

# In the Same Boat: A Scalable Hub-and-Club Model for Remote Youth Participation

## Name of the organisation

Demokratikus Ifjúságért Alapítvány

## Website of the organisation

<https://i-dia.org/>

## Location of the organisation

Károlyi utca 11. II. emelet 1., 1053 Budapest, Hungary

## E-mail address of the organisation

[hellodia@i-dia.org](mailto:hellodia@i-dia.org)

---

## Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in implementing youth activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Active citizenship/activism

## Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

## Good practice aim & purpose

Our overarching goal is to foster young people's sensitivity toward democratic participation and respectful exchange.

Our practice aims to redefine debating—moving it away from elite, winner-take-all competitions toward a structured tool for community discussion. In remote or less privileged territories, young people often lack a civic space where they feel heard or capable of making a change. We address the challenge of social polarization and geographical isolation by providing a framework for dialogue that is accessible regardless of academic background or location.

The change we seek is the transition from passive bystanders to active citizens. By establishing a culture of respectful disagreement, we empower youth in underserved municipalities to engage in local politics and everyday civic life. Our practice aims to build a “bridge” across the country, ensuring that a young person in a rural village has the same rhetorical tools and democratic platform as their peers in the capital, thereby strengthening the democratic fabric of even the most peripheral regions.

## Good practice description

### What are the building blocks of our good practice?

Our practice is built on a scalable, three-tier model: The Tool, The Network, and The Hubs.

The Tool (VoxPop): At the heart of our methodology is VoxPop, a debating game designed by our organization to moderate discussions. Unlike traditional parliamentary debate, VoxPop is a gamified “debate master” tool that structures arguments, ensures equal speaking time, and lowers the barrier to entry for marginalized youth. It transforms complex local or global issues into manageable, interactive sessions.

The Network & Knowledge Transfer: We operate a country-wide Debate Club Network. Any youth worker or motivated young person in a remote area can initiate a club. To ensure quality, DIA provides the “know-how” through mandatory Debate Master training. This professionalizes local youth work, equipping leaders with mediation skills. Member clubs must meet frequency requirements, ensuring that democratic practice is a consistent habit rather than a one-off event.

The Infrastructure (Regional Hubs): To overcome geographical obstacles, we organized the network into Regional Debate Hubs. These hubs act as decentralized support centers, providing mentorship to smaller, rural clubs.

The Bridge (Debate Day): Annually, we host Debate Day, basically a national summit. We intentionally mix participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and remote regions. This event functions as a physical “civic space” where youth use their VoxPop-honed skills to discuss community challenges, effectively using local engagement to address broader societal issues.

### **How do the participants get involved in the debate project?**

Debate clubs can be initiated by any motivated individual and established within a wide range of communities, including schools, youth groups, neighborhoods, associations, or workplaces. These individuals take the lead in organizing and facilitating sessions for club members, while receiving continuous support, guidance, and feedback from our NGO to ensure quality and sustainability. Young participants are engaged as active initiators within their local communities through the activities of local debate clubs. They are involved in identifying and exploring topics that directly affect and interest them, using participatory methods to define key issues and deepen their understanding through effective tools. Building on this, they develop potential solutions using creative problem-solving approaches.

Debate clubs not only foster dialogue among participants but also create opportunities for interaction with relevant decision-makers. Through this process, young people actively contribute to shaping discussions on key societal issues such as education, housing, employment, and environmental protection.

Special attention is given to involving disadvantaged communities, particularly through collaboration with after-school learning centers and community spaces. In these settings, debate clubs strengthen young people’s advocacy skills by developing their cooperation, communication, and debating competencies.

In addition to the structured network of debate clubs and regional hubs, open debate events are organized to ensure that participants can initiate their own projects in the long term and engage constructively in local decision-making processes.

### **What stakeholders play a role in the implementation locally?**

The involvement of experts and decision-makers is tailored to the needs of participating young people, as well as to the specific local, regional, or national issues identified during the project. Before engaging stakeholders, debate clubs and regional hubs conduct needs assessments among participants to identify the topics and questions most relevant to them. Based on these findings, they select appropriate experts and decision-makers for dialogue.

In the case of school-related issues (such as the introduction of lockers, dress codes, or selective waste collection), relevant stakeholders may include school principals, deputy principals, teachers, and external experts.

For local community-level challenges (such as the lack of community programs or services), the project encourages the involvement of municipal representatives, including local council members, mayors, and deputy mayors, as well as other relevant stakeholders such as school leaders or representatives of local civil society organizations.

In the context of after-school programs or youth organizations (for example, issues related to meals, community rules, or children's rights), participants engage with program leaders, mentors, working group coordinators, and external experts. This flexible, needs-based approach ensures that all discussions are relevant, inclusive, and impactful.

### **How does it relate to municipalities or other local stakeholders?**

The project creates opportunities for decision-makers and experts to directly engage with young people, gaining insight into their perspectives while sharing their own experience and knowledge. This dialogue is not one-directional but represents a process of mutual learning, where both young participants and stakeholders benefit from new ideas and perspectives.

The involvement of municipalities and other local stakeholders strengthens young people's engagement with societal issues and supports the professional grounding of debate topics. It also contributes to the development of a constructive dialogue culture between youth and decision-makers.

Importantly, these interactions increase the likelihood that solutions developed during debates can be translated into practical actions and policy considerations, thereby enhancing the real-world impact of the project.

### **Good practice result & concrete effects**

The primary result of this practice is the democratization of the “right to speak” in less-privileged communities. We have successfully established a self-sustaining network where rural youth are no longer consumers of culture, but creators of civic discourse. Participants report increased confidence in expressing opinions and, crucially, an improved ability to listen to opposing views—a vital skill for local political involvement. Our “Bridge Building” approach has yielded measurable connections between youth who would otherwise never meet. By bringing together participants from remote peripheries and urban centers at Debate Day, we feel that we have contributed to reducing social “othering.” Through our training, some schools and local NGOs in less-served municipalities have integrated structured debate into their daily operations, creating permanent civic spaces. Ultimately, using VoxPop and our hub-and-club model has proven that geographical distance does not have to mean democratic distance. Young people in remote areas are now able to use these structured discussions to influence local municipal decisions, proving that youth work can effectively bridge everyday life and representative democracy.

### **Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**

Quality development