

YOUTH DIALOGUE FORUM 2024

Project report



 Youth
Dialogue
Forum

DEMDIS

Youth Dialogue Forum 2024

Project Report

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Introduction

Democracy is a discussion. It's a system of tackling social challenges in a peaceful and fair manner. Because of that, the struggle of democratic systems isn't an abstract issue. Our whole collective ability to overcome the plethora of social problems struggles as well. That's why we shouldn't only preserve our democracies as they are, but also create new ways of civic participation.

One example of many stems from the chicken and egg problem of youth participation. Institutions aren't enough incentivized to create new participation incentives for youth, because they might view youth as disinterested or disengaged. On the other hand, youth report a lack of incentives enabling meaningful participation. To put it simply, one side lacks engagement, the other incentives. This vicious cycle of misunderstanding and disengagement is a perfect example that underlines not only the challenges of youth participation but also the roots of our unfulfilled democratic potential. The question is, can we break it? And how?

How could civic engagement and empowerment look like when we can experiment and test new approaches? What kind of incentives have the capacity to fulfill our potential as active citizens and changemakers?

Providing answers to these crucial questions was not only the topic of the Youth Dialogue Forum 2024 (YDF) which addressed the unfulfilled potential of youth participation in civil society - its whole structure is a moonshot which strives to break the vicious cycle of citizen disengagement.

3 Countries - 2 Digital Discussions - 1 Live Forum



The diagram consists of three icons in a row, each with a label below it. The first icon shows two stylized human figures with speech bubbles and arrows between them, labeled "Share experiences". The second icon shows a brain with a lightbulb at the base, labeled "Learn and innovate". The third icon shows a hand holding a network of interconnected nodes, labeled "Co-create solutions".

As we believe that good processes are often more important than the content, we designed and conducted a complex process which combined various proven and experimental approaches. We fused digital tools (CivTech) with live deliberative forum, incorporated gamification for participants and crowdsourced wisdom of local communities from Poland, Czechia and Slovakia.

So, how did we fare? Did the spaceship of YDF meet the expectations of this ambitious moonshot? Let's dive in!

Goals of YDF

As the introduction outlines, the main goals of YDF lie in:

1. **Creating** an innovative international dialogue forum.
2. **Engaging** 2000¹ participants and 9 Ambassadors from three countries.
3. **Mapping** the barriers and drivers of youth participation.
4. **Proposing** recommendations for better engagement in civil society.
5. **Proving positive impact** of fair discussions on participants.

Results

1. **Created a new functional international forum** format that combined gamified digital discussion with live deliberations.
2. **Engaged 746 participants** from three countries in digital discussion through 19 Ambassadors of YDF.
3. **Identified barriers and drivers** of youth engagement.
4. **28 concrete recommendations** for fostering good relationships, finding purpose, having a good team and proactive mindset.
5. Proving positive impact of deliberations on 20 participants which felt heard, empowered and engaged in a meaningful forum.



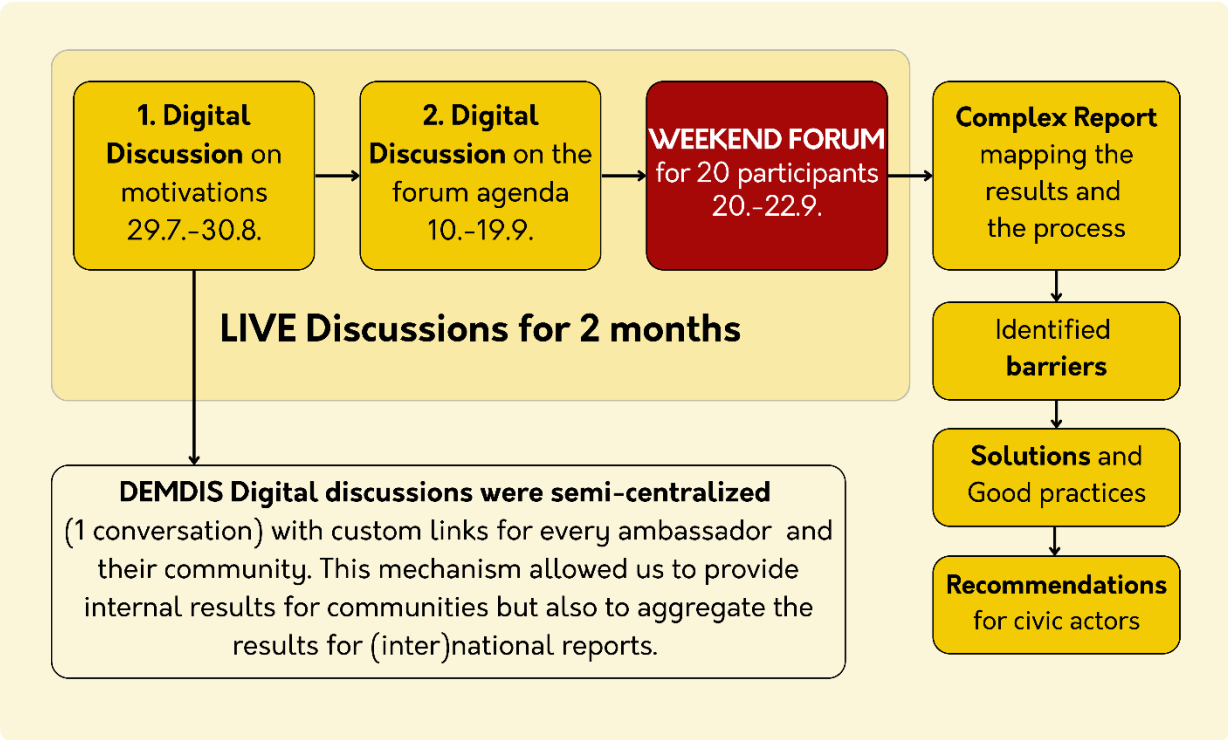
*Organizational team with participants of the live forum in Krakow.
Photo by Oleksii Zolochovskyi.*

¹ The goal of engaging 2000 participants through the digital modules wasn't fully met due to the initial overestimation of average number of participants engaged through one ambassador. That reason is supplemented by the fact, that the process needed adjustments, and the second digital discussion was open mainly for the participants on the topic of live forum setting.

Essence of Youth Dialogue forum

There are no lazy citizens, just badly designed games.² This core idea is the fundamental essence of the Youth Dialogue Forum which manifested itself on various levels.

As we believe in the power of communities, the core mechanism of YDF digital discussion centered around the engagement of local communities through Ambassadors of YDF. This meant that each Ambassador received a custom link of the discussion and shared it in his circles. By keeping the track of various Ambassador’s sources, we could provide them internal results and gamify the process of their community engagement.³



The purpose of the first digital discussion was not only to identify barriers and drivers of youth engagement, but also to select the participants for the final live deliberative event. The method of selection counted with 20 participants – 16 places were divided proportionally to each country and 4 places were allocated to the most active Ambassadors of YDF. When the participants in the digital discussion expressed their view on at least 35 opinions, they gained the opportunity to sign up to the event. Their final

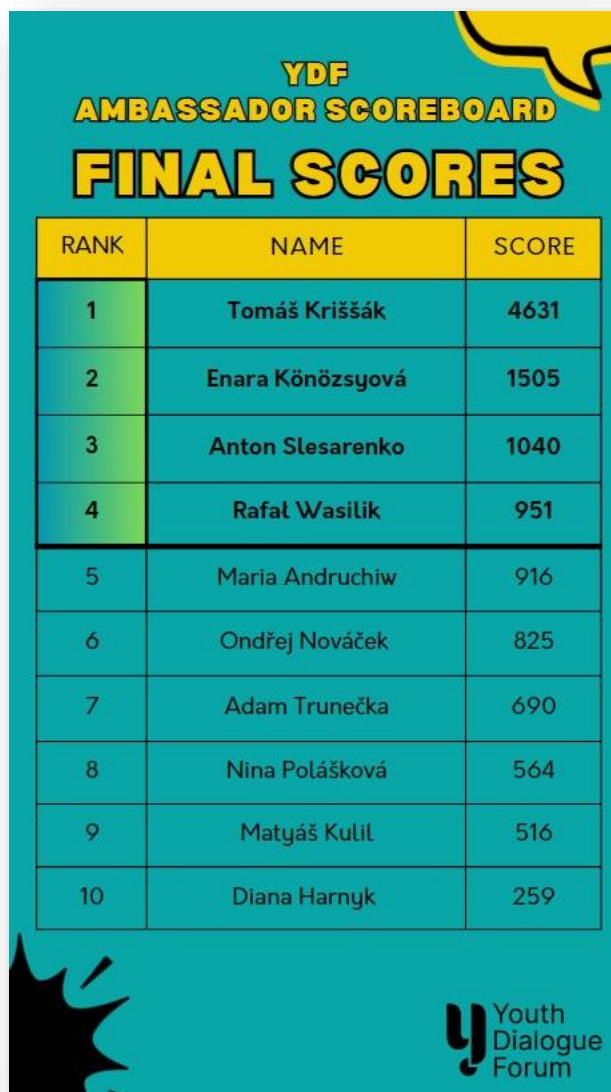
² Games are interpreted in the light of game theory as systems with the interaction of two or more individuals, clearly defined rules, where the individuals variably influence its outputs in which they are usually (emotionally) invested.

³ Noteworthy is the average number of votes per participant which was in this case higher than usual. The average number of votes in general DEMDIS during the last year is 16. This means that the engagement through communities and gamification leads to more engaged participants.

selection was drawn from national pools by lottery. The point was to combine randomized selection with rewarding active participation in the digital discussion module.⁴

Four places at the live forum reserved for Ambassadors were allocated to the most active ones in their community engagement in the first digital discussion.

The activity was measured by the number of participants' votes that were delivered to the digital discussion from their custom links (sources). In simplicity the number of Ambassador's score was equal to the number of votes submitted through their communities. As we didn't want it to be a popularity contest we decided to track the number of votes, not the number of participants. This made the game meaningful even for Ambassadors with smaller but engaged communities. Overall, **30 people registered** to become the Ambassadors of YDF and **19 were active** in their community engagement.⁵



The image shows a graphic titled "YDF AMBASSADOR SCOREBOARD FINAL SCORES". It features a table with 10 rows and 3 columns: RANK, NAME, and SCORE. The top 4 rows are highlighted in green. The YDF logo is in the bottom right corner.

RANK	NAME	SCORE
1	Tomáš Kriššák	4631
2	Enara Könözsyová	1505
3	Anton Slesarenko	1040
4	Rafał Wasilik	951
5	Maria Andruchiw	916
6	Ondřej Nováček	825
7	Adam Trunečka	690
8	Nina Polášková	564
9	Matyáš Kulil	516
10	Diana Harnyk	259

Ambassadors were regularly updated with the YDF Ambassador scoreboard.

In summary, YDF can be viewed as a civic metagame that combined international perspective with local focus, gamification for Ambassadors with incentives for the participants, and the thematic framework with the essence of the forum as an example of the potential solution to civic disengagement.

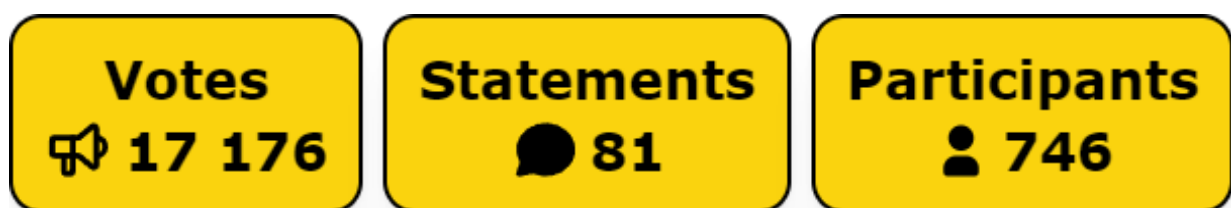
⁴ More detailed description of the selection process can be found in the chapter „Composition of participants“.

⁵ Complete scoreboard with the final results of the civic game can be found online at: demdis.notion.site/4ddef78fbfcf4c5eb1f08965e6cddb8?v=7ed1a148317c471b88bc38bed992b853&pvs=32

Results of the digital discussion module

What motivates us to be engaged in our community or society as a whole?

Power for a positive change in society lies in vibrant communities – considering the philosophy that “if you want to change the world, make your bed” the question was - what (de)motivates us to contribute to a positive change in our community or in the whole society? Finding answers⁶ to this question was the main scope of the digital DEMDIS discussion.⁷



Key findings

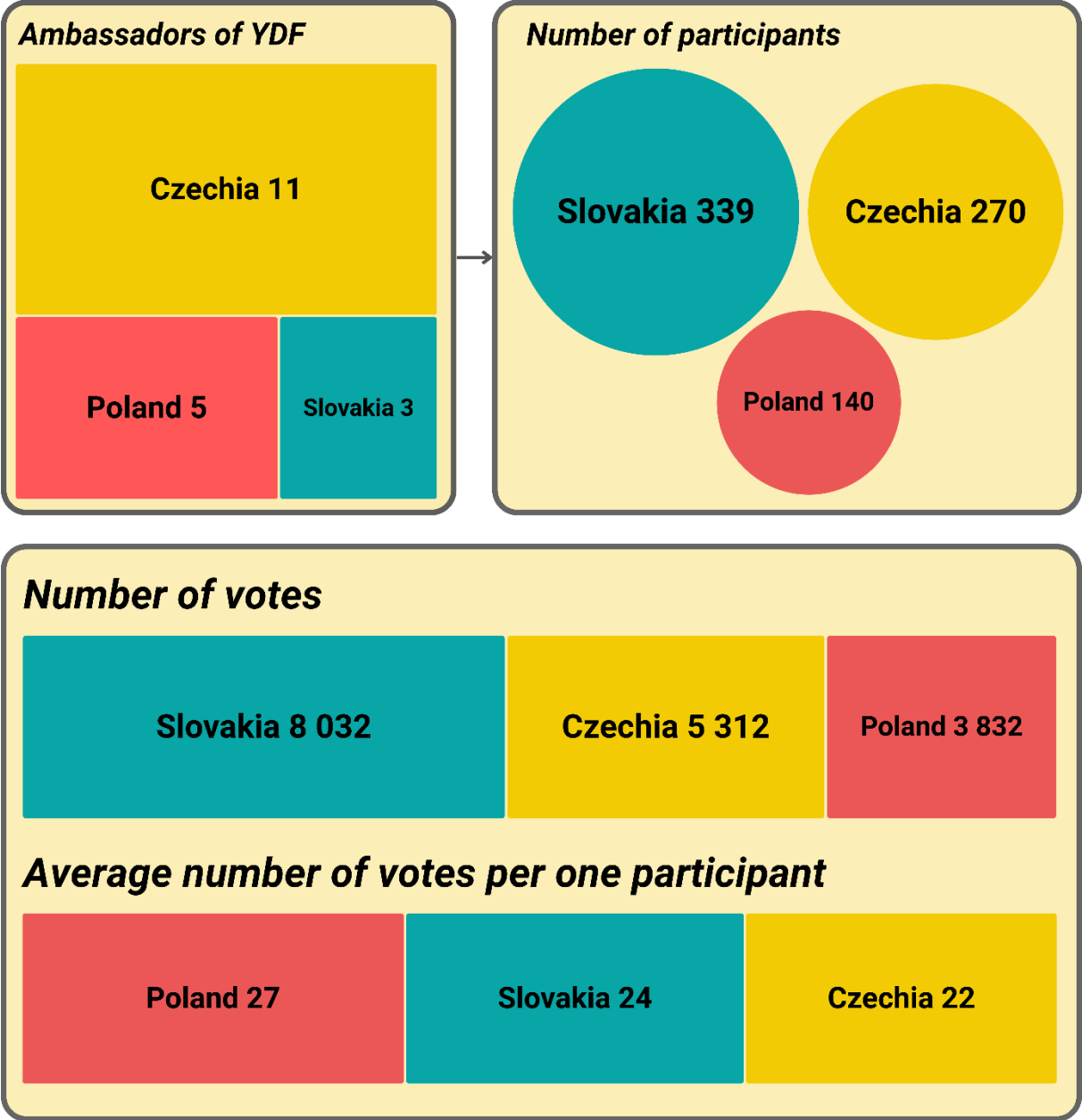
- **Our democracy is not guaranteed, we must fight for it.** It's our responsibility to make the world a better place. And even though it sometimes seems that the world is falling apart, our belief remains strong.
- **We're convinced that each of us can make a difference,** which can be amplified - everyone's a changemaker when we're cooperating.
- **Together we can achieve systemic changes** and community empowerment leads to real political power.
- Despite the difference in the perceived lack of time and energy, **we would like to participate more if we knew how** and would appreciate more incentives (games) in our communities.

⁶ In this report you'll find numbered sources of statements from the discussion i.e. (x). The number labels the order number of the statement in the full report.

⁷ Full report from the discussion with raw data can be found online at: www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/945d6ca6-cc9d-4717-a36d-176770adcf33/external_report/?language=en

From local to national level

Participants of the digital discussion were crowdsourced by various communities in three countries. The comparison⁸ of national sources⁹ shed some light on the specifics regarding the youth (dis)engagement.

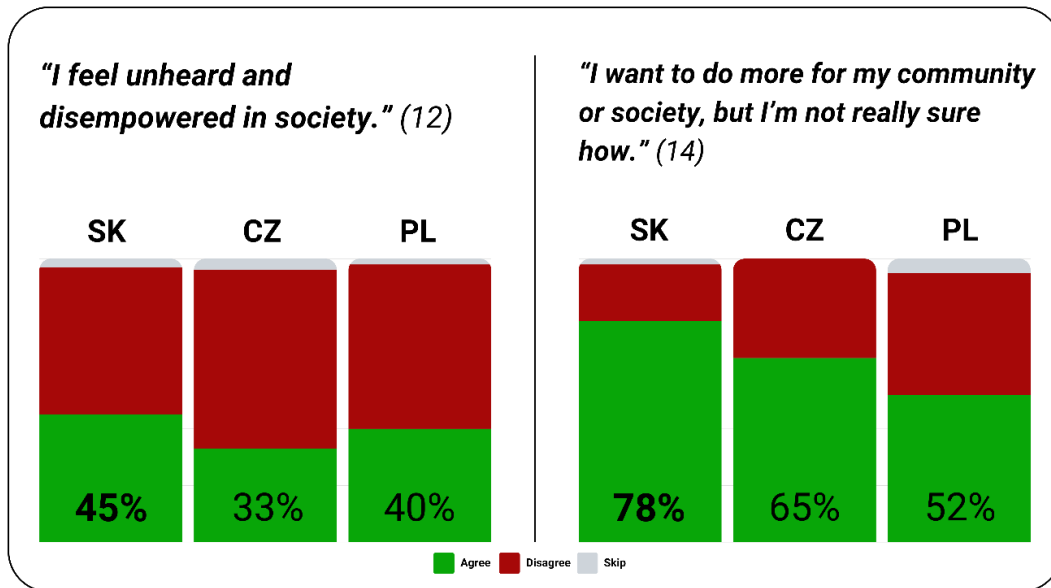


⁸ As the count of national samples differs, we looked mainly at specific differences that overpassed the margin of statistical error.

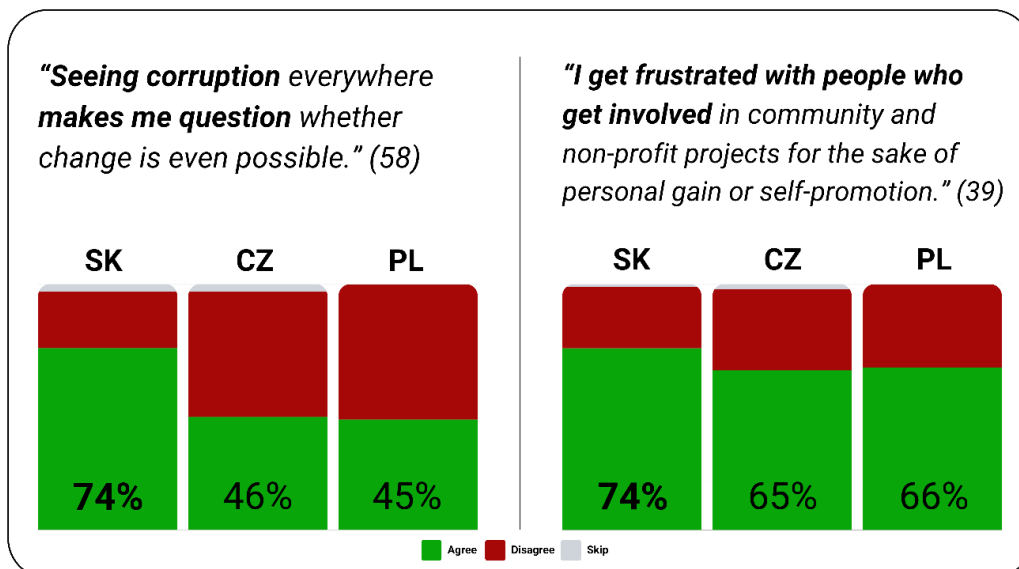
⁹ Full national reports can be found online;
Slovakia: www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/945d6ca6-cc9d-4717-a36d-176770adcf33/reports/checksk/?language=en
Czechia: www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/945d6ca6-cc9d-4717-a36d-176770adcf33/reports/checkcz/?language=en
Poland: www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/945d6ca6-cc9d-4717-a36d-176770adcf33/reports/checkpl/?language=en

Slovakia

The sense of **powerlessness** is at its highest among Slovak participants. (12) Yet, they would like to do more but aren't sure how.¹⁰ (14)



As they're showing the biggest interest in politics, (19) they're also feeling left out due to their (unpopular) opinions on the current political situation. (67) Besides comparing politics to a “circus”, (67) much more serious (discouraging) issue is knocking on their door. Seeing the malady of corruption is even making them question the possibility of a change.¹¹ (58)

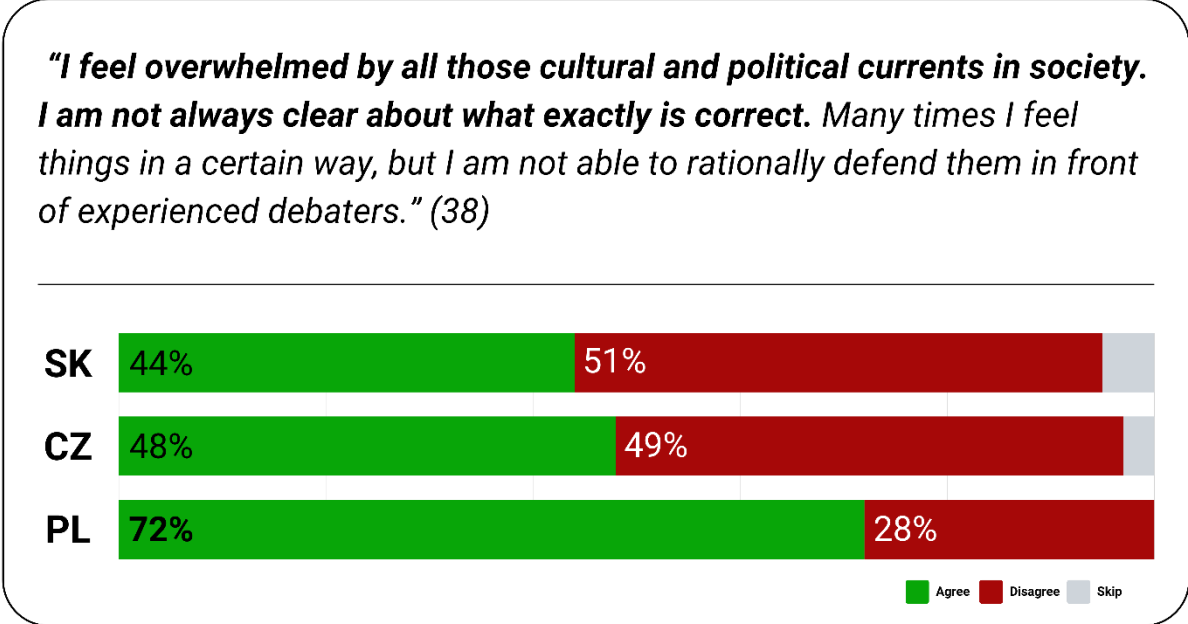


¹⁰ The online (or social media) activism may be one of many ways, however, they're less prone to share something, even if a meaningful CTA (call to action) is included. (20)

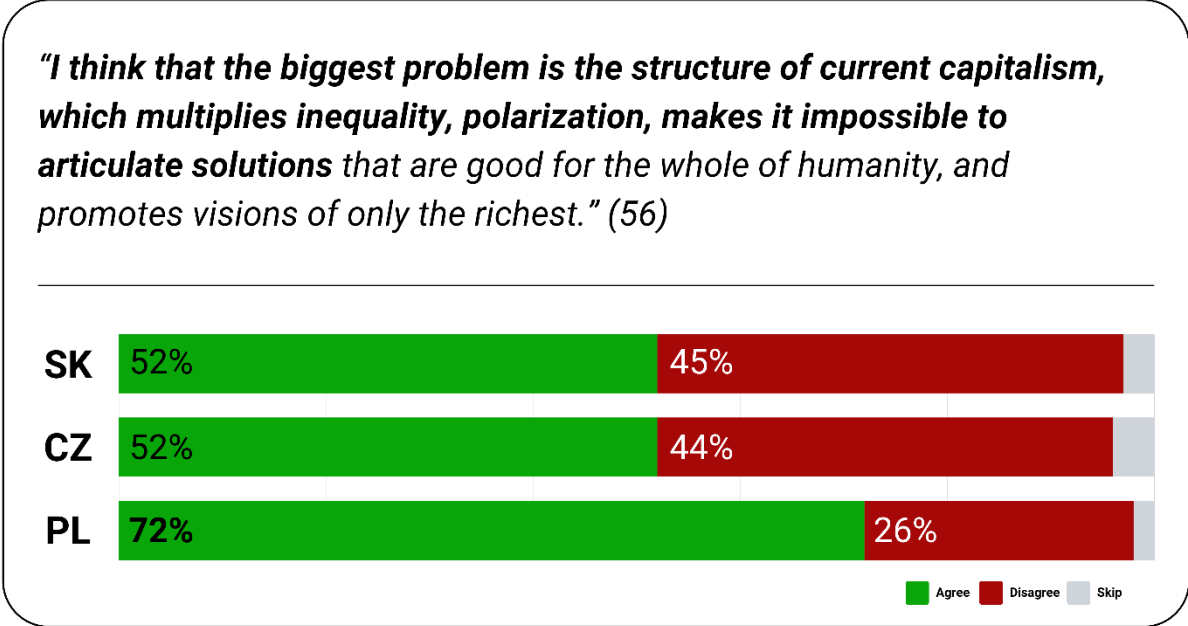
¹¹ According to the 2024 [Eurbarometer](#) (about citizen's attitudes towards corruption) fewer Poles (52%) consider corruption to be widespread in their country than Czechs (79%) and Slovaks (77%). In addition, Transparency International [compiles](#) every year Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) that is more complex.

Poland

Participants from Poland know their way(s), as they aren't struggling to find the means to do more for their communities (14). They're also most likely to turn a blind eye to those who consider them ridiculous once they start being engaged. (47)

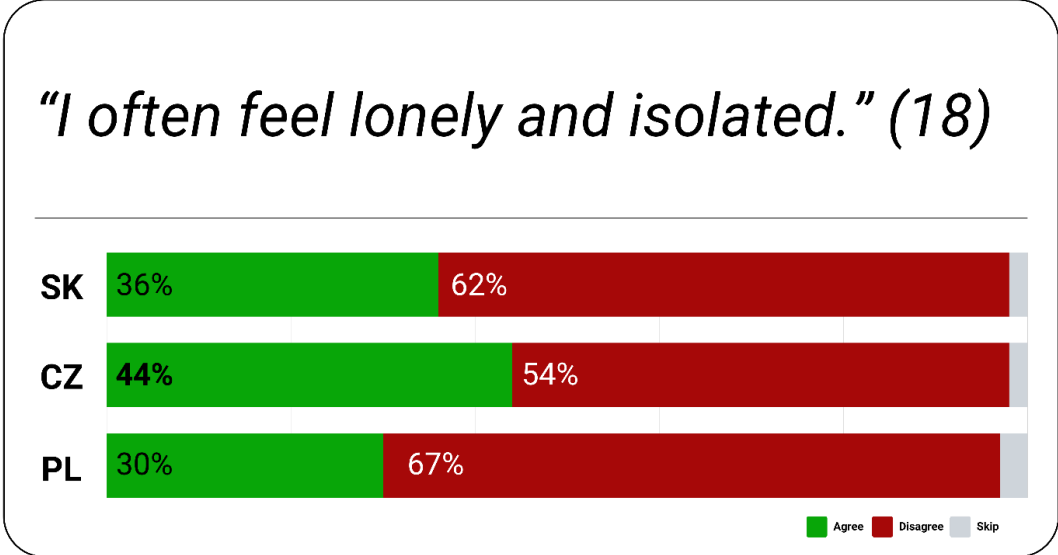


Yet, they're the ones who are the least confident about where they should stand, as they're being overwhelmed by cultural and political currents in society. (38) However, they're straightforward about the structure of current capitalism being the biggest problem. (56)

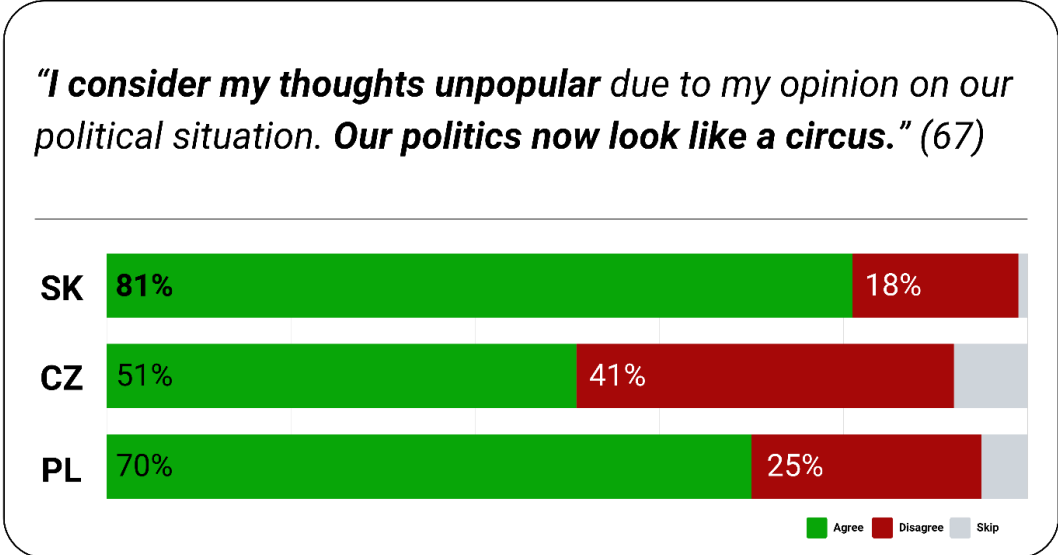


Czechia

As Czech participants aren't (that much) struggling with invisibility in society, (12) they're eventually missing “partners in crime”. Oftentimes they feel not only lonely, but also isolated.¹² (18)



Yet, they're the least prone to consider their opinions on current domestic affairs to be unpopular and to use the word “circus” in relation to their politics. (67) Moreover, the perceived “negative state of democracy” is less likely to discourage them from taking action.¹³ (5)



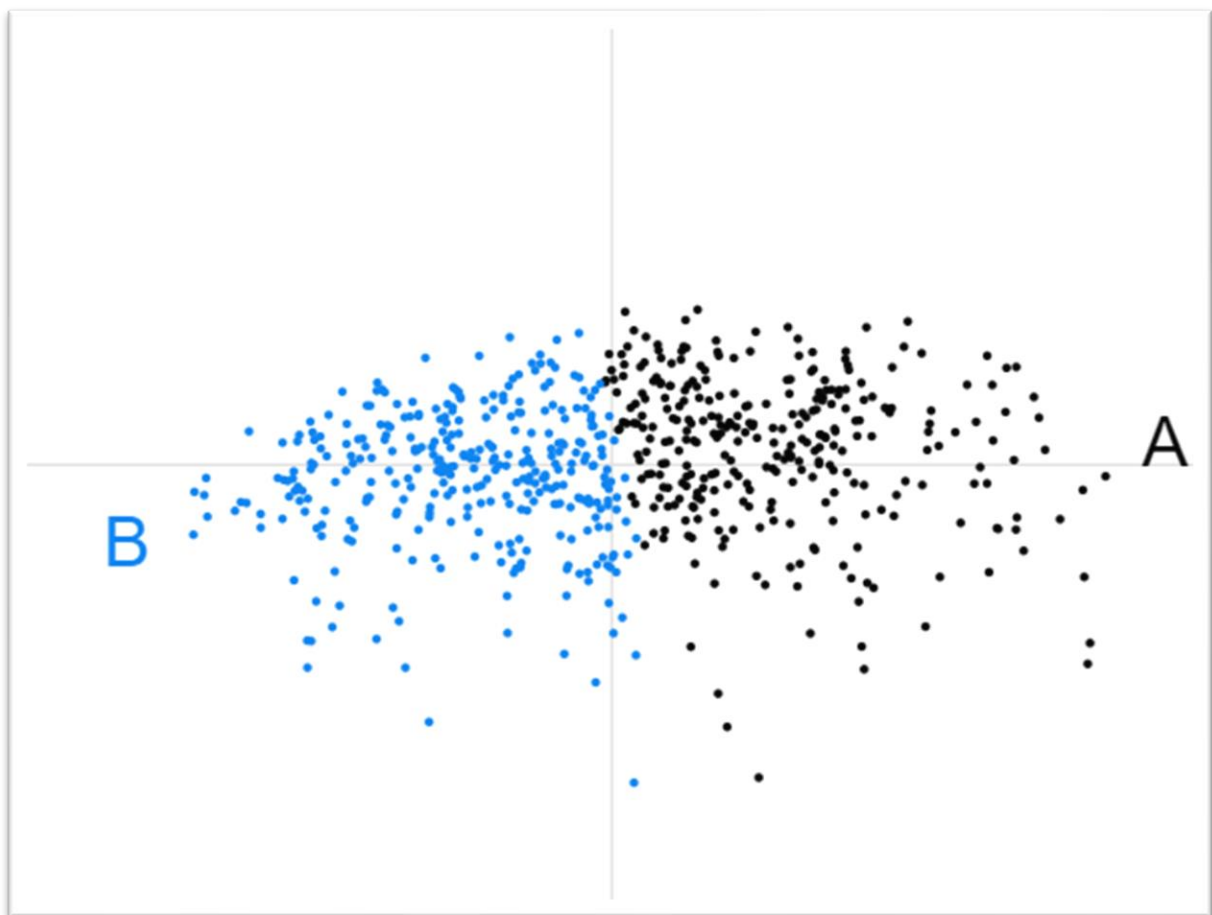
¹² Interactions with similar people that push one outside of their comfort zones may be a solution. Yet, Czech participants are the least supportive of this approach. (28)

¹³ According to the latest Eurobarometer, Czechia [stands](#) somewhere in between Slovakia (the lowest score) and Poland (the highest score) in terms of satisfaction with the country's democracy. Therefore, the state of democracy isn't (further) related to the level of engagement.

Main division lines

The aggregated results from each community and country show us that **the most significant opinion divisions stemmed from different levels of disassociation** - feelings of loneliness and isolation or powerlessness. At the same time, we are split into the question of whether the negative state of democracy as well as corruption has been demotivating us or questioning the possibility of (positive) change, or the opposite.

Other reasons for the automatic division¹⁴ of participants between groups A and B lie in the perceived and declared lack of time, or exhaustion from work or school that disables them to allocate more time to community activities.

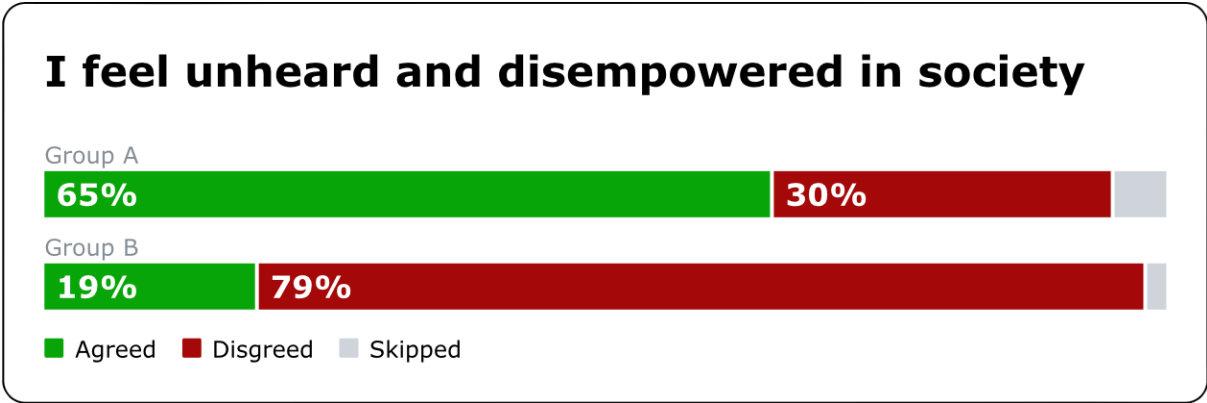


Spatial visualization of participants in opinion groups A and B.

¹⁴ Detailed description of the opinion group clustering mechanism and algorithm can be found in the Annex 1. or online at: www.demdis.sk/metodika

Group A

The lack of (more) time, feelings of loneliness, isolation, (18) powerlessness (12) as well as the negative state of democracy (5) are the apparent barriers in participation for **group A**. School or work duties are part of the explanation for not being (fully) active in community or society (as a whole). (30)



Group A also put emphasis on the need for meaningful and impactful participation as the (only) prerequisite for the (broader) engagement.¹⁵ (16;41) As their motivation to do something fluctuates and comes in waves, (10) so do the effects of impact and meaningfulness (of one’s activities), creating a vicious cycle of perceived powerlessness.

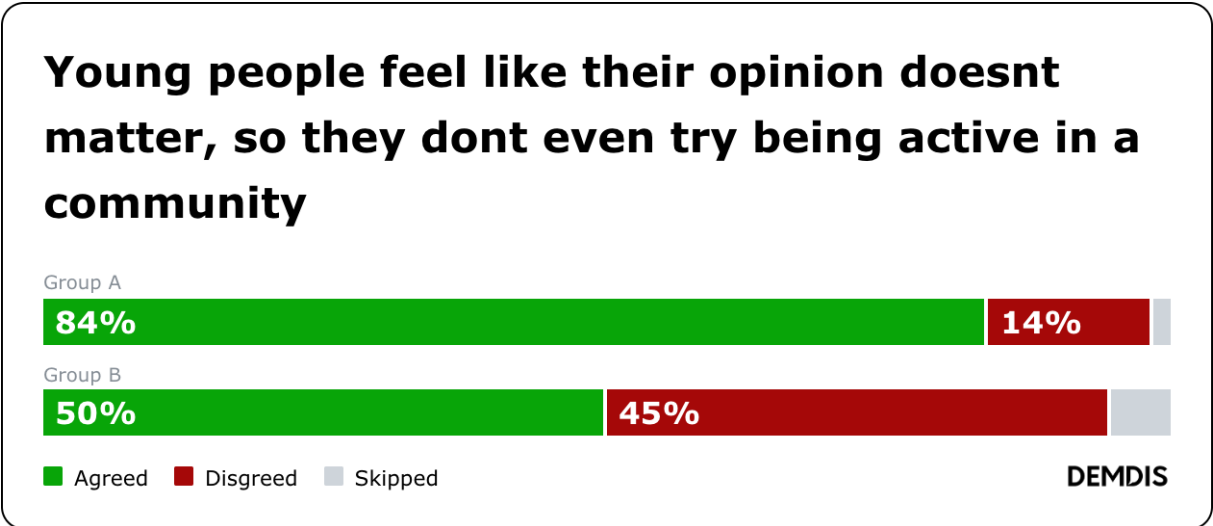


¹⁵ This notion is nonetheless contradicted by their own support of the opinion that “Belief in a good cause engages me regardless of the impact.” (31)

Group B

In comparison, **group B** demonstrates (much) lower levels of above-mentioned disassociation and participates in public life not only if it's evaluated as measurably impactful. Nevertheless, the negative state of democracy or corruption don't demotivate them from being active or make them question the possibility of change. (5;58)

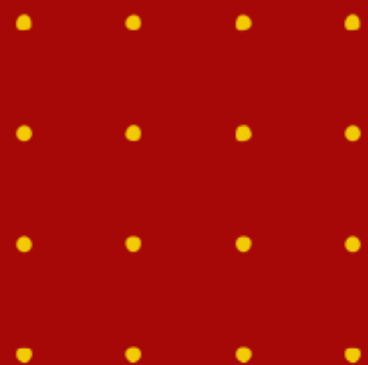
The difference between the level(s) of powerlessness among the groups - or (non)existence of one - could be (also) based on their experience with the approach of most adults towards the youth. While **group A** (overall) agrees that they aren't being taken seriously by older generations, **group B** is split - signaling a few positive experiences. (8) In addition, half of participants within **group B** agree with the statement that "young people are not trying to be active in their communities as they feel like their opinions don't matter". (40)



Group B also doesn't perceive school or work being (that much) energy consuming. (30) This opinion could explain why they're less supportive of the idea that there are not lazy citizens, just badly designed games (incentive structures). (2) To put it simply, if they can allocate energy to civic engagement others can too. However, they acknowledge the need to invest a lot of time and energy to make a real meaningful change in community or civic life. (34)

Top consensual opinions

1. Our democracy is not guaranteed, we must fight for it. (43)
2. Positive change starts from each and every one of us. (42)
3. It's my responsibility to contribute to making the world a better place. (25)
4. I'm interested in politics. (19)
5. The sense of accomplishment I get from completing a community project motivates me. (29)
6. Being on offline communal events has a positive impact on my well-being. (21)
7. I can make a difference and a positive change. That motivates me. (24)
8. Everyone is a change-maker when we're cooperating. (3)
9. Together, we are able to achieve systemic changes. (44)
10. Volunteering and helping out helps my personal growth. (26)

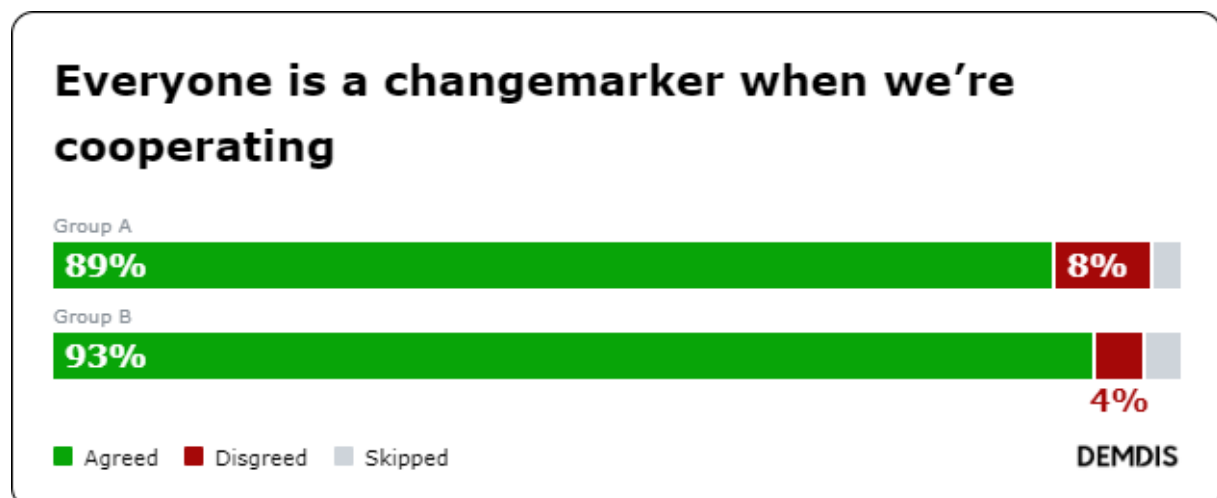


What unites different groups?

In contrast to the identified divisions, we identified a plethora of opinions that gained majority support of both opinion groups. We refuse the notion that “the world is screwed up, no reason in trying to change it” (1) or “that we can’t change anything as individuals”. (11) On the contrary, we see power in communities and believe that “**everyone’s a changemaker when we’re cooperating**”. (3) This consensual mindset is crucial in the light of perceived powerlessness which poses a barrier to participation.¹⁶

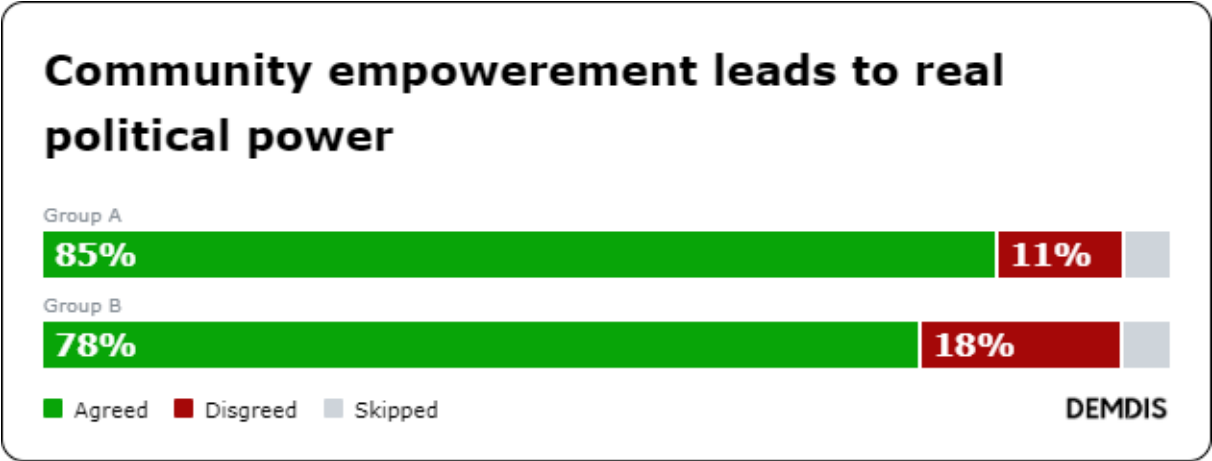


As we think of our contribution to better tomorrows as a sense of responsibility, (3) we are also not denying its positive impact on individuals - on our well-being, (6) personal growth (10) or the sense of accomplishment, after completing a community project. (5) At the same time, we put an emphasis on meaningful and purposeful engagement (15) as a driving force and belief in our community being part of a positive change in the whole society. (23)

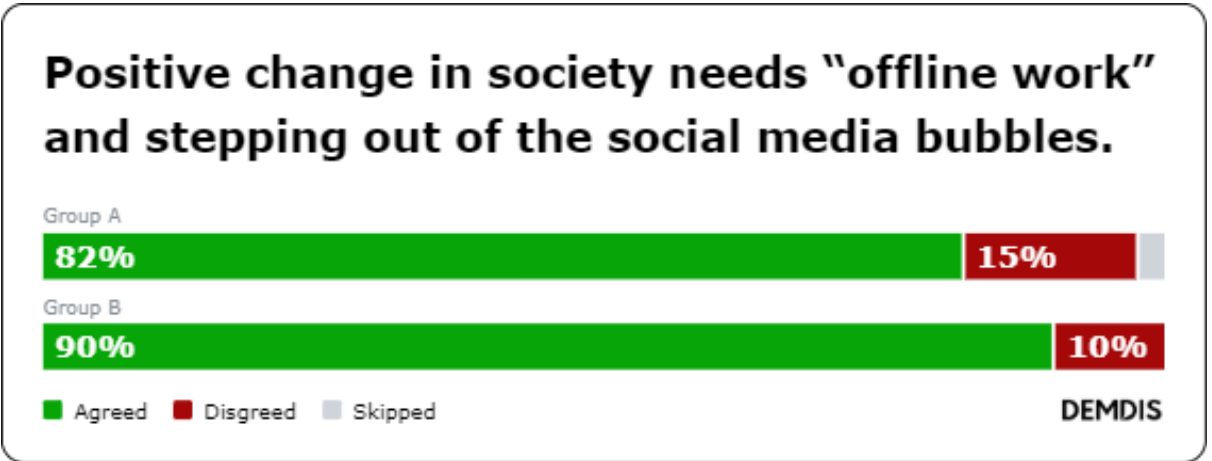


¹⁶ „It is difficult to involve young people when they do not view themselves as a group that can create change.“ Checkoway, Barry, [What is youth participation?](#)

The encouragement from other members motivates us to participate more (33) as well as the sense of belonging drives us to make the community an even better place. (27) From our perspective, community empowerment translates into real political power (4) and its effect(s) multiply by our shared eagerness to create opportunities for others - like those we had. (32)

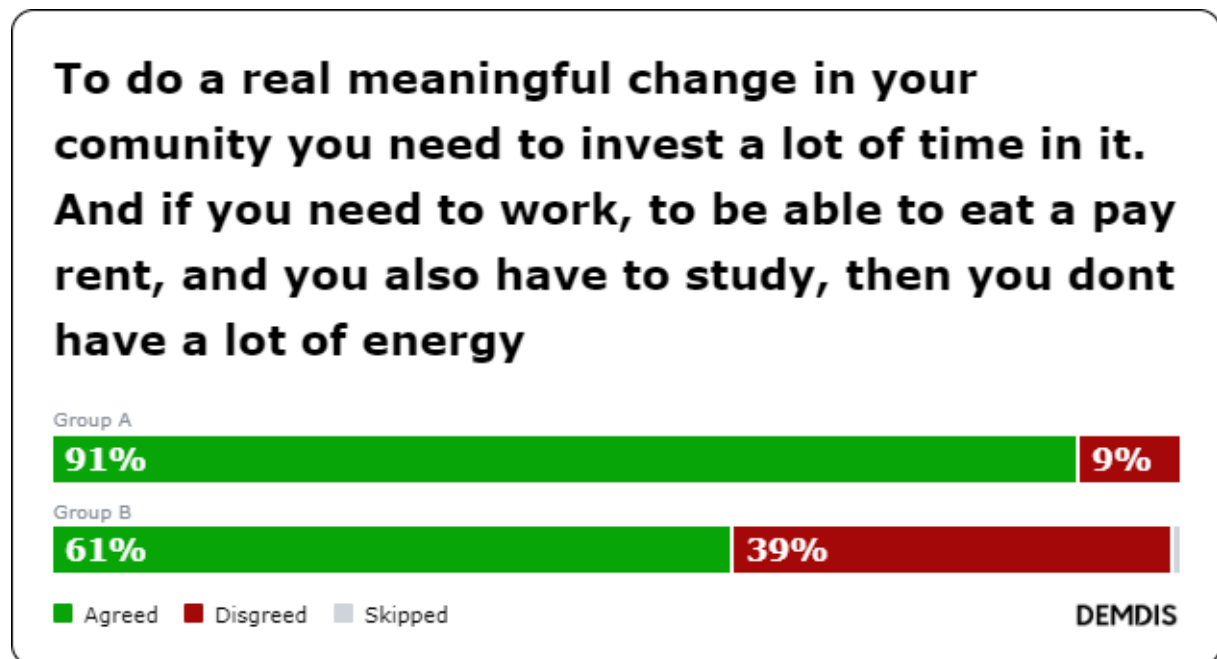


On a (quite) different note, we also agree that creating (adequate) conditions for the engagement to flourish is crucial. More resources such as (spare) time, financial boost or securing equal access to education are needed. (46) As we believe that the positive change needs an “offline work”, stepping outside of our social bubbles is (another) challenge in and of itself. (7)

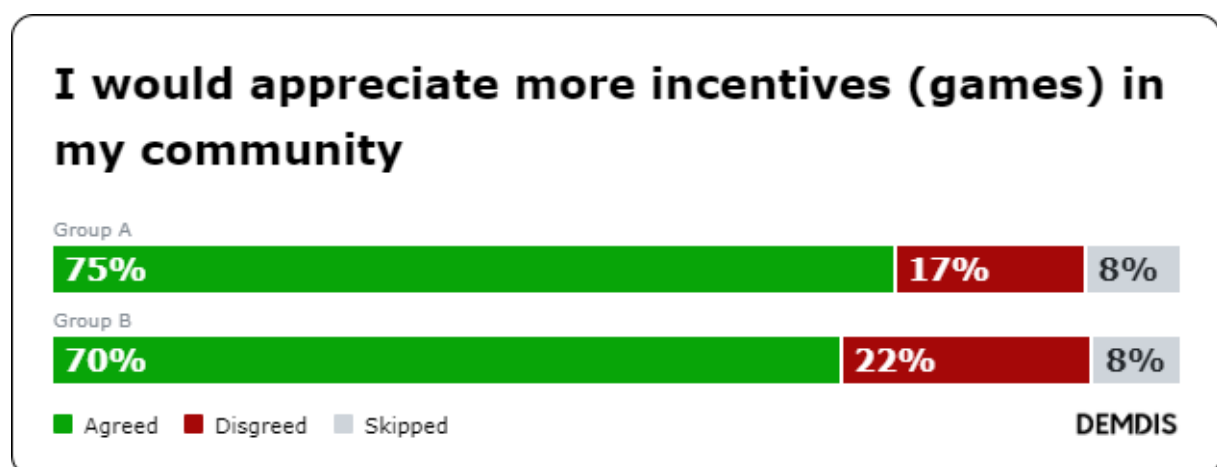


Mapping the barriers of engagement

Both groups of participants agree that making a real and meaningful change in our communities requires investing a lot of time or energy. (34) School and work consume most of it, leaving no (or at least minimal) perceived space for our engagement. (30) Therefore, more resources (such as time, financial boost or securing equal access to education, etc.) are required for enabling (wider) participation. (46)



These “hard” socio-economic barriers are supplemented by the (“softer”) lack of more incentive structures (games) in our communities that would be welcomed by both groups of participants. (17)



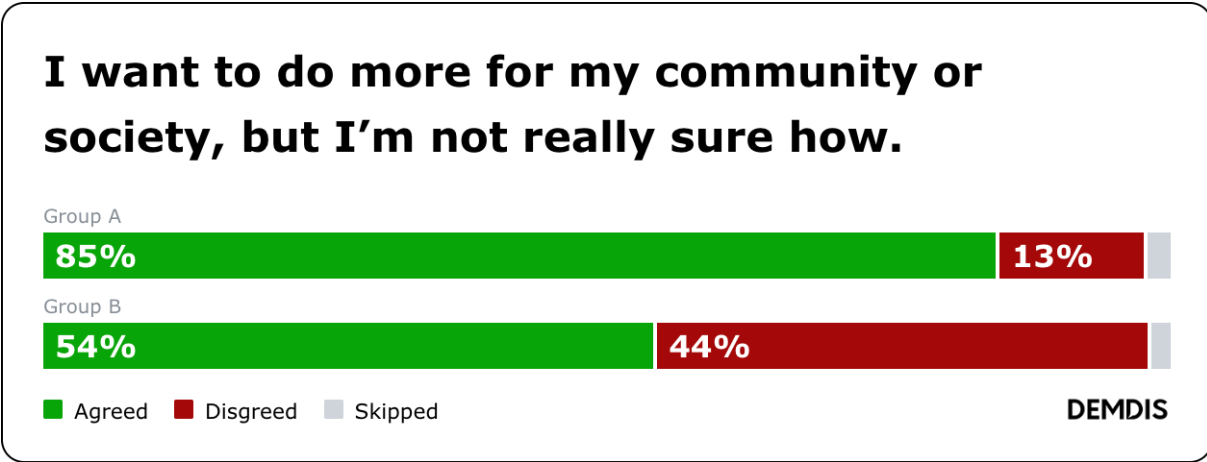
At the same time, participants are lacking adequate support from the older generation, as they believe that “most adults don't take youth seriously” (8) Not having taken the opinion of youth into account deters them from even

trying to be active even in communities. (40) However, some participants are signaling a few positive interactions with the older generation - especially, in group B - which could explain the display of different levels of disassociation (e.g. feeling left out, isolated, powerless, etc.) among the groups.

While the negative state of democracy (5) or corruption (58) doesn't demotivate the majority from being engaged, the participants are doubtful about the impact of the effort invested to change something. 60% of participants feel overwhelmed and deem the potential change as small or irrelevant, in the light of global crises and challenges. (41)



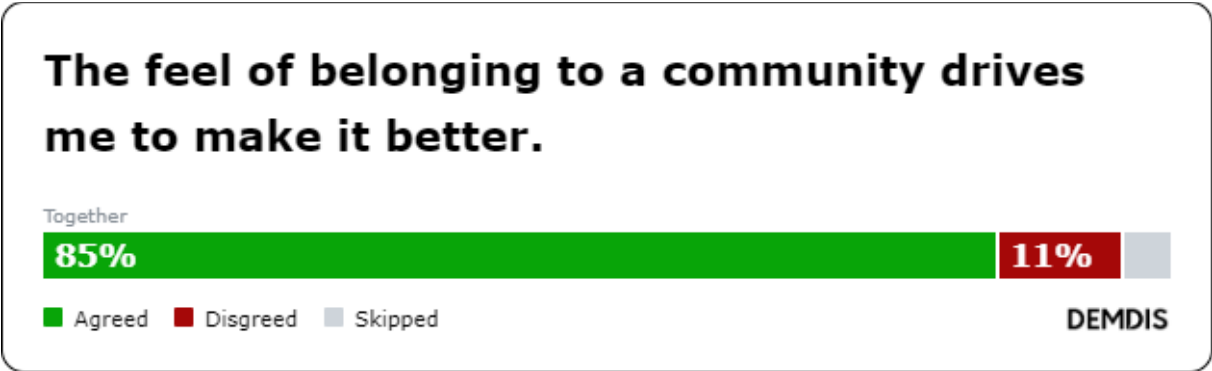
Participants also acknowledge that their motivation to do something for society fluctuates and comes in waves (10) Focusing on solving one or two social issues (9), may be a solution. Especially when the majority want to do more for their communities or society but aren't really sure how. (14)



Consensual drivers of engagement

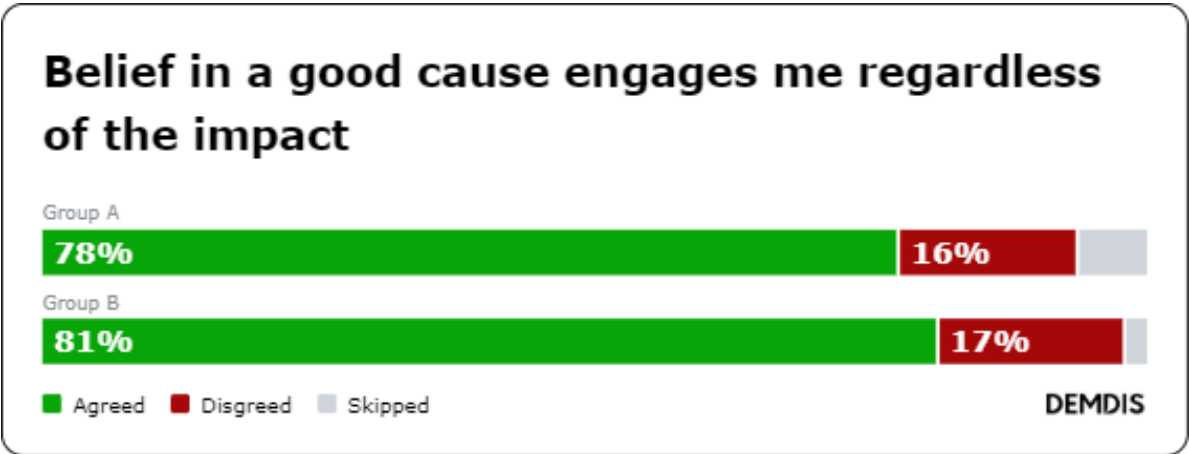
Regardless of the specific or shared barriers the discussion brought us a wide range of shared motivations that drive us towards positive change-making. One of the answers to powerlessness and reactions stems from the consensus that **community empowerment leads to real political power.** (4)

Not only does the sense of belonging to a community drive participants to make it better, (27) but also the encouragement from other members motivates them to participate (even) more. (33)

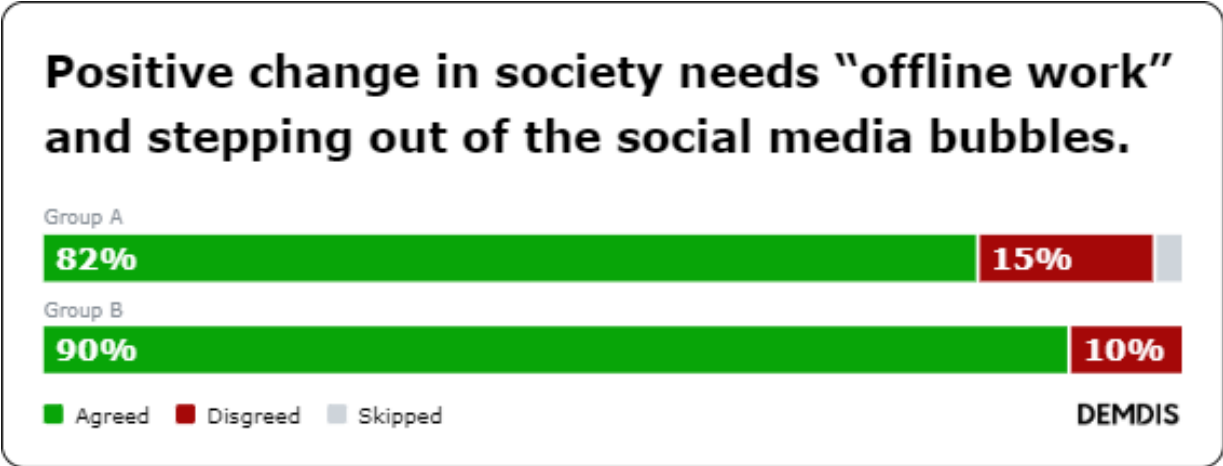


Commonly shared is also the belief that our communities are (already) making a positive change in the whole society. (23) The involvement of youth in community activities decreases the criminality of young people and prevents risky behavior. (49)

The ambitions for the systemic shifts are (apparent) drivers of engagement. (44; 52) As the participants want to create opportunities (like those they had) for others, (32) they approach their engagement as a sense of responsibility to making the world a better place to live. (25) Volunteering and helping others is not only seen as a meaning of life but also as a tool for personal growth. (26)

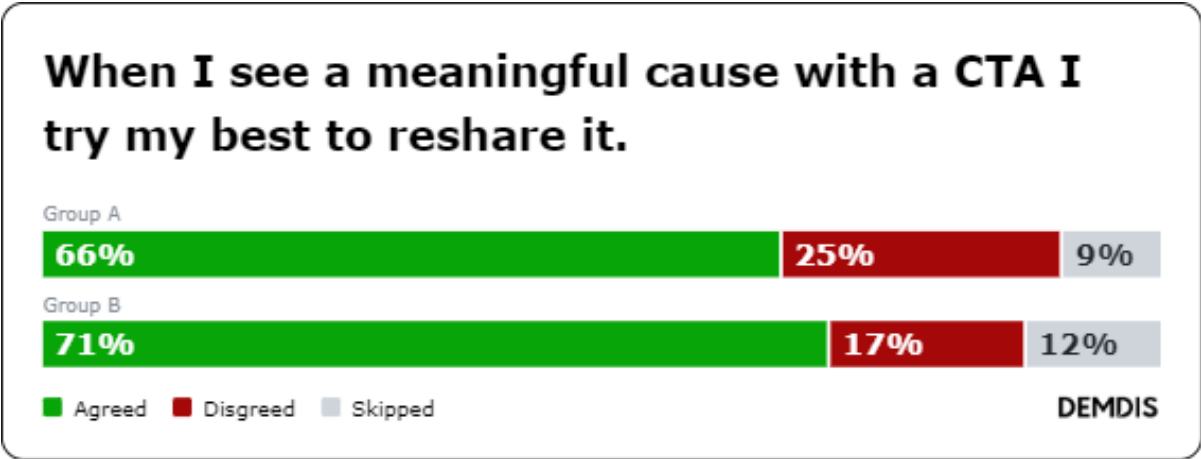


In this regard, participants agree that being on offline communal events contributes to their well-being, (21) and the sense of accomplishment from completing a community project drives their motivation. (29) The emphasis on “offline” gatherings isn’t coincidental, as stepping out of the social bubbles is perceived as necessity to achieve a positive change. (7)



Meaningfulness and purposefulness of participation is an apparent driver. (15) On the other hand, the participants acknowledge the challenge of defining what positive change is. As someone points out, while getting rid of a garage and creating a green park is for them an example of a useful contribution, for the car owner, it is a nightmare. (35)

Nonetheless, majority of both groups agree that if they find a meaningful cause with a call to action (CTA) they try their best to reshare it. (20) Online activism is therefore seen as a form of a meaningful participation in public life.



Conclusions from digital discussion

Without any doubt, we're eager to be engaged within our communities or society. We believe that a positive change starts from each one of us. (42) In addition, creating opportunities like those we had for others, (32) is one of (many) driving forces. Therefore, we see (our) participation in public life as a responsibility to making the world a better place. (25)



Eventually, we aren't denying the positive effects of (our) engagement on us (as individuals) - volunteering and helping others out helps our personal growth, (26) and communal events benefit our wellbeing. We're (also) driven by the sense of accomplishment we get from completing a community project. (29) Yet, we're frustrated with people who get involved in the communal (or nonprofit) projects, in a way that benefits oneself. (39)

As some of us feel unheard and disempowered in society, (12) communities being the source(s) of empowerment, (4) might mitigate the issue of disassociation. Eventually, having encouragement from other community members motivates us to participate even more. (33)

Yet, the communities may be facing their (own) issues, as they're being seen (by some of participants) as the elitist associations consisting of the "chosen ones". (48) Therefore, how do we contribute to bolstering the community, to create a space where (not only) the (apparent) eagerness could flourish, but also the symptoms of disassociation could be mitigated?

Today's associations are starting to look like elitist groups that only take their trusted ones.



As we acknowledge that making a real meaningful change in our communities means investing a lot of time in it, (34) the resources (time as well as energy, etc.) aren't on our side. Moreover, we would appreciate more incentives (games) in our communities. (17) However, we aren't (absolutely) clear about whether there are no lazy citizens, or just badly designed games (incentive structures). (2)

Despite the identified opinion divisions, the discussion showed us that it's possible to engage the disengaged, that a positive changemaking mindset is present and that it's worth investing (more) time in our communities regardless of the quantitative measurable impact they make in society. And that's in the light of the ever-present feelings of losing way and powerlessness more important than before.

I can make a difference and a positive change. That motivates me.



From digital to physical space

Uniqueness of Youth Dialogue Forum lies not only in tapping into the potential and knowledge of local communities and gamified digital discussion but also in its connection to a live deliberative forum. Because we're convinced that democratic innovation needs to capitalize on the synergies between digital tools (CivTech) and live, face-to-face interactions.

Whereas the digital discussion showed us the main drivers and barriers of meaningful civil engagement the goal was to dig deeper. What is even meaningful engagement? Which examples manifest as best practices? What are their key ingredients for success? And how to gather them? These are the main questions that we need to address when tackling the challenges of the 21st century and that we opened on the forum on 21st September.



Framework of the live forum

The live Youth Dialogue Forum was conducted for one day which consisted of introductory briefing, two working group sessions and output presentation. Four working groups consisted of five participants, each randomly redistributed with an accent to international character.

Overview of the 2nd digital discussion

Fair and open processes also manifest themselves in giving power to the participants on the forum setting and agenda. That's why we conducted a second digital discussion¹⁷ which was open just to the participants of the forum. The results provided gave us valuable insights regarding the dilemmas that stemmed from the forum design.

Top preferences of participants (90%+ support)

- I'm willing to be open-minded and listen to the perspective of others. (7)
- The forum should explore creative ways to combine digital tools with traditional activism for maximum impact. (4)
- Allow each participant to vote on which topics should be prioritized before the forum starts. (8)
- Focus on the practical steps organizations can take to involve non-political youth in civic engagement activities. (3)
- The final recommendations should be relevant for different kinds of organizations & communities. (12)
- We should focus more on a few recommendations and dig deeper. (15)
- We should divide the participants based on what they would like to focus on. (22)

Based on these preferences we adjusted the facilitation framework of the forum. We incorporated digital tools in the forum, distributed topics based on preferences and created few general, but applicable recommendations.

The 1st working group session focused on establishing common ground and creating an understanding of our language and unique contexts. Participants expressed their interpretations of meaningful engagement. This

¹⁷ Main areas of this digital DEMDIS were participant distribution principle, scope of the agenda and recommendations and the mindset we wanted to be present. Full report of the discussion "How would you assemble the Krakow forum to maximize its impact?" can be found online at: www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/27f053f7-7f62-487c-8a02-0af32ac55e15/external_report/?language=en

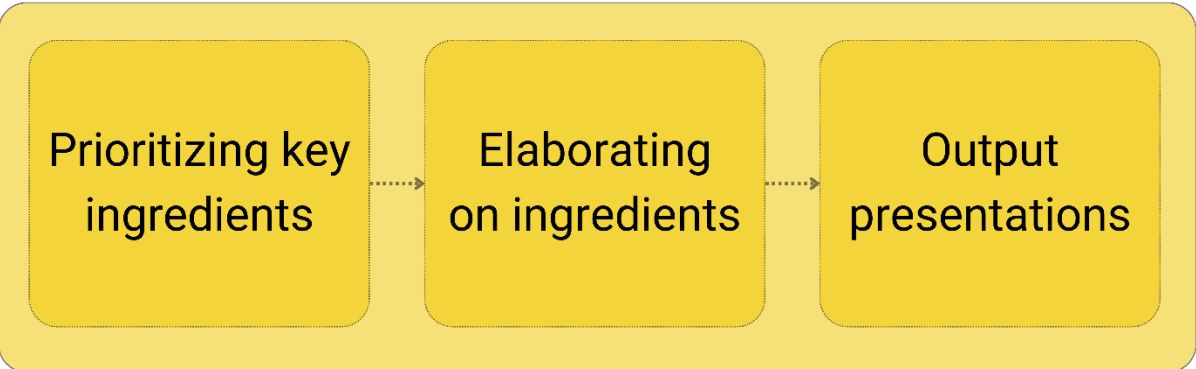
introductory phase continued in sharing examples of initiatives that fulfilled their ideals of meaningful engagement. The whole session concluded in identifying various ingredients and key elements which contributed and were crucial to the success of their examples of good practice.



Process of the 1st working group session. (120 mins)

In pursuit of knowledge sharing between groups and leaving space for subtopics that the participants deem discussion worthy we started the second session by participative prioritization. More concretely - all the identified key ingredients from each group were transferred to the software All our ideas. Then each participant voted from randomly selected pairs and co-created a priority list. The top 4 ingredients were then attributed to the groups based on their preferences. The task of each working group was to elaborate on various ways of achieving the presence of the key ingredient of meaningful civil engagement.

The main goal of the **2nd working group session** was to develop the prioritized ingredients and create recommendations on how to get them.

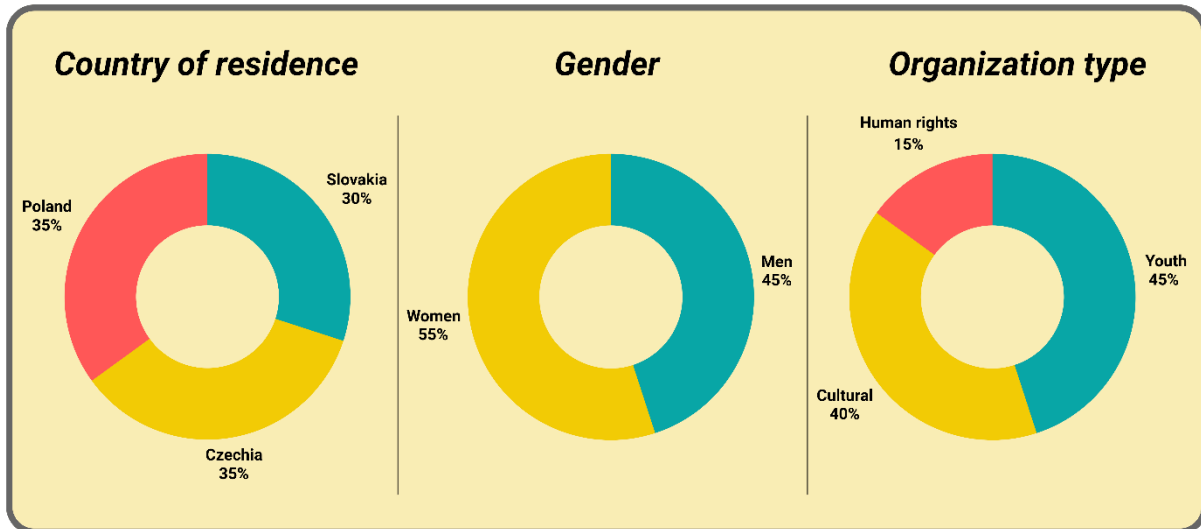


Process of the 2nd working group session. (105 mins)

The whole forum concluded in the presentation of the outputs. After that each participant distributed up to four votes to concrete recommendations, which they perceived as new and would consider applying them in their communities and organizations.

Composition of participants

In the light of the experimental spirit of YDF the participant selection system incorporated mechanism of rewarding active participation and randomized (stratified) selection based on the international character and principle of the forum. Overall, **20 young people participated** in the live deliberative forum.



Overview of the composition of 20 participants based on country of residence, gender and type of civil organization in which they're active.¹⁸

20 places for participants were divided as follows:

- **4 places for Ambassadors of YDF** which ranked at the top of the scoreboard and expressed willingness to participate in live forum.
- **16 places** from participants selected from the digital discussion divided:
 - 5 places for Poland.
 - 6 places for Czech Republic.
 - 5 places for Slovakia.

All the participants that registered through the form were put into open lottery¹⁹ to allocate the places for each country.²⁰

¹⁸ Due to smaller number of registered participants from Poland we changed the composition in our Rulebook of YDF. The change with reasoning is noted online at www.demdis.sk/rules-of-youth-dialogue-forum/

¹⁹ The recording of the live lottery can be found online at: <https://www.demdis.sk/ydf-participant-selection-lottery/>

²⁰ "Country" was defined by residence, not nationality.

Most crucial ingredients of meaningful engagement

1. **Open, trusting and respectful relationships.**
2. **Knowing your purpose**
(understanding how I can impact others and find a strategy).
3. **Being part of the team** and able to change how it works.
4. **Proactive mindset.**

-
- | | |
|---|--|
| 5. Working as a TEAM to achieve lasting change. | 11. Having consistency and continuity. |
| 6. Having common aim. | 12. Common principles, values, rules. |
| 7. Prioritize and be responsible. | 13. Brainstorming (open-minded atmosphere). |
| 8. Understand and believe in goals! | 14. Giving the participants the feeling of being meaningful. |
| 9. Sense of belonging and community. | 15. Effective division of work and clear command structure. |
| 10. Appreciation of the members. | |

As the list of key ingredients²¹ show us, the participants deemed as most crucial having a good setting in the team and individual mindset. Participants emphasized the importance of feeling of belonging and that their contributions are valued. A shared sense of purpose, vision, and common goals is critical for keeping everyone aligned and motivated. In addition to strong interpersonal connections, the structure and organization of civic initiatives play a key role in engagement. Clear division of tasks, effective leadership, and a safe, open space for brainstorming and feedback allow participants to contribute more effectively. Having clear principles and values, as well as a strategic roadmap or guidebook, helps to ensure that the collective efforts stay focused and sustainable. Openness to new members and ideas also enables innovation and adaptability.

Finally, participants highlighted personal responsibility and a proactive mindset as crucial factors for engagement. Taking responsibility for building and maintaining communities, as well as actively participating in the decision-making process, are seen as ways to make civic engagement more meaningful.

²¹ The complete results from the All our ideas prioritization of ingredients can be found online at: <https://all-our-ideas.citizens.is/group/810>

Working groups recommendations

The participatively adjusted configuration of the forum and framework of recommendations led us to varied actionable propositions. Based on their recipients they could be divided between individual and organizational recommendations. In this light the groups gathered the ingredients for creating trustful relationships, keeping a good team, knowing our individual purpose and having a proactive mindset.

Overview of key recommendations

Top recommendations from the working groups that are individually perceived as **new** and **applicable** by the participants.

1. **Don't be afraid of dreaming impossible.** Take action and try again if needed. Don't be scared of failure, we've all been there! (9 votes)
2. **Introduce accountability buddies system.**²² (8 votes)
3. **List your priorities** of what is important to you, self-reflect and focus on yourself. Keep an honest diary. (6 votes)
4. **Discuss the misunderstandings** right away. (5 votes)
5. **Be brave and face the challenge.** Don't hesitate. Action solves almost everything. (5 votes)

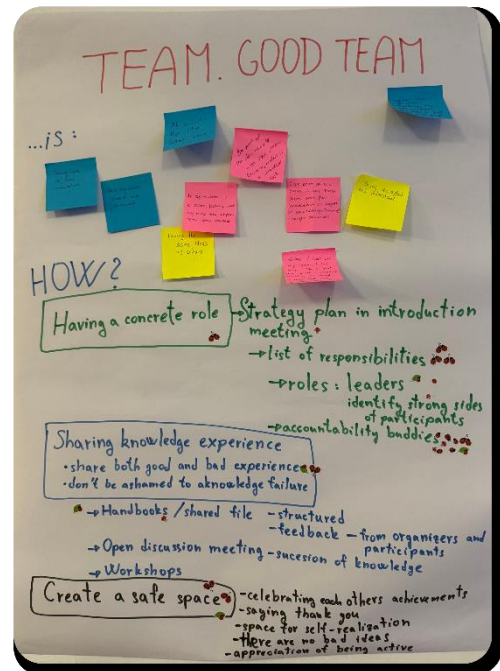
²² Accountability buddies system pairs two members of an organization or team. The purpose of the system is not only to double check their work but also to foster encouragement, mutual support and assistance in the team.

Team. Good team.

Everyone's a changemaker when we're cooperating and together, we can achieve systemic changes. The feel of belonging to a community drives us to make it better and we participate in our communities more when we have encouragement from other members. Creating and sustaining a good team is essential. So how to achieve this key ingredient?

What makes a good team?

1. Have concrete roles
2. Share knowledge and experience
3. Create a safe space



1. Define concrete roles

- Create a strategy plan for the introduction meeting.
- Identify strong sides of team members and create a list of and roles.
- Introduce “accountability buddies” system.

2. Share knowledge and experience

- Share both good and bad experiences, don't be ashamed to acknowledge failure.
- Create structured handbooks, shared files with feedback from members.
- Organize open discussion meetings, succession of knowledge.

3. Create a safe space

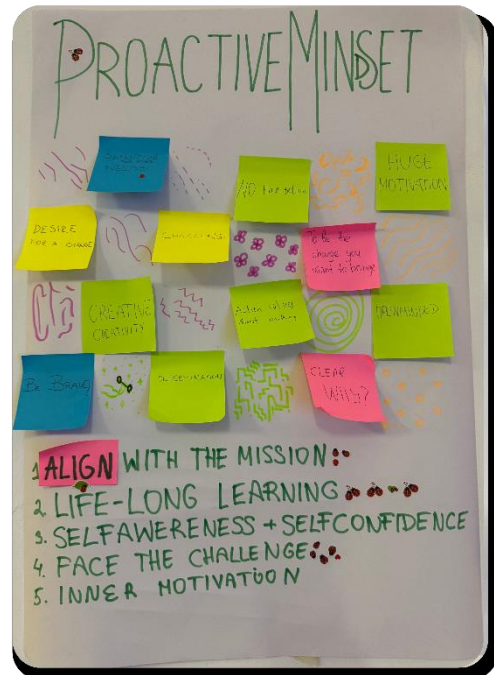
- Celebrate each other's achievements & say thank you!
- Create a space for self-realization & appreciate proactivity.
- Emphasize that there are no bad ideas.

Proactive mindset

The belief that we can make a difference, and a positive change doesn't only motivate us but also has support among identified opinion groups. Having a proactive mindset is therefore crucial to the idea that positive change starts from each and every one of us. So how to achieve this ingredient even in environments that ridicule engagement?

Have a proactive mindset

1. Align with the mission
2. Enable lifelong learning
3. Have self-awareness
4. Face the challenge



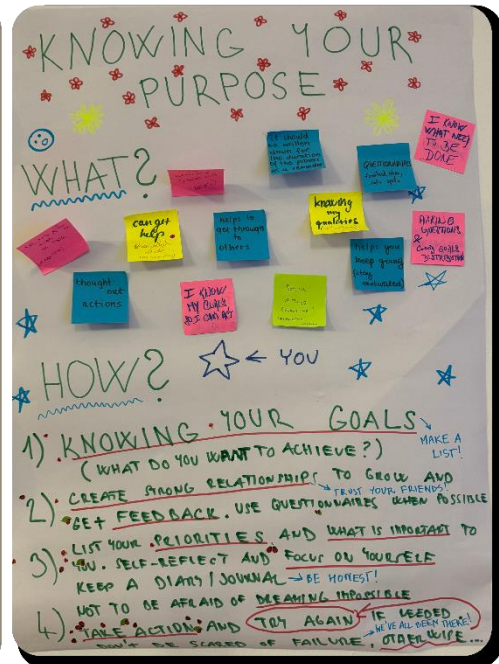
1. **Align with the mission**
 - Formulate a clear “why?” and have determination.
2. **Enable lifelong learning**
3. **Have self-awareness and self-confidence**
 - Be open-minded and sensitive to the needs of others.
4. **Be brave and face the challenge.**
 - Don't hesitate. Action solves almost everything.
5. **Foster inner motivation** and be the change you want to bring.

Knowing your purpose

Finding our individual purpose in life is no small challenge. But as we see from the discussion – it's crucial for any meaningful engagement. It's lack may be linked to identified barriers of uncertainty, feeling of losing way, or fluctuating motivation. So how to achieve this key ingredient?

Discovering your purpose

1. Know your goals
2. List your priorities
3. Create strong and trustworthy relationships
4. Take action and try again



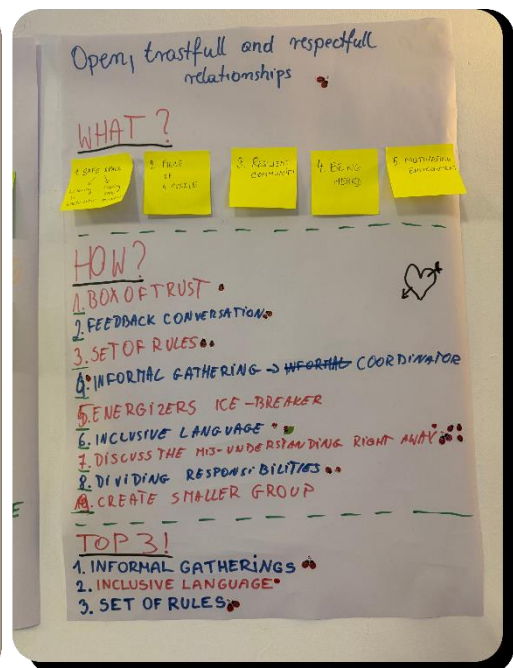
1. **Know your goals** of what you want to achieve & make a list.
2. **Create strong relationships** to grow.
 - Trust your friends.
 - Get feedback & use questionnaires when possible.
3. **List your priorities** and what is important to you.
 - Self-reflect and focus on yourself.
 - Keep a diary in which you're honest.
4. **Don't be afraid of dreaming the impossible.**
 - Take action and try again if needed.
 - Don't be scared of failure, we've all been there!

Open, trustful and respectful relationships

Since no one's a solitary island and the whole of human progress stems from our cooperation, having open, trustful and respectful relationships was naturally considered as a crucial ingredient for civil engagement. The encouragement from others and feeling of belonging to a community drives us to make it better and meeting new people with similar values pushes us forward. So how to achieve this key ingredient in our communities?

Having open, trustful and respectful relationships

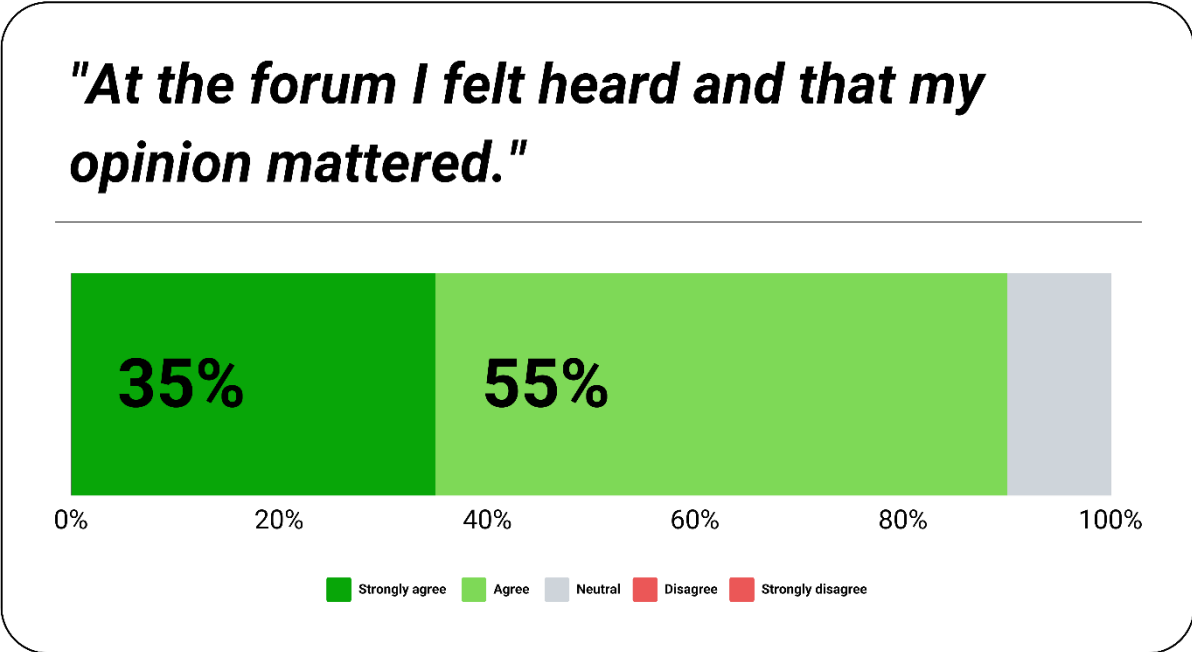
1. Have informal gatherings
2. Use inclusive language
3. Create a set of rules



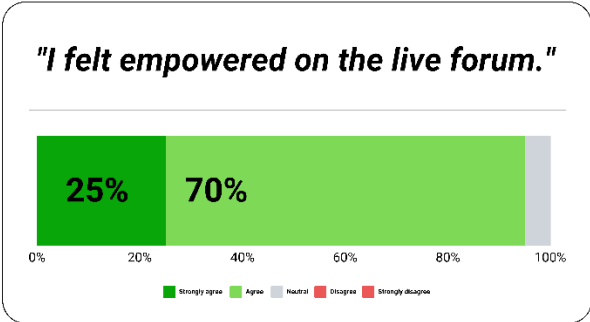
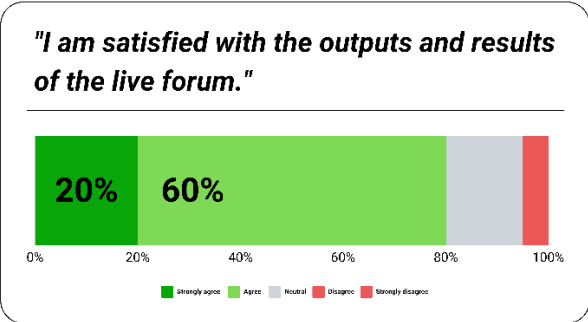
1. Organize informal gatherings.
2. Use inclusive language.
3. Create a set of rules.
4. Set a box of trust for members to anonymously address concerns.
5. Facilitate feedback conversation.
6. Use energizers and icebreakers with new groups.
7. Discuss the misunderstandings right away.
8. Create smaller groups and divide responsibilities.

Impact of the live forum

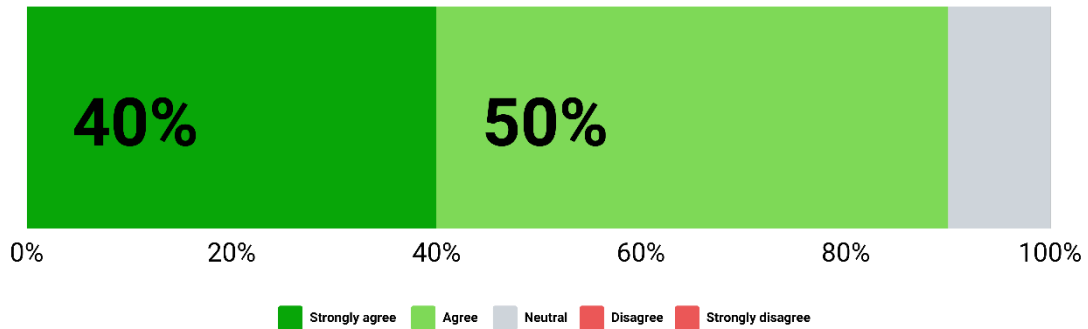
One of the main goals of YDF was not only to create new incentive structures and recommendations “for youth, by youth”, but also to measure the impact of fair and open deliberation on participant’s wellbeing. As the results of the first digital discussion showed us collectively shared feelings of powerlessness and of not being heard it was crucial to address this phenomenon.



The results from the feedback form show us that the goals of creating a respectable open space were met. 90% of participants felt “heard and that their opinion mattered” and “comfortable expressing their opinion”. On top of that 95% felt empowered and 80% were satisfied with the results (even before we published this report).

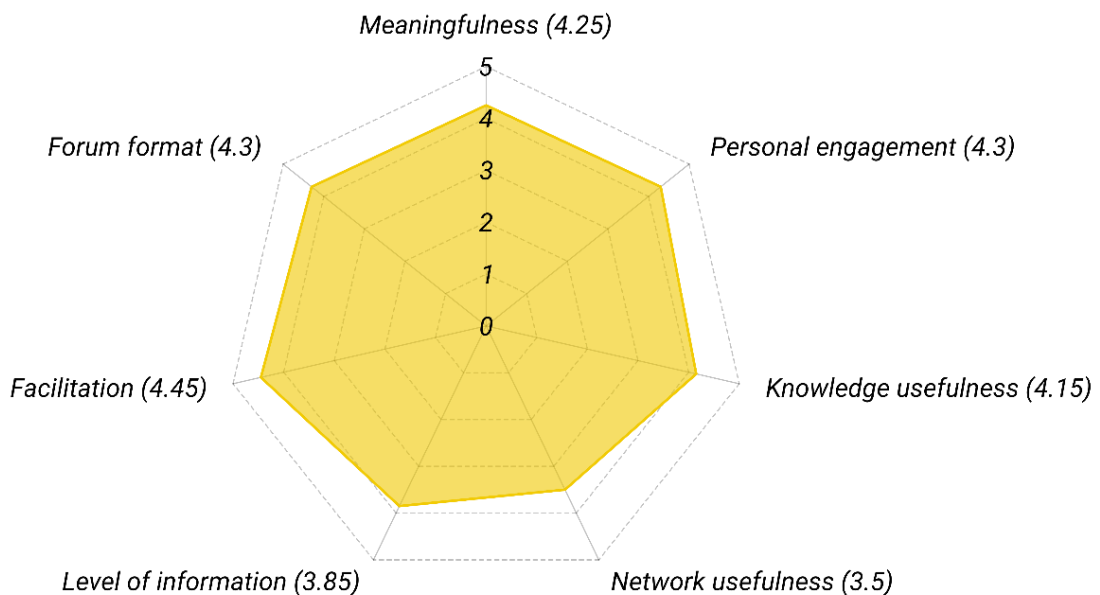


"I felt comfortable expressing my opinion."



Feedback from the participants was also positive regarding various aspects of the forum. The graph below shows the averages of participants ratings (on a scale from 1 to 5). The results enable us to state with certainty that they found the forum meaningful and were engaged during the discussions. The newly gained knowledge was perceived as useful and with a slighter lesser average rating the usefulness of the network as well.

Participants rating of the forum (averages)



Conclusion

Where to start? To put it one sentence - The moonshot of Youth Dialogue Forum 2024 gave us crowdsourced knowledge and solutions, new network of civic actors across borders, a blueprint for meaningful participation incentive structures and above all hope. And that is more than we could've wished for.

YDF gave us crowdsourced knowledge. The results of the first digital discussion between more than 700 people confirmed that majority of youth must overcome various barriers of engagement in civil society. Apart from hard socio-political factors, such as financial stability, availability of housing and current polycrisis, we discovered also “softer” ones. Youth perceive and encounter the problem of ageism, disdain from adults, indifference of politicians, or ridicule of proactivity from peers. What's important is that less engaged participants (which perceive these barriers more intensively) would like to do more for their communities and society. They just don't know how. Finding functional answers to the demand for more incentives in their communities is therefore the key to improving the quality of engagement in civil society.

YDF gave us solutions. Designs of new “civic games” should first and foremost address the main drivers and ingredients of engagement. Incorporating mechanisms with clearly defined purpose which foster the feel of belonging, encouragement from others, sense of accomplishment and peer interactions is crucial. Addressing these needs helps not only to overcome the feelings of not being heard, but also creates space for engagement which is meaningful regardless of its quantifiable impact.

From the perspective of youth, meaningful engagement is not primarily about creating a massive change in the world. It mainly stems from our personal purpose in life, (proactive) mindset, open and trustful relationships, and from a good team.

As the participants agreed - a big and lasting change needs time. Creating and improving our communities in the light of the identified drivers creates not only a safe space for self-realization, but also builds up momentum whose power can be unleashed in future.

YDF gave us a network. Building trustful relationships is not crucial only in our communities but also in the international space. The structure of YDF created valuable connections across borders on which we can build in future forums. The discussion showed us that majority of experiences, barriers and drivers are commonly shared in each country. It's therefore crucial to have spaces for sharing best practices to increase our potential as active citizens.

YDF gave us a functioning blueprint for meaningful engagement and civic participation. Apart from the thematic results, the whole structure and essence of YDF proved to us that innovative approaches towards citizen participation and deliberation are the future of democratic processes. YDF proves that new platforms of deliberative and participatory democracy have the capacity to engage the unengaged, create a safe space for listening and lead to quality results even in extremely short timespans. The number of ambassadors and participants, thoroughness of results, and feedback from participants underline its meaningfulness and success. All these factors prove our philosophy, that there are no unengaged citizens, just badly designed games. They prove that the vicious cycle of misunderstood expectations between institutions and (not only) youth is not unsurmountable. There is a way, and a valuable blueprint for the course of next action.

YDF gave us hope that change is possible. And this mindset unites us. Our democracy is not guaranteed, we must fight for it. It's our responsibility to make the world a better place. And even though it sometimes seems that the world is falling apart, our belief remains strong. We're convinced that each of us can make a difference, which can be amplified - everyone's a changemaker when we're cooperating. Together we can achieve systemic changes. Because community empowerment leads to real political power.

Democracies should not be only "kept alive". They should innovate in the context of human progress. They should provide and facilitate new forms of meaningful engagement in local communities and civic participation in public affairs. Thanks to this case our belief that solutions are to be found in innovative combinations of CivTech with live interactions, crowdsourced knowledge and thoughtfully designed games grew indubitable stronger. The spaceship of YDF successfully landed on the moon.

Today's small step tends to lead to a future leap.

We thank you for your breathtaking participation and look forward to the next chapter.

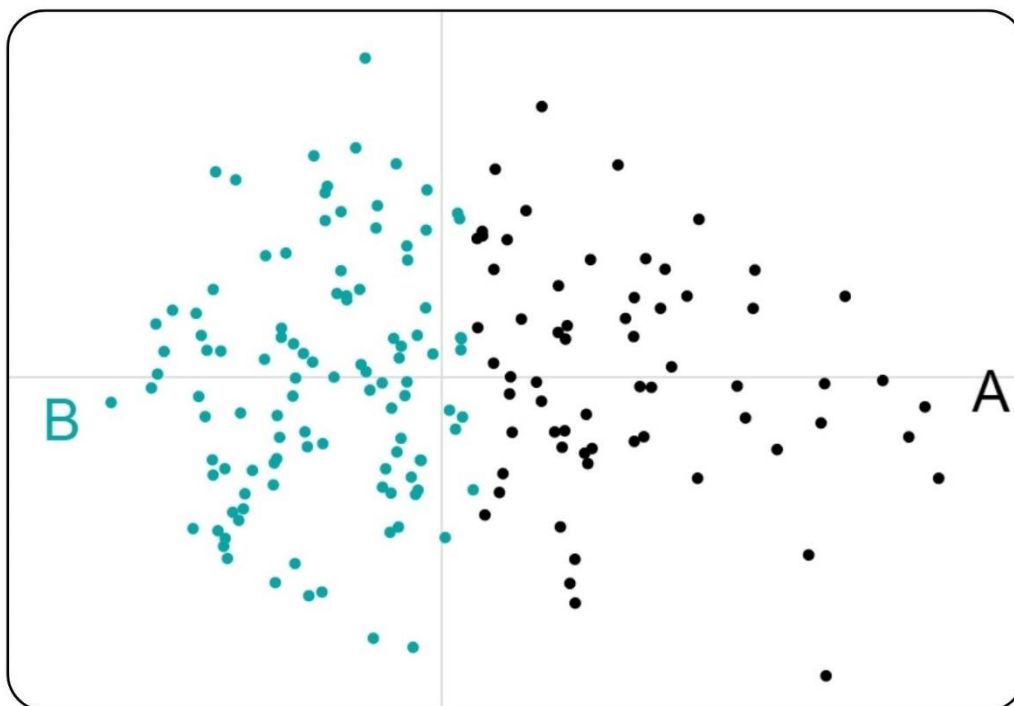
Annex 1. Methodology of DEMDIS discussions

1. Creation of opinion groups

The DEMDIS software utilizes statistical methods and data mining techniques to create so-called opinion groups. Votes of all participants are processed into a data matrix, with missing data (votes on comments from people who did not see the respective comment) being filled based on the responses of other participants.

Subsequently, principal component analysis (PCA) is performed on this adjusted matrix. PCA is a dimensionality reduction method that allows us to compress the responses of each participant into a two-dimensional point in such a way that the data retains the maximum amount of information. When each participant is represented by exactly one point in a 2D plane, the software uses a statistical clustering algorithm called k-means to automatically determine the ideal number of clusters for the given discussion.

The result of this process is several clusters (i.e., opinion groups), which the software further analyzes to evaluate consensual or polarizing comments. It is essential to recognize that this process is automated and relies solely on the obtained data from the voting of individual participants. This allows us to work with objective results for each discussion, without the possibility of any manual adjustments by discussion curators.



2. Consensus ranking

After assessing opinion groups, the primary goal of each discussion is to identify consensus, meaning statements that have garnered the highest support across all opinion clusters. Our DEMDIS software employs a mathematical formula that assigns a certain number of points to each comment.

Comments with the highest point totals are subsequently evaluated as the most consensual. The number of points is influenced by various factors:

- **Consensus Level:** Comments with similar levels of support across opinion groups receive a higher point total. Consequently, comments that receive significant support in Group A but very few votes from participants in Group B will be heavily “penalized”.
- **Total Number of Votes:** This criterion is straightforward; comments receiving a higher number of votes (i.e., "agree" expressions) will receive more points. From the most consensual comments, we expect substantial support across all groups, indicating a large number of agreements.
- **Agreement Ratio:** The last criterion considers the agreement ratio, expressing the ratio of agreement votes divided by the sum of agreement and disagreement votes on a given comment. These values are then averaged across all opinion groups, and comments with a higher agreement ratio are assigned more points.

This criterion is set to prevent groups with a larger number of participants from "overpowering" smaller groups with their high number of agreement votes. Therefore, the agreement ratio is incorporated into our formula for each opinion group with equal weight. This increases fairness in discussions with an uneven distribution of participants among groups. Comments with the highest point totals are the primary focus of discussion results, as they represent ideas and statements most aligned with all discussion participants.

Annex 2. Facilitation framework of the live forum

First working group session

120 min

	10:30	10:50	11:20	12:00	12:30	12:45
Activity	Group introduction 15 min	Establishing common ground divergent phase < 30 min	Sharing good examples convergent phase 30 min	Identifying key ingredients divergent phase 30 min	Collective prioritization convergent 15min	
Questions	Q: Introducing the members of the group	Q: <i>What does meaningful engagement mean to YOU?</i>	Q: What are the best examples of meaningful engagement, true participation that you've encountered?	Q: What were the key elements and ingredients that contributed to the success of your best examples?	Q: What ingredient is the most crucial for creating the recipe for meaningful engagement	
Goal	Get to know each other	Get on the same wave, uniting the language	Share good practices from our unique context, get inspired,	Broadening the palette of ingredients	Narrowing down the ingredients	
Method	Open introduction, popcorn method	Brainstorming ideas, no judgement, writing down all responses in a numbered list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will draw, write on papers the best examples Present and share examples in the group (provide sources for more knowledge) 	Participants will write on sticky notes brief and understandable ingredients which made their examples successful	Digital AOI prioritization by all participants	
Output		List of interpretations of meaningful engagement written down in a numbered list on flipchart (1/2 pages)	5-10 A4 Paper with individual cases of good examples	15-20 sticky notes of key ingredients for meaningful engagement	List of top ingredients	

Second working group session

105 min

	14:30	14:45	15:05	15:35	15:50	16:15
Activity	Introductory Energizer 15 min	Establishing common ground divergent phase < 20 min	Ingredient focus: Gathering divergent phase 30 min	Ingredient focus: Narrowing down convergent phase 15 min	Presentation setup final convergent phase 25 min	
Questions	Q: What resonated with you the most in the previous session?	Q: <i>What does this ingredient mean to you? Why is it important? How can it manifest?</i>	Q: <i>How to achieve this ingredient?</i> NOTE: See the dynamic, consider focusing on particular level - online, offline, community, organization, participative processes.	Q: <i>Which recommendations are so good that you'd consider implementing them in your community, organization,...?</i>	Q: <i>Is there something crucial missing?</i>	
Goal	Connecting new group + sharing experiences	Get on the same wave, uniting the language	Exploring the (innovative) ways of achieving this ingredient in general, or particular contexts	Selecting the best answers and recommendations to achieve that ingredient	Create a presentation on flipchart	
Method	Open forum ????	Open forum + write down on sticker notes (<i>what does it mean?</i>)	Brainstorming ideas, writing the responses to a flipchart paper in a numbered list NOTE: Nudge the participants to create concrete and actionable ideas	N/3 Method - Each participant will individually deliver N/3 votes to the best ideas, facilitator will check 1 by 1 the "winners"	Wrapping up previous outputs	
Output		Set of ingredient interpretations written down on various sticky notes	Flipchart of ideas, recommendations	Previous flipchart with votes and top contenders	Flipchart paper presentation	

Acknowledgments

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