



FH Salzburg

Citizens' Agora

Findings and Recommendations

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PRACTICIES
PARTNERSHIP AGAINST
VIOLENT
RADICALIZATION
IN CITIES
NETWORK

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Introduction



CITIZENS' AGORA:

Citizens' Agora is aimed at **offering spaces for inclusive citizenship participation and empowerment** on the local level in order to prevent anti-democratic extremism and violent radicalisation at an early stage.

Activities can provide **information and training for different target groups**, bring together groups for better mutual understanding and offer **space for dialogue** and discussion. They can give a voice to those who often have no or little access to public debate.

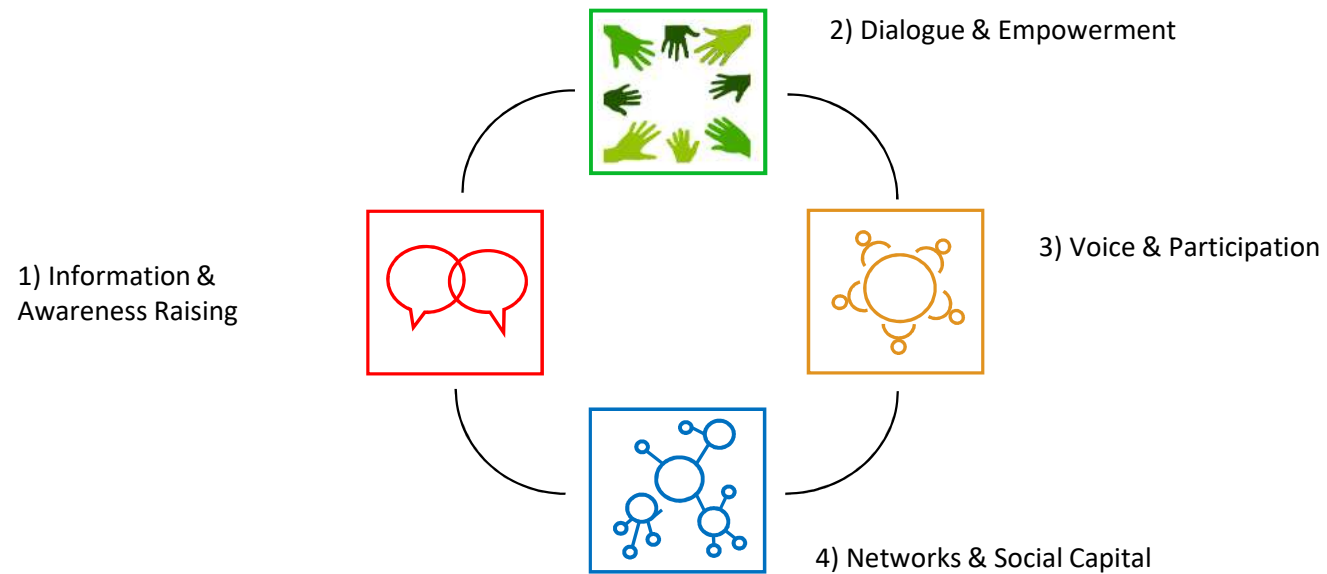
In all their forms, Citizens' Agoras allow for democratic experience, empowerment and self-efficacy.

Introduction



Place	Activity	Mode	Category
Nice	Trouve ta place!	Workshop	Information & Awareness Raising
Nice	Les promeneurs du net	Youth outreach work: virtual space	Dialogue & Empowerment
Toulouse	Point Information Laïcité et Citoyenneté	Information point	Information & Awareness Raising
Toulouse	Conseil des Jeunes Toulousains	Youth council	Voice & Participation
Lille	news craft	Serious game	Information & Awareness Raising
Salzburg	Streusalz	Youth outreach work: municipal district	Dialogue & Empowerment
Salzburg	88 gegen Rechts	Campaign	Information & Awareness Raising
Salzburg	ComEx	Workshop	Information & Awareness Raising
Kuregem, Molenbeek	Digital Me	Digital storytelling	Voice & Participation
Sfax	Fakebook App	Serious game	Dialogue & Empowerment
Tunis	Survey on parental resilience	Workshop	Information & Awareness Raising
Jerba	Parlement des Jeunes	Youth parliament	Voice & Participation

Introduction





Four Goals and Examples

Information & Awareness Raising



Information & Awareness Raising



Information & Awareness Raising

One of the core competences for education in democratic citizenship is so-called cognitive competence. It concerns knowledge of the political system and of the rights that citizens have in their local or national contexts. In addition, knowledge of the social and cultural frameworks and of the environment is important for the ability to participate in public life and decisions.

In many cases, a lack of **information** prevents people from participating in common activities or articulating opinions within these environments. In other cases, people avoid entering a new environment, because the invisible thresholds are too high. Providing information therefore becomes a central strategy that helps people to participate in daily life and in local decision-making processes.

Information here also becomes a measure for helping people to gain **awareness** of different forms of disadvantage or exclusion.

Information & Awareness Raising



- **Information Point**

“Point Information Laïcité et Citoyenneté”, La Faourette, Toulouse
Providing information about radicalisation and the democratic system,

<https://www.mncp.fr/partage-faourette-toulouse/>

- **Campaign**

“88 gegen Rechts”, Salzburg, info campaign against right wing extremism,

https://www.stadt-salzburg.at/internet/service/aktuell/aussendungen/2015/88gegenrechts_salzburg_steht_gegen_recht_418752.htm

Information & Awareness Raising



General characteristics and questions

- Cooperation between professional experts and local politics or administrations is helpful.
- Keep in mind the backing of the latter and financial support.
- In the case of a campaign: Which channels should be used? Do they allow dialogue with the target audience?
- What are our objectives? The dissemination of a general attitude or is there a specific reason?
- Who is the target audience? The broader public or specific target groups?
- Depending on this: Where should our activity take place?
- Who could get involved? Social work professionals or experts (in terms of de-radicalisation) or peers or a mixed team?
- Don't forget consideration and development of the activity.

Dialogue & Empowerment



Dialogue & Empowerment



Empowerment means fostering the skills and potential of individuals or groups that are vulnerable or socially disadvantaged in any way. Empowerment aims to achieve autonomy for those people who do not have the resources to participate equally in society. One crucial goal is the establishment of a higher degree of autonomy for these people.

Empowerment measures can only succeed if relationships between social workers and young people – and between young people themselves – can develop and if professionals offer the young people safe spaces, where they can express their needs without fear of rejection.

In this sense, **dialogue** is a first step towards or a condition for empowerment. Dialogue is a measure that helps with the empowerment of young people, if it is offered continuously over a prolonged period and in a way that tolerates conflict.

Dialogue & Empowerment



- **Workshops**

- “ComEx” (“Comedy and Extremism”)

- get awareness of extremism, stereotypes and prejudices

- method: humour and elements of comedy

- entering into discussion

- “Trouve ta place! Développement de l’esprit critique”

- three workshops with the topics: gender stereotypes and extremist propaganda

- **Youth Outreach Work**

- “Les Promeneurs du Net”, virtual social space, <https://www.promeneursdunet.fr/>

- “Streusalz” (scattering salt”),

- provide a variety of different activities

- relationship work!

- https://www.stadt-salzburg.at/internet/service/aktuell/aussendungen/2011/streusalz_wird_eine_nummer_groesser_350756.htm

Dialogue & Empowerment



General characteristics and question

- Which workshop method?
- Dialogue with a specific target group or bringing together different individuals/groups into contact? Or both?
- Do the participants form a heterogeneous or a homogeneous group?
- Trust is crucial.
- Do we spend a longer period with the target audience in order to form a more familiar relationship?
- Vocational contracts of the youth workers are crucial.
- We have to care for the needs and opinions of our target audience.
- Safe spaces are a necessary tool when it comes to open exchange with our target audience.
- Supporters of various institutions, such as teachers or school social workers, are valuable resources.

Voice & Participation



Voice & Participation



Voice and participation mean that people affected by a political decision can also participate in that political decision. First of all, this requires the possibility of raising one's own voice, articulating one's own standpoint and feeding it into the political debate.

In representative democracy, the opportunities for participation are not equally distributed. For example, people without citizenship and children or young people usually have no right to vote. There are also groups that are unwilling to or inhibited from participation, as a result of socio-economic disadvantages. Cities and regions can implement targeted measures to enable these people to have a voice in the political decision-making process. In recent years, a large number of **democratic innovations** have been developed to this end.

In this respect, voice and participation also mean that the political stakeholders of a city or region incorporate the suggestions of the citizens into their political concepts. Political participation measures make sense if this participation leads to visible consequences. Representatives should therefore commit themselves or in some way be obliged to incorporate or implement the results of participatory activities.

Voice & Participation



Preparing for Voice & Participation

People who are not used to expressing themselves politically or even to talking about their concerns at all must first be enabled to do so through various measures. Everything that is understood by the term democratic or **inclusive citizenship** education can be seen as preparation for political participation (school, open youth work or other experiences).

Digital Storytelling <https://maksvzw.org/en/digitale-inclusion/>

Specific Participation: Youth Councils

Youth Councils are a new participation format that makes it possible for young people to deal intensively with mainly local issues and to find constructive solutions. As Citizens' Council, youth councils are an innovative small format of participatory democracy. Participants are usually selected at random on the basis of the civil register of a municipality or region and invited to participate (sometimes by a letter from the mayor). The group then represents the council and works together to discuss solutions to local or regional problems. In the last few years, a broad variety has emerged in terms of topics, procedures etc. Youth councils are thus a typical form of democratic innovations.

Voice & Participation



	Toulouse	Salzburg
No. of participants	35 to 60 persons	10 to 20 persons
Frequency	Monthly meetings during 1,5 year	Punctual events, maximum one day (6 to 9 hours)
Recruitment	Promotion, social workers, open to all young people in the city	Random from the population register, invitation letter by the mayor
Age target group	15 to 25	15 to 25
Final paper	Yes, presented to local politicians	Public presentation in youth café for „resonance group“
Binding	No binding results, consultative character	No binding results, consultative character

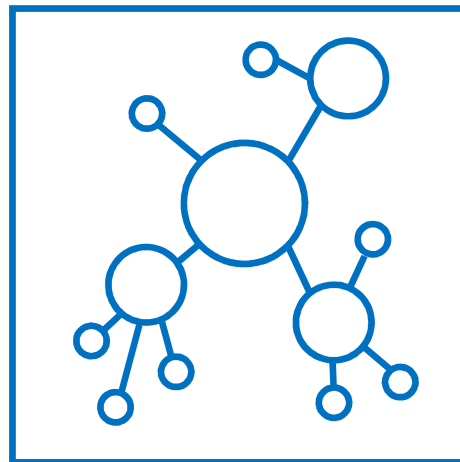
Voice & Participation



General characteristics and questions

- A key challenge is to reach those areas that are less privileged in terms of education and income. Preparation for articulation is important, so innovative tools such as digital storytelling are used to empower young people.
- Get in touch with schools, social workers, youth associations and seek their support, but do not organise youth councils in the school context.
- Inform and encourage not only the young people but also their parents, teachers and employers to allow and support participation.
- Offer a friendship ticket (“bring a friend”), which gives young people a feeling of safety.
- Stress the importance by a letter from the Mayor and a prestigious venue (such as the city hall).
- Be very clear on the aims of the youth council and where its limits are (non-binding character).
- Think about the best timeframe and frequency. Decide whether single punctual events or regular meetings over a longer period are better. Both have advantages and disadvantages. For longer formats, it is difficult to maintain the number of participants. The question that arises is how meaningful a citizens’ council is if it works only with a few people at the end of its period. Conversely, a one-off event certainly has a much smaller effect on the participants.
- Make travel and participation as easy as possible and support those for whom participation is more difficult (because they live far away or are otherwise restricted).
- Take into account that certain days might not work for certain groups (such as religious holidays) and should therefore be avoided as council days.
- Guarantee a trusting, safe, welcoming and participatory atmosphere.
- Do not exclude unorthodox, critical or provocative suggestions.
- Keep participants informed in a follow-up process.

Networks & Social Capital



Networks & Social Capital



Networking means collecting **social capital**. Social capital means relationships with other people or institutions that support our intentions.

Two types can be distinguished.

The first type refers to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu: here, social capital concerns the personal contacts of an individual: family, the peer group, school friends and so on. These contacts help the individual to find his or her way in daily life. They also help him or her to solve problems or to overcome obstacles.

The “Putnam” type of social capital refers to institutions located within a community. These may be schools, churches, the public administration, a youth centre or a sports or cultural club. Here, the assumption is that social cohesion depends on these institutions. The better the connections of the individuals to these institutions, the higher the degree of social cohesion.

Both types of social capital are important when it comes to early prevention and most of the interventions use social capital as a means or as a goal.

Networks & Social Capital



- **Networking – Examples**

Networks & Social Capital



General characteristics and questions

- What kind of social capital plays an important role? Individual contacts? And/or contacts to or between institutions within a community?
- Is it a goal to strengthen the contacts and intermixing between heterogeneous groups of young people?
- Is it a goal to inform them about supporting institutions?
- Could the policy cycle be a helpful tool when it comes to establishing networks?
- Could it help to strengthen social cohesion?
- Do not forget about representatives of the target groups: they should also be involved in the planning processes of early prevention interventions.



Lessons Learned

Trust, Relationship Work and Safe Spaces



- **Trust and Relationship Work**
- **Safe Spaces**
- **Safety as a Concept**

Trust, Relationship Work and Safe Spaces



Trust and Relationship Work

- Respect for individual coping strategies.
- Participatory interaction.
- Trust in the expertise of the clients.
- Acceptance of the pace and rhythm of the target audience.
- Awareness of the rights and obligations of the target audience

Trust, Relationship Work and Safe Spaces



Safe Spaces

- Trust encourages young people to participate and to form connections with others (empowerment) .
- Safety before articulation. This means: participation and the formation of connections with other young people are possible only in a safe surrounding.
- Needs before opinions. This means: before you start expressing an opinion, you start expressing your needs – you talk about everyday subjects, problems with parents, taboos even. This is a condition for the expression of opinions and therefore for participation in public issues.

Trust, Relationship Work and Safe Spaces



Safety as a Concept

- Young people in city districts are heterogeneous groups.
- And – more importantly – different majorities and minorities result from this heterogeneity. It is therefore necessary to protect minorities, otherwise they will not articulate their opinions or begin to exchange ideas with members of majorities.
- Protection does not mean protection from majorities but rather support to become a part of a common group. This relates to an inclusive approach.
- Safe spaces with mediators or tutors are important. Trust and relationship work is needed. It is obvious that long-term interventions can succeed better than workshops that are conducted only once.
- Affirmative action helps to create a safe space.
- Empowerment
- The goal of safety should not be certainty and peace but rather conflict tolerance, openness and sincerity.

Possibility of Revolt in the Setting



Revolt is to be understood as non-violent resistance against oppression, authoritarianism and injustice.

Encourage rebellious statements

Many young people are not used to expressing their opinions in a way that meets the standards of democratic debate. This should be taken into consideration. However, it should not under any circumstances lead to the suppression of opinions.

Dialogue before results

In addition to a certain tolerance for provocative or rebellious formulations, an interest in unorthodox and rebellious content is needed. These should not immediately be sifted out in favour of a compromise, but should be taken up as original ideas. If strongly divergent opinions and ideas make it impossible to reach a result, the process of discussion takes precedence over the outcome.

Nevertheless, an attempt should be made to reach a compromise between the different points of view within a given time frame.

Possibility of Revolt in the Setting



Revolt and democratic dialogue

- Revolt and democracy are inseparably linked. Only when you have the opportunity to say “no” to oppression, authoritarianism and injustice can you experience democracy.
- Young people in particular need such experiences of democracy in their development.
- Their revolt, which can also be provocative and challenging in expression and content, must be answered constructively and lead to dialogue.
- Differing opinions should not be sorted out immediately but should be discussed.
- Dialogue is more important than a result or final output.
- If a final decision or output must be reached, it should be the outcome of an open and inclusive debate.
- Everybody should be encouraged to express opposing arguments and unorthodox ideas or opinions.

Evaluation



General Remarks on Evaluation

- a dialogue between all persons involved, not a control instrument
- a contribution to the overall success of the project or activity
- methods depend on the concrete project or activity and its goals
- interview different groups (organizers, stakeholders, participants, target groups)
- observe in a systematic manner or collect data (either surveys, media reports etc.)
- alternative sources can be photographs, videos, diaries or other empirical material

Evaluation of Measures Against Radicalisation / For Prevention of Violent Extremism

- general political and social situation of a project or activity needs to be considered
- participants of activities must be sure that they can speak openly and that their anonymity is respected

Careful communication of results

Evaluation



- evaluation plan should be developed in a collaboration of academics and practitioners and partners involved
- evaluation will be much more respected if it was planned in a participatory way.
- evaluation can consist of different parts: a conceptual evaluation, a process evaluation and an evaluation of results (outputs, outcomes, impact and sustainability).
- general description of the activities, aims and goals, time, frequency, budget, place and persons involved, but also the perceptions of principals (organizers), implementers and participants.
- differentiated approach and qualitative research methods due to the sensitive nature of the topic
- evaluation as an equal part, involvement of experienced experts to carry out or support the evaluation



Thank You!

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