

Network: Youth and Participation Project

(2012 - 2014)



The design of the Network Project was based on the need to include people working in the areas of civil society and academia in discussions about youth, to produce instructional material related to the topic, and to empower youth in civil society (as well as CSOs working with them). Support for the project came from the European Commission Turkey Delegation and the Turkish Ministry of European Union Affairs. The project was carried out as part of a consortium that includes the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, the Civil Society Development Center (STGM), the Human Rights Joint Platform (IHOP), the Origin of Living Foundation (YADA) and the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV).

The aim of the Distance-learning Program (UOP) developed and implemented within this framework was to strengthen capacities of civil society organizations (CSO) and young citizens to increase their level of participation in public debate and decision-making processes. The syllabus included modules on civil society, advocacy, rights-based work, strategy development, national and international organizations, stakeholders and power analysis, networks and networking, campaigns and planning, legislative advocacy, advocacy techniques and tactics, public services

monitoring, public expenditures monitoring, communication and social media use, youth policy/youth study, organizational management, and intraorganizational participation. Instruction in these modules was given face-to-face, in classrooms, as well as online, via distance learning. It also included workshops and study visits to civil society stakeholders. At the end of the Distance Learning Program, participants prepared a strategy and action plan for their own organizations that dealt with specific problems and solutions they themselves identified. The program was implemented as two terms each lasting six-months. In the first term, there were 83 participants from 68 different organizations, while in the second term, there were 44 participants from 37 organizations.



In the study visits organized within the scope of the Network Project, youth from 20 different CSOs visited 42 organizations in Ankara and Brussels.

The board game, developed within the scope of the project, aims to facilitate discussions about representative democracy, participatory democracy and its impact on the formation of citizenship, among young people. The game was used as a multipurpose learning instrument in the seminars, and was distributed to CSOs working in advocacy, participation and education.

The project also produced eleven different short videos and one documentary to supplement learning processes it provided:

A Talk by Murat Belge on Civil Society, The Status of Youth in 2012, Civil Society Etymology, Blueprint for Survival, Turkish Grand National Assembly 101, Public Expenditures Monitoring Platform (KAHIP), Youth Participation in Turkey, Turkish Grand National Assembly Petition Committee, Turkish Grand National Assembly Parliamentary Question, Public and Youth Policies in Turkey, Economic and Social Status in Youth Participation, From Participation to Permanence.

Three international academic workshops were organized in the scope of the project. In the first one, in June 2013, discussions were held about the obstacles facing young citizens in joining political parties and their relations with them. The second one, in November 2013, examined the relationship of young citizens to CSOs, as one of their important means of participation, and discussed the issues of youth and volunteering. The third one, in February 2014, focused on the relationship between citizenship and young citizens who actively use alternative means of participation/communication, such as caricatures and social media instruments, and how these instruments can increase the efficacy of young citizens in decision-making processes.

An international conference was convened in May 2014 with public institutions, CSO representatives and participants from academia from Turkey and Europe to share all of the outputs produced by the activities in the Network Project and the results and discussions raised by its' research publications. In different sessions of the conference, discussions were held on contemporary issues about active citizenship, participation, new forms of organizing, voluntarism and civil society.

Network Project Publications

The Network Project, which was implemented between 2012-2014 with the financial support of Turkey Delegation of the European Union and the Turkish Ministry of European Union Affairs, aimed to strengthen the capacities of young citizens and CSOs working with youth to increase their level of participation in public debate and decision-making processes.

The books published as part of the project are as follows:

- *Conference on Participation of Young Citizens in the New Era: Conference Papers*

Editors: Nurhan Yentürk and Devin Bahçeci (2014), Network Youth Participation Project Books no. 13, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

The book consists of the proceedings at the international conference held to share and discuss the findings of the research done as part of the Network: Youth Participation Project. Following the titles of the conference, it includes the transcriptions of the speeches and presentations, on the importance of youth participation, alternative means of participation,

participation of youth in civil society, empowerment and participation, and best practices in participation.



- *Youth Participation in Turkey*

Editors:: Nurhan Yentürk and Devin Bahçeci (2014), Network Youth Participation Project Books no. 3, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

The Youth Participation in Turkey research project was conducted as a field study by KONDA Research and Consulting in April 2013. Up to 2,500 young citizens between the ages of 18 and 24, from 36 provinces, 203 neighborhoods and 11 student dormitories throughout the country participated in the study. This book includes the main findings of this field study, a summary of which was also translated in English. The research focuses on the intersection of the social, political and economic dimensions of participation, and publishing the findings as a book aims to create a discussion ground for conceptualization of youth participation in a holistic manner.



- *Youth and Political Participation: Does Socioeconomic Status Make a Difference?*

Volkan Yılmaz and Burcu Oy (2014), Network Youth Participation Project Books no. 5, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

This study was on the main research question whether or not youth from different socio-economic backgrounds differ with respect to their perceptions and mechanism of political participation. It analyzes the findings on political participation presented in the fifth chapter of the book 'Youth Participation in Turkey' with respect to socio-demographic variables presented in chapter 3. Examining the relationship between the socioeconomic status of youth and their political participation, the publication presents different perspectives, based on the research findings, to explain the reasons why youth are or are not included in political decision-making processes. The research concludes that disadvantaged youth are less able to participate in political mechanisms and their voices are heard less, which in turn make it more difficult to influence the political

decisions in a direction to eliminate their disadvantages. This publication aims to foster the discussion about the relationship between the status young people have and their position in decision-making processes. The research thus aims at fueling the debates being waged over the political decision-making of young people.



- *Youth Policies in Terms of Autonomy and Freedoms*

Laden Yurttagüler, Burcu Oy and Yörük Kurtaran (2014), Network Youth Participation Project Books no. 8, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

This book consists of a compilation of three articles. The first of these discusses the extent to which young people in Turkey are autonomous. It also points out that the demands of the young people have to be met by public services provided to them as equal citizens. The second article examines freedom of expression and organization in universities. It contains recommendations, namely to eliminate all obstacles to the freedom of expression and organization of youth and to expand the boundaries of freedom to encompass all young people with different characteristics. The

third article in the book looks at development in youth policies between 2009 – 2012. The study emphasizes that after the creation of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Turkey had “youth policies” that were different than in previous years and argues that it is

necessary to discuss the qualitative aspects of these policies. It also points out the need for a monitoring and evaluation with respect to young people’s status as equal and free citizens, as put forth in the Youth Policy processes suggested by European Youth Forum.



- *The Parliament’s Youth Discourse: 1930-1990*

Laden Yurttagüler (2014), Network Youth Participation Project Books no. 7, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

This research was carried out to understand the framework within which the Turkish Grand National Assembly discussed young people and how the institution perceived them. To do this, it scanned the assembly minutes from 1930 – 1990 and analyzed the youth discourse in which parliamentarians engaged. The analyses show that parliamentarians and political party representatives saw young people as entities in need of protection. In addition, they instrumentalized them as part of their desire to turn them

into “ideal citizens”. They did not see young people as individuals having the ability to make decisions about their own needs, and political, economic and social conditions.



- *Participation of Youth and Youth Policy in Europe: A Comparative Analysis*

Editors: Emre Gür and Devin Bahçeci (2014), Network Youth Participation Project Books no. 10, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

This book is an attempt to link the results from studies analyzing youth policies in Turkey with respect to participation, with different perspectives put forward in translated publications in the scope of the Network Project, and focuses on concrete youth policy experiences from different countries in Europe. These are the experiences of political participation in the UK,

civil participation in Germany, social movements and participation in



Finland.