

Democracy in Action: Fostering Civic
Engagement Training Course
15-23 April 2024 Türkiye

TOOLBOX



Introduction

“Democracy in Action: Fostering Civic Engagement” training course was organised for youth workers and youth leaders to improve their competences to promote democracy and active citizenship among young people. During this 8-day training course in Türkiye, an international group of 36 youth leaders from 9 different countries¹ participated in various activities. The methods and tools used in training course were an example and provided participants the opportunity to adapt them to their own target groups. The participants also designed their own activities and tools to promote democracy and active citizenship which is described in this document.



¹ Germany, Türkiye, North Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary and Latvia

1) Minority vote

Title	Minority vote
Timeframe	60 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning objective)	Exploring alternative voting systems, to stimulate critical thinking about political situations, majority rule vs. minority perspectives, and to promote discussions around democracy, civic participation, and human rights.
Materials/space /location needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pens and paper for each participant - A whiteboard or flip chart - Pre-prepared yes/no questions (could be related to democracy, current political events, or social issues)
Target group	15+
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	<p>Setup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants sit in a circle or around a table. • Facilitators prepare a list of statements or questions that encourage reflection on democracy, participation, or political issues. <p>Pens and papers distributed to participants. A pre-made yes or no question is written on the white board. Facilitators makes a statement about political situation, current events in Europe ((e.g., "Do you believe voting should be mandatory for all citizens?" or "Can social media platforms influence election results?"). Players will discuss the question briefly and anonymously write their answer. Answers are collected and tallied. The people who picked the least popular answer move on while people in the majority are eliminated. Even though players in the majority are out, they remain engaged by helping suggest new questions or observing and commenting on the discussions. Players who are still in the game continue participating, and a new round begins with a new yes/no question. This cycle continues until there are 3 or less players left.</p>
Debriefing method and questions	<p>After the game, hold a group discussion. Ask the players about their experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did it feel to be in the majority vs. the minority? - Did the game change their perspectives on the importance of minority opinions in a democracy? - How does this relate to real-life political systems where majority rule is balanced by minority rights?
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants learn the importance of respecting minority views in a democracy. - The game fosters debate and encourages deeper analysis of political and social issues. - It promotes active listening, as players must consider alternative viewpoints to stay in the game.

2) Associations

Title	Associations
Timeframe	40 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning objective)	-Improving knowledge about democracy -Active participation -Group work
Materials/space /location needed	- Boxes or bags with pre-written words related to democracy (such as "elections," "freedom," "citizenship," "justice," etc.). Prepare 20-30 words per team. - A stopwatch or timer (one person will act as timekeeper). - A scoreboard for keeping track of points.
Target group	For young people aged between 18-30.
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	To play the game of associations, you will need to split the group into two or more teams. Each team should have their own box of words related to the democracy. During each round, a member of the group will randomly select a word and describe it using only two words to their team within a 30-second time limit. The team must then guess as many words as possible within that time frame. If the team guesses correctly, they score one point. If the team does not guess the word, no points are awarded for that round. After 30 seconds, the turn passes to the next team, and the process repeats. The person or team with the most points at the end of the game will be declared the winner.
Debriefing method and questions	Gather participants in a circle to create an open, comfortable discussion environment. Ask open-ended questions to guide reflection, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Which word(s) were most difficult to describe and why?" • "How does the game relate to the democratic processes or values we experience in everyday life?" • "What new associations or ideas did you develop about democracy during the game?"
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	- Participants gain a stronger understanding of democracy-related concepts. - The game fosters teamwork and communication. - Players must think quickly and strategically about how to describe complex ideas in only two words.

3) Active citizens

Title	Active citizens
Timeframe	60 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning)	Participants will explore ways to inspire young people to become more active citizens in a democratic society, using key democratic concepts as

objective)	a foundation. This activity encourages creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, while promoting awareness of democracy and active citizenship.
Materials/space /location needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flipcharts or large sheets of paper - Markers - Pens and notepads - Access to creative resources (props, costumes, or presentation tools if available)
Target group	15+
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	<p>Introduce the Task: Start by asking participants: "<i>How can we inspire young people to be more active citizens in a democratic society?</i>" Explain that the focus will be on raising awareness and promoting participation in four key topics related to democracy.</p> <p>Explain the Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Elections and Voting in the European Parliament:</i> Emphasizing the importance of participating in the democratic process through voting and elections. • <i>Equality:</i> Addressing various types of equality, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic equality, and how it is vital for democracy. • <i>Human Rights:</i> Focusing on the protection and promotion of human rights as fundamental principles of a democratic society. • <i>Environmental Protection:</i> Highlighting the connection between civic engagement and addressing environmental issues like recycling, pollution, and climate change. <p>Group Division: Divide participants into 4 groups and assign each group one of the above topics. Each group will focus on how they can promote their assigned topic to inspire young people to take action in their communities and engage in democratic processes.</p> <p>Creative Brainstorming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group has 25 minutes to brainstorm creative ways to promote their topic. Encourage them to think outside the box and use any form of presentation they like. This could include role-playing, skits, posters, short campaigns, video ideas, or social media strategies. • Ask the groups to focus on how to make their message engaging and relatable to young people, considering the audience's interests, concerns, and preferred communication methods. • They should also consider how their initiative could lead to real-world action and change. <p>Group Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group has 5 minutes to present their ideas to the rest of the participants. Encourage creativity during the presentations (e.g., using props, acting out scenarios, or creating mock campaigns). • Encourage participants to think about how their ideas could be realistically implemented in their local communities or on a larger scale.
Debriefing method and questions	<p>After all presentations, lead a group discussion to reflect on the experience. Use the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What inspired your group's ideas, and why did you choose that</i>

	<p><i>approach?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which presentation or idea stood out to you, and why? • What challenges did your group face when trying to promote the topic to young people? • How can these ideas translate into real-life action in your own community? • How do these topics relate to active citizenship and participation in a democratic society?
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	By the end of the game, participants will have developed creative strategies for engaging young people in democratic issues, increasing their awareness and inspiring active citizenship. They will also have practiced public speaking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

4) Parliament Simulation

Title	Parliament Simulation
Timeframe	70 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning objective)	The law process/How parliament works
Materials/space /location needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flipcharts or large sheets of paper - Markers - Timer or stopwatch - Voting ballots (or hand-raising system for quick voting) - Name tags (optional) for each participant to assume roles in the simulation
Target group	Young people aged 18-30
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	<p>Begin by explaining the importance of parliaments in democratic societies as the place where laws are created, debated, and passed. The participants will experience the democratic process by simulating a parliamentary session focused on creating laws that promote democracy worldwide.</p> <p>Divide participants into 3 or more groups based on the number of participants. Each group will represent a political party or a faction within the parliament. Give the groups time to come up with a party name and basic values or principles that guide their party's ideology (optional but fun).</p> <p>Each group will propose a law aimed at promoting democracy globally. Encourage participants to think about key democratic values such as freedom of speech, equality, human rights, or transparent elections. Each group has 20 minutes to brainstorm and draft a law. The law can address any issue that promotes democracy in the world.</p> <p>Each group will take turns presenting their proposed law to the rest of the participants (the parliament). After each presentation, open the floor to a debate. Participants not in the presenting group (other parliament members) will ask questions, raise concerns, or voice their support.</p>

	Once all groups have presented and the debate has concluded, conduct a vote to determine which law will pass. Voting can be done through ballots or by raising hands . Each participant votes for the law they believe is the best solution for promoting democracy. If no single law receives a majority of votes, consider holding a second round of voting between the top two proposals (runoff election style).
Debriefing method and questions	After the simulation, lead a group reflection on the activity using the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What were the main challenges your group faced in coming up with a law?</i> • <i>How did the debate help refine or challenge your initial ideas?</i> • <i>What did you learn about the process of passing laws in a democracy?</i> • <i>Which arguments were most persuasive during the debate, and why?</i> • <i>How do you think this process reflects real-life challenges in promoting democracy?</i>
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the core functions of a parliament and the legislative process. 2. Developing skills in debating, negotiation, and conflict resolution. 3. Enhancing their ability to propose and critique laws that promote democracy.

5) Dictator

Title	Dictator
Timeframe	70 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning objective)	Participants will explore themes of civic engagement, political representation, and the importance of democratic processes through strategic role-play and discussion.
Materials/space /location needed	<p>Role cards for each participant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens (Majority): Aim to preserve democracy and protect their rights. • Dictators (Minority): Seek to undermine democracy and control the population. • Journalist: Investigates issues and can reveal information about one player each round. • Mayor: Has a voting power that counts as two votes. • Activist: Can save citizens <p>-Voting cards (Yes/No)</p> <p>-Timer</p>

	-A space for group discussion
Target group	15 years +
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	<p>Assign roles secretly using the role cards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of Dictators should be fewer than the Citizens. • Include one Mayor, one Activist and one Journalist for added dynamics. <p>Night Phase: All participants close their eyes. Dictators secretly choose one Citizen to “remove” from the game, representing the suppression of democracy. The Journalist can choose to investigate one player to gather information about their role. The facilitator will privately inform the Journalist of that player’s identity. Activist can choose a person to save from attack for that night.</p> <p>Day Phase: All players open their eyes. The facilitator announces who was removed from the game (if they weren’t protected by activist). The remaining players discuss what happened during the night, share suspicions, and strategize. Citizens aim to identify the Dictators, while Dictators work to mislead the Citizens. The Journalist can reveal their findings about one player, which can help guide the discussion but may also put them at risk.</p> <p>Voting Phase: At the end of the discussion, players vote on who they believe is a Dictator. The Mayor’s vote counts as two votes, if the votes are equal. The player with the majority of votes is “removed” from the game and reveals their role. If a Dictator is removed, Citizens gain points for successful identification; if a Citizen is removed, Dictators gain points.</p> <p>Winning the Game: The game continues for several rounds, alternating between Night and Day phases. The game ends when either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All Dictators are identified and removed (Citizens win). -The Dictators outnumber the Citizens (Dictators win).
Debriefing method and questions	<p>After the game, hold a debrief discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the dynamics change with the presence of the Mayor, Activist and Journalist? • What strategies worked for Citizens in identifying the Dictators? • Discuss the implications of power dynamics and the role of media in a democratic society.
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recognizing the importance of civic engagement and active participation in democracy. -Understanding the role of media in investigating and revealing truths in political contexts. -Developing skills in communication, persuasion, and critical thinking.

6) Erasmusland

Title	Erasmusland
Timeframe	120 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning objective)	Participants will explore the electoral process, campaign strategies, and the responsibilities of leadership within a democratic framework.
Materials/space /location needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large meeting room - Papers - Pens
Target group	15 years +
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	<p>Participants will be told that they live in an imaginary city called Erasmusland and will be given a document containing information about this city. This document will include information about the city's population, opportunities, economic status and problems. After the participants are given time to read the information on the paper, they will be told that a new mayor will be elected for the city. Volunteers will come out from among the participants to run for mayor. Each mayoral candidate will be able to choose 1 or 2 advisors to support them depending on the number of participants in the group. The mayoral candidates and advisors will be given 20 minutes to think about their election campaigns and prepare their campaign materials. Afterwards, the candidates will go to the other participants and make propaganda for them for 30 minutes. At the end of this period, the whole group will gather and each candidate will be given 5 minutes to make an election speech. The candidates will be encouraged to be creative in their propaganda and election speeches. After the candidates' speeches are over, the mayor will be elected by voting. The mayor who wins the election will make a victory speech.</p> <p>In order to make the simulation more interesting, the election phase can be completed in 2 rounds. The first two candidates with highest votes can do another election speeches. Additionally the group can be given information about the city where the group is located instead of Erasmusland.</p> <p>Consider inviting local policymakers or community leaders to observe the simulation and provide feedback or insights on the electoral process. It would also be useful to discuss ideas with policy makers in the city after the simulation and get feedback.</p>
Debriefing method and questions	<p>Hold a discussion after the simulation to reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies were most effective in campaigning? • How did the group dynamics influence the election? • What are the implications of leadership and representation in a democratic society?
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Understanding the electoral process and the importance of civic engagement. -Developing skills in public speaking, persuasion, and teamwork. -Recognizing the impact of leadership decisions on community issues.

7) Image Theatre

Title	Image Theatre
Timeframe	50 minutes (includes debriefing)
Aim (what for, learning objective)	To explore key issues related to government systems and democracy by creating symbolic representations through still images
Materials/space /location needed	Paper and Pens, Whiteboard/Flipchart and Markers
Target group	15+
General description (Timing, procedure etc.)	<p>Divide participants into small groups of 4–5 people. Each group will be assigned a different problem or challenge related to democracy or government systems (e.g., corruption, inequality in voting rights, censorship, lack of political participation, etc.). Groups will create a series of 3 freeze-frame images (like photographs) that illustrate:</p> <p>Scene 1 (The Problem): Groups depict a significant democratic issue, such as lack of transparency or citizens being denied voting rights. The audience observes the still image and guesses the problem being shown. After discussing the problem, they suggest ways to enhance the portrayal. The audience is encouraged to step in, physically shape the participants' positions, or even join the scene to improve the visual representation of the problem.</p> <p>Scene 2 (Transition to the Solution): After the problem is clearly expressed, the group presents a second image showing the transition or actions taken to address the issue. For example, this could include protests, political discussions, or reform efforts. Again, the audience can engage, discuss, and adjust the scene to better illustrate how society can move toward a solution.</p> <p>Scene 3 (The Solution): The final image should portray the resolution of the problem. This might depict improved democratic participation, equal rights being enforced, or a transparent government system. The audience can participate by refining this image to ensure it clearly reflects a positive outcome for democratic improvement. During each scene, audience members are not passive observers—they can suggest adjustments, enter the scene themselves, or move participants into new positions to more effectively convey the emotions and attitudes linked to the democratic challenge or solution.</p>
Debriefing method and questions	<p>Group discussion including these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did this issue reveal about democracy? • How can the transition from problem to solution be more effectively achieved in reality? • What insights did the exercise provide on collaborative problem-solving in democratic contexts?
Impact and Learning Outcomes:	<p>-Understand complex democratic issues through visual storytelling. -Engage in collaborative problem-solving and creative expression. -Foster critical thinking on how democratic systems can evolve and improve. -Empower participants to express their opinions creatively</p>