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REPORT

Community Meetings

Introduction

The community meetings were organised within the STAR project in the period from February 2019 to June 2020. In principle, the meetings were open to all young people who were interested in coming and discussing the issues related to racism, hate speech and discrimination.

The topics of the meetings were put forward by the groups of young facilitators who were trained within the STAR project. They were also responsible for running the discussions with the support from 2 youth workers (one being a psychologist as well).

The meetings were advertised in schools and also through school counsellors who meet in our Association once a month. During the meetings we also co-operated with the Municipal Cultural Centre, which was also responsible for the promotion and bringing young people who take part in their activities.

The idea of community meeting was based on the following principles:

- the topics discussed must be relevant for young people
- the meetings are based on the needs of participants
- the meetings are youth-led events
- the meetings are open to all young people who want to listen to and contribute to discussions (whoever comes is an important person)

The outburst of COVID-19 pandemic moved meetings online, but as it was at the beginning of the pandemic they were quite popular among young people. During this time, the meetings were advertised through schools online registers.

21 community meetings were run within the project bringing together 411 participants.

List of community meetings

Date	Topic	Type	No. of participants
February 14, 2019	Acting against gender stereotypes (One billion rising)	residential	21
May 24, 2019	The impact of racism	residential	18
May 31, 2019	Discussing young people and depression	residential	15
September 6, 2019	Are you racist?	residential	22
September 13, 2019	Discrimination - do we know what it is about?	residential	12
September 20, 2019	Have you ever heard about microaggressions?	residential	10

September 27, 2019	Hate vs. hate speech	residential	13
October 4, 2019	Freedom of speech and hate speech	residential	15
October 21, 2019	How to recognise hate speech?	residential	18
November 8, 2019	What to do when you you are targeted with hate speech?	residential	15
November 15, 2019	Why do people use hate speech?	residential	15
April 3, 2020	Violence towards LGBTIQ people	online	27
April 27, 2020	How to be an ally?	online	20
May 7, 2020	What to do when I am attacked?	online	25
May 13, 2020	How to support people who experience violence?	online	22
June 19, 2020	Fighting racism - what do you need to know?	online	23
June 26, 2020	Dealing with depression during lockdown?	online	25
June 2, 2020	How to take care of your mental health?	online	27
June 10, 2020	Yes, you can... act against hate speech	online	25
June 17, 2020	Why is it so hard to be yourself?	online	22
June 23, 2020	Why do we need empathy?	online	21

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Summary

- The topics of the meetings turned to be interesting for young people. It was clear that young people wanted to focus on practical aspects related to dealing with racism, hate speech or discrimination. The topic of mental health became relevant during the lockdown.
- The meetings had a very loose form: they were run by young facilitators who usually organised discussions around some key questions and proposed the interactive activity to explore the topic further. The youth workers were there to support young people or provide additional input, when necessary.
- Young people who participated in the meetings were coming from different backgrounds. The meetings were organised together with Municipal Cultural Centre that targets very different young people than our association. This contributed to the group being more diverse.
- It is difficult to mention very tangible outcomes of the meetings. However, the feedback received from the participants was very positive and proved that this kind of form of discussing youth issues is very needed. therefore, our association decided to continue organising similar event beyond the project. Young people have very few chances to just come and talk, and be listened to. Community meetings provided for such an opportunity.
- During the meetings, the idea of creating a support group for young LGBTIQ people emerged. It is worth mentioning that in our town (other small), young LGBTIQ people do not have any spaces to meet and get support. The group will start operating in 2021.

