The PIDOP Project
An Overview

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What is the PIDOP Project?

- PIDOP is a *multidisciplinary research project* funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme.
- There are *nine research teams* participating in the project:
  - University of Surrey, UK (Coordinating institution)
  - University of Liège, Belgium
  - Masaryk University, Czech Republic
  - University of Jena, Germany
  - University of Bologna, Italy
  - University of Porto, Portugal
  - Örebro University, Sweden
  - Ankara University, Turkey
  - Queen’s University Belfast, UK
- The project has run for three years from **2009-2012**
- The project formally ends on April 30\(^{th}\) 2012
The aims of the PIDOP project

• The project examined *the factors which influence civic and political participation* in *nine national contexts*: Belgium, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Italy, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey

• We focused on *three different levels of factors*, to see how they impact on civic and political participation:
  – *Macro level contextual factors* (e.g., political, institutional and electoral factors)
  – *Social factors* (e.g., family, educational and media factors)
  – *Psychological factors* (e.g., motivational, cognitive, attitudinal and identity factors)
We focused our main attention on four groups of individuals which the European Commission identified as being at risk of political disengagement:

- Young people
- Women
- Minorities
- Migrants

In practice, the main focus of the project was on youth, with the data being explored for differences between women vs. men, and differences between ethnic majority vs. ethnic minority/migrant individuals.

The project examined the differences, as well as the relationship, between political and civic participation in these individuals.
By **political participation**, we mean:

- Activity that has the intent or effect of influencing either regional, national or supranational governance, either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of individuals who make that policy.

Under this heading, we included:

- **Conventional forms of activity** involving electoral processes (e.g., voting, election campaigning, running for election, etc.)
- **Non-conventional forms of activity** which occur outside electoral processes (e.g., signing petitions, participating in political demonstrations, displaying a symbol or sign representing support for a political cause, membership of political campaigning organizations, etc.)
Civic participation

• By *civic participation*, we mean:
  – Voluntary activity focused on helping others, achieving a public good, or participating in the life of a community, including work undertaken either alone or in cooperation with others in order to effect change

• Under this heading, we included a variety of activities such as:
  – Working collectively to solve a community problem
  – Belonging to community organizations
  – Attending meetings about issues of concern
  – Raising money for charity
  – Helping neighbours
  – Consumer activism (boycotting and buycotting)
Types of psychological factors examined

- Having a **sense of civic duty** or social responsibility
- Perceiving an **injustice**
- Curiosity-driven **interest** in political and civic matters
- **Attentiveness** to what is happening in the political and civic domains, for example, by following the news on television, newspapers and internet
- Having **knowledge** about political and civic matters
- Holding **opinions** about political and civic issues
- Having a sense of **internal political efficacy**, that is, a belief that one is able to understand and to influence political or civic affairs
- Having a sense of **external political efficacy**, that is, a belief that politicians and political institutions are responsive to citizens’ views
- **Trust** in political and societal institutions
Types of social factors examined

- **Family factors** (e.g., socioeconomic status, parental education, family communication style, political talk in the family home)
- **Peer group factors** (e.g., positive peer relationships, peers' political beliefs and behaviour)
- **Education factors** (e.g., school curriculum, open classroom climate, training in letter-writing)
- **Organizational factors** (organizational membership, holding an office or role in an organization, representing an organization)
- **Media factors** (e.g., attending to news on television and in newspapers)
- **Religion factors** (e.g. religious affiliation, religiosity, membership of a place of worship)
- **Other factors specific to ethnic minorities and migrants** (e.g. experiences of racism and discrimination, involvement in politics of country of origin)
Types of macro contextual factors examined

• **Civil liberties** *(free media, lack of discrimination, religious tolerance, citizens treated equally under the law, independent judiciary, etc.)*

• **Democratic structures** *(checks and balances, degree of single party dominance, executive constraints, percentage of female parliamentarians, minority voting rights, etc.)*

• **Electoral processes** *(elections free and fair, transparent financing of parties, access to public office open to all, etc.)*

• **Functioning of government** *(corruption is controlled, government is open and transparent, civil service is capable of implementing government policy, government is accountable to the electorate, etc.)*

• **Open vs. closed institutional systems** *(number of access points for social movement organizations and other non-state actors to exert influence)*

• **Prevailing strategies** *(how members of the political system deal with challengers: confrontational and polarising vs. facilitative and cooperative)*
The objectives of the PIDOP project

The project had five main objectives:

1. To **audit existing theory and research** on civic and political participation in the disciplines of Politics, Sociology, Social Policy, Psychology and Education

2. To **audit and analyse existing policies** on civic and political participation within Europe

3. To **identify empirically the factors and processes which drive civic and political participation** within Europe

4. To **develop a theoretical understanding** of the factors and processes responsible for civic and political participation

5. To **formulate new evidence-based policy and practice recommendations** for key stakeholders at regional, national and European levels
The structure of the project

• The theoretical and empirical work in the project was broken up into a series of separate work packages:
  – Work Package 2: Collate and analyse current policies
  – Work Package 3: Development of a political theory of participation
  – Work Package 4: Development of a psychological theory of participation
  – Work Package 5: Modelling existing survey data
  – Work Package 6: Collecting new data
  – Work Package 7: Theoretical integration and practical recommendations
• In addition there were two ‘project management’ work packages:
  – Work Package 1: Consortium management and coordination
  – Work Package 8: Dissemination activities
Work Package 2

- WP2 was responsible for **auditing and analysing existing policies** on civic and political participation within Europe, particularly participation among youth, women, minorities and migrants.
- It investigated the extent to which there is **coherence or tension** between policies at EU, national and regional levels.
- The policy documents of **civil society organisations, regional government, national government and the EU** were selected for analysis.
- The time frame which was chosen for the selection of policy documents was **2004-2009**.
- This time frame allowed the project to explore issues relating to active citizenship, civic participation and Europeanisation, as well as the level of engagement of civil society organisations with the overall policy priorities of the EU.
Work Package 3

• WP3 was responsible for **auditing existing theory and research** on civic and political participation, particularly in the disciplines of Politics, Sociology and Social Policy.

• WP3 was also responsible for **developing a political theory** of civic and political participation based on macro-level contextual factors.

• As part of WP3, the project developed **a systematic account of all the different forms** that political and civic and participation can take.

• WP3 also drew up a detailed account of **all the macro level contextual factors** which previous research has revealed to be related to citizens’ civic and political participation.

• Finally, WP3 developed **a range of theoretical models** explaining how the various macro factors are linked to the different forms of participation.
Work Package 4

- WP4 was responsible for **auditing existing theory and research** on civic and political participation, particularly in the disciplines of Psychology, Education and Political Science.
- WP4 was also responsible for **developing a psychological theory** of civic and political participation based on both **social factors** and **psychological factors**.
- WP4 drew up a detailed account of **all the social and psychological factors** which previous research has revealed to be related to citizens’ civic and political participation.
- In addition, WP4 developed **a range of theoretical models** explaining how the various social and psychological factors are linked to the different forms of participation.
Work Package 5

• WP5 was responsible for **analysing existing survey data** in order to identify empirically the factors which drive civic and political participation within Europe.

• There were two main sub-goals here:
  – To **describe patterns of civic and political participation** across EU member states over time and across key demographic groupings
  – To **describe the factors which are related to variations** in these patterns of civic and political participation across EU member states

• These analyses examined:
  – A wide range of different **forms of participation**
  – A wide range of different **psychological factors**
  – The impact of **demographic characteristics** (age, gender and ethnic status) on participation
  – The impact of **macro contextual factors** on participation
Work Package 6

• WP6 was responsible for **collecting new data** in order to identify the factors which drive civic and political participation within Europe.

• There were two main sub-goals here:

  – To examine *civic and political participation among members of different age, gender, minority and migrant groups* within each *participating country*, in order to identify the factors and processes which drive participation in these various groups.

  – To examine *differences* in the factors and processes which drive participation *in different national contexts* and *in different demographic groups*.

• Each team in the consortium collected data from both their own local *national group* and from *two ethnic minority or migrant groups* living in their country.
National and ethnic groups studied in each country

- **Belgium**: Belgians, Turks, Moroccans
- **Czech Republic**: Czechs, Roma, Ukrainians
- **England**: English, Congolese, Bangladeshis
- **Germany**: Germans, German resettlers from Russia, Turks
- **Italy**: Italians, Albanians, Moroccans
- **Northern Ireland**: Northern Irish, Chinese, Polish
- **Portugal**: Portuguese, Brazilians, Angolans
- **Sweden**: Swedes, Kurds of Turkish background, Iraqis
- **Turkey**: Turks, Roma, Turkish resettlers from Bulgaria

In all of these groups, data were collected from **two age groups**:
- 16-17 year olds (pre-voting age)
- 18-26 year olds (post-voting age)
The three phases of WP6

- **In phase one** of WP6, **focus groups** were conducted with women and men in both age ranges from all 27 national and ethnic groups.
- The focus groups explored the young people’s perceptions of citizenship and participation as they viewed them across a wide range of different life contexts.
- **In phase two** of WP6, **interviews** were conducted with some of the individuals who had been identified during the focus groups as important sources of influence on the focus group participants.
- These interviews primarily involved parents, teachers and youth workers, as these were the most frequently cited sources of influence.
- **In phase three** of WP6, a quantitative **survey** was conducted.
- This questionnaire was administered to 16-17 year olds and 18-26 year olds in all of the participating countries.
- Data were collected from all 27 national and ethnic groups.
Work Package 7

• WP7 was responsible for:
  - **Developing an integrated multi-level theory** of how and why different forms and interpretations of participation develop or are hampered, incorporating reference to macro-level contextual factors, proximal social factors and psychological factors, drawing on the theoretical work conducted by WP3 and WP4 and the findings of WP5 and WP6
  - **Formulating new evidence-based policy and practice recommendations** for key stakeholders at regional, national and European levels – these recommendations are based on the findings obtained by WP5 and WP6
• The purpose of today’s meeting is to tell you about the recommendations for policy and practice which WP7 has developed
• It is important to emphasise that we have only developed recommendations which are based directly on specific findings from the project
• We have deliberately avoided developing recommendations based on normative considerations – no matter how worthy these may be
• So, in the remainder of this presentation, I want to give you a brief overview of some of the main findings on which our recommendations are based
Findings: The civic and political interests of young people

• Young people often have pronounced civic and political interests – particularly in issues at the local level (including issues of litter, graffiti, local transport, local amenities, etc.) and in broader environmental, humanitarian and human rights issues at the international or global levels
• In addition, ethnic minority and migrant youth often have a high level of interest in issues affecting their own ethnic community and issues affecting their country of origin or the country of origin of their parents
• However, young people tend to tackle these issues through civic and non-conventional forms of participation (e.g. charitable activities, consumer activism, demonstrations and petitions) rather than through conventional forms of participation (e.g. voting)
• Media are extremely important for young people, with TV, radio, the Internet and new social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) being among the main sources from which youth obtain their information about civic and political issues.

• Youth workers, youth and leisure centres, youth and education NGOs, and leaders of ethnic minority communities often play a crucial role in relationship to youth participation, especially in relationship to hard-to-reach and disengaged young people.
Findings: The perceived barriers to participation

- Young people frequently feel that they do not know enough about political issues to be able to engage in effective action to influence political, civic and social change, and this lack of knowledge is experienced by young people as a significant impediment to their own civic and political participation.
- Young people also commonly report that they have relatively little experience of civic and political participation, and those experiences which they have had are often viewed negatively and being of low quality.
- Young people often feel that they are not taken seriously in political terms by politicians and other older adults – this lack of responsiveness reduces their belief in their own ability to have any influence politically or civically and is experienced as a significant disincentive to engage any further with political issues.
• When young people engage in acts of political participation, they feel that the news media fail to represent their participatory actions with fairness and seriousness of purpose, and this is experienced as a significant disincentive to engage any further with political issues.

• There are many obstacles that hinder the civic and political participation of women – for example:
  – Female youth often perceive biases against women and in favour of men both in the workplace and in the political sphere.
  – In some countries, among some ethnic groups, young women’s participation is further hindered by the need to undertake paid employment, early educational dropout and/or early marriage.

• Young members of ethnic minority and migrant groups often perceive themselves as being excluded from political processes because of the prejudice and inequity which they commonly experience.
Findings: The psychological factors that drive participation

- The most consistent psychological drivers of political and civic participation are political interest and internal efficacy (i.e. the subjective belief that, as an individual, one is able to understand and to participate in politics effectively)
- Opinionation (i.e. having opinions on civic and political issues) also sometimes acts as a driver of a range of different forms of civic and political participation
- In addition, collective efficacy (i.e. the subjective belief that, working together as a group, citizens can achieve civic and political change) sometimes acts as a driver of collective forms of civic and political participation
Findings: The social factors that drive participation

• One of the most consistent social predictors of political and civic participation is membership of organizations – greater involvement in organizations is associated with more interest and attentiveness towards civic and political issues, and with higher levels of civic and political participation

• Another consistent predictor of participation is having had previous high quality participation experiences, either through schools, youth centres or leisure organizations
Findings: The macro factors that drive participation

- Participation varies systematically as a function of the macro institutional features of countries
- Participation is higher when all of the following factors are high:
  - **Civil liberties** (free media, lack of discrimination, religious tolerance, citizens treated equally under the law, independent judiciary, etc.)
  - **Democratic structures** (checks and balances, low degree of single party dominance, executive constraints, high percentage of female parliamentarians, minority voting rights, etc.)
  - **Electoral processes** (elections free and fair, transparent financing of parties, access to public office is open to all, etc.)
  - **Functioning of government** (corruption is controlled, government is open and transparent, civil service is capable of implementing government policy, government is accountable to the electorate, etc.)
Qualifications concerning the drivers of participation

• The psychological determinants of participation can vary according to the specific type of participation concerned
• Furthermore, a factor which increases one form of participation can sometimes lead to a decrease in other forms of participation
• Furthermore, forms and levels of participation, and influences on participation, can vary according to young people’s age, gender and ethnic status (minority vs. majority)
• In addition, the participatory behaviours of young people are often specific to particular subgroups defined in terms of the intersection between gender, ethnicity and age (e.g. specific to younger females from an Angolan background, or to older males from a Bangladeshi background)
Findings: Attitudes to the European Union

- On the specific issue of the European Union, we found that youth often view the EU as an entity which takes decisions following a top-down process and is not responsive to citizens’ views.
- There is also a perception of exclusion and distance.
- In addition, young people have a low sense of belonging to a civic EU sphere and low levels of European identification (compared with their levels of national and ethnic identifications).
The recommendations for policy and practice

• The recommendations that we have developed are aimed at four main groups of actors:
  – Politicians and political institutions
  – Media producers and media organizations
  – Ministries of education, educational professionals and schools
  – A range of civil society actors, including youth workers, youth and leisure centres, youth and education NGOs, and leaders of ethnic minority communities

• We will be discussing these recommendations this morning in two blocks:
  – Before the break: Politicians, political institutions and the media
  – After the break: Ministries of education, educational professionals, schools and civil society actors
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