



Paths of Participation

International Youth Assembly



BRITISH
COUNCIL



Education and Culture DG
'Youth in Action' Programme

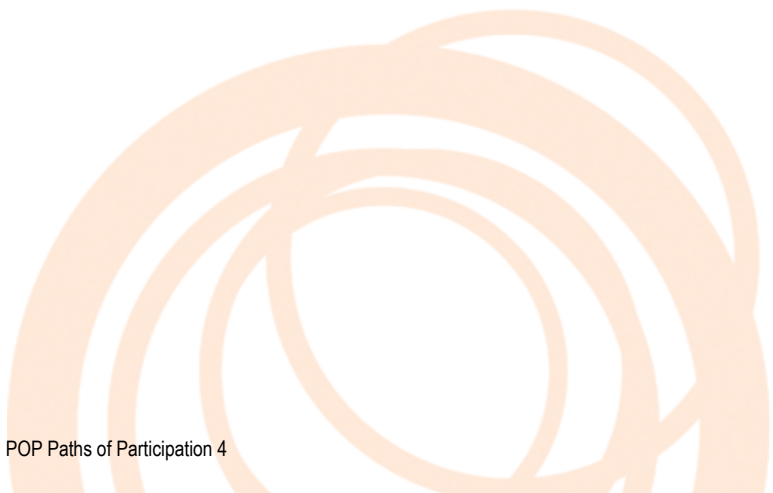


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Introduction

This is the story of the PoP (Paths of Participation) International Youth Assembly which took place between 23rd and 27th October 2011 at the White Horse Hotel, Derry and involved almost 50 young people from Northern Ireland, Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Finland.

The process kicked off at the same venue in May 2011 when representatives of all partner organisations came together to discuss implementation of the assembly and how, in the time between both the planning meeting and the assembly local projects would be implemented in each partner country.

This report begins by contextualising the Youth Assembly within the process that is and has been The 'PoP' Project from its humble beginning back in 2008 and explains how the idea of a Youth Assembly grew over time. It goes on to outline the purpose of the Assembly including long-term goal, unique element, methodology used, ultimate aim, planned legacy, how it met the general objectives of the Youth in Action Programme and its significance for Derry~Londonderry.

The report also details the Planning Meeting, provides a brief overview of local projects and goes into detail of the Youth Assembly itself including 'Team Building', 'Assembly' and 'Action' Days. It also outlines its achievements whilst also taking account of the learning from the event and ends with some conclusions.

I would like to conclude this introduction by thanking our international partners and their staff for the strong level of commitment, energy, determination and perseverance which has helped make the Assembly successful; I would also like to thank all young people who took risks and put themselves forward in an effort to support our work and finally the British Council, who through funding from the EU's Youth in Action Programme agreed to fund the project.

Fergal Barr, Youth Co-ordinator, Inside Out



Background to POP Youth Assembly

In 2007, the European Union launched a call for a Large Scale Project 'encouraging innovation and quality in the youth sector'. The aim of the call was to support the integration of young people with fewer opportunities living in suburban areas in Europe in line with the programme's overall priorities, which were intended to encourage participation by young people, cultural diversity, European citizenship, social integration and the then special priority, promoting equal opportunities.

Phase 1 Developed by our Viennese partner, ELT (Experience, Learning, Training), 'The PoP (Paths of Participation) Project - New ways for inclusion and active participation of young people living in suburban and marginalised areas in European Cities' aimed to exchange Models of Best Practice through a combination of two key elements: (i) week-long Job Shadows and (ii) a series of seminars/training programmes.

Job Shadows took place in Berlin and Helsinki in October and November of 2008 and in Vienna and Derry in February and

March of 2009. Seminars on themes of Participation and Inter-cultural Conflict took place in Vienna and Derry in September of 2008 and January 2009 respectively.

A final PoP Conference took place in Berlin in May 2009 and one of the outcomes of the conference was a clear desire to keep the 'PoP' project going in some way and to build upon the work developed and delivered during the first phase of the programme. For more info on PoP please see www.pop-project.eu

There were many, many ideas and suggestions - among these being a proposal



to host a Feasibility Meeting to discuss further how PoP could be sustained.

Phase 2 Feasibility Meeting

Inside Out applied for and secured funding from the British Council and in December of 2009 alongside five other invited partners, met and agreed on a way forward for the second phase of 'PoP'.

One of the very clear outcomes from that meeting was that any new partnership and its ensuing activities should (a) focus primarily on young people whilst (b) retaining a practitioner's element as had been the case with the first phase of 'PoP'.

Whereas all activities in phase one of 'PoP' fell under the large scale application co-ordinated by ELT, it was agreed that on this occasion both ELT and Inside Out would facilitate the delivery of the two key elements of phase two.

ELT would secure funding to support the continued exchange of practitioners (involving all partners at the Feasibility Meeting) in short week-long job shadows that would coincide with on-going youth democracy-based projects organised by host organisations. So for example, in

March 2011, Inside Out hosted practitioners from Zavod ANI and UNESCO to observe some of the practice being delivered under its other youth democracy project - The 'Why?' Project. To support this process Inside Out agreed to apply for and host a Youth Assembly to be held in Northern Ireland in the autumn of 2011.

Whilst there was much discussion on how 'PoP' should evolve the Feasibility Meeting established a broad framework from which the 'PoP' project could continue to develop.

Planning Meeting Much of the detail though, namely that regarding the two key elements still had to be ironed out and in August of 2010 ELT hosted a planning meeting to clarify a wide range of issues regarding the second phase of PoP and in particular the proposed exchange of practitioners and the various local projects they would visit.

The Youth Assembly fitted within the broad context of 'PoP' because all the partners were committed to a twin-track process that involved (a) an exchange of practitioners and local democracy projects and (b) providing opportunities for young people to experience and 'taste' participation and democracy.

Northern Ireland partners, Inside Out and Clubs for Young People NI (Northern Ireland) co-ordinated delivery of the second element of the PoP process but also viewed the Youth Assembly as an opportunity to help embed participation structures at local level within the Derry City Council area.

It was hoped that their efforts would galvanise both youth workers and young people 'on the ground' to ensure that the views of young people would be adequately reflected in public life by developing a model which also had the potential to be replicated in partner countries as well as embedded in the North West area of Northern Ireland.

This also fitted within the broader plans of Clubs for Young People NI in that they had just established a presence in the North West and were hopeful that this would help bolster that presence.

Both Inside Out and Clubs for Young People NI along with its European partners recognised the value and importance of the role that young people can play in public life and the proposed Youth Assembly

would be an important part of that and provide an opportunity to work together to develop a model of practice that would introduce young people to democracy and help embed participation structures.

Purpose of the POP Youth Assembly

Long-Term Goal One of the long-term aims of The PoP Youth Assembly was to create an annual meeting involving young people from each of the partner organisations with a view to providing views and opinions on a wide range of issues as well as reflect upon participative and democratic processes.

This concept was based on two key underpinning beliefs – young people do not have adequate opportunity to (i) express themselves in public life thus feeling excluded and isolated and (ii) they do not have the opportunity to engage in mechanisms whereby they can influence policy and bring about change.

All of our (non-formal) partners were of the same opinion, hence their commitment to the PoP process and by engaging formal partners, i.e., public bodies in their local settings in this proposal it was a testament to their commitment to help bring about change.

Whilst there were examples of youth democracy projects operational within each of the geographical locations of project promoters many were akin to (what we

might describe) as youth council based arrangements and not the assembly-type scenario we wanted to create.

Unique In all of the locations represented in the partnership there was no existing youth assembly of the kind we aspired to, i.e., a 'sitting assembly' that debates and takes decisions on issues or matters of concern on an international basis and thus we were attempting to implement a relatively new model that provided young people with the opportunity to engage in 'public life' and argue for change not only at a local level but to create consensus on an international stage.

The Assembly would allow participants to build upon the work they have done during their on local 'PoP'-led projects and enable them to go into the assembly



feeling informed, confident and equipped to engage in the discussion and debate.

Methodology By using an Open Space-type methodology we could not only facilitate young people bringing their issue to the assembly but their assuming control for how it evolves and whereby solid actions and clear outputs (to help inform the way forward for the assembly) would emerge.

Ultimate Aim The ultimate aim of The PoP Youth Assembly was to provide young people from diverse backgrounds with the opportunity to engage in debate and discussion on a range of relevant issues and in doing so not only experience 'democracy in action' but learn about the various processes involved whilst agreeing actions that can help inform and influence youth work policy and practice not only at local level but in each of the partner countries.

Legacy The Youth Assembly was also designed to leave a lasting local legacy in all partner countries whereby young people could continue to operate with the support of and under the guidance of the project promoters and in due course could work in partnership with more public bodies to

ensure that participation and democracy of young people is embedded at local level.

General Objectives The project met the general objectives of the Youth in Action programme in the following ways:

- **promotes young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular** – the programme brought young people from five different countries together to enhance their skills and increase their knowledge and experience of democracy and therefore equip them with the capacity to be active citizens;
- **fosters mutual understanding between young people in different countries** – the programme brought together 48 young people from five different countries and through a range of conversation and other complimentary processes provided space and time for participants to interact and therefore helped to increase their knowledge and understanding of one another so as to help them reflect on stereotypes, prejudice and perceptions that they might have had prior to meeting.

The project also contributed to the permanent thematic priorities of the Youth in Action Programme in the following ways:

- **European Citizenship** – by coming together they engaged in discussion and debate around common issues that have relevance at a European level and thus contributed to the broader debate around European Citizenship.
- **Participation of young people** – by the very nature of the project, i.e., the participation of those young people was clearly visible, tangible and evident. Prior to the assembly each promoter worked with 'their' young people to help prepare them for their involvement thus equipping them with the confidence and skills to take (at the very least) an active role in the process. This was evident in the level of participation during Day 1 – the Team Building Day, Day 2 – Reflection and World Cafe discussions and (preparation for 'Street Protest') Workshops and on Day 3 – the Street Protest and presentations to the Mayor of Derry~Londonderry.

And finally, the programme contributed to the then National Priority of European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) – by continuing to

work to reduce the sense of isolation and exclusion felt by young people by providing them with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to engage in local public decision-making processes. We also hoped that the 'taste' of democracy that participants got from the process would inspire them to begin volunteering at local level thus providing a small but essential contribution to European Year of Volunteering in 2011.

The process for achieving all of this began with the Planning Meeting when partners from Northern Ireland, Poland, Slovenia, Germany, Finland and Austria gathered at the White Horse Hotel in May 2011.



Relevance to Derry-Londonderry

The Youth Assembly was viewed as a potentially significant step in helping to embed a long-term participation mechanism for young people within the city and was significant at the time (particularly) in light of Derry having secured 'UK City of Culture' status for 2013 and also as part of its then bid to land the 'European Youth Capital' title for the same year.

This city was viewed as being in a privileged position and the hosting of an international Youth Assembly which was also timed to coincide with Inside Out hosting a three-day plenary (involving young people from Northern Ireland and Germany from its other Youth Democracy Project) provided the city with not only the opportunity to demonstrate its vision and leadership in promoting participation among young people (up to eighty young people from five different countries across both projects) but would add an extra dimension to the city's annual calendar of events.



The PoP Youth Assembly Planning Meeting

The Planning Meeting took place between 21st and 25th May and allowed representatives from all ten partners (five countries) to meet and plan for both the Local Project Phase and Youth Assembly.

Poland were originally represented at the planning meeting but were unable to continue due to one of their original Partner Agreement Forms getting lost in transit and thus their participation was deemed ineligible by the British Council.

The planning meeting largely involved (in-depth) round-table discussions and also a number of small working groups to develop various aspects of the Youth Assembly.

The meeting began with an overview of the work of each organisation and existing participation projects with young people, an explanation of work that would make up the Local Project phase of the Youth Assembly and in-depth discussion of how the Youth Assembly could and should be implemented including roles, responsibilities, tasks, commitments and actions post-meeting and pre-assembly.

We went through each aspect of the programme including content, staff responsibilities, duties as well as agreeing

common principles and values that applied to the programme not to mention conduct and expectations from one another.

It was at times very in-depth and much time was spent on agreeing principles and expectations and how we would ensure we not only met the needs of participants but uphold our responsibilities to manage their stay effectively and safely.

It was agreed of course that all partners stay in regular contact but that each country would have a 'Country co-ordinator' who communicated regularly via e-mail, text and telephone in the build-up to the programme.

It was also agreed at the meeting in May that at least three of the country co-ordinators would meet in Derry two days early to work on 'paving the way' for the arrival of groups which involved taking care of logistics and practicalities so as to ensure a safe and smooth process.



The following is a breakdown of the key points that emerged from the meeting.

Target Group: 14-17 year olds with a % of young people who are likely to be over 18

Overall view of Youth Assembly:

Day 1: Fun Day – break into smaller groups and ‘compete’ against each other but in a way that gets to know one another.

Day 2: Assembly - Workshops

Day 3: Activity in the city – tour, event, reception with mayor, shopping, flash mob.

The final ‘Draft’ Assembly programme has been reproduced overleaf (P 16).

Overarching Themes

- Stimulating their thoughts and ideas
- Creating learning spaces
- Use Moaning Wall/Wishing Tree?
- Planning Group of young people made up of reps from each country

Working Groups

- Getting to know each other & leisure activities
- Evening programmes
- Youth Assembly
- Actions
- Interactive City Tour – actions in small groups and then in large group.



Final 'Draft' Assembly programme:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
AM	9.30 Bus to Diamond Centre 10am Getting to know each other	9.30 Youth Assembly (workshops)	9.30 Bus 10am Gathering in the Guildhall Square 10.10 Circuit of the walls 11.15 Shopping Centre 'attack' 11.30 Reception with the Mayor
PM	1.30pm Lunch Leisure Activities 6pm Bus 7pm Dinner	12.30pm Lunch Market Place & large group meeting 4pm Action planning 7pm Dinner	12pm Participants go to various gates to conduct interviews 1pm Lunch 2pm Plenary 3.15pm Presenting information to the Mayor 4pm Close Free time 6.30 Return to hotel 7pm Dinner
PM+	Intercultural evening	Leisure Activities	8.30 Farewell party



Local Projects

The second phase of the Youth Assembly process involved the Local Action Phase. Each partner organisation worked closely with their group in their respective environments on their local projects to explore both participation and democracy and was able to build up relationships with them over a period of time.

In this respect much of the emphasis focused on exploring these concepts and a number of practical activities to back this up allowed participants to compare and contrast their understanding of these concepts and the following is a brief overview of the local projects that each partner organisation undertook.

Northern Ireland: In Northern Ireland young leaders from The Yard Project in Derry took part in an OCN Accredited Training Project called 'Network Earth: Global Citizen for the 21st Century'.

The project provided training in Global Education and as a result participants had to then develop a local project (they chose Child Poverty) and worked with young people in their own setting to develop and paint a mural which would highlight the theme they chose and then present

their learning to their peers, colleagues, practitioners and young people at a Celebration/Unveiling event.

Germany: Although a local action project did take place no detailed information was forthcoming from the German partner at the time of going to print.

Austria: Word Up! 20' Youth Parliament targeted young students in the 20th district of Vienna and engaged them in a 'parliament' that focuses on the policies and decision-making processes of the district's policy-makers and helps them to reach binding agreements.

The process began with a video on Word Up!20 followed by workshops on, for example, democracy and responsibilities. Two delegates from each school class were nominated to work on the issues before



returning to engage with the other students so as to further help inform the process. Pupils then get a 'fixed amount' of money to help address the issue(s) with the support of the Mayor of the district before coming together for a final plenary to evaluate the process.

Slovenia: The Slovenian Local Democracy Project was divided into two parts. First phase was an Open Space training for youngsters followed by two Open Space activities in schools conducted by high schools students. Activities focused on research into local youth policy.

The second phase is currently on-going. After much 'structural work' eight "non-organised" youth representatives were elected to the 'second dorm' of the local youth council (bicameral youth council pilot project). Elections were embedded together with a referendum which ran on the same day in Slovenia. The first phase is still on-going and (at the time of writing) another OS event with the local mayor, municipality representatives and local young people working on local youth policy has been organised.

Finland: The SKARPPi Peer Education Programme developed a new kind of alcohol education model based on the input of young people. SKARPPi trained young people aged fourteen and up to act as peer educators to other young people (younger than them). They then acted as mentors and promoted conversations with young people about drinking in schools and youth centres.

The SKARPPi Action Crew (as they are known) met once in a week and their aim was to arrange events promoting discussion regarding drinking, share opinions in local newspapers via the web and try to influence how alcohol is advertised.

The project ran between May and December 2011 during which time 263 young people were mentored in 17 different groups across 34 workshops. There were also a number of events and activities including a water bottle campaign at a local shopping centre which was used to initiate conversations about alternatives to alcohol as well as a campaign highlighting the lack of consultation with young people around alcohol advertising and a questionnaire collating the views of adults around how alcohol is advertised.

The POP International Youth Assembly



The PoP International Youth Assembly was held at the White Horse Hotel, Derry and ran between 23rd and 27th October 2011. It involved 40 young people from five countries – Northern Ireland, Austria, Finland, Germany and Slovenia.

The programme was designed to meet 2 of the 5 general objectives of the Youth in Action Programme, i.e., promotes young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular and foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries.

The Youth Assembly was also run simultaneously alongside The 'Why?' Project Joint Plenary involving 36 young people from Northern Ireland and Germany.

The Youth Assembly was structured in three phases:

(i) Day 1 was 'Team Building/Orientation' Day where participants would take part in a series of interactive activities so as to promote contact between participants so that they could get to know one another.

(ii) Day 2 was 'Discussion Day' where participants would have the opportunity to chat about issues affecting them

(iii) Day 3 – 'Action Day' where participants would travel to the City Centre and make a 'noisy' and visually impressive circuit of the city's famous walls in order to signal a 'street protest' about important issues.

'Team Building/Orientation' Day

Participants travelled to The Diamond Centre in Claudy, Co Derry (home of Inside Out) where they took part in structured simultaneous workshops that ran throughout the morning session before everyone participated in a large team game called the 'City Game' in the afternoon. Workshops covered a variety of themes – sports, arts, crafts, music and board games among them.



‘Discussion Day’ Discussions ‘kicked off’ in the morning beginning with ‘My Issue is....’ where each working group would identify 3 issues and then prepare and present these to the large group. The issues that arose where:

- Meaning of Family in different cultures
- Free Time
- Study Opportunities
- Immigration
- Poverty
- Declining Standards
- Exams
- Friendship
- Family
- Suicide

‘World Cafe’ followed allowing greater exploration of those issues and to work towards identifying two key issues that participants could concentrate on as the key messages for their action day. In the afternoon participants took part in a ‘Public Relations’ workshop which focused on how to raise the profile of issues to local audiences in their communities.

‘Action Planning’ was next and this allowed participants to use their creative side designing placards, writing songs and taking part in a drumming workshop – all of which would be used the following day in a street protest on the issues they had identified.

‘Action Day’ Participants travelled to the City Centre (beginning at the Guildhall in the centre of Derry) and made a ‘noisy’ and visually impressive circuit of the city’s famous walls. The group was led by a group from the drumming workshop (made up of approximately 20-25 participants – both of which were drawn from The ‘Why?’ Project and PoP Youth Assembly) whilst the rest carried placards, played guitar and made noise so as to create fuss and draw attention to themselves so as to raise the profile of their protest. All participants dressed in their PoP colour-coded t-shirts.

This had the desired effect as many people from the city stopped to watch the parade as it made its way from Guildhall Square around the City Walls back to the Guildhall where they were then received by the City’s Mayor in the City’s Council Chamber. They engaged in conversation with the Mayor and even sang to him one of their ‘protest’ songs.



Following this they then took part in an interactive city tour where they worked in small teams to answer questions about the city so as to increase their knowledge before breaking for lunch.

After this they resumed at a local Community Youth Centre where they worked on preparing presentations in small groups about their learning from the Youth Assembly. After this they had some free time followed by a farewell evening.



Thoughts on the Process... Achievements

Overall the Youth Assembly can be judged a success. There are elements of the programme and its organisation which partners would do differently and these are further elaborated upon later in this report. We can however look back upon the assembly with a large degree of satisfaction.

First of all we brought 40 diverse young people together and over the course of 3 days there were no major 'disasters', difficulties or challenges and by and large most if not all of the young people had a positive experience and worked well together and built a good rapport and in some cases built lasting friendships.

Secondly, all partner organisations were able to fulfill their commitments of attending the planning meeting in May which they participated fully in, followed this up with recruitment of young people for the Assembly and participation in local projects and ensured that all young people they had recruited attended and participated in the Youth Assembly.

Thirdly, each partner completed successful local projects which explored issues of democracy and participation and

introduced participants to these concepts in a real and meaningful way.

Fourth, partner organisations worked effectively together to not only fulfill obligations as regards roles and responsibilities but worked to ensure that participants went through a realistic process at the Assembly which further explored democracy and participation and in doing so moved from a 'getting to know you' phase to one where they actively 'protested' on the streets of Derry about an issue such as youth employment.

Fifth, the partnership has worked well together to develop a model of practice that can be replicated in other countries or settings or can be amended to take account of changes as necessary but what is clear is that the experience has been built up and a working model established.



Sixth, relationships with all participants have been further developed and thus puts partners in a position to continue to work with participants to develop their skills base and increase their learning further.

It should also be noted that for many of the participants this was their first 'European journey' as many had never ventured into 'residential territory' with other young people from across Europe. It might be stating the obvious but for all of them this was the first time that they had entered into a joint 'Austrian-German-Slovene-Finnish-Northern Irish' experience and this in itself proved an invaluable aid to a life beyond their doorsteps and thus were introduced to a variety of cultures that make up the 'European Project' therefore offering an enhanced sense of European Citizenship.

This of course is the more generic element of the programme where through on-going interaction, participants start, if they haven't already, to get a sense of who they are and who or what else makes up 'their world' and they can begin to put things into perspective and contrast this against what they already know and the experiences they already have had. This happens generally in the non-programme moments when they are not necessarily thinking about the programme but rather absorbing

the experience and in this respect the youth assembly was no different.

The programme itself endeavoured to provide opportunities for people to get to know one another and in doing so facilitate a process whereby participants would start to ask relevant questions. In one of the exercises we had on the first day, we had a large map of Europe pinned to a wall and participants were asked to mark out where they were from. This in itself provided an overview of where people had travelled (or came) from and thus opened people's eyes to how spread (across Europe) the group was.

Other elements of the programme that allowed participants to grasp the European Project more or better understand their identity within Europe or their role as European citizens was the inter-cultural evening on day 1 and the small discussion groups and workshops on day 2. The intercultural evening allowed them to promote their identity in an environment where others were doing the same. Discussion groups allowed them to focus on common issues whilst workshops allowed them to work together on delivering a common message and thus achieve a sense of commonality among young Europeans.

Thoughts on the Process... Learning

There were two main elements of representative democracy that participants engaged in – first of all, their local project and secondly, the youth assembly itself.

Each partner organisation was directly responsible for the recruitment and selection of participants and by and large they were drawn from existing projects although there was occasion when young people were directly recruited to take part in the Youth Assembly. Each partner applied their own method of recruitment where applicable and had the autonomy and trust among the partnership to do so.

Groups were set up specifically with the Local Project Phase in mind. This is where participants were able to develop and implement issue-based work which of course involved discussion and debate and decision-making processes with other non-programme participants in an effort to consult and liaise with them so as to inform their 'policy' discussions.

Whilst participants were able to explore concepts of democracy and engage in practice that mirrored the political process not to mention engage with publically elected officials (as in the case of some of the local

projects) it was not possible to involve locally-based politicians during the Youth Assembly (apart from the Mayor that is) and this proved disappointing.

All locally elected members of Derry City Council as well as both the Junior Ministers from the Northern Ireland Executive were informed about the assembly and an invite to attend Day 2 of the programme (Assembly Day) was extended.

For whatever reason, local politicians failed to engage and whilst it didn't detract from the overall work of the assembly there is no doubt that participants would have found their efforts even more rewarded had this been the case.

Only during the Local Project Phase of the Youth Assembly did Policy Makers participate. A vast array of youth organisations from right across Northern Ireland were invited to be part of the Assembly Day (Day 2) but only three organisations took up the invite - The Rainbow Project, Opportunity Youth and



Include Youth set up stalls and also listened in on some of the discussions.

Participants were involved in all stages of the project - local projects, youth assembly and post-assembly meetings and activities. At all times participants were engaged in a variety of activities that were interactive in nature not only during their local projects but also in the youth assembly.

On Day 1 of the youth assembly they worked together in team building/orientation activities including large group simulation exercise, whilst on Day 2 they worked to identify and raise issues relevant and important to them before participating in workshops that would prepare them for 'vocalising' and 'visualising' their 'key messages' on Day 3, i.e., drumming, music and arts-based workshops in the afternoon of day 2.

Much of the work necessary to manage the group was done pre-arrival including staff rotas and duties, staff teams allocated (for various aspects of the programme), 'strategic' allocation of rooms for participants, staff room allocations at various points throughout the hotel to manage movement of young people, allocation/separation of young people and other hotel guests to different parts of the hotel and non-use of

hotel leisure facilities so as to avoid any potential issues with other hotel guests and non-residential leisure centre users.

In terms of repeating the experience there's probably not a lot that we would change as we managed the process fairly well given the size of the group. Because we ran the Youth Assembly simultaneously alongside another youth democracy project this had the effect of swelling numbers and therefore it would be worth reflecting upon on whether we would do likewise again given the demands that such a commitment brings.

Perhaps a little bit more thought would need to be given in terms of recruitment and selection and preparation of participants as clearly for some travelling to a residential programme in an international setting was a new experience and thus the excitement of such was apparent. It would be worth considering balancing the needs and dynamic of the entire group with that of the learning needs of individuals and perhaps for some such a venture may have been too much or perhaps too early.

Also, probably a bit more preparation of and information for staff in terms of expectation regarding their role and also more clarity and continuity regarding individual behaviours of participants is required. There were a



number of small if not untypical teenage behaviours between male and female participants whilst some participants had various medical conditions such as ADHD and Aspergers Syndrome which contributed to some challenging moments. Greater clarity around how that could and should be dealt with in the future and the expectations of all staff in regards to this should be more widely considered.

Another factor was language – all Finnish, Slovenian and most Austrians (along with the Northern Ireland group of course) spoke a good level of English whilst only some were at the this level within the German group and this proved challenging in that for many, much of what was being said had to be translated and this had the effect of delaying instructions or they were 'lost in translation'. This underlined the need and importance for all participants to be at a similar level so as to avoid or minimise the difficulties that language can pose.



Conclusion

To conclude, we brought together a very diverse bunch of young people with a wide range of dynamic, accompanied them along a medium to long-term journey which included a local project element and a full international youth assembly.

We 'guided' them safely through the process and in doing so have helped in some ways to raise their confidence and self-esteem, increase their knowledge of participation and democracy, stimulate their interests in subjects that affects them, build long-term relationships with their peers and motivate them to continue in this type of work.

This was not without its challenges and things we would do different if we were to do it again but the process did serve to create a dynamic model that with continued support, commitment and funding could be repeated and replicated in other areas.

