

Recommendations for National Working Groups for Structured Dialogue

14-15 April 2015, Ljubljana, Slovenia

This document summarizes the main challenges of National Working Groups for Structured Dialogue (NWG) based on the experiences of 14 countries present at the seminar. The following recommendations are possibilities that all NWGs could implement in their work if facing the following challenges

Challenge 1: National Working Group's cooperation with other stakeholders

Recommendations:

- Organise Structured Dialogue round tables for the familiarisation with the process and determining the areas of cooperation with key actors in order to engage National Ministries and other relevant stakeholders to improve SD (in the matter of visibility, implementation of recommendations etc.).
- Engage relevant stakeholders (in line with the respective topic of the cycle) in a follow-up workshop where they develop their institutional follow-up to one or more of the recommendations.
- Encourage partners on local and regional level to create a local/regional structured dialogue with the aim of strengthening youth participation in their context and to improve the situation of young people.
- Use success stories of local SD to convince and motivate local governments to start local dimension of structured dialogue.
- Since many NWGs have to tackle similar challenges, they are invited to organize bilateral and multilateral meetings in order to exchange examples of good practices.
- Possibly involve schools and universities into SD strategic partnership.

Challenge 2: Clear understanding of Structured Dialogue by all members of National Working Group

Recommendations:

- NWG should ensure that all members of NWG will agree on a common definition and objectives of the SD in the country, which are also linked to EU level. People who are involved in the process should be competent and well informed about the Structured Dialogue. Members of NWG should have experience/knowledge of EU and national level policy making process.
- Each NWG member's organisation should be aware of the process and track all the changes happening on that. This would support the individual member attending the meetings.
- The coordinator of the NWG should ensure that all NWG members have access to relevant information on the current status of the process and NWG work.
- The whole SD process together with side-processes and advocacy processes should be evaluated by NWG.

Challenge 3: Improvement of National Working Group's internal communication and working procedures

Recommendations:

- Ensuring onboarding of newcomers, the current members of NWG should find a way how to keep those new people active and engaged. If any members are in lack of knowledge, they should be provided with the information and training by the other members and, if possible, attend at trainings organised from time to time.
- Possibility: engage an external facilitator for all the NWG meetings.
- Ensure a predetermined agenda.
- Ensure a Secretary for the NWG in order to take minutes and prepare documents (usually the Chair - NYC provides this).
- Keep the composition of NWG in a way that the number of people is not too big (up to 10 people) + invited guests if relevant.
- Memorandum or agreement signed between all members on tasks and responsibilities
- Clearly defined timeline (for all phases of SD)
- The Chair (or a designated member) should provide summaries of documents (especially the bigger compilations)
- In cases of the need to take decision several options of decisions can be pre-prepared
- Conference calls can be organised in preparation of the meetings (bigger countries)
- E-learning course on the NWG for new members can be organised

Challenge 4: The role of National Working Groups in attracting funding to solve the lack of staff and enhance the implementation of SD process at national level

Recommendations:

- National authorities should include funding of SD into youth policy of the state since they recognize the importance and contribution of the results they gain from the SD.
- If NWG members would need support from NWG in attracting extra funding for the SD implementation, like the needed co-funding, the NWG should find ways to support them
- Member States should fund the coordinating organisation (usually NYC) for the Structured Dialogue at national (possibly regional) levels. This would assure provision of consultations, evaluation and activities raising public awareness, hereby increasing the quality and efficiency of the Structured Dialogue.

Challenge 5: Topics and priorities

Recommendations:

- Youth from each country should have the opportunity to specify the topics of the cycle and NWG should advocate at EU level that young people are involved earlier in choosing topics.
- The topic of SD as a wider approach of participatory youth policy creation on local and national level, shouldn't be limited by the EU Youth Strategy but should meet upcoming demands and challenges of young people. Whereas in the case of the specific

Structured Dialogue Process, we should ensure that young people continue directly inputting the Youth Strategy.

Challenge 6: Composition of National Working Group

Recommendations:

- A clear picture about composition of NWG, its tasks and mechanism can be achieved by written working procedures. Tasks in NWGs should be divided according to the knowledge and expertise of the people/organisations involved. If any members are in lack of knowledge, they should be provided with the information and training by the other members and, if possible, attend at trainings organised from time to time.
- NWGs should invite organizations, not members of NWGs, to participate in their meetings as observers and to enable them to be involved in the work of NWGs.
- If relevant, researchers should participate in NWGs and their role should be clarified. The data collected in the SD should be sent to the researchers who after analyzing it, share their feedbacks and inputs with NWG.

Challenge 7: The role of the NWGs in ensuring promotion and visibility of Structured Dialogue and the achieved results

Recommendations:

- Branding and promotion of SD dialogue should be significantly improved, as it serves as an essential tool to reach out to young people and in making the SD more visible. This can be done through various possible ways, for example with active presence at youth festivals, creating web portals, media appearances and via involving famous people to deliver the meaning of SD to youth and using social media advertising (Twitter, FB, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.).
- Success stories about SD should be made visible at different platforms in a friendly and simple language, including also the local government officials' opinions. In summarizing the results, using existing materials, interactive platforms, infographics created based on past activities could be helpful.
- Ministries represented in NWG should collaborate on information spreading about SD while using their contacts from ministerial to regional and local level.
- The term „Structured dialogue” can be complemented on national level by another term/name/slogan which is understandable and appealing to young people.

Challenge 8: Political importance of SD in the eyes of other political stakeholders

Recommendations:

- NWG should develop recommendations for incorporating of SD into youth policy of the state, approach relevant ministry or members of parliament to communicate it into the agenda of the decision-making, be present on public discussions, get involved in parliamentary working groups or committees to defend the recommendation incorporation into legislation.

- Different competences among NWG members and relevant stakeholders (such as parliamentarians, organisations etc.) in implementation of SD results should be identified at the end of each working cycle. Based on this mapping, tasks of members in implementation should be shared in the most effective way. The implementation of results should not be under the responsibility of only one actor.
- NWGs (through their Ministry representatives) can, if relevant, establish contact with their Permanent Representations to the EU during the SD cycle, to be able to help building bridges between national and EU level, especially in moments like the preparation of the high level debate. This would contribute to an enhanced political importance of the SD.
- Results of SD, whenever it is applicable, should be used as guidance in national youth policy and national debates.

Challenge 9: Commitment of all National Working Group members

Recommendations:

- In order to ensure participation and contribution of all NWG members, it is necessary to clarify the purpose of the NWG and the roles of all members (organisations/institutions) to make all the work worthy. There is a need to clarify that the ownership of the SD is in the hands of all NWG members.
- Each member organization of NWG should prepare its own working plan in addition to the common plan / memorandum of the whole NWG.
- These particular working plans should be presented to all members of NWG and based on that, a common timeline should be agreed upon.

Challenge 10: Outreach to Youth

Recommendations:

- NWG should encourage transparent and open trainings, conferences and meetings to be organized at places frequented by the youth, such as schools and youth centers.
- Diversity of young people could be improved with the help of youth ambassadors who can operate as a bridge to connect with youth from different social groups (from rural areas, minorities, disadvantaged, disabled, etc.), involving them in SD. In approaching these groups, the proper youth-friendly and group-specific language should be used, to enable mutual understanding. Co-operating with schools, organizations and youth workers could also be useful in reaching this goal.
- NWG should, in its communication strategy, focus on advantages the youth can get out of SD, so the youth can have an understanding in which ways participation in the process could have a direct positive effect for them. Young people should be informed about and made aware of opportunities in active participation and expression of opinion.
- NWGs should encourage organizations apart from the National Youth Councils to develop and apply for SD projects within Erasmus + key action 3, in order to support SD and improve outreach to an increased number of youth.



- NWGs should organise, support, advocate and/or steer a process that would enable the education of local authorities, trainers and other stakeholders on how to better implement SD.

Challenge 11: Increase of “faith” in the potential of the process

Recommendations:

- Recommendations intended for local/regional/national level (not necessarily intended for EU process) should be followed up and implemented as soon as possible.
- NWGs should find a way how to involve youth and other stakeholders in SD through creative approaches, considering the emotional aspects of a person’s motivation to be part of the process.
- NWGs should find out what makes the SD attractive to stakeholders and those benefits should be communicated in order to increase the trust in SD process.
- As it is important that all individuals involved in all different aspects of the SD implementation have personal commitment to the process, NWG needs to lead the example. :)