



Developing a Culture of Participation

with the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) network

Context

[ICYE](#) is an international non-profit youth exchange organisation promoting youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service. It organises long and short-term exchanges combining home stays with voluntary service in more than 34 countries around the world.

Process

ICA:UK has been working with ICYE members in Europe and Scandinavia since 2006. We have delivered three 5-day training events:

- **in July 2006 with ICJA Germany** in Berlin, 13 from France, Italy, Germany, Iceland, Finland, Switzerland, Romania & Spain attended training on the ToP [Focused Conversation](#), [Consensus Workshop](#) & [Action Planning](#) methods
- **in April 2007 with AUS Iceland** in Reykjavik, 18 from France, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Romania, Finland, UK, Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Portugal & Estonia attended training on the ToP [Consensus Workshop](#) method and [Participatory Strategic Planning](#)
- **in August 2008 with ASERMUN Spain** in Badajoz, 15 from France, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Estonia, Spain & Iceland attended training on the ToP [Focused Conversation](#) & [Action Planning](#) methods and [Group Facilitation Skills](#).



participants in Berlin in 2006

Outputs

Some of the lessons learnt from these events, extracted from course evaluations, included:

2006 in Berlin

- we have a better idea of what participation is, what different facets it includes, in which ways it can be improved and how central its role is when working in a team
- now I see participation as something one should train and not anymore as naturally given to everybody

Some comments of the participants included:

"It has been one of the most useful and participative trainings I have attended"

"Excellent chances to get equipped with the tools you need to make your life easier!"

"Very useful, a practical and interesting course with a motivated and professional trainer! Hard work but plenty of funny moments too! And partying!"

2007 in Reykjavik

- results are more comprehensive, more clearly articulated, and actions are more focused rather than the “hit and miss” method that seems to have occurred when directed by only one person
- participation is the most important thing if you want to find the best solution - difficult - takes much time and patience - but the results are worth it
- the importance (and challenge) of following up

Some comments of the participants included:

“Fantastic and professional- go for it! A possibility to change your way of working and improving your results!”

“A training on facilitation where the participants are the facilitators- and it works!”

“A process shared by all the participants that identifies a vision and goals for the organization, to help articulate the reasons why accomplishing these goals have been difficult and to develop real strategies that can move the organization closer to actually realizing its mission.”

2008 in Badajoz

- the difference between facilitation and training: how can I use facilitation skills within our organisation, how to be empowering participation through facilitation skills and methods
- I understand the concept of participation much better and the different levels of it
- both facilitation and participation needs hard work and focus on the purpose

Some comments of the participants included:

“It was amazing and has helped me so much to recognize how I work”



participants in Badajoz in 2008

“Challenging week of work, fun and self-learning”

“A short and inspiring training where you can learn and practice new methods in facilitation and participation”

Impact

Three-six months after each training course, we sent out a questionnaire to assess the longer term changes that resulted from the training. The following reports came back from participants:

2006 in Berlin

- I am less of a “control-freak”, I let things go and more easily accept different ways of doing tasks
- I delegate more and I look at things task by task, which makes it easier for me to involve people at any stage they want to
- I pay more attention on the process of improvements and how things build up and not so much on failures (from failures I extract those aspects that I need to prepare more)
- I “wear different glasses” when looking at relationships I have. I share more of those parts of me that can inspire and push forward the person I am having in my life. It’s like a mind-switch... I enjoy it a lot and I see that people around me perceive

differently my attitude. They get motivation to do more for them and complain less

- in relation with participants, what I do differently is that I pay attention to the colors I use for materials, for my clothes and the smell in the air. It boosts so much their attention even when the program is tiring
- in terms of projects, they are more likely to happen when the people in charge feel totally responsible for the results. Thus the management capacity of my team grows with each project that we do
- I have seen a great difference. These skills really gave me more confidence and I know that these skills really work and I know how to use them
- we now try to listen more to what other people have to say and feel more comfortable making decisions within a team. People feel somehow more motivated because they see themselves as an active part
- I am more patient, I create now more space, where the participants can reflect on the topic and I'm getting used to paraphrase the content which is expressed by a participant, this improve a reflection on the side of the participant, it's also good for a better understanding and it provokes more discussions

2007 in Reykjavik

- work seems more relaxed for people working with me, because I am more relaxed when I know that we share the responsibility
- ideas based on dreams and unrealistic are likely to stay on the paper. Consequence of that: disappointment, lose of motivation

- relationships are more intense, since this method allows interaction on different levels, not necessarily linear. It empowers trust and openness towards cooperation and that is special in my opinion
- in terms of ownership of the project, it belongs 100% to those who did it and they are convinced about it also, that's what I like the most. I have seen people who had a great sense of ownership of that project that even when they discovered it wasn't realistic, they transformed it till it was implemented. Which tells me that using this method stimulates motivation that lasts longer than what I was used to before
- I believe more in the groups I facilitate and in their capacity to achieve the best result they can and therefore will realistically use and put into practice
- I see that participation develops trust and ownership and that the groups feel more respected while becoming more active and responsible
- I try to involve more people in planning as well as in implementing programs and activities and the results are visible
- my skills as facilitator improved, not only in the field of planning but in general. I feel that now I can not only ask the good question but that I really look for the answer the other can give and not the one I would like. I see this helps people to be more realistic and to better find solutions to the questions they discuss with me. I feel this makes them comfortable and builds trust
- the persons I work with feel more involved and listened to and this create self responsibility and energy.