INTERNATIONAL YOUTH THINK TANK

Interreg North Sea

Co-funded by the European Union

Speak Up

Summer Camp Report

Malmö, Sweden

Youth Fellows: Joe Earnshaw, Sophia Kaur Badhan, Miranda Tate

Table of Contents

Concept

Program

The Summer Camp

- **Day 1 – Open Chair Democracy Talks**
- **Day 2 – Idea and Feedback**
- **Day 3 – Presentation and Closing**
- **Relationship with the Partner**

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Concept

IYTT Youth Fellows are role models when they lead three-day Summer Camps with local youth. The purpose is to give youth a meaningful task, to promote local citizens political participation and engagement, and to transform local citizens' views into policy proposals and convey them to local policy makers.

During the first day, the youth run Open Chair Democracy Talks with local citizens. This voicing and empowerment method was invented by the IYTT Youth Fellows. It means going to a buzzy place and inviting random passers-by to conversations which are driven by four questions:

- ★ Which three words come to your mind when you hear the word democracy?
- ★ Can you influence your life choices?
- ★ Can you influence society?
- ★ What would it take to make you more influential?

During the second day, the youth transform the citizens' views and ideas into a few concrete decision proposals. On the third day, the youth meet local decision makers to present and discuss the decision proposals. The Summer Camp is carried out in the local language, while the discussions among the youth may be done in English if the IYTT Youth Fellows does not speak the local language.

Carried out successfully, the IYTT Summer Camps makes a three-fold contribution:

- ✓ Youth are included and entrusted with a meaningful task (listen to and voice local citizens and transforming their views to policy proposals that the present to local policy makers).
- ✓ Local citizens are provided with a new means/channel for engagement and participation (i.e. taking part in Open Chair Democracy Talks).
- ✓ Local policy makers are provided with a new method to sound out views among the local citizens and a new method for input/advise (i.e. the youth's policy proposals).

Program

Day 1 – Open Chair Democracy Talks

Time	Activity
09:00-09:45	Welcome, introduction to the camp and IYTT, and icebreaker activity
09:45-12 10:30 fika	Training in Open Chair Democracy Talks
12-12:30	Lunch
12:30-14:15	OCDT: Conducting conversations with local citizens (locations: Triangeln and Folkets Park)
14:15-15:00	Debrief and joint reflection: What did we hear? What themes reoccur?

Day 2 – Idea and Feedback

Time	Activity
9:00	Recap of yesterday's insights, presenting selected topics and brainstorming with the whole group
9:30 10:30 fika	Group work: Exploring the challenge and starting idea development
12-12:30	Lunch
12:30-13:15	Continued group work: developing solution proposals
13:15-14:00	Feedback session: Local guest and Youth Fellows give feedback
14:00-14:45	Further development and refinement of solutions
14:45-15:00	Discuss tomorrow's tasks and plans

Day 3 – Presentation and Closing

Time	Activity

9:00	Preparing policy briefs and presentations
	Rehearsing presentations and feedback from Youth Fellows
	Lunch
11-11:45	Final presentation of Summer Camp to Speak Up and other participants
	Final reflection and wrap-up: What will we take with us?
15:00	Thank you and goodbye

The Summer Camp

Day 1 - Open Chair Democracy Talks

The aim of the first day of the Summer Camp was to quickly get the participants acquainted with each other, us, the IYTT, and the structure and goals of the next few days. As this was only the second day of the Environmental Department's youth summer program, the participants had not known each other long and had yet to become socially familiar with each other. With a large group of around twenty individuals, especially teenagers, this presented the first obstacle: How do we get the group to overcome their shyness to become active discussion participants? Initial progress was slow. Participants demonstrated a very high level of English comprehension; however, they were initially reluctant to speak aloud in front of the whole group. To encourage participation and facilitate dialogue, Miranda and Sophia introduced Mentimeter polls, to allow for anonymous, non-verbal participation, and divided participants into smaller discussion groups. These approaches helped create opportunities for participants to express their views in a less intimidating setting.

Participants responded positively to Joe's arrival, suggesting that the presence of a male role model may have helped to encourage engagement. Joe's more direct facilitation style, which involved addressing questions to individual participants rather than posing them to the room as a whole, also proved effective. Although some minor disruptive behaviour was observed, this appeared to stem primarily from a small number of young male participants testing boundaries and exploring the limits of acceptable behaviour. Similarly, some participants initially appeared disengaged, however, when invited to contribute directly, they often provided thoughtful responses and reflections. This suggests that initial reticence or apparent disengagement did not necessarily reflect a lack of understanding or interest in the topics being discussed.

This progression continued during the OCDT training session. The structure of the training session was roughly as follows: the facilitators explained and demonstrated an OCDT session in front of the large group. Once they had seen this demonstration, the participants were then asked to run their own OCDT exercises in small groups. Although the participants were initially reluctant to participate honestly, trying to avoid the questions or make jokes of them, once some individuals began to properly engage real discussions broke through and many of the participants seemed genuinely excited to be carrying out the exercise.

The effect of the training session was threefold. Firstly, it made the participants familiar with the questions and the format of the exercise, making later conversations in public more fluid. Secondly, it allowed them to consider which answers may arise from these conversations meaning that they were more prepared to offer follow up questions and engage in discussion later on. This was important for a group that was not familiar with politics and political discussion in the first place. Finally, during this practice run the participants also began to consider their own responses to the questions. In some respects, despite the format of the overall summer camp implying that the public's opinions should form the theme for each group, the participants' own responses were equally, if not more, instructive in developing their respective themes.

A particularly notable moment occurred during the role-playing and practice exercise, when a participant from a migrant background approached Sophia and challenged her to answer the OCDT questions herself. Although he initially appeared to be joking and did not seem to take

the exercise seriously, his demeanour changed when Sophia reflected on her own personal background and explored the nuances of freedom in different cultural and gendered contexts. This prompted a more substantive discussion about the meaning of freedom in Western societies and the participant's own experiences. The interaction appeared to represent a significant turning point: an individual who had previously seemed disengaged and perhaps even disruptive began to engage meaningfully with the underlying issues and demonstrated a greater appreciation of the purpose and importance of conducting OCDTs. This moment highlighted the potential value of personal testimony and direct, relatable exchanges in encouraging participants to move beyond initial scepticism and engage critically with complex social and political questions.

After practicing the OCDTs, the participants split into two groups to cover two different locations. One group headed to Triangeln, a bustling shopping center and public transit area, and the other to Folkets Park, a large, central park. With minimal support, the participants handled initiating and carrying out the OCDT very well and engaged a breadth of ages and opinions. Despite some shyness, many of the participants reported enjoying carrying out the OCDTs. Several participants subsequently suggested that future summer camps should allocate more time to OCDTs, indicating that the experience had become more valuable and engaging than they had initially anticipated. Nevertheless, participants were visibly tired following the exercise. This is understandable given the demands of engaging in animated, potentially challenging discussions with unfamiliar people. Based on previous experience, we recognise that, while such conversations can be incredibly rewarding, they can also be mentally and emotionally taxing for those conducting them. Future planning should therefore seek to balance the educational value of OCDTs with sufficient time for rest and reflection.

It must also be noted that there was some slight backlash from members of the public, however the staff from Malmö Stad had prepared the participants well for what to do in such a situation and they handled it maturely and safely.

Day 2 - Idea and Feedback

The second day of the Summer Camp was focused on summarising the findings of the previous days' OCDT sessions and developing proposals. After separating the overall group into three teams, the structure of the day followed three stages:

1. During the first part of the day, each team worked on producing a poster mind-mapping the societal challenges which they had identified from their discussions with passersby the previous day. Notably, all three teams had surprisingly varied mind maps despite their composition meaning that each group had experienced roughly the same mix of discussions as each other the previous day. Clearly, therefore, the individual interpretations and perspectives of the participants played a significant role in which issues were identified.
2. From their mind maps, the participants then began honing in on one challenge that they found particularly interesting. This section of the day required significant input from the moderators to ensure that the groups were effectively discussing amongst themselves as, in certain cases, groups wanted to focus on too many issues or were reluctant to delve deeply into any single issue.
3. Once the teams identified a principal challenge, they began brainstorming solutions. The three issue areas that the participant groups selected were youth education on political issues, youth political engagement, and youth imprisonment.

The participants worked in their teams to put together a comprehensive proposal to address their identified challenge and a presentation to go along with it. Throughout the day they received feedback from the Youth Fellows, our hosts from Malmö City's Environmental Department, and most importantly each other. This was encouraged by having the teams regularly present their work to the larger group throughout the day which was effective in encouraging dialogue in the larger group, generating constructive feedback, and helping the participants to feel more comfortable debating and presenting in English.

Day 3 – Presentation and Closing

On this final day, the participants spent the morning finalising their presentation slides and scripts. They also each practiced their presentations, receiving feedback from the moderators and each other twice on the morning before the presentation. Importantly, the participants arrived early to the venue where they would be presenting their proposals. This gave them time to practise their presentations on-location which helped to calm their nerves. Furthermore, it allowed them to experience what it was like to talk on stage, something they had initially felt very hesitant about.

While speaking in front of the sizable crowd of the Speak-Up partners was intimidating, the participants rose to the occasion and performed well. Furthermore, the participants in the audience who were not presenting were encouraging throughout, demonstrating a collective engagement in the process and its outcome from the whole group. In the Q&A segment after the presentations, the partners showed real appreciation and engagement with the participants and their ideas. The participants reported that they really valued this engagement and it was visible as an observer that they began to open up more as the session went on. The Q&A session was therefore particularly fruitful because the participants, in feeling more comfortable with the crowd of partners, became very eager to answer questions and elaborate on their ideas and experiences over the past few days. For the Youth Fellows, this felt like the moment that demonstrated that the past few days had really paid off. The participants themselves began to see the meaning of the work they had carried out and saw that a crowd of adults in positions of political and administrative authority valued their thoughts and opinions. It was evident that the participants really valued the feedback and comments they received.

Overall, on the final day the feedback from the participants was almost universally positive. This was especially true of those who were most engaged throughout the entire programme. Even more so, those who had initially been sceptical yet had nonetheless been willing to engage seemed the most affected with certain participants seeming significantly transformed in their attitude towards the summer camp, and political engagement in general, between the first and last day.

Relationship with the Partner

Our partnership with the Environmental Department of the City of Malmö contributed to the smooth running of the Summer Camp. As the youths were formally employed by the department through a youth summer working program, our contacts within the department were well prepared to integrate us and our workshop and goals into the program. This resulted in a high degree of structure, with the participants being on time and expecting to partake in various activities throughout the days. Additionally, because some had specifically chosen to be assigned to the environmental department as part of the summer program, a

few key individuals drove the energy of the group through a high level of willing engagement already from the beginning of the workshop. We had two department contacts who greeted us, prepared the room, and one of whom stayed with us throughout the day. Having an additional facilitator proved to be an advantage; we had one facilitator per sub-group when the students split off into three working groups.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The Summer Camp proved successful and positively impacted the participants, the Youth Fellows, and the Speak Up partners. Learning from our experience leading the Summer Camp the following suggestions are put forth to be taken into consideration to further improve the facilitation of future Summer Camps.

Recognizing that the Summer Camps often are limited to a few days, if possible, more time should be allocated to holding OCDT sessions. Several participants brought this point up after the OCDT, having appreciated the novel and enriching experience. Alongside this point it is important to note that holding OCDT requires a lot of intellectual and emotional energy and therefor it is essential, particularly with a young group of participants, to allocate time after the OCDT to reflect and recuperate. Therefore, future Summer Camps should therefore seek to more carefully balance the educational value of OCDTs with sufficient structured and unstructured down time after a session is held.

Another aspect on the OCDT that is important to raise before young participants engage with the public is the possibility that they are met with less than kind or even hostile responses. Especially for youth participants it is best practice to prepare them before hand on how to maturely and safely handle all sorts of responses, from being ignored to meeting unkind language or very radical statements.

Reflecting on the success of the final presentation we recommend that more time be allocated to the question-and-answer segment at the end. As this is the moment that the participants see the effect and impact of the hard work they have put in over the past few days, this moment is critical to the participants understanding of their achievement. The success of the feedback round also rests on having very engaged audience members, who pose considerate and constructive comments and questions to the young participants. Preparing the audience so that they understand the form of the project and what tasks the participants have been carrying out helps to facilitate a successful feedback session and leaves the participants feeling valued and empowered.