EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	4 - CITIZEN CROSSROADS (CCR)
PIC number:	877774050
Project name and acronym:	Youth DemocrAID: Education, Debate, Action – Youth DemocrAID

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP5		
Event name:	Implementation in Greece		
Type:	Workshop, training		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	GREECE, THESSALONIKI		
Date(s):	12.07.2025; 24.11.2025		
Website(s) (if any):	https://youthdemocraid.weebly.com/		
Participants			
Female:	33		
Male:	23		
Non-binary:	5		
From country 1 [GREECE]:	51		
From country 2 [CROATIA]:	4		
From country 3 [SLOVENIA]:	5		
From country 4 [ALBANIA]:	1		
Total number of participants:	61	From total number of countries:	4

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

On July 12th and on November 24th, 2025, CCR organized a series of events in Thessaloniki, bringing together young people from the city and abroad to explore themes of democracy and youth. The event was structured around five parallel workshops, each dedicated to a distinct topic, running concurrently.

Each session began with a shared presentation introducing the project's goals and activities, followed by a theoretical overview of the CERV programme, its core values, and the foundational concepts of the workshops.

Within each session, participants engaged in two non-formal learning activities. They were divided into smaller groups to collaboratively reflect on the issues presented, encouraging open dialogue, critical thinking, and peer-to-peer learning tailored to the specific theme of their workshop.

The first of the five parallel workshops focused on Political Participation and Advocacy, aiming to deepen participants' understanding of democratic engagement and empower them to become active citizens.

Non-formal activity 1: Approaching tomorrow

In the first non-formal activity titled “Approaching Tomorrow,” participants were divided into three groups, each tasked with developing a strategy to communicate a pressing social issue through a specific form of political participation. Each group randomly selected two envelopes. The first envelope contained a topic - Mental Health, School Infrastructure, or Actions for Climate Change - while the second revealed a method of civic engagement: organizing a protest, launching a social media campaign, or creating a petition.

After receiving their topics and participation methods, the groups began crafting targeted strategies to raise awareness and mobilize support.

Petition Group: School Infrastructure

Participants focused on issues observed directly in their school environments, such as dysfunctional heating and cooling systems, long-unresolved structural damage like broken windows and walls, and the need for overall renovation. To address these concerns, the group proposed a petition using the slogan “Fix it!” paired with a bandage graphic symbolizing collective effort and healing. The petition would advocate for the establishment of a department within an existing NGO dedicated to monitoring and ensuring the continuous maintenance of school facilities. It would highlight threats to student safety and emphasize the urgency of intervention. The group also emphasized how a single, simple act, adding a signature, could contribute significantly to meaningful change.

Social Media Campaign Group: Mental Health of Women

This group chose to focus on promoting mental health awareness among women. Their strategy centered on creating engaging and interactive content, including a quiz designed by psychologists to help users assess their emotional well-being and identify personal needs. To extend their reach, the group proposed partnering with influencers who could promote their campaign and encourage more women to engage. Their campaign would align with popular trends and challenges to remain relevant, appealing, and highly visible across platforms.

Protest Group: Air Pollution in Thessaloniki

This group chose to organize a protest addressing the rising problem of air pollution in Thessaloniki. Their campaign focused on demands, such as expanding bike lanes by constructing underground parking lots, increasing the use of public transportation, and introducing more electric buses. The group’s overarching goal was to not only express frustration but to push for lasting, sustainable change. To amplify their reach, they planned to collaborate with private companies interested in improving their environmental image, thus enhancing both visibility and credibility. They also prepared banners and drafted clear demands to ensure their message resonated loudly and clearly during the demonstration.

Nonformal activity 2: Speed debating

During this activity, participants were divided into three groups and seated at designated debate tables, each moderated by a coordinator. The coordinators guided the discussions, recorded key points, and ensured that the group engaged thoughtfully with each topic. Each group had seven minutes to debate one topic before rotating to a new table with a different theme. This rotation continued until all participants visited every table and contributed to all three discussions. Coordinators remained at their assigned tables to welcome incoming groups and encourage new perspectives to enrich each debate. At the end of the activity, each coordinator presented the collective findings from their discussions to the full group, offering a final reflection on the topics explored.

Topic 1: Establishing a Factory in a Forest Area

Most participants reached a consensus that building a factory in a forested area is not a suitable option. While acknowledging the economic benefits, particularly for rural regions, the groups emphasized that climate challenges are no longer hypothetical or distant; they are pressing concerns that demand immediate attention. Participants noted that modern technologies could help mitigate the

environmental impact of factories through green infrastructure and pollution-reducing mechanisms. However, they concluded that such benefits are outweighed by the potential risks to air, water, and soil, which could result in serious health consequences for the local population. In a broader conversation about economic development versus environmental protection, participants proposed that the two are inherently connected. While economic growth has contributed to the climate crisis, it also fuels innovation and research necessary to resolve it. Ultimately, most participants aligned with environmentalist values, suggesting that environmental preservation should remain the primary evaluation criterion in such decisions.

Topic 2: Political Correctness - Freedom of Expression or Restriction?

This debate sparked diverse and divided opinions. Some participants defended freedom of expression as a cornerstone of democracy, while others stressed the need to limit speech that is harmful or discriminatory. An interesting point emerged regarding the psychological effects of excessive political correctness. Participants observed that it can lead individuals to develop two separate “faces”: one for public discourse and one reflecting their genuine thoughts. This duality, they argued, could undermine authenticity and hinder meaningful dialogue. The conversation also raised questions about the authority and legitimacy of those who define what is “politically correct.” Since legal systems and cultural norms vary widely across countries, the standards for acceptable speech are often subjective and context-dependent. This made it clear that political correctness is not a universal concept, but one shaped by society and circumstance.

Topic 3: Hate Speech and the Boundaries of Free Expression

While discussing this topic, participants examined the boundaries of free speech, particularly when expression leads to harm. The most common opinion during the debate was that speech should be free only insofar as it does not cause harm to others. Yet, defining what constitutes “harm” proved to be complex. Groups discussed the variability of hate speech definitions across cultures, countries, and even digital platforms. While most agreed that harmful speech poses significant risks, they also emphasized that outright banning such content is not a solution. Suppression, they argued, can provoke fear and radicalize individuals further. Instead of censorship, participants proposed investing in strong, independent institutions and comprehensive citizenship education. These mechanisms, they believed, could empower people to recognize and resist hate speech, promoting resilience through awareness and critical thinking.

In the second parallel workshop, participants explored the theme of Youth Leadership and Empowerment through an engaging simulation titled "Critical Decisions." After a short introduction, participants were divided into four small groups, and each was assigned a leadership scenario reflecting dilemmas young leaders might face. The scenarios included:

1. **Peer Pressure in a Student Council:** A student council president is pressured by friends to allocate funds to a popular event that excludes certain student groups. The group had to decide whether to prioritize popularity or inclusivity.
2. **Organizing a Protest:** A youth activist group wants to organize a peaceful protest, but local authorities warn of potential legal consequences. Participants had to weigh civic responsibility against personal and group risk.
3. **Social Media Backlash:** A young leader faces online criticism after expressing a controversial opinion on climate policy. The group had to decide how to respond publicly and whether to stand by the original message.
4. **Team Conflict in a Volunteer Project** A conflict arises between two team members during a community clean-up initiative. The leader must decide how to mediate while keeping the project on track.

Each group used guiding questions to navigate their scenario:

- Who are the stakeholders, and how are they affected?
- What are the possible courses of action?
- What are the risks and benefits of each option?
- How would you communicate your decision to your team or the public?

After discussing, each group presented their decisions and reasoning to the rest of the participants. This led to an exchange of perspectives, with others offering alternative approaches and reflecting on the implications of each choice.

The second activity of the Youth Leadership and Empowerment session invited participants to engage in a World Café-style discussion. The activity began with a short introduction to the World Café methodology, explaining how rotating small-group discussions encourages diverse perspectives and collective insight. Participants were divided into groups of 4–5 and assigned to their first table, where a

moderator introduced the theme and guided the conversation. Each discussion was framed by open-ended questions like:

- What challenges do young people face in this area?
- What solutions or actions could empower youth?
- How can institutions better support youth participation?
- What role does technology or social media play?

After 10-15 minutes of discussion, participants rotated to a new table. The moderator at each table summarized the previous group's insights, allowing the new group to build upon them with fresh ideas and perspectives. This cycle continued until all participants had visited multiple tables. The activity concluded with a debriefing, during which each moderator presented a synthesis of the ideas generated at their table. Common insights included the need for more inclusive platforms, better mental health support, and stronger youth representation in decision-making. Participants emphasized the importance of peer collaboration, ethical leadership, and access to resources.

By the end of the activities, participants had explored pressing issues and practiced essential leadership skills: synthesizing ideas, engaging in debate, and learning from each other.

The third workshop focused on Community Action and Grassroots Initiatives. The session was designed to simulate the full planning cycle of a grassroots initiative - from identifying a social issue to presenting a structured action plan.

During the first activity, participants were divided into three small groups and tasked with designing a grassroots initiative by identifying a local problem and developing a structured action plan using the SMART approach.

Group 1 focused on the issue of the lack of recycling awareness in their neighborhood. They identified the problem as a combination of limited recycling infrastructure and low public engagement. Their SMART goal was to launch a month-long "Green Corners" campaign, installing recycling bins in key community spots and organizing weekly awareness events. Their timeline included planning, outreach to schools and universities, and a final community clean-up day. They identified the municipality and local environmental NGOs as key stakeholders.

Group 2 addressed social isolation among elderly residents, particularly those living alone in urban areas. Their initiative aimed to connect youth volunteers with elderly individuals through weekly visits. Their goal was to reach at least 30 elderly participants within three months. They planned to collaborate with local senior centers, schools, and media to promote the initiative and gather volunteers.

Group 3 focused on the lack of representation and visibility for marginalized youth, particularly those from immigrant or minority backgrounds. They proposed creating podcast series aimed at sharing personal stories, experiences, and challenges faced by underrepresented communities. Their SMART goal was to produce and publish six podcast episodes over three months, each featuring a guest speaker and a discussion on topics like identity, discrimination, and belonging. The group identified local radio stations and NGOs as potential partners, and planned a social media campaign to promote the series.

The final activity of the third session focused on Presenting Ideas and Constructive Feedback, allowing participants to practice public speaking and refine their grassroots initiatives. Each group delivered a short, structured pitch of their project, highlighting the problem they aimed to address, their SMART goals, planned actions, and outreach strategies. After all pitches were delivered, participants voted on the most innovative or impactful initiative, with Group 2's initiative receiving the most positive feedback. This was followed by a facilitated discussion where participants reflected on the challenges their projects might face, such as limited resources, stakeholder resistance, or low community engagement.

The fourth workshop was dedicated to Democracy and Citizenship. The first activity was a quiz titled "How Does My Democracy Work?" and aimed to deepen understanding of national democratic systems and their connection to the European Union.

Using the online platform Mentimeter, the session started by asking the open question "What is democracy?" with responses displayed in a dynamic word cloud, ranging from "freedom" and "equality" to "voting" and "responsibility." The quiz then progressed through a series of open and closed questions, covering key topics such as:

- **National Institutions**: Participants were asked to name the institution where laws are created and describe how legislation is passed. This led to a brief explanation of parliamentary procedures.
- **Political Parties and Ideologies**: Participants listed parties with current representation and explored how to choose among them. Facilitators introduced the political compass model, helping participants place parties along ideological lines.
- **Voting Systems**: Questions addressed how often citizens vote, what levels of government they vote for (local, national, EU), and whether they vote for parties or individuals.
- **European Parliament**: The quiz explored participants' understanding of the EU Parliament's role, how representatives are elected, and what political families are.

Throughout the activity, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own civic engagement and how their values align with broader political structures.

The second activity, titled "Be a Fake News Content Creator," was an exercise designed to strengthen participants' digital literacy and critical thinking. Participants explored how misinformation spreads online and learned practical strategies for identifying and resisting manipulation in digital spaces. The activity began with a brief explanation of how social media algorithms are designed. Then participants took on the role of a fake news creator, aiming to gain followers by using tactics such as emotional manipulation, disinformation, and conspiracy framing, creating headlines designed to provoke outrage or fear, spreading false claims, and suggesting hidden agendas with posts. After that, facilitators presented five real-world examples of online content (three false and two true) and asked participants to determine their authenticity. Each example was followed by a demonstration of how to verify facts using reliable sources, highlighting useful techniques.

The activity concluded with a reflective discussion on the importance of distinguishing between facts and opinions, recognizing credible sources, and staying curious rather than reactive. The session encouraged participants to become more aware of the traps of misinformation and to be equipped to make informed choices rooted in their values and beliefs.

The fifth workshop, devoted to Youth and Civic Engagement, opened with an activity titled *"My First Political Party."* Participants had to step into the role of political leaders, guiding them through the process of forming their own political party from scratch. The goal was to help them understand the fundamentals of political organization, the importance of values, and how policy proposals reflect a party's vision for society. After a brief introduction explaining the role of political parties in shaping public policy, participants were divided into two small groups. Each group was given paper, markers, and a timer, and tasked with creating a political party that included a unique name, two core values, and two key policy proposals.

Group 1 created a "green" party built around the values of sustainability, innovation, and transparency. Their policies included funding renewable energy and introducing climate education in schools. Group 2 formed an "equal" party emphasizing equity, inclusion, and youth empowerment. Their proposals focused on free mental health services for students, anti-discrimination training in schools, and youth representation in municipal councils. Once the planning phase ended, each group presented their party in a two-minute pitch. The activity concluded with a group reflection. Participants shared what they found challenging and what they enjoyed. The activity left participants more aware of their potential to shape the political scene.

The second activity of the fifth session, titled **"Political Compass,"** offered participants a deeper understanding of political ideologies. The goal was to explore how political beliefs intersect across economic and social dimensions, and how these beliefs shape policies and perspectives. The activity began with a clear explanation of the political compass as a two-dimensional model. Participants were then divided into two groups and given a set of 10 statements covering a wide range of political, economic, and social issues. Each group discussed and debated where each statement, such as *"Education should be free for everyone"* and *"Wealthier individuals should pay higher taxes to support social programs",* might fall on the compass. After completing the group activity, participants reflected on the process. Many noted how difficult it was to categorize certain beliefs, and how some statements could be interpreted differently depending on context.

By the end of the workshop, participants had gained a clearer understanding of political ideologies but also developed greater empathy for differing viewpoints. The activity highlighted the importance of critical thinking, open-mindedness, and active citizenship in shaping inclusive and informed societies.

Conclusions:

Through these non-formal activities, participants were allowed to interact meaningfully with one another, exchanging ideas and listening to diverse perspectives on key societal issues. The group

discussions created an environment of open communication and mutual respect, allowing individuals to share their viewpoints while remaining receptive to different opinions.

Following the event, all participants were promptly provided with essential project data and a link to access the EUSurvey platform.

Social media posts about the workshops implemented in Greece:
Facebook Youth DemocrAID
Facebook Citizen Crossroads
Instagram Citizen Crossroads

Website articles:
https://youthdemocraid.weebly.com/news/workshops-in-greece
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/insights-from-youth-democraid-workshops-thessaloniki-umoif

EDS publication links:
https://www.you-net.eu/youth-democraid.html
https://youthdemocraid.weebly.com/news

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).