



YOUTHVOICES4PEACE

REFERÊNCIA DO PROJECTO: 2022-1-PT02-KA154-YOU-000065140

MOTIVATION:

There are currently 1.2 billion young people, between 15 and 24 years old, who represent 16% of the world population (UN statistical data). The increase in the number of young people around the world leads us to (re)think about the need to highlight the role of young people as true agents of intervention in the construction of democracy. In this panorama, Alentejo assumes an endogenous demographic dynamic that translates into an even more pronounced aging of the population, according to analysis of data from PORDATA (2020).

According to the Council Conclusions on the role of young people in building a safe, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe (2018), it was necessary to “ensure the active and meaningful participation of young people in building peaceful and inclusive societies”. The COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation and the economic crisis have put youth participation at risk, through the growth of extremist ideas and ideologies that have incited violence, inside and outside Europe.

In this sense, we consider the devaluation of European transcultural values, the misunderstanding of the importance of respect for pluralism and diversity by young generations, as the social problem. Therefore, we believe that the solution should be resolved intrinsically, through processes adjusted around a consensus among young people. Based on the above, YV4P devised a solution that brought together individual and/or collective actions, with the aim of making changes to the social facts that caused concern among young people, encouraging their participation in democratic processes.

In line with the Youth Participation Strategy, 94% of young people interviewed believed that they had developed skills to discuss political issues and 62% admitted that they had developed citizenship and participation skills. Bearing this reality in mind, we designed a project that incorporated digital and in-person activities, with a view to promoting dialogue in civil society, between young people and public and private institutions with experience in working with policymakers at local, regional, national and European levels. . Therefore, we developed a robust sharing space for new opportunities for young people's civic participation, with a focus on young people with fewer opportunities (FO), making them more aware and responsible citizens, with the ability to express decisions that affect their own lives. and/or the life of the community in which they live.

OBJECTIVES:

General:

Promote a close relationship between young people, through meaningful participation in civic and democratic life.

Specifics:

- Offer a space for personal growth for young people, through a space for dialogue and cooperation with political decision makers;
- Raise awareness among policymakers about the needs of young people and the importance of inclusive and participatory decision-making;
- Promote the defense of a Culture of Peace, through participatory dialogue between the EU and youth;
- Foster understanding and respect for European cross-cultural values, by ensuring a feeling of belonging to Europe;
- Involve young people in the formulation and/or implementation of policies, as well as in the co-production of democratic methods;
- Encourage young people to reflect on policies, their needs and critical thinking;
- Develop digital and media literacy skills, through critical thinking and Non-Formal Education (NFE) opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION:

a) CONSTITUTION OF THE PARTNERSHIP



In accordance with the submitted and approved application, the promoting entity – Associação European Network of Places of Peace – initiated contacts with two of its public members in Alentejo – Municipality of Estremoz and Municipality of Viana do Alentejo as well as two public education institutions based in city of Évora: the Gabriel Pereira School Group and the University of Évora. Thus, meetings were held with those responsible for those Municipalities and their respective Educational Departments as well as with the Director of the Gabriel Pereira School Group, from Évora and with the Vice-Rector for Education and Pedagogical Innovation at the University of Évora, of which results the acceptance of the participation of these four entities as partners in the project as well as the indication of the respective Political Decision Makers by each of them, with the two partner Municipalities working together with public education institutions in the respective municipalities.

The four partner institutions committed to:

- carry out the selection and participation of young people in the project;
- participate, through Political Decision Makers, in all partner meetings aimed at planning, programming and monitoring the project;
- contribute to the project with the participation of teachers and teaching technicians who may be requested by the promoting entity;
- provide the facilities and technical means required by the promoting entity to carry out the activities integrated into the project planning;

b) ACTIVITY PLANNING AND PROJECT EXECUTION PERIOD

As the project was expected to last 10 months, starting on September 1, 2022 and ending on June 30, 2023, it was soon concluded that it would be difficult to complete all the planned activities in such a period of time, due to the different academic calendars of the participants institutions, high school and university education. Faced with this reality, the promoting entity requested the National Agency ERASMUS+/Juventude em Ação, to change the project completion date to December 31, 2023, which was approved by the aforementioned Agency on 17-04-2023, resulting in the amendment of Article 1.2 of the respective Grant Agreement (attached).

Given this change, the 2nd. Partner Meeting (see item c)), carried out the replanning of project activities, as explained in item f), below.

c) PARTNER MEETINGS

Five partner meetings were held with the promoting entity, to plan and monitor project activities.

d) PARTICIPANTS SELECTION

The selection of participants was carried out taking into account the main selection criteria defined when applying, that is, age (16 to 25 years old), origin (Alcáçovas, Estremoz, Évora Monte and Évora) and fewer opportunities.

e) CONSTITUTION OF GROUPS AND POLITICAL DECISION MAKERS

The application provided for the constitution of 4 groups of 10 participants each, making a total of 40 participants, namely: Alcáçovas, Estremoz, Évora Monte and Évora. However, it was soon concluded that it would be very difficult to maintain the planned constitution and respect the planned selection criteria, for demographic reasons and the participants' academic calendar. Therefore, maintaining the objective of involving as many young people as possible within the limit proposed in the application (40 participants), it was necessary to reformulate the groups and the number of participants per group. Thus, the 4 groups were constituted as follows, without prejudice to the participation of all young people in collective and face-to-face activities, namely the 3 Conversations about Peace:

- Alcáçovas Group: 2 participants;
- Estremoz Group: 3 participants;
- Gabriel Pereira School Group (Évora): 10 participants;
- Group from the University of Évora: 25 participants;

The first 3 groups included young people studying Secondary Education (10th/11th and 12th Years of Schooling) and the Group from the University of Évora included, in its entirety, Master's students from the International Relations Course at this University. In view of this reformulation of the constitution of the groups, it was also decided to carry out a redistribution of Political Decision-makers, with 2 for the University of Évora Group and 1 for each of the other groups, in a total of 5 Political Decision-makers, namely:

- Professors Irene Viparelli and Evanthia Balla (University of Évora);
- Teacher Sónia Cabeça (Grupo Escolar Gabriel Pereira);
- Professor Silvia Cuco (Estremoz);
- Dr. Edite de Sousa (Alcáçovas)

f) ACTIVIDADES

YouthVoices4Peace was a youth project whose cornerstone was the promotion of the NFE methodology as a means of empowering young people and transforming society. The project was designed with the learning needs of young people as a reference and aimed to offer a learning experience based on a dynamic and inclusive environment. The project was structured on a large scale through group dynamics exercises on an informal and non-formal basis to develop the group as a relational space that respected each person's differences and enhanced everyone's personal, social and professional development.

We sought to move away from the formal and more traditional method of education and, therefore, a collaborative and constant sharing environment was created, without fear of judgement. Each person's contribution was a valuable asset to the project.

We also sought to bring young people into contact with the different local realities of Alentejo, through the decentralization of face-to-face activities. For this reason, and by common agreement between the promoting entity and the partner entities, the three sessions of the Conversations on Peace were held in 3 different locations: Torre/Paço de Évora Monte (Évora Monte), Paço dos Henriques (Alcáçovas) and Gabriel Pereira Secondary School (Évora). This decentralization of activities had 2 visible positive results: it allowed young participants to have closer contact with local realities that they were not familiar with and boosted the active participation and connection of partners with the project and its activities, whether through the provision of facilities for their achievement is through the participation of its staff in these activities.

Within the scope of the project and taking into account the replanning that was carried out, as mentioned in point b), the following activities were carried out:

- Conversations about Peace_1 (in person), Torre/Paço de Évora Monte, on 19/05/2023;
- Conversations about Peace_2 (in person), Paço dos Henriques (Alcáçovas), on 10/11/2023;
- Conversations about Peace_3 (in person), ES Gabriel Pereira (Évora), on 11/29/2023;
- 8 Awareness Campaigns (2 for each group);
- Creation of a Whatsapp group;

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT PEACE:



The Conversations about Peace had the following common moments in all sessions:

- Energizer dynamics specifically for the first moment of the morning and for the first moment of the afternoon, after lunch;
- Previous presentations of themes and content defined by ENPP facilitators and Policy Makers;
- Group dynamics to carry out cooperative work between the group of young people and joint participation in debates with policymakers;
- Group reflection activities on the different activities, followed by a moment for individual reflection where young people made some notes in their logbook;
- Contacts with the reality of the places where they were carried out;

Conversations about Peace 1: As previously stated, this activity took place in the Tower/Paço de Évora Monte, located in the Historic Center of this town and where the house where the Convention of Évora Monte was signed on May 26, 1834, which put an end to the so-called Liberal Wars and is one of the places that is part of the European Network of Places of Peace Association (ENPP), the entity promoting the YouthVoices4Peace project. This activity included the in-person participation of young people, ENPP facilitators and Political Decision Makers. This activity was dedicated to the “Presentation of the project and the Erasmus+ Program”, in charge of the ENPP facilitator, Eduardo Basso and “Presentation and Debate on the theme of Peace and Culture of Peace”, in charge of Professor Irene Viparelli, from the University of Évora , with participants visiting the Local Parish Council and the Historic Center of Évora Monte during the day, in particular, the Interpretive Center of the Évora Monte Convention, installed in the Convention House.



Conversations about Peace 2: this activity took place on October 11, 2023 and had as its stage the rehabilitated and renovated Paço dos Henriques, in Alcáçovas, where negotiations took place and the signing of the well-known Treaty of Alcáçovas/Toledo, between the kingdoms of Portugal and Castile, on September 4, 1479, which in addition to ending the War of Castile Succession defined for the first time the division of the world between the 2 kingdoms, giving the final increase to the maritime expansion of the 2 Iberian kingdoms in the centuries XV and XVI. The registered young people, ENPP facilitators and Political Decision Makers participated in this in-person activity. This activity was essentially dedicated to the debate on the Construction of the European Union, with a prior presentation by Professor Evanthia Balla, from the University of Évora and on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with a prior presentation by ENPP facilitator, Eduardo Basso. Participants also had the opportunity to visit Paço dos Henriques at length and the various exhibitions and services it hosts, as well as the Chocalhos Museum and a Chocalhos Factory, an art inscribed on UNESCO's Urgent Safeguard List since 2015.



Conversations about Peace 3: This activity was held on September 29, 2023, in the Gabriel Secondary School Auditorium throughout the day, with young participants, ENPP facilitators and Policy Makers. In addition to these, several groups of students from that school also participated throughout the day, accompanied by their respective teachers. The activity had 2 distinct parts: in the morning, participants were able to watch a presentation on “The role of diplomacy in resolving world conflicts” by journalist Rui Cardoso, former director of Courier Internacional and with a regular presence on SIC -Notícias , followed by debate; the afternoon was dedicated to problems affecting young people, with a presentation on the “European Union Youth Strategy 2019/2027” by Gabrielle Bernoville, from the European Commission's DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, followed by a debate and another on “Portuguese State Policies for Youth”, led by Miguel Rasquinho, IPDJ Regional Director for Alentejo, followed by a debate. The afternoon program was completed with the completion of the YouthPass and the “Collective Memories Book” by the young participants.



AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS:



The awareness campaigns took place in 3 locations, Alcáçovas, Évora and Estremoz, with 8 actions carried out, as described below.

These actions had the following objectives:

- Raise awareness among young people about the importance of participating in democratic life;
- Transmit ideas about possible forms of youth participation in society;
- Raising awareness of the importance of young people's participation in democratic life;
- Develop the creative capacity of young people;
- Reflection on learning developed during awareness campaigns.

Based on these objectives, the awareness raising actions resulted from projects designed by the young participants in each group and implemented by them and were oriented towards the involvement of other young people, educational communities and local communities, namely through the use of local events with great meaning. The diversity of content and audiences was one of the very positive characteristics of the actions carried out:

Awareness Campaign 1:

Alcáçovas Group:

This campaign was carried out during the 25th Cultural Week in the village of Alcáçovas, between September 3rd and 10th, 2023, taking advantage of the presence of young people from various countries participating in another ERASMUS+ project. Like the others, the Campaign was created by the young participants with the support of the respective Political Decision Maker and the local partner in the project: the participants used a questionnaire about Peace, the Peace Treaties and the entity promoting the project, set up a small counter with decoration alluding to the project for several days and interacted with the public, young and non-young, during the aforementioned Cultural Week. Several merchandising products related to the project and the promoting entity were purchased and distributed to the public participating in the questionnaire.



Gabriel Pereira School Group (Évora):

The participants in this group chose to make a video about issues related to Peace, through interviews recorded on the street with several people. With this work they sought not only to collect people's opinions about Peace and the current war situation in Europe but also to understand how important it is for people to live in a climate of peace and what level of concern they have about the situation. current. The video made by the participants served as an instrument to raise awareness among the school community, through sessions held with students and teachers from their State College.



University of Évora Group:

Being students of the Master of International Relations, the participants of this group chose to hold a session in one of the University's amphitheatres during which the film "Sérgio" was shown, which tells some of the main episodes in the life of Sérgio Vieira de Mello, High Commissioner of United Nations for Human Rights, murdered during an attack on the United Nations General Headquarters in Baghdad, on August 19, 2003. After the screening of the film, a debate followed in which dozens of students from that University participated.



Estremoz Group:

The group of participants from Estremoz also chose to carry out their awareness campaign among the general public, on October 14, 2023, taking advantage of the Traditional Saturday Market and the Velharias Fair, which takes place in the main square of that city and which It is visited by thousands of people from across the region and from neighboring Spain. The participants set up a counter on site with decoration alluding to the project and also carried out a questionnaire with questions related to Peace and the Peace Treaties and distributed to the participating public a variety of merchandising material, designed by the young participants and with motifs and logos alluding to the project.



Awareness Campaign 2:

Alcáçovas Group:

This group followed a strategy identical to that of the Awareness Campaign_1 for this Awareness Campaign, but now set up a counter at the largest public event that takes place annually in the town of Alcáçovas: the Alcáçovas Sweets Show which took place over the weekend from December 8th to 10th, 2023, which allowed very close contact with the public visiting this event.



Gabriel Pereira School Group (Évora):

Taking advantage of the video made by the participants of this group during the Awareness Campaign_1, the participants organized a set of 3 awareness sessions with students from the Group to which they belong, focusing on the youngest students (7th, 8th and 9th years of schooling).

In these sessions that took place at Escola Básica André de Resende, belonging to the Gabriel Pereira School Group, participants presented the video they made to other students, followed by debates in which the great participation of students and their concerns regarding the state of war in Europe and the need to defend Peace on our continent.



University of Évora Group:

As this group is made up of Master's students in International Relations, their attention to events taking place in the world is more keen and, therefore, in view of the outbreak of the conflict in the Gaza Strip at the beginning of October, the group decided to promote a lecture and debate on the "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", with the participation of several Professors from the University of Évora and which took place on November 22, 2023, in the Nobre Auditorium of that University.



Estremoz Group:

This group also chose to hold awareness sessions with other students at their school, Escola Secundária Rainha Santa Isabel (Estremoz), using materials they collected and others designed by themselves.

The sessions took place in the Auditorium of that School with the presence of several groups of students and Teachers, during which they focused on their experience as participants in an ERASMUS+ project and showed the importance of putting young people's concerns at the forefront of the fight for Peace, for Human Rights, highlighting the role of new generations in achieving these goals. In addition to the merchandising materials already used in the Awareness Campaign_1, participants used a video about Évora Monte, the site of the signing of the Évora Monte Convention, on May 26, 1834 (<https://youtu.be/arR9jhimowg?feature=shared>) and a PowerPoint created by them about the events that led to the signing of this Peace Treaty.



g) DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Given the temporal extension of the project (16 months), the dissemination of the projects, their activities and results was carried out throughout its duration, namely through Press Releases and publications in social media, as well as through the Whatsapp group created specifically for the group of participants.

At the end of the project, on December 15th, an online meeting was held with Policy Makers and participants with a view to collecting results and disseminating them.

A video (attached) was prepared with a photographic summary of the entire project, which served as the basis for the debate during this online meeting.

h) FEW OPPORTUNITIES

In a region like Alentejo, one of the poorest and least populated in Portugal and with a deficient public transport system, the mobility difficulties of young people due to geographic reasons stand out compared to any other. Hence, one of the reasons for this project and one of its main objectives was to “remove” young people from their usual habitat and make them discover (and recognize) other realities, even within the same region, a region that covers practically 1 /3 of the national territory but which does not exceed 8% in terms of number of inhabitants.

Therefore, when selecting participants, we took this reality into account and chose young people with fewer geographical opportunities, namely:

- all young people attending primary and secondary education (Gabriel Pereira School Group, Rainha Santa Isabel Secondary School and Alcáçovas Basic School);
- young university students coming from the PALOPs and Brazil (University of Évora).

After the selection above, the table of participants in the project with fewer opportunities is as follows

FEW OPPORTUNITIES	Number of Participants
Geographic	20
Social	0
Economic	0
TOTAL	20

i) RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

The results of the project were extremely positive and exceeded the expectations of the promoting entity, especially with regard to the participation of young people, the number of participants and the quality of the collective work carried out by young people both with regard to participation in the debates held in the 3 editions of “Conversations about Peace” but most especially, in the creative capacity and achievement of young people, clearly evident in the ways they found to carry out the 2 Awareness Campaigns and reach very diverse target audiences.

The following main conclusions can be drawn:

- Good organization of the project, particularly regarding content and general logistics;
- Very positive decentralization of activities;
- Very current and interesting content, particularly in the development of skills in matters related to peace;
- Very enriching experience in personal, professional and social terms;
- Enriching experience, in particular, due to the autonomy given to young participants in developing the content and forms of awareness campaigns;
- Active dissemination and promotion of the culture of peace in school communities and civil society through awareness campaigns;
- Quality Speakers and Facilitators;