on a given issue of high public and social importance with the aim to develop solutions and recommendations for decision-makers. They are designed to empower citizens, to prove that they are capable of governing themselves and regaining control over their own future.

CAs are usually organised by public administration in collaboration with third sector organisations. Participants are mostly randomly selected from their communities' register to create a group that represents the diversity of the community in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, education level or socioeconomic status. Professional facilitators and various experts can sometimes take part and have an important role. They moderate the discussions to allow everyone to have their say and to support the group and its diverse opinions in reaching an agreement. The final CA recommendations are usually forwarded to a committee of experts and representatives of political institutions (e.g. mayors, ministers) for further consultation and implementation.

Some Citizens Assemblies have a merely consultative character while others have a binding character, which means that policy makers and administrators are committed to implementing the proposed solutions. CAs work best when citizens and other involved actors know that their recommendations will have a real impact.

## **Citizen Assembly step by step:**

1. Choosing a topic of the Assembly (eg. how we can fight climate change in our city).
2. Decision-makers (e.g. city council) provide funds for the Assembly and commit to implementing recommendations made by panelists.
3. An organising team is created, developing a concrete plan.
4. A random group of participants is selected, representing the entire community.
5. Meetings of panelists, which can be divided into:
  - educational meetings, during which experts help panelists increase their knowledge on the topic.
  - discussing and debating the recommendations.
  - voting on the recommendations.
6. Sharing decisions with the whole community.
7. Decision-makers implementing the recommendations of the Assembly.



# WARSAW CLIMATE PANEL

## POLAND



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### Context

In 2020, on the initiative of residents and local NGOs, the Mayor of Warsaw decided to organise the Warsaw Climate Panel. Three NGOs were commissioned to implement the process: Civis Polonus Foundation, Field of Dialogue Foundation and Shipyard Foundation.

The organisers randomly selected 18.000 households to receive an invitation by post to participate in the Panel. Recipients of the invitation were able to choose one (at least 15 year old) person from their household to participate in the Panel meetings. From the 337 people that responded to the invitation, organisers selected a group of 90 participants. This final group represented a population of Warsaw - people of different genders, ages, levels of education.



### How does it work?

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all meetings took place online. Residents met five times. There was 1 kick-off meeting, 2 educational meetings and 2 deliberative meetings. During the educational meetings, experts from the fields of environmental protection and energy policies spoke to panelists about environmental problems and solutions the city could adopt. During the deliberative meetings, participants discussed and voted on recommendations to the city authorities.

The city will implement any recommendation that has received a min. of 80% support from the panelists.



### Why did we choose this example?

This innovation shows that city residents can have an impact on global-scale issues. They made a request for a panel, organised it and kept politicians accountable for their promises. Recommendations that resulted from this panel initiated changes that are now implemented in the city policies.



## Workshop

### Why should we decide together? Lessons about Co-deciding

**Duration: 90 minutes** (activity divided into 2 45-minute parts that can be done separately)

#### *Main objective:*

Students learn about co-deciding on an example of the Warsaw Climate Panel.

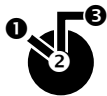
#### *Detailed objectives:*

- Students learn what co-deciding/participation is and why it is important in democracy.
- Students get to know one specific method of participation - civic assembly.
- Students discuss topics on the class or school level they would like to be involved in.



## Materials:

- Video about Warsaw Climate Panel
- A device to watch the video on (TV/laptop/projector) with internet connection
- Photos with holiday destinations - on presentation or printed



## Steps

### PART I (45 min.)

**❶ Introduce the topic to the students** (2 min.) - tell them that you will discuss ways of involving citizens in decision making in democracy, deliberate on what makes democracy really democratic and identify areas of school/local life where young people could be involved in making decisions.

**❷ Tell students that now you have to make an important decision** (5 min.) - you are able to spend one week in one holiday destination together, absolutely for free - but you have to decide on one place together as a group. Present 4 possible options:

- hotel at the seaside - comfortable but definitely not a calm area.
- hike in the mountains - for those who love nature, physical activity and do not need a lot of comfort.
- cottage in the village - far from civilization, great local food, not for party lovers.
- big city tour - visit Paris and get to know the most attractive museums, touristic sites and attractions.

Tell them you will use 3 methods of decision making - at the end you will discuss them to find out what are the advantages and disadvantages of each of them.

### ③ Three types of voting (10 min.)

- a) by shouting - on signal everybody shouts out the name of the destination. You as a trainer decide which one you heard most clearly, but you can also choose the one that you heard at first or at the end.
- b) by voting - ask students to raise their hands or to write down the number of the destination they choose. Count the votes and announce which one was chosen.
- c) by discussion - divide students into small groups (3-4 people). It is important that within one group should be people who voted for different destinations in the previous step. Tell students: "Please share with each other what are your needs and expectations towards the holiday destination, try to listen to each other and decide on one destination that could fulfil most of the needs and be ok for the whole group." They have 5-7 minutes for the discussion.

Additionally: If you have more time you can make more steps of the last stage - after the small group discussion you can combine groups together and they should do the same again but in a bigger group. The last step is that the whole group should decide on one destination.

### ④ Sum up the activity (15 min.)

Ask the groups if they were able to decide together on one destination - who made a consensual decision? What were the arguments that helped you understand the needs of others and change your preference? Was it easy or difficult to resign from your first choice? Would it be equally easy to give up your first choice if it was a real situation? Why?

sum up shortly the three types:

- a) Shouting - This simulates decision making with no fixed framework or rules, where the ones who have the most strength or flair wins. It is a situation similar to when a rich businessman or media company owner is able to influence or corrupt politicians to make decisions according to his company's or his group's needs. It is also similar to a situation where two or more sides are in a continuous fight for something - land or resources.
- b) Voting is a popular way of making decisions, often equated with democracy. But voting does not mean that a country or institution can be considered democratic (e.g. North Korea, Belarus or other authoritarian countries where elections and voting take place).
- c) Discussion - The third way was to simulate those ways of making decisions in which interested persons had the opportunity to directly participate in the process, express their needs and ideas, discuss and participate directly - you will focus on one of these methods soon.

Ask participants to discuss in pairs or reflect individually on the advantages and disadvantages of the second (voting) and third (discussion) methods of decision making. They get 7 minutes to write it down and can use the following template:

#### VOTING

*Advantages*

*Disadvantages*

#### CONSENSUS

*Advantages*

*Disadvantages*



- sum up the advantages and disadvantages of both methods - you can write it down on the board/ flipchart or online.

<b><u>VOTING</u></b>		<b><u>CONSENSUS</u></b>	
<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Fast	People with special needs, minority groups must obey to the will of the majority.	Individual perspective and needs can be seen and taken into account.	Takes more time.
Measurable	Only people and groups with resources, access to media, etc. are able to present their needs, point of view.	People with less access to media, wealth, money have a bigger chance to show their point of view.	It is almost impossible to have a consensus in big groups - the bigger group, the harder the process.
Easy to understand and participate	Act of voting does not make a country or institution democratic (eg. totalitarian countries with elections).	The process is more a cooperation than a competition.	Requires some openness, will and communication skills from the participants.
Possible to apply in large groups (like a nation)	Often seen in terms of win-lose rather than win-win situations, different sides are "fighting"/competing.  Democracy based only on voting and representatives gradually makes more and more people feel they do not have any impact and destroys trust among society.	Discussing needs builds trust among the different sides of the process.  Decisions made in this way are more likely to better fit the real needs of the people.  Gives a space for compromise or finding new solutions.	Requires preparation and good moderation to succeed.

Tell students that very often democracy is linked with voting but the same act of voting/elections does not make society or institutions democratic. This is obvious in totalitarian countries that make fully-controlled elections to justify the regime, but also in traditionally democratic western countries, we can see how small groups of business and media owners can manipulate and influence public opinion. Many people are disappointed with democracy because they do not feel that their voice matters, and that all the important decisions are made by the people in power.

One solution for this crisis in democracy is a method of involving regular citizens more in the decision making process - these are methods we call civic participation, deep democracy or democratic innovations. Their idea is to include more direct methods of decision making in our society.

⑤ **Presentation** (7 min.) - short explanation of participation. Explain to students following terms:

**Participation** - in broad terms, this means involvement of the person in the life of the group, community, doing something together for the common good.

**Civic participation** - involvement of citizens in decision making processes by the public institutions (school, local government, country).

**Democratic innovations** are all the methods that allow civic participation to happen - methods that allow citizens to take part in decision making processes on a public level.

Tell the students that the main aim of participation is *to give citizens influence on issues that concern them*. It is a response to the situation of having large groups of people excluded from real democratic processes or limited just to voting once every few years.

Ask the students:

- How do they understand the influence on public issues? Is it possible that regular citizens could have such an impact?
- Do they know about any examples of civic participation/democratic innovations? Have they ever taken part in such activities?

Give students some examples of DI methods - consultations, participatory budget, civic assembly - have they heard about them? You could show examples of these methods from your local community (student council in school, participatory budget in the city, open consultations on the park in the middle of your town - to show that these methods are close to the students).

It is important to show specific examples from your environment to show students that civic participation and democratic innovations are close to them and easy to use. Tell them that in the second part/lesson they will get to study one example more closely.





## PART II (45 min.)

⑥ **Short reminder** (5 min.) - if you divide this activity into two parts - briefly remind students what you discussed during the first part - the experience with the three methods of decision making, what is participation and democratic innovations.

⑦ **Video screening** (7 min.) - watch together one of the videos showing practical examples of democratic innovation (citizen assembly)

⑧ **Short summary of the film** (5 min.) - ask students how they liked it, how did the citizen assembly work? Explain what the citizen assembly is, showing the steps of the process.

⑨ **Ask students to discuss in pairs** (7 min.)

- What are the strong and the weak sides of this method?
- Does this method increase regular citizens' impact on important decisions that are taken in the city? Why or why not?

Sum up the discussion in pairs, list pros and cons of the method. How can this method increase regular citizens' impact on important decisions?

Do you think it is possible to use this method on some issues in our school/community?

⑩ **The axe of opinion** (10 min.) - ask students to answer the statements by standing on the line where one end means "yes" and the other end means "no" - in between there is a spectrum so if you do not fully agree or disagree one can stand somewhere in between.

While working online or if there is not enough space in the room you can just use numbers from 1 (strongly no) to 10 (strongly yes).

Read the following sentences and ask students to show their opinion by standing in the right position:

- I have a real impact on how my school works.
- I have a real impact on how my town/neighbourhood works.
- I have a real impact on how my country works.

After each sentence, give some time to stand on the line. Then you can ask some students why they choose their position (especially ask for an explanation if some students chose extreme points).

Sum up - it is not easy to feel that your voice is heard and that you have a real impact in large groups. Some schools cannot even gather to discuss in one large room, as there are too many students. This is why we need participatory/democratic innovation methods that are aimed at strengthening the influence of regular citizens. In our school or on a local level, we are able to propose and initiate such processes.

**① What issues are important for you? (7 min.)**

Individual reflection - ask students to think about the top three issues that are important to them. These should be issues in which they would like to be more involved in the decision making processes or in general they think that young people should have a stronger voice.

You can make a table shown below on a board or virtual tool like a Jamboard. Ask students to write their answers on post-its and put in the right column (one topic on one card)

*List the topics/issues that are important for you and you would like to be more involved in decisions concerning these issues?*

School/class level

Local level

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Categorise the answers of the students by putting similar answers together to see if there are some topics common for the big part of the group.

Sum up all the issues, focusing on those which are popular.

**② Choose together with the students one or more issues** (you can do it by fast voting) from the school or the local level, which is important for the students, and where you think it is possible to do something about youth involvement in this case.

Discuss in groups (10 min.) - how can youth be more involved in decision making about this topic?

Think about possible, realistic solutions, regarding the context of your school or community (e.g. issue of school rules - we can make open school discussions; we can make online consultations and then discuss results with principal and teachers; we can ask the principal to make a citizen assembly in our school on this topic, etc.).

The next steps could be to choose one of the ideas you think is most realistic and effective and plan it step by step and start implementing it!

**③ Sum up the whole training** - shortly remind the students of the activities, main terms - participation and democratic innovation, citizen assembly, idea of a real democracy that is aimed at making everyone's voice heard and important. Ask participants to name one thing that was interesting/inspiring for them.



# Citizen Council Vorarlberg Model

## Austria



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### Context

Vorarlberg is a federal province located in the west of Austria which is better known as a tourist destination between Lake Constance and the mountains. It has a population of 400.000 inhabitants.

In 1999, Vorarlberg founded the office for future related issues with the mission to increase the collaboration between the State government and the population. The team of this new office noticed that the population was much more active when they were involved in co-creating the solutions. And their initiative paved the way to today's culture of civic participation in Vorarlberg. Today, the Citizens' Councils are organised and coordinated by the "Office for Voluntary Engagement and Participation", Office of the Vorarlberg Provincial Government. There have already been 13 statewide and over 60 regional and municipal citizens' councils on various societal issues since 2006: Climate, youth, agriculture, refugees and also education. This commitment to citizens' participation was taken up into the province's constitution in 2013.

Citizens' councils can be started directly by the government or parliament. The population can also initiate a citizens' council by collecting 1.000 signatures of Vorarlberg residents aged 16 or older, regardless of their citizenship. Participants of the Citizen Council are selected at random from the registration register, according to the criteria of age, gender and place of residence. It means that it can be anyone who lives in Vorarlberg over 16, regardless of their citizenship.



### How does it work?

The citizens' council is a four-step process:

1. During a 1.5 day meeting, 15 to 20 participants deliberate on a specific question and jointly develop recommendations for the state parliament, with independent facilitators guiding the process.
2. Results are publicly presented and discussed further during a citizens' café.
3. Representatives from politics and administration examine a possible implementation of the recommendations. They complete the proposals and prepare a report.
4. The documentation is sent to the provincial government and parliament as well as to municipalities who in turn supply information about the measures taken.



## Why did we choose this example?

With its citizens' council, Vorarlberg plays a pioneering role in Europe in terms of democracy. The Vorarlberg Bürgerrat model, a.k.a Citizens' Councils, was included in OECD's report on Innovative Citizen Participation. Citizens' participation even has a constitutional status. In Art.1, para.4 of the Vorarlberg State Constitution, it is stated: "The state is committed to direct democracy in the form of petitions for referendums, plebiscites and popular consultations and also promotes other forms of participatory democracy".



## Workshop

### What Democratic Participation really is?

🕒 **Duration: 3 - 5 hours**

*Main objective:* Participants learn what it means to get involved in civil society.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Participants discuss the opportunities and challenges of civil society engagement.
- Participants learn about the democratic innovation of a citizens' council.
- Participants learn how to plan and carry out a petition campaign.
- Participants learn how to negotiate with decision-makers.
- Participants learn how to use the method of "systemic consensus" to reach a democratic group decision.

### BEFORE YOU START

This exercise is not a simulation and is intended to give young people the opportunity to truly experience democratic participation at their school or recreational institution. It is therefore necessary to get the management of the school or recreational facility "on board" first. Make them aware of the steps and consequences of the exercise. Also, let them know that they will play an important role in this exercise.

It would be a great disadvantage if the young people were to get the impression that they should only "play" democracy.

#### A. Introduction (20 min.)

Introduce the topic of democratic innovations in general and the citizens' council in particular (see introduction of the toolkit). Give an overview of the objectives and steps of the activity and add why you personally decided to do it.

#### B. Systemic consensus building (1 hour)

Hand out [Appendix 1]. Guide your students through the process of systemic consensus building by explaining each step.

## Systemic consensus building

### Introduction

Systemic consensus is a decision-making process. It is based on the principle of consensus: your class (group) can decide on the issue with which everyone is most in agreement. In systemic consensus building, however, you do not ask the group members for their agreement on the individual proposals but focus instead on the degree of resistance. You decide on the issue that generates the least opposition from everyone. By doing this, you will arrive at a result that can be supported by all participants. (This is important so that everyone is willing and able to participate in the collection of signatures that will take place later.)



### Materials:

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Device for showing a video
- Printed Appendix 1, 2 and 3



### Steps

#### ❶ Formulate the issue: (15 - 30 min.)

In the first step, you develop concerns in small groups that you would like to present to the school administration. Use the brainstorming method to collect ideas. What should be changed urgently at your school? What could your school (leisure facility) do better? Please make sure that everyone in the group is given equal space to express their ideas and wishes. All suggestions are welcome! They will not be commented on, discussed or evaluated at this stage. After 15 minutes, please agree in the small groups on a concern that you would like to present to the class (group) for a vote. Use Appendix 1 to formulate your concern and create a flipchart sheet to visualise your idea. Please, show how you yourself can contribute to putting this idea into practice (volunteering).

#### ❷ Discussion: (15 min.)

In this phase, the concerns are presented on the flipchart sheets, discussed and commented on.

#### ❸ Decision phase: (15 min.)

Now you make a decision. You evaluate the proposals with "resistance points". If you do not feel any resistance to a proposal, i.e. if you completely agree with the proposal, then you give 0 points. If you do not find a proposal acceptable at all and feel a lot of resistance, then you award the highest number of points: 10 points. All concerns can be evaluated on the flipchart papers. Go to each flipchart paper and give each flipchart your desired score (between 0 and 10 points). Also add a flipchart paper that says: "No concern". This is because systemic consulting must always include the option of not changing anything (the so-called passive solution).

**④ Evaluation:** (15 min.)

When everyone has given their evaluation for each proposal, the resistance points for each of the proposals are added up: The proposal with the fewest points has generated the least resistance from the group. This means you have found the issue that all group members are most likely to support!

Ask those with high scores to explain the reasons for their reluctance. This will help you to better understand the needs and possibly adjust the implementation of the decision for those who have great difficulty.

**⑤ Video** (45 min.)

Show the video after a short introduction to the Citizens' Council. Having formulated a concern themselves, participants will probably be able to easily put themselves in the shoes of the people presenting their concerns in the video.

Start a discussion about the Citizens' Council and give the opportunity to ask comprehension questions.

*Questions:*

- What do you think about this democratic innovation? Do you see strengths and weaknesses of this process?
- How useful does the Citizens' Council seem to you?
- Do you think 1000 signatures are easy enough to collect?
- What do you think of the procedure by which people are selected?
- Do you think the minimum age of 15 is legitimate?
- How did you like the special method of Dynamic Facilitation that was shown in the video?
- Should all cities and municipalities be obliged to hold a citizens' council? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

**⑥ Negotiation with the management of the school / recreational centre** (approx. 1 hour)

The students prepare to present the issue they have chosen through systemic consensus building at a meeting with the school management. They compile the arguments and consider how many signatures they think would be needed to move the issue forward. They also consider whether and what steps they themselves would like to contribute in order to advance the cause. A democratically elected delegation of pupils presents the issue to the school management and negotiates how many signatures the pupils have to collect in how long a period of time so that the school management "has to" deal with the issue.

**⑦ Collecting signatures** (lasting 1 day to 1 week)

The students create an information sheet for their concern and signature lists for the collection of signatures [Appendix 2].

They collect the signatures at school (during break and after class) or at their recreational facility.

They can also arrange with the school administration to go to classes to briefly present the concern.



**⑧ Signature delivery** (0,5h - 1h)

Help your students arrange a meeting with decision makers. The pupils hand in the signature lists and discuss the next steps with the management of the institution.

**⑨ Reflection** (1h- 1,5h)

Meet with students after the whole process is finalised.

Ask the following questions without expecting concrete answers, but be interested in the young people's experiences.

- Formulating a concern  
*What was it like to formulate a concern? What was fun? What was difficult?*
- Agreeing on a concern using the method "systemic consensus building"  
*What did you think of this method? Was it helpful in agreeing on a concern?*
- Negotiation with the school management  
*How did the negotiation with the school management go? What worked well and what didn't work so well?*

Did you get enough signatures? If yes, are you satisfied with the way your concerns were dealt with? If not, what could have been the reason? Was the issue not important enough for a large number of your fellow students? What could be done differently next time? Did the school management nevertheless take up the issue?





## CITIZEN COUNCIL VORARLBERG MODEL

# Appendix 1: Formulate your concern

Headline:

What should change:

Who does it affect?

What could it look like instead?

What needs to happen for this to happen:

### Example

Headline:

Green Deal

What should change:

The school playground is not a nice place for recess.

Who does it affect?

All pupils and all teachers

What could it look like instead?

There should be more green spaces and flowering shrubs and places where people enjoy spending time.

What needs to happen for this to happen:

Financial resources must be made available to green up the asphalted areas. The school community should be motivated to help and volunteer with work.



## CITIZEN COUNCIL VORARLBERG MODEL

# Appendix 2: List for collection of signatures

### Example

Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the issue? (In three sentences)

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Name	Class	Signature



# YOUTH ACT BARCELONA

## Catalonia



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### Context

The Youth Act! is an initiative of the Barcelona Youth Council, the International Civil Service of Catalonia and Pompeu Fabra University that began in 2021 in the city of Barcelona. The aim is to provide a platform for local youth to have an impact on the public policies of Barcelona City Council. The project was born after 50 young activists and 50 young academics met for the first time in a new initiative called Agora of 100. Together they developed a set of 30 policy proposals that could serve as a basis for the city of Barcelona to work on the following topics: feminism and LGTBI +; economic model and inequalities; climate emergency; educational models; democracy and the fight against authoritarianism; technological change; territorial model and mobility; human rights; anti-racism and decolonialism; culture as an engine of change.

In November 2021, the organisers of Youth Act! hosted the first International conference "Youth Act! time to face common challenges" bringing together more than 30 activists from 20 different countries with the aim to exchange common challenges and solutions.

The idea was to consolidate this type of international conference to allow young people in Barcelona to get to know and exchange knowledge with activists around the world.



### How does it work?

Phase 1 - Impulse group: Twenty young people, half from academia and the other half activists from civil society, have prepared the debates in the first instance by selecting the priority challenges to be transferred to the Agora of 100.

Phase 2 - Agora of 100: Eighty young people have been added to the initial group, constituting the final set of 100 participants. They worked in thematic spaces in order to agree on three challenges and three proposals for priority solutions in each of them. The work of the ten final groups/panels has resulted in a total of thirty outstanding challenges and proposals.



## Why did we choose it?

This project connects academia and activists to influence policy making processes. This project has united these two worlds in order to influence the policy making process.

In addition, the proposals initially created have been validated and expanded by an international vision. All this work has been done in a hybrid format that has allowed the participation of young people from around the world.



## Workshop

### Small steps for solving big problems

 **Duration: 4 hours + breaks**

*Main objective:* Participants discuss how they can find solutions to big social problems that they find in their everyday life.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Participants identify issues and challenges important for their group.
- Participants discuss and share their opinions on issues that matter to them.
- Participants create social activities and/or projects to be implemented by the group or by the young people individually.



## Materials:

- Device for showing a video
- Moderation cards
- Markers
- Flipchart papers
- Post-its
- Printed Appendix 1



## Steps

### ❶ Introduction (5 min.)

Tell participants that today you will discuss big social challenges and the impact that they as individuals and as a small group can have on those issues.

### ❷ Video (20 min.)

Say that first they will watch a video about Youth Act - a project that was developed in Catalonia. In this project, young activists and academics were discussing big social issues and possible ways that those issues could be tackled by authorities.

After watching the video, ask participants the following questions:

- What topics were discussed during the Youth Act! conference?
- What actions did the Youth Act! organisers take to make a change?

You can give participants more details about the event (see description of this innovation above).

### ③ Big problems (30 min.)

Show the group a list of 6 big problems that our societies all around the world are facing at the moment:

1. Climate crisis
2. Racism
3. Gender inequality
4. LGBTQ+ issues
5. Authoritarian politics
6. Economic inequality

Ask participants how they understand the meaning of each of these problems. Clarify the meaning if there is any confusion about how they should be interpreted.

Say that today they can choose what big problems they want to discuss - you will create up to 3 topic groups, with each group discussing a different topic.

Then, ask participants to think about which of these 6 problems are most important to them or which problems they would like to change in the first place. Put the names of the issues on different tables in the room and ask participants to stand next to an issue that is most important to them. Count which 3 problems gathered the most people and ask people from 3 other tables to join one of the most selected topics.

### ④ Know your issue (45 min.)

After creating topic groups, give each group a printed hand-out [Appendix 1].

Say that to find solutions for a problem they have to gain some knowledge about it. Ask them to discuss the problem that they have chosen and to focus on how this problem manifests in their lives. They should answer questions that are on the handouts and they should include every person's perspective. After 30 minutes, ask each group to share their answers. If something is too vague, ask questions and make sure that participants understand their topics.

### ⑤ Finding solutions (1,5 hour)

Tell participants that now is the time to think about solutions for these issues. Tell groups that their task now has 2 parts:

A. Discuss how you can engage in solving these issues. Come up with concrete solutions and divide the solutions into 3 categories:

What can I do as an individual (e.g. change the way I do X, change how I treat Y)?

What can we do as a small group (e.g. create an awareness campaign in our school, change something in our community)?

How can we influence authorities (e.g. ask the school principal to do something, write a petition to the local government)?

**IMPORTANT!** As a trainer/teacher try to guide participants to be as concrete as possible with their ideas. E.g. Instead of writing *We will inform people about the climate crisis*, participants can write *We can paint posters about climate change and hang them in our school*.

B. Create a Flipchart poster presenting your ideas. Make it nice and readable.

Give groups 1,5 hour for these 2 tasks. During this time approach groups and check if they understand the task. If needed - give them some guidance.

#### ⑥ Silent debate (30 min.)

Ask the groups to put their flipcharts on the tables. Give each participant post-it notes (at least as many as there are groups). Tell participants that their task is to approach different tables and read the proposals of other groups. Then, each person should write a note - a suggestion, thought, constructive criticism. After 20 minutes, ask the groups to go back to their original flipchart and read the notes from the other participants. They are allowed to do whatever they want with the suggestions - make some improvements to their original plans or decline them.

#### ⑦ Summary (15 min.)

Congratulate groups on their hard work.

Ask the participants to raise their hands if they would like to transform their plans into real action. Encourage them to try with small steps and slowly move towards big ones.

Say that it is up to them to choose what to do next. They can meet after the workshops and discuss these ideas. They can approach other groups and work together with them, or they can ask local NGOs for help. You can also come back to these topics during future meetings.





## YOUTH ACT BARCELONA

# Appendix 1: Questions to find out more about your challenge

Question	Meaning	Answers
What?	What is the challenge?	
Who?	Who is involved and in which way?	
How?	How does it affect your hometown, city, school, class, youth group?	
Why?	Why is it important?	
When?	When does the challenge manifest in your life? When do you see the consequences of it?	
Where?	Where do you see this challenge the most?	



## SELF-ORGANISED YOUTH GROUPS & DIGITAL PARTICIPATION TOOLS



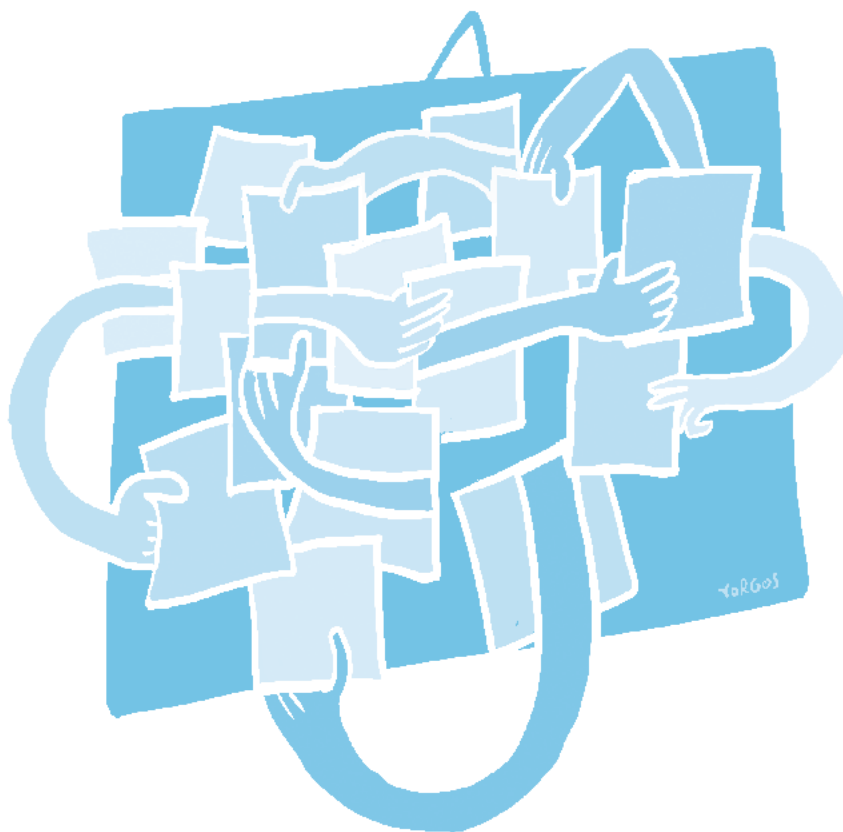
# SELF-ORGANISED YOUTH GROUPS & DIGITAL PARTICIPATION TOOLS

## WHAT IS IT (AND WHAT IS IT NOT) ABOUT?

With an emphasis on non-hierarchical leadership and participatory decision-making methods, (activist) youth groups connect locally, internationally and digitally to work collaboratively on finding innovative and sustainable solutions to common challenges. This chapter explores how self-organised activist movements and youth groups can participate more actively in decision-making, especially through the use of digital collaborative tools, and how they can have a stronger impact on the political agenda and/or on decisions taken in their local communities or schools.

While teachers and parents often complain that youth is using digital tools mainly for fun, some youth movements use them in truly constructive ways, organising impactful collective actions, demanding responsible political decisions and raising public awareness. These forms of youth involvement are fundamentally different from slacktivist practices (online activities requiring very little effort of commitment such as "liking," "sharing," or "tweeting").

Participatory activities within institutions such as schools, where processes are usually initiated by adults, or outside them, where self-organised youth act on their own, can thus complement each other and lay the groundwork for more democratic and citizen-centred political systems in the future.





# EXTINCTION REBELLION

## POLAND



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### Context

The Extinction Rebellion (XR) is an international, non-hierarchical movement that fights for climate justice and better policies in response to the climate crisis. They use methods of civil disobedience: protests, blocking traffic and petitions.

They have no leaders and no formal structure. In Extinction Rebellion, every person has an equal say in the decision making process. Anybody can join the movement, no matter their age, nationality or social status. Coordinating roles are more often given to marginalised groups and those in positions of responsibility are rotated to avoid perpetuating power relations and subordination.

They ensure accessibility (i.e. providing childcare, wheelchair access, avoiding technical jargon), both in meetings and actions. Their strategy focuses on doing the work required to forge authentic alliances with grassroots movements of the most marginalised groups.



### How does it work?

The non-hierarchical and bottom-up structure of the movement manifests through the distribution of tasks and decision-making. Each person can take the initiative and invite others to contribute. Individuals get involved by deciding what element they take responsibility for and to what extent they want to be involved.

The movement is divided into smaller working subgroups (e.g. media group, regeneration group), and each of these subgroups can decide on their own actions, so that the decision-making process goes smoothly.

Decisions are taken not by voting but by consensus. During the decision-making process, each person has the right to object. If this happens, that person has to explain what they think is wrong with the decision. The group discusses until they come to a consensus. Consensus in XR is that no person expresses a strong objection to the decision being made.



### Why did we choose this example?

The way that Extinction Rebellion Poland works shows that democratic groups do not need leaders to be efficient. They present innovative ways of decision making and sharing responsibilities between each other. It can be inspirational to young people - showing that democracy can look different than voting and giving responsibility to chosen individuals.



### Workshop

#### A lesson on Extinction Rebellion

 **Duration: 90 minutes**

*Main objective:* Participants learn about collective decision making and practice it on a small decision in their group.

*Detailed objective:* Participants know what is Extinction Rebellion and how they make decisions.



### Materials:

- The video about Extinction Rebellion Poland.
- A device on which to watch the video (TV/laptop/projector).



### Steps

#### 1 Introduction (5 min.)

Teacher asks students to describe how they make decisions, for example at home or with their friends. How do we make decisions more broadly in our society? Using the answers to these questions, introduce the topic of decision making and explain the upcoming activity as a way to make decisions in a very different way.

#### 2 Video and discussion (20 min.)

Watch the video about XR with the group. Initiate the discussion by asking questions:

- What is extraordinary about this group/movement?
- How do they make decisions? Would this way of decision making work in your class/school/youth group? Why or why not?
- Do movements like XR affect political decisions in any way? Why or why not?

### ③ Making a decision together (45 min.)

- Choose a real decision that you and your group have to make. It should be something simple: what will you do for a celebration day or what movie will you watch in a cinema. It is crucial to pick a topic that is relevant to the group and not a fake construct just for the sake of this activity. It should also be a decision that engages young people and can happen in the near future.
- First, the group has to create criteria for the decision making. See examples of rules in Appendix 1. It is important that the rules are created by the youth. They should propose what is important to them, discuss it and write it down.
- Ask participants to propose rules of good decision making and write it down on a blackboard/flip-chart. You can see examples of rules in Appendix 2.
- Ask every person to write their proposal on post-it notes. Emphasise that there are no good or bad ideas. After 5 minutes collect them and put them on a blackboard/flipchart. You can group similar answers together and summarise them. Ask students if every proposal follows the rules that they have established. If not, ask the person who made that proposal to change something, if possible.
- Write every proposal on a flipchart/blackboard. Ask students to vote for the proposal that they like the most.
- After counting votes, ask students if there is someone who does not agree with the decision. If so, they can argue what rules are not met by this proposal.

### ④ Summary (15 min.)

Ask students how they felt about making this decision? Do they feel like it is their decision or is it forced on them? Why? How can they improve the decision making process for the next time? Do they feel like voting is a fair way of making a decision? Would they like to try making a similar decision by consensus, like XR does?

Summarise by saying that groups can always improve how they collectively make decisions. You, as a group, can always come back to rules of decision making and change them to make them more inclusive and democratic.





## EXTINCTION REBELLION POLAND

# Appendix 1: Making a decision together

Examples of the rules for celebrating First Day of Spring:

- The date is 21 of March.
- We have a budget of 10 EUR per person.
- It has to be outside of the school building.
- It should be inclusive to every person in our class.
- It should last a maximum of 4 hours.

## Appendix 2: Rules of good decision making

Examples of the rules of good communication:

- We listen to each other.
- We do not make fun of one another.
- We consider every proposal.
- Everybody can vote.

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# AULA DIGITAL TOOL

Germany



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## Context

Created in 2014, Aula is a concept operating via an online platform (also a mobile app) that allows secondary and high school pupils aged around 11-18 to develop their own ideas about how they would like to change and improve their school environment and to decide how these ideas will be implemented. Students are also given the chance to reflect on the process in a classroom context and explore the links between everyday life decisions and democratic responsibility. Aula was developed by the German association politik-digital e.V. with the support of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education. It is mostly used in German schools but has also been adapted to other contexts outside education, such as community decision-making.



## How does it work?

1. The school council including pupils, teachers and the school leadership draws up a contract which governs the ways students and teachers can use the Aula online platform. This includes how they can contribute ideas on Aula but also the limitations on what they can do. The school leadership team also commits to taking up any proposal decided on the platform, as long as that idea is acceptable within the terms of the school's Aula contract.
2. After the contract is signed by all parties involved, students are given a user account and can log into the platform anywhere and anytime. They can post, discuss, elaborate on their own ideas and support the ideas of others via the online platform.
3. After the ideas are elaborated upon and clustered into topics, the school leadership team checks if an idea is compatible with the Aula contract and achievable in practice.
4. The ideas are then submitted for voting.
5. All the ideas that gained sufficient votes are implemented. The responsibility for implementing the idea lies with its originator and the idea project team. They may ask for help from their class representative, the school leadership or their class teacher.

The Aula platform is moderated by teachers and students who want to take on more responsibility and some administrative roles. Parents have the option to request accounts that allow them to see the ideas and discussions taking place in their child's school or class. They have no other access to the site.



### Why is it innovative? Why did we choose it?

In the school setting, students have too little opportunity to influence the environment in which they spend most of their days. Aula is a project that allows them to actively participate in shaping their schools with the use of digital tools. Aula brings together learning about the media and politics and lays the foundations for responsible political participation in a digital world. It allows young people to practise responsibility, communication skills and creative thinking and to gain confidence in their actions.



### Workshop

#### Decision making through digital tools

🕒 **Duration: 3,5 hours + breaks**

*Main objective:* Participants learn about digital participation from the example of an app called Aula.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Participants understand the term of digital participation.
- Participants learn about possibilities of using digital participation in schools.
- Participants create ideas of using digital tools in decision-making in their own schools.



### Materials:

- Video about Aula
- A device to watch the video on (TV/laptop/projector,screen)
- School board/flipchart
- Flipchart paper or other large sheets of paper
- Colourful pens and highlighters
- Green, yellow and red post-its (as many as participants)







### ❶ Introduction (5 min.)

Tell students that the topic of this workshop will be participation with a special focus on digital participation. This term refers to different ways people get involved in decision making in their communities (schools, cities, countries). There are traditional ways of participating (e.g. voting, running in elections, sending petitions), and there are more innovative ways that are becoming more popular each year. During these workshops, you will discuss how digital tools can improve participation in your schools.

### ❷ Is Aula an example for us? (20 min.)

Tell students that now they will watch a short video with an example of digital participation. Say that afterwards you will be discussing 3 questions (see below).

Write these questions on a board or present them on a screen:

- How would you describe the idea of Aula to your peers?
- What are the possibilities that this platform gives students?
- What challenges do you see in implementing a similar decision making process in schools?

*The students watch the film about Aula.*

After watching the video, tell your students that they will work in 3 phases. They will first think about questions by themselves for 2 minutes. Then they will share their thoughts in pairs for 6 minutes and come to common conclusions. At the end, each pair of students will present their thoughts to the whole group.

*Process:*

- 2 minutes reflect by yourself
- 6 minutes sharing in pairs
- 12 minutes sharing in plenary

Ask students if they have any questions regarding the video and rules of using Aula. You will find most common questions and answers to them in Appendix 1.

### ❸ Digital tools list (15 min.)

Tell the group that Aula is a unique innovation, but parts of it can be transferred easily to any group. Ask participants if they know/use any digital tools that can help in these processes:

- creating new projects and ideas
- discussing new ideas
- debating
- making common decisions

On a flipchart/school board create a list of tools mentioned by the group. Tell the group that this list will become useful in the next part.

### ❹ Accessibility of digital participation (30 min.)

Ask students to consider the limitations of digital participation. Emphasise that real participation and democracy is possible only under the condition that it is accessible to everyone.

Give them 2 questions to think about:

- Can you give examples of situations in which students would not have equal access to this digital tool?
- How could we solve those problems? Come up with at least 3 ideas.

After 10 minutes, ask students to share their answers with the group. On a board/flipchart write a list of possible problems and solutions that the group created.

### ⑤ Digital tools in our group (90 min.)

Divide students into groups of 3-5 people. Give each group a flipchart and pens of different colours. Tell students that now you will think about using digital tools in decision making in their group. Specify that their task now is to choose a problem/issue that they have inside their class/youth group, which could be solved with decision making (e.g. choosing where to go on a trip or deciding what they want their classroom to look like).

Then they should create a proposal for how they could use digital tools known to them to make common decisions. Emphasise that the proposals have to include more than simply voting - they should allow students to share their thoughts, proposals, discussions. The groups should create a whole proposal answering the following questions:

- What is the problem we would like to solve?
- What is the decision associated with this problem that should be made?
- What tool(s) should we use in this case?
- What capabilities will this tool give us?
- Why would digital tools help us with making this decision?
- How should we carry out this process step by step?

Write these questions on a flipchart/board.

Participants should draw a poster advertising their proposal and prepare to present it to the whole group.

Give participants 40 minutes to create their proposals. Afterwards ask each group to present their idea in front of the class for 5 minutes. After each presentation listeners have 5 minutes to ask questions to the presenting groups. Each group answers the questions or notes them down to consider later.

At the end of this part students can decide together through consensus which proposals they would like to apply to their group.

### ⑥ Summary and feedback (40 min.)

Remind the group about everything that you have discussed during this workshop.

Give each participant 3 post-its: 1 green, 1 yellow and 1 red and ask them to write on them the following:

- On the green paper, they write a conclusion, reflection or thought they have after this workshop.
- On the yellow paper, they write a question/concern they have after this workshop.
- On the red paper, they write down the things they do not understand about digital participation.

Tell the students that they have 5 minutes to write their answers down. After this time, gather post-its from each student and group them thematically on the board/flipchart. Summarise answers in each category (green/yellow/red). If you have the knowledge, answer the questions or doubts. If not, encourage students to research the topic after the workshops.



## AULA DIGITAL TOOL GERMANY

# Appendix 1: More information about Aula

### What are the rules of the cooperation agreement to Aula?

- all the school's consultation bodies are reached (all the important committees - general conferences, school management conferences, school conferences, etc.) so that no one can say that it is not known that pupils can design, select and implement projects with the use of Aula.
- It is stipulated that all ideas that are considered "accepted" within the framework of the Aula contract are important.
- Additional information about the school's student council: it continues to be fully responsible for its tasks at the school and does not lose its relevance through the co-determination opportunities provided by Aula. However, it also has the task of appointing a team of moderators.

### What does the law say about this?

- In a court of law, the agreements in Aula are not binding, but they have a high moral obligation.

### Who is named in the cooperation agreement?

All those who take on roles in the process - for example:

- those generating ideas
- those supporting ideas
- those responsible for ideas (two for each)
- the review team (checking implementation and who needs to be involved)
- The facilitators (responsible for ensuring that rules are adhered to and awarding medals for selected ideas).

### What else is in the contract?

There is a fixed process by which ideas come to a possible vote by the students. This is described in the contract.

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## AULA DIGITAL TOOL APPENDIX 1 PAGE 2

### ***In what areas students can propose changes?***

- Spatial design ideas
- Issuing rules of conduct for the orderly running of the school (house rules)
- Breaktime rules
- Breaktime catering
- The extra-curricular activities offered by the school within the framework of the staffing and facilities available at the school
- Cooperation with non-school facilities and institutions within the framework of projects aimed at opening the school to its social environment and taking into account the given material requirements
- The organisation of special school events
- The establishment and development of school partnerships
- The school's internal principles for excursions as well as class and course trips
- The principles for the activities of groups of pupils at school
- Other matters that fall within the competences of the school conference or the pupils' representatives.
- Rules in class
- Demanding transparency from teachers regarding the design of rules or curricula
- Planning specific class trips or school festivals
- Questions about the furnishing of rooms or the school
- Changes in the Aula process itself
- Helping to shape the school concept
- Demonstrations or project plans outside the school community

Other options with Aula: discussion of official documents from the student council in the entire school.

### **What are the limits of co-determination?**

- Applicable law
- School Act/School Regulations
- No ideas that only benefit individuals or certain pupils
- There is no influence on the personnel/staff policy of the school via Aula.
- Costs must be covered by an independent financing concept.

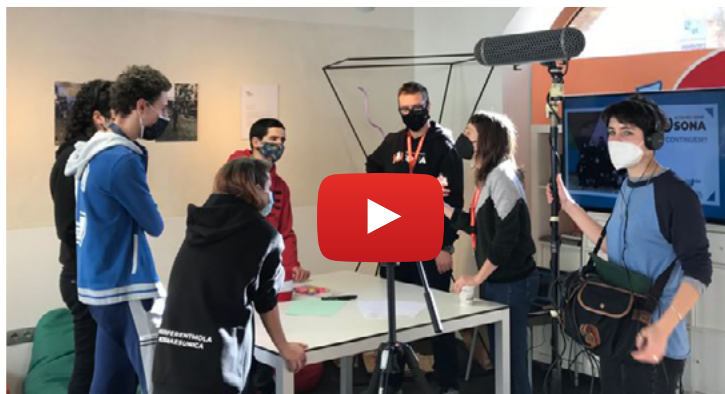
### **Other information:**

- Facilitators ensure that the rules on the platform are respected.
- In case of three violations of the rules of platform use, the person will be excluded from participation via the platform and the account will be blocked for 2 months. If the person in question then accumulates 3 violations again, the account will be blocked for 4 months. In order to establish a violation, at least three moderators must confirm this. After each violation, a warning will be issued to the person.
- No insults, discriminatory posts or otherwise offensive content will be written on the platform.
- No personal conflicts will be carried out on the platform and no persons will be discussed.
- No full names of students or teachers are written on the platform. User names (such as maxmus) or abbreviations of the surname, such as Max M., are permitted.
- When choosing a profile picture, make sure that the rights to use the picture are given. Therefore, pictures with open licences or your own pictures should be used. Offensive, insulting or pornographic content are forbidden.
- Suggestions for improvement are to be formulated constructively. They must not simply contain a devaluation of the idea without giving reasons.



# OSONA DIVERSE GROUP

## Catalonia



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### Context

Promoted by the County Council, Osona Youth Group is a space to encourage the active participation of young people with an inclusive vision and an intercultural perspective. The idea arose during the collaboration between the Youth Service and the Reception and Integration Service of the Osona County Council for the elaboration of the County Youth Plan.

This initiative encourages young people to work together with public administration for the benefit of all young people in the region. The aim is to address difficulties with stereotypes and labels, improve coexistence and generate synergies to act in the face of possible discriminatory situations.

The group is currently made up of twelve young people between the ages of 15 and 24. They meet monthly and work on the cohesion of the group, the recognition of diversity and the promotion of small actions that may have an impact at the county level.

It is an open group - any young person can join it. The group aims to become a space for participation and work of its own, independent of the administration, with the capacity to contribute and influence the policies regarding youth.



### How does it work?

The Osona regional government wanted to develop the Regional Youth Plan based on the timely participation of a group of young people. Youth workers decided to create a working group with an intersectional vision to give the plan an inclusive look. The group was formed and started to participate in the Regional Youth Plan and continues to collaborate in the development of public youth policies.

They organize seminars and workshops about antiracism, LGBTQ+ movement with some leisure time and non-formal activities that they propose.

In the future they want to work on creating a group independent of the administration. The consolidation of this group will give young people in the region the opportunity to be able to act with their own voice to create new youth policies.



## Why did we choose this example?

This is an innovative way of including young people from diverse backgrounds into policy making on a local level. The way it works can be seen as a “school of participation” with the aim of empowering young people and having their own voices as co-creators of youth policies.



## Workshop

### Inner work. Let's take a look inside!

🕒 **Duration: 2 hours 45 minutes + breaks**

*Main objective:* Participants analyse how differences in privilege are reflected in decision making in their groups.

*Detailed objectives:*

- Participants increase self knowledge.
- Participants identify the role that they have within their class/ group.
- Participants analyse their influence/position within the group.
- Participants create ideas on how they can ensure more equal participation in their group.



## Materials:

- Video about Osona Diverse Group
- Device for showing a video
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Printed Appendix 1



## Steps

### ❶ Introduction (5 min.)

Tell participants that today you will discuss how different people in a group can have different positions that reflect their privilege. You will try to find solutions to these issues in your group. Have the group come up with a few examples where different positions reflect privilege in society.

### ❷ Video (15 min.)

Tell participants that you will watch a video about Osona Diverse Group. This group includes people from different backgrounds. Together they discuss important topics and can give their suggestions to the City Council of Osona.

After watching the video, say that inspired by this group, you will together talk about how you can ensure that people of different backgrounds can have equal opportunities in your group/class.

**③ Our group (30 min.)**

Divide participants into smaller groups. Give each group a set of questions:

- What are the aims of our group?
- What are the benefits that we get from being together?
- Do we see any obstacles for participating actively in the group? If so, what are they?

If participants have issues with understanding questions/coming up with ideas, you can give them more detailed questions:

- Aims of the group (what do you do together: learn? take action? discuss topics?)
- Benefits (what is most important in this group for you? how do you know that time in this group is not wasted?)
- Obstacles (does every person participate equally in our activities? If not, why? Maybe age difference, language barriers, personality differences?).

Summarise the answers in the group. If people have different perspectives, you can say that the next exercise can help them understand the root of it.

**④ Take a step forward (40 min.)**

Tell participants that now they will receive a description of a “fake identity”. Their task is to analyse it and imagine they are this person. Give them printed descriptions (1 per person). If there are more people, many people can receive the same description [Appendix 1]. Give participants a few minutes to read and analyse their descriptions.

Ask participants to stand next to each other in a line. You will read them sentences [Appendix 2]- if the sentence is reflecting the person in their “fake identity”, they should step forward. Say that if they are not sure about whether they should take a step, they should decide however they think their “fake personality” would feel.

After you read the last sentence, ask people that have made it to first place in this “race” to look back. Say that even though the personalities were not real, they reflect how people in different groups (including yours) have different starting points in life. The differences between participants show that it is not enough to give everybody equal rights to participate, we need to give them equal opportunities as well.

Ask participants to come back to their seats and ask them:

- How did you feel after the “race” was over?
- How did you feel seeing different positions people were standing on at the end?
- Would you like to make a change, to give people in your group equal opportunities?

Say that their next task will be creating solutions for possible inequalities in their group.

## ⑤ Solutions for our group (1 hour)

Divide participants into pairs. Tell them to answer the following two questions:

- What rules can we make in our group that would provide equal opportunities for every member?
- What solutions would we propose to give every person equal opportunity to speak their mind and make decisions with us?

If participants have problems with creating solutions, you can give them categories to choose from:  
language barriers

- access to the internet and digital tools
- background in low-income families
- different ethnic backgrounds
- sexual minorities
- gender inequalities
- Introverts / extroverts

After 15 minutes of working in pairs, ask participants to create small groups (6-8 people) and discuss their solutions. Give groups 15 minutes for exchanging their ideas. After that time ask each group to read their ideas.

Ask if everybody agrees with all ideas. If not, give participants an opportunity to exchange their thoughts. Together create an “Equal Opportunities Act” on a flipchart or online. Write down all the rules and solutions that the group created.

## ⑥ Summary (15 min.)

Congratulate all the participants on their hard work. Ask students to take a paper and a pen and finish following sentences:

- The most important thing I have learned today is that...
- I am happy that we...
- I wonder...

Tell participants that from now, you will together be responsible for making sure every person in your group has the same opportunities.





## OSONA DIVERSE GROUP

# Appendix 1: Imagine You are this person

Alice

You are a citizen of this country. You were born and raised here, but your parents emigrated here from Egypt. You live with your parents, who have good jobs but do not spend much time with you. During Ramadan you skip some classes to go to the mosque.

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Maria

You were born in a different country and you had to leave it because of a war. You live in a small apartment with your grandmother. Your parents stayed in your country of origin. You do not like what your body looks like.

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John

You are a citizen of this country. Your father has a very good job, and your mom stays at home taking care of you. You go out with friends often, you also have a girlfriend. In the future you would like to become a football player, which is why you train football every day.

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Mat

You were born in this country, but you are not a citizen. Your parents live together, but they often fight a lot. You suffer from anxiety and depression but are scared to ask anyone for help. You do not have a computer or a cellphone.

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Laura

You have a nice family. Your parents have good jobs, and you never lack any financial resources. You are healthy and smart, everybody in your school likes you. However, you are scared to tell anyone that you are gay.



## OSONA DIVERSE GROUP

# Appendix 2: Take a step forward - list of sentences

- You have never encountered any serious financial difficulty.
- You have decent housing with a telephone line and television.
- You feel your language, religion and culture are respected in the society where you live.
- You know where to turn for advice and help if you need it.
- You have never felt discriminated against because of your origin.
- You have adequate social and medical protection for your needs.
- You can go away on holiday once a year.
- You have an interesting life and you are positive about your future.
- You are not afraid of being harassed or attacked in the streets, or in the media.
- You can fall in love with the person of your choice.
- You can use and benefit from the Internet.
- You are close to most of your family.
- You identify as a citizen of this country.
- You are comfortable with your body.

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## About us:

This toolkit for youth workers and teachers was developed in the framework of the European project **Democratic Innovations in Youth Work (DIYW)** that was co-funded by the European Union Programme Erasmus+ and initiated by four civil society organisations and social businesses – Catalan Association of Youth Policies Professionals (Spain), Center for Citizenship Education (Poland), Citizens For Europe (Germany) and DeGeDE (German Society for Democratic Education - Germany). The aim of the project is to tackle the growing democratic disenchantment and erosion in Europe and support teachers and youth workers in empowering young people to envision a democracy beyond voting, to envision themselves as an active part of a building participatory democracy.

From January 2021 to August 2023 DIYW brought together youth workers, teachers, civil society actors, young people, video-makers as well as experts in democratic innovations. They developed, tested and disseminated various didactic materials that support youth workers and teachers to introduce to young people Democratic Innovations. Those innovations have been designed and implemented to advance democracy and to involve people, and especially young people, more actively in designing policies and decision-making that affect their lives.

**The Catalan Association of Youth Professionals (ACPJ)** was founded in 2004 with the aim of regulating the work of youth professionals and defending them before the institutions.

To achieve this, we work in different lines, such as vindicating the social and labour dignity of the youth group, representing members and associates before the institutions that carry out youth policies, promoting the design of targeted training programs to these professionals, to establish the necessary mechanisms to guarantee the territorial representation of all the associates, to organise formative and social activities to foment the cohesion of the group and to promote the development of the youth policies.

**The Center for Citizenship Education (CCE)** is the largest educational non-governmental organisation in Poland. With CCE support teachers bring to school methods and topics that help students engage in their education and better cope with the challenges of the modern world.

We run programs that develop faith in our own capabilities, openness and critical thinking, teach cooperation and responsibility, encourage engagement in public life and social activities. We follow current trends and respond to educational challenges that appear in a changing world.

The solutions proposed by CCE are based on over 28 years of experience, expert knowledge and cooperation with practitioners. About 40 thousand teachers and school directors from almost 10 thousand schools all over Poland use our support.



**PROFESSIONALS  
DE JOVENTUT**



**CENTER  
FOR CITIZENSHIP  
EDUCATION**



**Citizens For Europe gUG (CFE)** is a non-profit organisation based in Berlin with a focus on empowering civil society, strengthening democracy, as well as on promoting diversity and dismantling discrimination and racism. Since 2010 we have been advocating for a more participatory and inclusive society at the local and European level and we strive for representation of all marginalised communities. Our activities range from research and publications to empowerment through workshops/trainings, consulting on diversity and inclusion, collection of anti-discrimination and equality data, to grassroots activism and audio-visual educational projects. These activities are implemented by our interdisciplinary and diverse team, e.g. People of Color, in collaboration with our networks and experts in academia, politics, civil society and communities. Our projects receive broad attention in the media, politics and communities.



**The German Society for Democracy Education (DeGeDe)** is a network of actors from education and educational practice, educational research as well as education administration and education policy, which aims to promote and bundle national and international discourses on democracy education and to set impulses.

The goal of DeGeDe is to empower children, youth and adults to help shape a democratic and inclusive society. Therefore, DeGeDe promotes the democratisation of formal and non-formal educational institutions and organisations. We support children, youth and educators to build subject-specific and cross-curricular democratic competencies and to experience self-efficacy as citizens in democracy as a way of life, society and governance.

We promote the further development of democracy education through discussions among members, practical projects and the connection to social science discourses, especially the theory of democracy.



[www.democracyandyouth.eu](http://www.democracyandyouth.eu)