



1. introduction

Why a manual for facilitators of study sessions?

The “transitional” nature of youth work implies a regular turnover of volunteers and staff in the organisations active in this field, especially those facilitating educational activities on a sporadic and voluntary basis. Therefore, constant training of new generations of young people and youth leaders is required.

The programme of study sessions, organised by the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport (DYS) in co-operation with international youth organisations or networks, consists of some 20-30 activities every year. It involves more than 1000 participants per year and some 120-150 people are involved in preparing them.

The study sessions of the European Youth Centres have been trendsetters in European youth work and remain a benchmark for the international youth sector’s work. Successful study sessions have always been dependent on the proper selection of a relevant topic, recruitment of participants with the right profile and competent team members. For the Directorate of Youth and Sport, this manual represents an investment in the quality of study sessions and other educational activities in its programme. Establishing the competences of team members of study sessions is one of the essential prerequisites for enabling exchanges of views, multiplying the effects in the participants’ day-to-day lives, and thus contributing to the principles and values of the DYS’s work priorities. We hope that international youth organisations and other organisers of study sessions will find value in this manual and make its use a standard feature in the preparation of teams running study sessions.

The first “Training Course for Facilitators of Study Sessions” was held in April 2004 and the second in November 2005. The two training courses were attended altogether by 60 participants from 47 different youth NGOs and 27 different countries. The first training course was developed by Mette Bram, Goran Buldioski, Inge Stuer and Arjen Bros. Martin Krajcik helped in running the course. The 2005 team of trainers consisted of H  l  ne Barkovic, Arturas Deltuva, Dariusz Grzemny, Sabine Klocker and Pervana Mammadova. The courses addressed the needs of youth organisations and other youth work institutions in having competent and autonomous volunteers and staff capable of facilitating training and education activities to meet the needs of their memberships. At the individual level, these courses offered basic competences essential for designing, running, evaluating and following-up study sessions for current and future preparatory team members.

As not all young people who are involved in preparing and delivering study sessions could participate in such a specialised training course, this guide was produced to help them to prepare/perform in their roles as facilitators/preparatory team members. This manual summarises the key issues that were addressed at these two training courses and captures some examples of best practice in preparing for and running study sessions. The text has largely benefited from the “DYS guide for study sessions”, the two reports produced by the participants of the Training Courses for Facilitators and other training publications. The objectives and the methodology of this manual follow the logic and the educational rationale of the two training courses for facilitators of study sessions (Appendix 1).

Main aims of the manual

At individual level, the main aim is to inform future team members of study sessions about the central educational issues in designing, running, evaluating and following-up study sessions and other similar youth activities.

At the international youth organisations level, this manual will support the development of the quality of the study sessions and other educational activities that contribute to the fulfilment of their goals and their long-term organisational development.



At the Council of Europe (institutional) level, the main aim of this manual is to contribute to the consolidation and development of the quality of the programme of study sessions of the European Youth Centres, by providing specific training material for the members of future preparatory teams of organisations.

Objectives of the manual

At the individual level

This manual aims to equip facilitators with a basic knowledge of study sessions and to raise future preparatory team members' awareness about DYS quality criteria and principles related to their responsibilities. It is designed to increase their knowledge and awareness of the values underpinning European non-formal educational youth activities. Objectives also include giving a basic insight into different concepts of learning in non-formal education, and developing preparatory team members' competences in, and motivation to use, intercultural learning and human rights education in study sessions. It is also intended to assist facilitators in non-formal education to develop essential skills with multicultural youth groups (for example, programme design, leadership, team work, chairing and facilitating, communication, group dynamics, evaluation and follow-up). In addition, great emphasis is placed in this manual on the development of preparatory team members' awareness of and skills in organising the follow-up, in particular writing reports and securing other forms of dissemination of the results of study sessions. The DYS's intention is to provide facilitators with a concise insight into the political and administrative framework of study sessions run in co-operation with the European Youth Centres.

At international youth organisations level

One of the main objectives of this manual is the promotion of values connected with study sessions, as well as the development of an appreciation of study sessions as a unique opportunity for organisations to contribute to their overall strategy and programme. A further objective is that the impact of study sessions should be enhanced within the youth organisations or networks by encouraging organisations to equip their members with this manual prior to the activity. Other crucial objectives are to enable facilitators to achieve a meaningful follow-up with their member organisations after the study sessions and communication of the results to a wider public.

At Council of Europe (institutional) level

The Council of Europe hopes to support the development of facilitators of educational activities of youth organisations which co-operate or plan to co-operate with the European Youth Centres. Another main objective is the further development of quality criteria for study sessions in relation to the realities and needs of youth organisations.





2. What is a study session?



2.1. The concept of a study session and its place in the programme of the Council of Europe/DYS

Study sessions are based on co-operation between the partner organisations and the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport (DYS). Study sessions are international educational youth seminars (meetings), lasting between four and eight days, which bring together members of youth organisations or networks and experts for discussions on a specific subject leading to conclusions relevant to the priorities and programmes of the Council of Europe Youth sector. They are organised in co-operation with youth organisations and networks, and are hosted by one of the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg or Budapest.

The selection of topics and partner organisations for study sessions is based on applications submitted by youth organisations twice a year and decided upon by the DYS Programming Committee on Youth.¹ These activities are almost fully financed by the Council of Europe in accordance with guidelines available at the Secretariat.

About 20 study sessions a year take place at the European Youth Centres. These sessions address a variety of subjects, corresponding to the work priorities established by the DYS.² The scope and extent of the subject matter indicate that they remain a key tool for co-operation with youth organisations in developing their own thematic focuses and multiplying their organisational cultures. Seminar objectives are set by the youth organisation and accepted by the Programming Committee of the DYS. Youth organisations recruit the participants and are responsible for the follow-up. Creativity and innovation in methodological as well as thematic terms are also important aspects of study sessions.

Within the programme of the DYS, a study session is a very specific type of activity. The DYS also organises other types of activities, such as training courses, conferences and seminars. A study session is emblematic of youth work, as it incorporates different aspects of the above-mentioned activities. In fact, a study session combines pan-European youth work with work at grassroots levels. The contents of study sessions filter down to the grassroots, as participants in a study session are mostly local leaders who otherwise would not come to the European Youth Centres, as their work does not necessarily have an international dimension. This means that the results of study sessions can be implemented and used by participants in their local realities, and are not just a nice abstract result in a report.

For more detailed information on study sessions, consult: www.coe.int/youth

1. The Programming Committee on Youth is a co-decision body comprising eight members each from the CDEJ (European Steering Committee for Youth, consisting of government officials) and the Advisory Council (representing youth organisations and networks). It establishes, monitors and evaluates the programmes of the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation. The Programming Committee is one of the three main bodies of the Co-management system of the DYS. Based on the embedded values of youth participation, all the decisions made by the DYS are brought before the Joint Council (a body that comprises governmental representatives in charge of youth issues and young people representing different youth organisations at national and European levels).

2. The priorities for 2006-08 are: human rights education and intercultural dialogue, youth participation and democratic citizenship, social cohesion and inclusion of young people, and youth policy development. The DYS chooses new priorities every three years.



Reflection point

We have presented the different organisational and institutional contexts of a study session. While this may sound formal, study sessions have a very concrete meaning for youth organisations.

What is a study session in practice for a youth organisation/network?

What is the main use of study sessions within your organisation/network?

Is there a difference between holding a study session and organising other activities?

When participants in the Training Course for Facilitators and in the Consultative Meeting on study sessions were asked to define what a study session is for them, they came up with the following:

What is a study session?	What is a study session NOT?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning experience• Involves non-formal learning• Intercultural learning process• Panel for exchange of experiences, ideas, visions• Linked with the organisation's mission and work• Active involvement of participants• Connected to priorities of the Council of Europe• Open to everyone• Funded/supported by the DYS• Held at EYCS or EYCB• Educational support provided• Work• Group/team work• Young people (approx. 18-30) involved• Personal development• Well-prepared• Dynamic & flexible programme• It's an international activity (at least 8 countries have to be involved)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic seminar• Sport activity• Less than 4 days• Training course• Open to everyone• A holiday• Statutory meeting for the organisation• Individual work

