



Societal & Political Engagement
of Young People in Environmental Issues

D1.2: Minutes of 1st Advisory Board meeting

WP1 – Project Management



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1 Executive summary

This document aims to provide an overview of the most important points discussed during the 1st External Expert Advisory Board (EEAB) meeting of the STEP project (experts' recommendations, partners' comments, important issues raised, etc.).

2 Role of the STEP External Expert Advisory Board

The External Expert Advisory Board comprises representatives from organisations relevant to youth participation, environment, policy making, data protection, and social media. Their role will be to participate in workshops in which they will review the project activities and outcomes, identify the strong and weak points with respect to the objectives of the project and the applications of the results, and provide recommendations.

3 Meeting overview

The scope of the first External Expert Advisory Board meeting was to introduce STEP project partners and EEAB members to each other, to inform EEAB members about the project and the challenges the consortium faces, and to offer the STEP consortium the chance to elicit some initial crucial recommendations for the implementation of the project. The meeting took place through an online collaboration tool. Five members of the Advisory Board and representatives of eight project partners participated in this meeting. The detailed list of participants is presented in Chapter 4. The discussion was open for all participants to express their opinions and comments, and several interesting and useful recommendations were provided by the EEAB.

3.1 Welcome and introduction of participants

Mr. Keratidis from DRAXIS (Coordinator) welcomed all the participants and thanked especially the members of the EEAB for their participation. After a quick self-presentation of the participating partners, the members of the Advisory Board presented themselves.

Kerstin Franzl

Ms. Franzl is the coordinator of a STEP relevant project, "EUth-Tools and Tips for Mobile and Digital Youth Participation in and across Europe", funded by Horizon 2020 – Young 5b call (the same call by which STEP is funded). She expressed her interest to collaborate with the STEP consortium as the two projects have similar objectives. Ms. Franzl is a research associate at the NEXUS Institute since 2010 and she has been involved in several research projects on public participation, demographic change, and applied social sciences in general. She is evaluating German pilot projects of digital youth participation in the project Youthpart.

Catriona Macaulay

Dr Macaulay is the Head of User Research and Engagement at the Scottish Government implementing a participatory decision-making approach. She leads the development and delivery of user research capacity building for Scottish Government's Digital Directorate, and champions user/citizen engagement and participation in the delivery of digital public sector, business transformation, and environmental issues. Moreover, for over 20 years she has helped people and organisations learn to make sense of the social world, and put that sense to work in product, service and technology design and innovation contexts. Among others she has collaborated with Intel, Unilever, Microsoft, the BBC, Swisscom and NCR.

Enric Coll Gelabert

Dr Gelabert holds a PhD in Environmental Sciences. Currently, he is an Environmental Technician at Environmental Education and Promotion Office of the Barcelona Provincial Council. He is in charge of the Technical Secretariat of the Network of Cities and Towns towards Sustainability (XarxaSost project) promoting working groups on topics relevant to energy, climate change, water management, noise, air quality, waste prevention, education for sustainability, etc. Moreover, he is the community manager of the project websites, social media accounts, and awareness campaigns on energy, water, waste and pollution.

Epaminondas Christofilopoulos

Mr. Christofilopoulos is a Physicist with an MSc in Environmental Impact Assessment, Auditing and Management Systems. He is the Head of International Cooperation in PRAXI Network, Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (FORTH) offering consultancy support to third countries for establishing research and technological co-operation with the EU. He is a Greek National Contact Point for Horizon 2020 for Environment, Energy and Transport. Moreover, he is Chief Executive Officer of the "MillenniumProject" Greek node, which aims to modernise process of Southeastern Europe, by giving special emphasis on the implementation of the "science" of future studies through direct diffusion of the results to organisations, businesses and other stakeholders.

Christiane Klemm

Ms. Klemm is a representative of European youth. She is student of the BSc "Landscape Ecology and Nature Conservation – International" at University of Greifswald, and Board Member of the Youth and Environment Europe (YEE). At YEE, she used to be project officer, thus she has a lot of experience in engaging youth, training them on environmental issues, and promoting campaigns.

3.2 Project overview

Ms. Syropoulou (DRAXIS) briefly presented the project highlighting the key points of its future implementation. Ms. Syropoulou presented the problem, the objectives of the STEP project, the main components of the envisioned platform, and the most critical indicators that will be used to assess the impact of the project.

3.3 Setting up a common vision around STEP

Mr. Keratidis managed the discussions of the meeting and set the issues for which the consortium asked for consultation. The topics discussed are presented below:

- *What kind of consultation do policy makers need in order to set up and manage public participation processes? How can we build capacity and educate public authorities on participation issues?*

Having experience in working with policy makers, Ms. Franzl mentioned that consultation on public participation should be made for any target group distinctively by providing them with appropriate knowledge and tips. Such a target group is policy makers, for whom awareness building and cultural change is important. The challenge arising is their level of readiness to welcome participation approaches in general. From Ms. Franzl's experience, however, they may not be ready to listen and be trained. Initiators of participatory initiatives are often people in the administration or at lower levels in organisations, who need to be trained in technical issues. On the other hand, young people need strong motives in order to participate, thus any such initiative has to be especially attractive to them, and to derive from a serious offer by the politicians – otherwise, it can destroy trust of the youth. In addition, online methods alone are not sufficient, and should be complemented by offline activities. In many governmental bodies there are units that focus on public participation. Although public servants are willing to welcome participatory processes, they often lack the appropriate technical knowledge of eParticipation tools, and they are not aware of their full functionality in order to make the right choices. As the daily direct contact between the software provider and public administrators is difficult, in the EUth project the technical partners trained one to two persons from each pilot, who afterwards organised workshops themselves in order to train their colleagues in a hierarchical way.

Dr Gelabert, as a public servant, pointed that the majority of policy makers in Spain understand what public participation processes mean, however the extent to which they can implement them depends on their knowledge background.

Dr Macaulay emphasised that we should be very cautious on how we define public participation, as perceptions may vary for local, national, and European level. She pointed out that there is a difference between policy makers and politicians, who have different agendas and motives. One of the challenges is that public participation procedures usually attract citizens who would be attracted anyway, and not youth with fewer opportunities.

- *How do policy makers interact with young people? How do they use online platforms and social media? How should STEP approach them, and what are the potential barriers to the use of eParticipation platforms that we should be aware of?*

Dr Gelabert talked about his experience in interacting with young people via the Barcelona Provincial Council. He mentioned that they have organised many awareness raising campaigns on sustainability issues, and that they are very active in social media campaigns. However, they received very low feedback from social media, especially regarding young people with age between 12 and 20 years old. Mr. Keratidis asked Dr Gelabert if the low feedback from young people is attributed to the fact that youth is bombarded with overflow of information or because they do not care of environmental issues. Dr Gelabert believes that young people are sensitive in environmental issues, but the problem is that public servants cannot exploit the full benefits of the social media, and that is due to their limited experience and their age. The majority of local authorities in Barcelona have social media accounts managed by press departments, while just a few of them have specific profiles for environmental issues. However, their activity is limited only to receiving and recording feedback from the public, but not actually using it for participatory purposes. To this point, he emphasised that it is very crucial to carefully choose the public servants who will be responsible to utilise the STEP platform in each pilot.

- *How are online platforms and social media used to engage young people? How should STEP approach them?*

Dr Macaulay talked about the experience of the Scottish government in using e-participation platforms to engage young people, and she pointed that we should have in mind inclusion and sex and gender equality issues. However, the main challenge is to actively collaborate with youth organisations in order to engage their members. She mentioned the “Young Scot” organisation, and suggested that STEP should involve them in the project.

Mr. Christofilopoulos briefly presented the situation in Greece regarding the use of e-Participation platforms. He pointed that public authorities mostly aim to engage scholars, and not the general public, and that there is lack of clarity in the consultations. They do not have access to tools that can support them to manage the input they receive. On the other hand, the public seems to be reluctant to participate as they believe that participation processes are unclear and that their voices will not be heard.

3.4 Other proposals from the Advisory Board members

Some interesting points discussed before the end of the meeting are the following:

- Ms. Klemm, as a potential user of the STEP platform, was asked if she would be willing to use a platform in order to participate in decision making procedures in environmental issues. Ms. Klemm pointed that, although social media is the main source of information for the majority of young people, they are often too fancy and do not provide reliable information. To this point, Ms. Franzl mentioned that projects that involve young people can work best if young people do the job of moderation and facilitation, as their posts on social media are more authentic and they already know how to communicate information.
- Ms. Franzl also mentioned that for each pilot setting there may be a different use of social media, and that the services offered to public authorities should be adapted according to their level of readiness to use them. Apart from the use of social media, it is important to also use offline engagement activities and to collaborate with NGOs and existing environmental communities that locally engage young people. However, the challenge is to restore the trust of youth to public authorities and their processes. Building trust takes time, and it takes two or three participation processes to achieve this.
- Mr. Macian from the Municipality of Mollet Del Valles (MDV) mentioned some of the challenges they encountered during the process of interviewing young people from their region for the identification of STEP user requirements. According to Mr. Macian, young people in Barcelona tend to distrust public authorities and they are very sceptical to participate in the interviews. Thus, we should convince them that the STEP project is serious, important and will radically change their lives. He suggested focusing on local issues rather than EU-wide.
- Dr Gelabert mentioned that, along with environmental issues, the STEP project should focus on social and financial issues, such as energy poverty or the use of empty public spaces that affect young people in order to really apply the concept of sustainability as a whole.

- Dr Gelabert also pointed the importance of the coherence between the participation processes executed with the STEP platform and other participation processes executed already by local authorities. Moreover, he mentioned that internal relationships between different departments of the same local authority (participation department, press and communication department, environmental department, etc.) should be reinforced.
- Mr. De Paoli from ABERTAY, as the leader of WP2-Analysis and requirements, pointed that some of the most critical questions included in the stakeholders' interviews have already mentioned in the present meeting. He mentioned that ABERTAY is looking to identify policy makers that can be involved in the project interviews. Ms. Franzl offered to bring the consortium in touch with policy makers involved in the EUth project.

3.5 *Closure of meeting*

Mr. Keratidis thanked all the participants for their contribution to the meeting and assured them that the consortium will take all the information discussed into account during the project implementation. Finally, he informed them that the next EEAB meeting will be held in summer 2016, but until then the consortium may contact the EEAB members individually in case they need their recommendations on important issues.

4 List of participants

4.1 Members of the External Expert Advisory Board

| Name | Organisation & expertise |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Epaminondas Christofilopoulos | PRAXI Network, Greek NCP for Environment Energy and Transport |
| Kerstin Franzl | NEXUS Institute, Coordinator of Euth project |
| Enric Coll Gelabert | Environmental Technician at Environmental Education and Promotion Office, Barcelona Provincial County |
| Catriona Macaulay | Head of User Research and Engagement at The Scottish Government |
| Christiane Klemm | Board member of YEE |

4.2 Project partners

| Name | Organisation |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Christodoulos Keratidis | DRAXIS |
| Panagiota Syropoulou | DRAXIS |
| Symeon Papadopoulos | CERTH |
| Reinhard Busch | LINGUATEC |
| Stefano De Paoli | ABERTAY |
| Paula Forbes | ABERTAY |
| Mustafa Serdar Yümlü | SAMPAS |
| Pasqualina Caruso | CSB |
| Mercedes Fioravanti Álvarez | YEE |
| Albert Macian Garcia | MDV |