

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2024

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE PLATFORM



Table Of Content

1. Activities on Citizen Engagement

1.1 The European Elections 2024: Unleashing the Momentum for Youth Engagement on March 4-5, 2024, at the European Parliament	<u>3</u>
1.2 Meet your Future Policymakers: Youth and EP Candidates in Dialogue, April 9, April 20, May 30, 2024	<u>5</u>
1.3 Shaping the future of Europe - Deliberating with young people in the run-up to the European elections, European Parliament, May 6-7, 2024	<u>11</u>
1.4 Democracy beyond elections - Deliberations with young people on common issues for European citizens, European Parliament, October 14-15, 2024	<u>14</u>

2. Intercultural Activities

2.1 Advisory Board Meetings	<u>18</u>
2.2 Mid-Term General Assembly (Berlin, 8th of February)	<u>19</u>
2.3 Intercultural Iftar Dinner at the European Parliament (19th of March)	<u>22</u>
2.4 Youtube Videos	<u>25</u>
2.5 Interfaith Council for Peace and Security in Europe	<u>28</u>

3. Other Activities

3.1 Partnership Agreement with the European Parliament	<u>33</u>
3.2 Certificate of Recognition from EP President Roberta Metsola	<u>34</u>
3.3 Dialogue Summit 2024, Belgium (22 – 25 May 2024)	<u>35</u>
3.4 Youth Advocacy Team	<u>36</u>
3.6 Participation in the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 12 March 2024	<u>37</u>

4. Publications and Dissemination

4.1 Position Paper on European Elections 2024	<u>39</u>
4.2 Sakharov Prize Ceremony	<u>41</u>
4.3 Interviews	<u>44</u>

5. European Projects

5.1 Citizen Z	<u>45</u>
5.2 Protone	<u>46</u>

6. EU Project Development

6.1 MinDS Horizon Europe	<u>47</u>
6.2 Peaceguard Horizon Europe	<u>48</u>

7. Contributions

7.1 5th Citizen Participation and Deliberative Democracy Festival	<u>49</u>
7.2 Partes workshop	<u>49</u>
7.3 Shrines workshop	<u>50</u>
7.4 ECPS Summer School 2024: Populism and Foreign Policy: How Does Populist Politics Influence Foreign Affairs?	<u>50</u>

1.1 The European Elections 2024: Unleashing the Momentum for Youth Engagement on March 4-5, 2024, at the European Parliament



The third edition of Deliberative Democracy Days, a cornerstone event within the EU-funded Citizen Z project coordinated by the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, took place in Brussels on March 4-5, 2024. The event was co-hosted by the Civil Society Outreach Unit and InfoHub at the European Parliament. Aimed at strengthening young people's participation in civic and democratic life, the event drew over 60 unique participants from seven European countries, including Belgium, Italy, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Netherlands, Romania and representing a diverse array of stakeholders including young individuals, civil society organizations, activists, youth workers, educators, and policymakers.

Themed "*The European Elections 2024: Unleashing the Momentum for Youth Engagement*," the event provided a dynamic forum for discussion, with the absolute majority of participants falling within the 15-25 age category, injecting the conversations with fresh perspectives. Featuring 11 speakers and moderators, the discussions covered various aspects of youth engagement, representation, and deliberative practices, addressing pressing issues such as mental health and social well-being, gender equality and inclusion, democracy and peace, social and environmental justice.

Representative John Albrecht from the Civil Society Outreach Unit of the European Parliament kicked off the event, introducing flagship initiatives and offering valuable insights ahead of the European elections.

Structured into workshops and panels, the event commenced on March 4 with two engaging workshops. The first workshop concentrated on crafting a youth campaign, encouraging young individuals to advocate for the active involvement of their peers in the forthcoming elections. The second workshop was dedicated to educating young participants about various tools and forms for citizen participation. Notably, participants were divided into four groups to brainstorm and propose relevant European Citizens' Initiatives. The workshops were met with enthusiasm and active involvement from the young attendees, yielding inspiring proposals that facilitators pledged to explore further in the subsequent edition of Deliberative

On March 5, the event continued with two enlightening panel discussions. The first panel delved into the crucial topics of mental health and social well-being among youth, featuring esteemed speakers from the Netherlands, Croatia, and Belgium. Prof. Imke Baetens, Prof. Marina Nekić, and Dr. Lysanne de Brinke offered insightful perspectives, which captivated the audience, leading to a lively and engaging Q&A session.

The concluding panel shifted the focus towards presenting recommendations stemming from the first round of deliberations in countries involved in the Citizen Z project, namely Belgium, Italy, Croatia, and the Netherlands. Project partners shared remarkable recommendations that emerged from local deliberations, revealing young people's keen interest in topics encompassing justice, human rights, gender equality, inclusion, and peace.

Despite modifications to the program due to constraints beyond the organizer's control, the event saw meaningful and authentic discussions, characterized by high interactivity and active engagement from attendees. The smaller scale allowed for more informal discussions and facilitated genuine exchanges among participants.

The panels featuring the participation of the candidates in the 2024 European elections, originally slated to be part of the event program, have been rescheduled to April 9 and April 18. Young attendees expressed enthusiasm upon learning that they would still have the opportunity to engage with their potential future policymakers.

As preparations continue for upcoming events, the overarching lesson drawn from the latest edition of Deliberative Democracy Days is clear: young people are eager to contribute to building their future when given the opportunity to participate and be heard. Listening to and valuing the perspectives of young people is paramount in fostering a more inclusive and dynamic democracy. Deliberative Democracy Days stands as a testament to the power of youth engagement in driving positive change for the future of Europe



1.2 Meet your Future Policymakers: Youth and EP Candidates in Dialogue, April 9, April 30, May 30, 2024

In the heart of Brussels, at STAM Europa, a unique and crucial dialogue unfolded on April 9, bringing together aspiring European Parliament candidates and the vibrant voices of youth representatives. The event, titled "Meet Your Future Policymakers: Youth and EP Candidates in Dialogue," organised by the Intercultural Dialogue Platform and Stand Up for Europe, aimed to foster direct engagement between candidates and potential electors ahead of the pivotal 2024 European Elections.

The significance of the upcoming elections cannot be overstated. With Europe at a crossroads, facing multifaceted challenges from economic recovery post-pandemic to climate change mitigation, the decisions made by voters will chart the course for the European Union's trajectory for years to come.

Moderated by Olivia Gheyselinck, Event and Project Manager at the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, the panel commenced with brief introductions from each speaker, offering insights into their backgrounds, policy focuses, and aspirations. The panel featured a diverse lineup of candidates, including Suzana Carp, a European Climate Policy Specialist representing Volt; Laura Hidalgo, President of the Young MR, representing the Reformist Movement; Chelsea Nshuti, Board Member of Jong CD&V, representing Christian Democratic and Flemish; Léa Charlet, a Youth Sector NGO Director and Strategic Analyst representing ECOLO; Bram Vandeninden, a Scientist and Policy Planner representing Volt; and Marta Barandiy, Founder of Promote Ukraine, representing the political movement Voor U.

The subsequent Q&A session sparked dynamic exchanges between participants and candidates, with discussions spanning a broad spectrum of topics. Subjects such as climate action, youth empowerment, international relations, defence policies amid the conflict in Ukraine, the need for EU institutional reform, housing crises, inflation, economic stability, social justice, budget allocation, education, and mental health resonated strongly with the youth attendees.

With over 40 active participants, the event provided a platform for attendees to voice their concerns and aspirations for the future of Europe, underscoring the importance of engaging and empowering the younger generation in shaping European policies and priorities.

Moreover, the event did not conclude with the panel discussions; before and after the formal proceedings, attendees and speakers socialised over coffee, continuing conversations and forging connections on the issues at hand. This informal setting provided an invaluable opportunity for deeper engagement and understanding between candidates and the electorate.

Events like "Meet Your Future Policymakers" serve as catalysts for meaningful dialogue and democratic participation. By bridging the gap between candidates and citizens, particularly the youth demographic, such initiatives lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and responsive European democracy.

It is paramount to recognize that the outcomes of these elections will profoundly shape Europe's trajectory. Hence, there is an urgent need to empower all citizens, especially the youth, to actively participate in this democratic process. Their voices must not only be heard but also genuinely considered in shaping the policies and decisions that will define our continent's future.



Dialogue for Europe's future: Insightful conversations with EP candidate Bram Van Hecke

On Tuesday, April 30, 2024, the spirit of engagement and dialogue that began at STAM Europa on April 9 continued to flourish as the Intercultural Dialogue Platform (IDP) hosted a follow-up event.

This time, the setting was the intimate surroundings of IDP offices, providing the perfect backdrop for a candid conversation with Mr. Bram Van Hecke, a 28-year-old Belgian candidate running for the European Parliament under the EPP banner with the CD&V party. The event aimed to delve deeper into Mr. Van Hecke's vision for Europe and allowed for lively discussions between him and the audience.

The event series initiated earlier exemplified a critical effort to bridge the gap between aspiring European Parliament candidates and the vibrant voices of youth representatives. Titled "Meet Your Future Policymakers: Youth and EP Candidates in Dialogue," it underscored the importance of direct engagement in the lead-up to the pivotal 2024 European Elections. Now, as we gathered once again, the significance of such dialogue became even more pronounced.

The discussion commenced with Mr. Bram Van Hecke sharing his vision on two pressing European issues close to his heart. The first issue he passionately addressed was the challenge of reconciling the EU's Agricultural policy with its environmental protection goals. As the son of a farmer and a graduate in agro-engineering, Mr. Van Hecke emphasised the importance of safeguarding the environment while also ensuring that farmers are adequately consulted and supported. He highlighted the current inadequacies in handling this issue and stressed the necessity of finding solutions that balance environmental sustainability with the livelihoods of farmers. Transitioning to another crucial topic, Mr Van Hecke underscored the urgent need for European defence reform. He advocated for the formation of a unified European army by pooling resources, citing potential efficiency gains and enhanced geopolitical positioning for the EU.



Furthermore, the discussion delved into the rise of extreme right parties in Europe, particularly in Belgium, and the imperative for centre-right parties like Mr Van Hecke's own to counteract this trend. Youth representation in politics emerged as another critical theme, with Mr. Van Hecke advocating for increased participation and listening to the concerns of younger generations. As the former president of Groene Kring, an organisation advocating for young farmers in Flanders, he highlighted the importance of consultative bodies like theirs in amplifying youth voices and shaping policy.

In addition, topics such as youth mental health, affordable housing, the free market and imports were addressed, with all participants having at least one chance to ask questions and share their observations or concerns.

The final point discussed before closing the discussion centred around the necessity of internal checks-and-balances mechanisms to uphold integrity in politics. When prompted by a question from the moderator, Mr. Van Hecke addressed this issue, emphasising the importance of surrounding ourselves with a social circle ready to challenge us and, through his personal philosophy of up-or-out, stressed the need for periodic renewal of political actors, including the MEPs.

In essence, the dialogue with Mr. Van Hecke provided valuable insights into his policy priorities, strategic vision for Europe. His perspectives underscored the complex challenges facing the EU and the importance of proactive and collaborative approaches in addressing them.

As the evening drew to a close, we were reminded of the importance of events like these in shaping the future of our continent. The intimate setting of IDP offices facilitated not just a dialogue but a genuine exchange of ideas, aspirations, and concerns between Mr. Bram Van Hecke and the audience. It showcased the power of direct engagement in fostering understanding and driving meaningful change.



Youth in Dialogue with European Parliament Candidates in Brussels

In a dynamic and interactive setting, over 45 individuals gathered yesterday evening at STAM Europa on Rue d'Arlon for a panel discussion featuring candidates in the 2024 European Elections. Organized by Stand Up for Europe in collaboration with the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, the event titled “Youth and EP Candidates in Dialogue” aimed to foster direct engagement between European Parliament candidates and the youth.

The distinguished panel included Lucie Rousselle, Johan Langerock, and Olivia Ten Horn, each representing different political parties and bringing a wealth of experience from various sectors. Moderated by Sebastian Berchesan, Executive Secretary at Stand Up for Europe, the discussion provided a unique opportunity for attendees to delve into critical issues and bridge the gap between youth aspirations and the legislative agenda.



Critical Issues on the Agenda

The dialogue addressed pressing concerns facing the European Union, focusing on three key areas: Youth Engagement & Education, Environment & Climate, and Migration. Each candidate shared their perspectives and policy proposals, emphasising the need for proactive measures and inclusive strategies to tackle these challenges.

Lucie Rousselle, a city councillor in Ixelles representing MR (Renew Europe), highlighted the importance of integrating youth perspectives into policymaking processes. Drawing from her experience as a member of the Cabinet of EU Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders, Rousselle underscored the progress and achievements made in the three key areas during the current legislative term while also addressing the challenges that remain for the coming mandate. She emphasised the need to eliminate the unanimity vote to prevent initiatives from being blocked by a single Member State.

Johan Langerock, a policy advisor for the Greens/EFA, stressed the urgency of addressing climate change. Representing Groen (Greens), Langerock called for robust environmental policies and sustainable practices, advocating for appropriate taxation measures to achieve desired results not only in environmental terms but across other areas as well.

Olivia Ten Horn from Volt (Greens) brought information from her work in the education sector and made it clear that fundamental human rights must be respected in all circumstances and at all costs, identifying disrespect for human rights as a red line that must not be crossed. She stressed the need to strengthen and defend our democracies and their principles.

The interactive format allowed participants to ask questions, share remarks, and engage directly with the candidates. Young attendees expressed a keen interest in the candidates' campaign programs and their visions for the future of Europe. Beyond the three main issues discussed initially, participants raised questions during the Q&A session on topics such as mental health, integration, transnational public transport, democracy and the rule of law, as well as security and conflict resolution regarding the war in Ukraine and Gaza.

The event concluded with a networking drink, providing an opportunity for participants and candidates to continue the conversation in a more informal setting. The post-event discussions were as engaging as the panel itself, with many participants sharing their views with the candidates and posing additional questions.

Building a Responsive Political Environment for Youth

The event exemplified the commitment of Stand Up for Europe and the Intercultural Dialogue Platform to create platforms for active youth participation. By facilitating such events, these organisations aim to promote a more inclusive and responsive political environment where young citizens are empowered to contribute to shaping the future of the European Union.



Events like this are essential for improving understanding and collaboration between young people and policymakers. The dialogue at STAM Europa provided valuable insights and inspired a sense of responsibility and commitment among participants, promoting more active citizenship, especially among the youth. This is vital given that Belgium currently has the highest proportion of first-time voters in the EU for the upcoming European elections, with one in ten people having never voted before, along with the recent lowering of the voting age to 16.

1.3 Shaping the future of Europe - Deliberating with young people in the run-up to the European elections, European Parliament, May 6-7, 2024

On May 6-7, in a dynamic convergence of ideas and insights, young minds from across Europe gathered at the European Parliament's Info Hub for a two-day event aimed at shaping the future of Europe. Organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Platform in collaboration with partners from the Citizen Z project and Stand Up for Europe, and in partnership with the European Parliament, the event served as a platform for reflection, dialogue, and action in the run-up to the European elections.

Day 1: Navigating Democracy and Combating Misinformation

The inaugural day began with an opening address by Albrecht John, representing the Civil Society Outreach Unit at the EP, which co-hosted the event. John shared essential updates about the upcoming elections before introducing the newly released EU Elections 2024 Campaign Video. The impactful short film deeply resonated with participants, leaving them both moved and inspired. The program continued with a thought-provoking panel discussion titled "Navigating Democracy in Times of War and Peace." Esteemed professors Luca Tomini, Suzan Gibril and Martin Deleixhe from the Free University of Brussels led the discourse, delving into the complexities of democratic governance amidst global challenges. Following the presentations, participants eagerly exchanged with the speakers, probing detailed questions and actively sharing their perspectives.

Following the panel, attention turned to the pervasive issue of misinformation and fake news. A consortium of journalists, researchers, and media experts from Italy and the Netherlands spearheaded discussions on strategies to combat disinformation, emphasizing the critical role of media literacy and responsible journalism in safeguarding democratic processes. Ahmet Kaya, Michele Calamaio, Allesia Melchiorre, and Lorenzo di Stasi each shared relevant insights, real-life experiences, and project examples, providing practical illustrations and valuable reflections on disinformation, and fake news.

The day ended with an interactive workshop aimed at empowering youth voices. Participants collaborated on the launch of a youth-authored video campaign designed to inspire active engagement in the upcoming European Elections, underscoring the significance of youth participation in shaping the democratic landscape.



Day 2: Citizen Engagement and Celebrating Europe Day

Day two commenced with a workshop led by Sebastian Berchesan, representing Stand Up for Europe. During the session, participants actively collaborated on developing a European Citizens Initiative, highlighting the pivotal role of citizen-driven initiatives in promoting democratic engagement and accountability within the European Union. Divided into three groups, participants worked on formulating an initiative focused on the creation of a universal Public Transport Pass across the EU, thus contributing to enhancing mobility, promoting tourism and curbing pollution. Towards the conclusion of the session, participants shared brilliant and concrete ideas, reaffirming that collaboration and collective brainstorming can yield outstanding results.

Following a networking coffee break, the program resumed with a panel discussion highlighting the initial findings from the second round of deliberations in participant countries of the Citizen Z project, including Croatia, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Insights and recommendations from project partners offered valuable perspectives on youth visions regarding various topics, such as gender equality, social justice, mental health, affordable housing, and civic education. Preliminary findings revealed that young people are primarily interested in equality and justice issues, with their recommendations demonstrating a high level of insight and intuition, despite the common perception that young individuals lack experience.

The event concluded with an intellectual prize. As part of a Europe Day celebration, participants tested their knowledge and understanding of European history, values and institutions through an engaging European quiz, fostering a sense of common identity and belonging. While all participants were able to take the quiz, 3 volunteers from the audience competed for a few meaningful gifts from renowned authors like Stefan Zweig and Albert Camus. The quiz was a great opportunity to have fun and learn new things about Europe.

The 2-day event drew over 45 participants from a diverse array of countries, reflecting the multicultural fabric of Europe. Attendees came from Belgium, Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Slovakia, and the UK, underscoring the pan-European significance of the discussions and initiatives undertaken.

While the event took place on the premises of the European Parliament, its impact also reverberated through online engagement. The live-streamed sessions attracted numerous spectators, with an audience of over 200 viewers, demonstrating the resonance of the discussions on democracy, disinformation and citizen engagement.

The discussions at the European Parliament's Info Hub serve as a testament to the power of youth voices in offering fresh and innovative perspectives on the most complex challenges facing our continent. Through dialogue, collaboration, and proactive engagement, young Europeans are reaffirming their dedication to democratic principles and active citizenship, thus paving the way for a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous Europe. Their eagerness to contribute knows no bounds, provided they feel genuinely listened to and regarded as equal actors in their communities.



1.4 Democracy beyond elections - Deliberations with young people on common issues for European citizens, European Parliament, October 14-15, 2024

On October 14-15, the final event of the EU-funded Citizen Z project took place at the InfoHub of the European Parliament in Brussels, drawing participants from across Europe for a two-day exploration of democracy beyond elections. Organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Platform and the Citizen Z project partners, in collaboration with Stand Up for Europe and the European Parliament, the event centered on the theme "Democracy Beyond Elections – Deliberations with Young People on Common Issues for European Citizens."

The event aimed to move beyond traditional electoral participation, encouraging continuous civic engagement. It provided a space for young people to discuss and shape the future of European democracy, stressing that democracy is not only about voting but about participation in everyday life. With over 70 in-person participants from countries such as Belgium, Italy, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Estonia, Romania, Austria, and the Netherlands, along with a strong online audience, the event showcased youth-driven deliberative democracy practices. It highlighted the outcomes and recommendations from the two rounds of local deliberations with young people across Europe.

The opening speech was presented by Giulia Busolin, Project Manager from the Civil Society Outreach Unit of the European Parliament, who co-hosted the event. She emphasized key information about the Parliament's flagship initiative and provided insights from the recent European parliamentary elections.

The program kicked off with a workshop focused on reimagining youth centers across Europe. Facilitated by Silvestar Petrov, President of Udruga Prizma in Croatia, participants collaborated to design inclusive and empowering youth centers. Their recommendations will be presented to European policymakers, reflecting a shared vision of democratic spaces that engage youth in meaningful ways.

The afternoon continued with a panel discussion on the housing crisis, one of the most pressing issues faced by young Europeans. Speakers, including Teun Otte, Chairperson of ASVA Student Union in Amsterdam, Suzana Carp, European Policy Specialist, and Emiliano Rocchetti, Policy Officer at the International Union of Tenants, shared youth-driven solutions for tackling the housing shortage and ensuring affordable access to housing across Europe.

The second day of the event focused on integrating democracy into everyday life. A standout session centered on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) tool and the idea of a unique European public transport pass, building on insights from previous youth deliberations. Participants engaged with experts Vasiliki Mustakis, Participatory Democracy Manager at ECAS, and Tony Venables, Founder of the ECIT Foundation on European Citizens' Rights, to explore the strengths and limitations of the ECI and assess the feasibility of the transport pass initiative. The session also encouraged participants to develop a communication campaign to promote the proposal via the ECI, highlighting its potential to enhance mobility and connectivity across Europe.

Another key highlight was a panel on the role of diversity and inclusion in empowering youth, moderated by Dr. Cenap Mustafa Aydin and featuring experts such as Prof. Luigi di Santo, Professor of Philosophy and Law, Prof. Katiuscia Carnà, Head of Education and expert in Active and Global Citizenship, Marco Tarquinio, Member of the European Parliament, Domenico De Carlo, Youth Representative from the Youth Forum of Potenza, and Ludmila Malai, Coordinator of the Citizen Z project. The discussion emphasized how inclusive practices can foster resilience, innovation, and active participation, empowering young people from diverse backgrounds to shape Europe's democratic future.

The event concluded with an engaging quiz on the European Parliament, challenging participants' knowledge and offering the chance to win exciting books about Europe. The quiz was moderated by Youth Advocacy Members Nisa Yildirim and Esra Tekinkaya, adding an interactive and fun element to the closing session.

The final event of the Citizen Z Project reinforced that democracy must go beyond the ballot box, requiring ongoing engagement, particularly from young people, to address the pressing issues faced by European citizens. Expanding deliberative and participatory practices not only allows youth to bring valuable insights to policymakers, but also plays a crucial role in fostering their civic awareness. Through these processes, young people become more active participants in shaping society, gaining a deeper understanding of their civic responsibilities and the impact they can have on the future of Europe.

Ultimately, the event instilled a sense of shared responsibility among young people to actively shape their futures, highlighting the importance of civic participation in everyday life. As democracy evolves, it is crucial for youth to stay at the forefront, ensuring governance reflects the diverse and dynamic needs of European society. Democracy is not a given—it is something that must be fought for every day. We can never declare that democracy has prevailed and move on; it requires constant vigilance. Young people, in particular, must be deeply involved in these processes, as they are the stewards of democracy for both the present and future generations.



2. Intercultural Activities

2.1 Advisory Board Meetings

The establishment of the Advisory Board, foreseen under WP3, "Community Mobilisation and Network Establishment" was a significant achievement within the Protone Project. The board is composed of 10 members with different profiles, including professors of theological studies, professors of social sciences, faith leaders, journalists and security consultants.

The board is composed of the following members: Prof Paul Weller (Research Fellow in Religion and Society), Dr Liza Dumovich (Doctor in Anthropology), Abdelghafar Salim (Research Fellow Zentrum für Islamische Theologie Tübingen), Sandro di Castro (president of the Jewish Community of Rome), Aitor de la Morena (Episcopal Delegate of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Archdiocese of Madrid), Lina Kolesnikova (consultant in international relations, security, risk management, Brussel), Prof. Christoph Bultmann (professor of biblical studies, Erfurt), Dr. Arhan Kardas (Dr. Philosophy of Human Rights Law and Religion, Journalist), Uriel Perugia (Secretary General of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities), Zouhir Louassini (Rainews24 journalist, PhD in Semitic Studies). Information about the Advisory Board was published on the website and is available at the following address: <https://www.protoneproject.eu/advisoryboard>.

The members of the board have been selected carefully according to the criteria of (i) competence, (ii) diversity of religious background (iii) diversity of profiles. Indeed, the board's composition shows a balance of elements from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions, allowing the consortium to have all the necessary expertise required to work with respective communities and improve the quality of the activities in different contexts. The advisers have been performing the following tasks: (i) formulating suggestions and recommendations for improving the project; (ii) strengthening project narratives and giving visibility; (iii) facilitating consortium contacts with local communities; (iv) collecting and transferring concerns from local communities; (v) providing information on how people perceive the places of worship and their proximity.



In 2024, the advisory board participated in:

- Three online meetings in January, April and September 2024
- The first interfaith symposium on the 7th of February
- The Mid-term General Assembly in Berlin on the 8th of February 2024
- The second interfaith symposium in Madrid on the 19th of June 2024
- The third interfaith symposium in Rome on the 20th of November 2024

The board members proved to be particularly passionate about the issues related to the protection of PoWs and active in proposing measures to improve the project activities. In the consultations consortium partners had with the board, the advisers suggested which elements should the training and workshops of WP4 focus on, which specific communities are the most likely to be vulnerable to threats, and which measures can be implemented to train the target groups on detecting the signs of threat. Some members of the Advisory Board also started working on a recommendation report to be published at the end of the project.

2.2 Protone Mid-Term General Assembly, Berlin, 08/02/2024

The Protone Midterm General Assembly took place in Berlin and discussed the progresses of the project in relation to its objectives.

Massimo Ronco emphasised the role of interfaith dialogue in addressing security challenges. He discussed three theoretical frameworks for understanding the faith-conflict nexus: primordialism, instrumentalism, and moderate constructivism, each influencing the effectiveness of dialogue strategies. Dialogue strategies aim to delegitimise violence and foster cooperative conflict resolution. Challenges such as religious illiteracy and balancing openness with community safety were explored. The relevance of human security—a prevention-oriented, people-centered approach—was underscored.





May Tamimova highlighted research in Brussels, Berlin, and Rome, emphasising the diversity of security needs across religious communities. For example, Jewish communities prioritize protective measures, while Muslim communities often resist intrusive security. The sensitivity of security-related discussions and spatial challenges, such as exits in PoW, were noted. Partner organizations shared past and upcoming interfaith initiatives, including Iftar events, interfaith dinners, and cultural concerts. A key takeaway was the need for actionable plans and inclusive discussions involving civil society, academics, and security stakeholders.

The Protone Midterm General Assembly in Berlin included detailed discussions on management, administration, and dissemination strategies. A principle-based approach was emphasised for financial management, with reminders for partners to upload essential documentation to facilitate payments. Flexibility in budget allocation and adherence to eligibility criteria were highlighted as key points. Upcoming deliverables, including the progress report, training modules, and a guide to Places of Worship (PoW), were discussed, with an emphasis on timely submission and alignment with the project's quality assurance framework.

Efficient meeting management was also addressed, underlining the importance of thorough preparation, active participation, and effective follow-up communication. Dissemination strategies aimed at boosting the project's visibility were presented, focusing on impactful video creation that explores themes such as interfaith collaboration, religious freedom, and prejudice. Both social media and offline approaches were considered, with partners encouraged to tailor and share content across various platforms.

The advisory board discussions delved into the unique security concerns faced by different faith communities, opportunities for collaboration among PoW, and strategies for ensuring the sustainability of the interfaith council after the project concludes. Final remarks reiterated the importance of maintaining momentum through inclusive, actionable efforts.



2.3 Intercultural Iftar Dinner at the European Parliament, 19th of March 2024

The halls of the European Parliament echoed with the spirit of unity and diversity as distinguished guests and community leaders gathered for an intercultural iftar dinner aimed at fostering dialogue and understanding among different cultures and faiths.

The event, hosted by MEP Kathleen Van Brempt, unfolded into an evening of insightful speeches and meaningful conversations, all underscoring the vital significance of solidarity and unity in our contemporary world. MEP Kathleen Van Brempt, a prominent advocate for diversity and inclusion, kicked off the evening with a heartfelt welcome, setting the stage for an enriching exchange of ideas and experiences. Against the backdrop of numerous conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and Gaza, MEP Van Brempt stressed the imperative of gatherings like these, serving as poignant reminders of our shared humanity and the urgent need for empathy and understanding. She highlighted the privilege of having access to food, juxtaposing it with the stark reality faced by those torn apart by conflict, where such basic necessities are tragically scarce.

Among the keynote speakers was Fatima Altunbas-Kaya, President of the Intercultural Dialogue Platform (IDP), who highlighted the significance of promoting dialogue and cooperation among diverse communities. Her remarks underscored the crucial role of platforms like the intercultural Iftar dinner in fostering mutual respect and understanding.



Alexandre Thiry, Project Manager at Fedactio, brought his expertise in social cohesion to the forefront, highlighting the pivotal role of cultural exchange in uniting communities. He expressed sincere appreciation for the extensive support from participants and shed light on the transformative power of intercultural dialogue in creating cohesive societies.

Elisabeth Razesberger, President of the Governing Board at the Chapel for Europe, echoed similar sentiments, stressing the need for peace, justice, and interfaith dialogue in a world plagued by conflicts and divisions.

The evening also included insights from Massimo Ronco, Research & International Policy Analyst at IDP, who delved into the subject of interfaith dialogue, drawing from his experiences with the PROTONE project. He offered invaluable perspectives on the potential of dialogue and collaboration among diverse faith communities to foster greater harmony and understanding in our society.

As the sun set and the call to prayer resonated through the halls, guests gathered to break their fast together, symbolising the spirit of unity and solidarity that defines the iftar tradition.



The ambience was further enriched by the enchanting live music performance by Mevlut Akgungor and Robert Micin from the Makam Duo. Their mesmerising melodies transcended language and cultural barriers, uniting guests in harmony and joy.

Following the dinner, guests had the opportunity to hear from esteemed attendees representing various communities. Dr. Jack McDonald, speaking on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, highlighted the importance of compassion in building bridges between different religious traditions. Tiar Rkia, President of the European Women of Faith Network, emphasised the role of altruism in fostering mutual understanding. Jonathan Krauter from the House of One in Germany shared insights on the significance of humanity and interfaith cooperation in promoting peace and solidarity.

As the evening drew to a close, guests continued their conversations over dessert, exchanging ideas and forging new friendships. The event served as a powerful reminder of the importance of embracing diversity and living together in harmony.

In a world marked by growing polarization and division, the intercultural iftar evening at the European Parliament stood as a beacon of hope and solidarity, reaffirming the timeless values of solidarity, compassion, and mutual respect. As participants departed, they carried with them not only cherished memories but also a renewed commitment to building a more inclusive and harmonious world for future generations.



2.4 Video Production

The realisation of videos on the subject of the protection of places of worship plays an essential role in the dissemination campaign of the EU-co-funded Protone Project. A total number of eight videos was produced by Intercultural Dialogue Platform (Belgium), Fedactio (Belgium), Arco Forum (Spain), and Istituto Tevere (Italy). The video production pursued a specific approach which distinguishes it from most of the videos which are usually produced for the general public in this area. While many videos are created with the aim of providing a toolkit of recommendations on what to do in case of an attack on a PoW and of increasing awareness about early warning signs in behaviour, the videos produced by the Protone team focused mostly on giving space and voice to individuals whose experience in the field can generate both awareness of the potential threats but also suggestions and proposal on how to improve the security posture of these spaces.

The attention to the people who use PoWs in the videos reflects the ethnographic and community-centric approach of the project, which contextualises security issues within the broad social contexts and actors. Consequently, the interview turned out to be the most common format for the videos, though not the only one. The individuals who were interviewed or displayed in the videos were accurately selected to ensure that the diversity of faith communities and backgrounds was sufficiently represented. The diversity of expertise was another crucial criterion that was taken into account to maximise the utility of the video for the audience, providing a comprehensive security framework. For this purpose, the videos included a wide range of interviewees, including faith leaders, heads of PoWs, academicians and security experts.

The target group of the videos was multi-layered. At the general level, the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities constituted the first target group, as the project relies on the collaboration between the different religious communities to achieve higher levels of security. The second target group was represented by religious leaders, volunteers, and heads of the local communities' places of worship. The third group consisted of people who attended places of worship either daily or occasionally, as well as members of the general public.

Among the videos' objectives were: raising awareness, stimulating activism and mobilisation of faith communities, increasing international engagement, highlighting best practices in the field, and encouraging dialogue between faith communities themselves and between faith communities and non-believers.

The first video, Safeguarding Places of Worship: Direct Voices from Faith Leaders and Academicians, comprehensively explores the diverse threats faced by places of worship across Europe through interviews with experts. Featuring perspectives from academicians and faith leaders, the video examines the role of security measures, technology, and interfaith dialogue in addressing these threats while navigating the delicate balance between protection and the spiritual sanctity of worship.

The second video, *Praying, Protecting, Peace'ing: Unveiling the Hidden History of Rome's Temple on the Tiberian Island*, features an interview with Sandro Di Castro, a prominent figure in Rome's Jewish community. It explores the historical, cultural, and spiritual significance of the Tiber Island synagogue, integrating historical context, personal reflections, and a persuasive call to action to protect places of worship, irrespective of religious affiliation.

The third video, titled *Sacred Spaces, Shared Heritage: Protecting Places of Worship in Spain*, highlights the importance of protecting Spain's places of worship—historical and cultural landmarks which symbolise unity and shared heritage. It explores challenges such as vandalism, neglect, and environmental threats, particularly in rural areas, while showcasing efforts by local governments, NGOs and interfaith collaborations to safeguard these spaces. Through inspiring visuals, the video emphasises preserving not just buildings but Spain's diverse cultural identity for future generations.

The fourth video, *Security, Technology, and Interfaith Solutions to the Protection of Places of Worship*, features an interview with the faith community representative, Stijn Ledegen, addressing the challenges and opportunities surrounding places of worship, including their social perception, security measures, and the role of interfaith dialogue in fostering inclusive communities. Ledegen emphasises the need for stronger law enforcement responses to aggression against these spaces and highlights the transformative impact of interfaith initiatives in breaking stereotypes and building solidarity. He advocates for the ethical use of technology to enhance safety and explores the ripple effects of global geopolitical tensions on European religious communities.

The fifth video, *Heartfelt Interviews with Religious Leaders on the Art of Building Dialogue - Sainte-Suzanne Church, Schaerbeek (Brussels)*, features Paul Abou Naoum, priest and interreligious dialogue coordinator within the Belgian Catholic Church, and Florence Verbrugghen, co-responsible for the Kerkebeek pastoral unit, discussing the importance of protecting places of worship and fostering interfaith dialogue. Their insights, part of a broader project, contribute to the publication "Guide to Brussels' Places of Worship" and highlight the role of faith communities in promoting understanding and collaboration.

The second video of the *Interviews with Religious Leaders on the Art of Building Dialogue*, presents Bernd Günter, priest of the Chapel for Europe, and Sabina Gonzalez, program manager and fundraising coordinator. The video, part of the "Guide to Brussels' Places of Worship", highlights the importance of places of worship as integral to community well-being. It emphasises the need for protection, recognition, and the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, aligning with the Protone Project's mission to raise awareness about these vital social spaces.

The seventh video, titled Embracing Diversity and Harmony in Torpignattara, shows the Imam of the Torpignattara Muslim Centre, offering his perspective on the protection and safety of places of worship. The video discusses the challenges faced by Muslim communities in securing mosques while promoting interfaith harmony. It highlights key themes such as community safety, security measures and the imam's vision for fostering understanding between faiths.



2.5 Interfaith Council for Peace and Security in Europe

The Interfaith Council is an initiative aimed at enhancing the security and protection of places of worship, fostering interfaith dialogue, promoting mutual understanding, sharing best practices, and coordinating efforts to build a sustainable network that ensures the safety, resilience, and harmony of all religious spaces. The Interfaith Council consists of representatives from the major religions present in Europe, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Baha'i. The members will meet online every six months after the completion of the project (February 2025). Each meeting will be chaired by a mixture of inter-religious, civil society and secular academic institutions: Arco Forum, Fedactio, House of One, Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Istituto Tevere, Religions for Peace Italy, Stiftung Dialog und Bildung and University of Leiden. The meetings serve the exchange of information between the members and the coordination of activities contributing to the objectives listed in the previous section.



The Interfaith Council for Peace and Security in Europe consists of the following members:

- **Paul Abou Naoum:** of Lebanese origin, holds degrees in Political Science and Theology. As the priest for three Brussels parishes, he serves as a bridge between communities, fostering dialogue and understanding across cultural and religious divides. In his role as an advisor to the Conference of Belgian Bishops on relations with the Arab-Muslim world, he has shown remarkable skill in building connections and promoting mutual respect. His commitment to coexistence is further demonstrated by his founding of a multi-faith school in a conflict-ridden area of Lebanon.

- **Sabina Gonzàles Villas:** She was born in Zaragoza, Spain, and raised between Barcelona and Valencia. She holds a Master's degree in Communication Sciences (Journalism) from the Universidad Politècnica de Valencia. Sabina has worked in various media, including TV, radio, and news agencies, as well as in logistics and purchasing for international food-related companies. In 2015, she joined the Chapel for Europe in Brussels as a Communication Manager. Later, driven by a personal interest in interfaith dialogue, she pursued specialized training in this area and took on responsibility for this topic at the Chapel. This year, Sabina will begin her Ph.D. at the University of Fribourg's Faculty of Theology, under the supervision of Prof. Mariano Delgado, focusing on the topic: "How Interfaith Dialogue Can Help Reinforce EU Democracies."
- **Eva Ruth Palmieri:** She is an Interpreter and Translator, has taught Professional Translation in the Bachelor's Degree Course in Language Mediation at SSML S.Pio V. She has deepened her studies on religions and cultures at the department for interreligious studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University where, at the Cardinal Bea. centre, she is currently completing a Licentiate in Judaic Studies She contributed as a journalist to numerous journals on the subject of dialogue, including for almost ten years the Japanese English-language journal on interreligious dialogue 'Dharma World' (Rissho Kose-Kai). Former member of the Advisory Board of the international organisation for dialogue KAICIID, former councillor of UCEI - Union of Italian Jewish Communities. She has worked in the press office of the Israeli Embassy to the Holy See, currently serving as National Secretary of Religions for Peace, Italy. She is a member of the European Women of Faith Network EWFN, elected member of the Consulta of Rome's Jewish Community.
- **Prof. Genti Kruja:** is a lecturer of Sociology of Religion, Intercultural and Interfaith Communication and Interreligious Dialogue at Bedër University College. He is a member of the Trustee Board of the University and the Secretary General of the Inter-Religious Council of Albania. He has participated in and contributed to many international conferences on Education, Freedom of Religion, and Interfaith Dialogue. He is the author of a lot of research papers and book chapters published by leading publishing houses as well as the author of the books "Albanians Facing the Challenges of Interfaith Understanding" and "History of Interfaith Dialogue". In 2021 he was elected as a member of the European Union External Action Service (GERIS). On February 15, 2024, he was elected as a President of European National Interreligious Bodies (ENIB) in Religions for Peace, Europe.

- **Dr. Carola Roloff:** she has been a Visiting Professor for Buddhism at the Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg, since 2018. She holds a PhD in Philosophy, specializing in Tibetan and Buddhist Studies. From 2013 to 2018, she was part of the European research project *Religion and Dialogue in Modern Societies*. From 2010 to 2017, she led a DFG-funded research project on Buddhist nuns' ordination. Her current focal points include dialogic theology and practice, intra-Buddhist dialogue, and the recognition processes of Buddhist minorities in Europe.
- **Reverend Dr. theol. h.c. Thomas Wipf** (Zurich Switzerland): he is the former President of the European Council of Religious Leaders ECRL and of Religions for Peace Europe RfP E. He studied Protestant theology at the Universities of Basel, Münster (Westphalia) and Zurich. After his time as a Reformed parish pastor, he was President of the Swiss Reformed Church, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE and member of the Presidium of the Conference of European Churches CEC. He was also the founder of the Swiss Council of Religions and served as its first President. For his services to European Protestantism, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Protestant theology from the Universities of Münster (Westphalia) and Debrecen (Hungary).
- **Rev Dario Doshin Girolami:** Abbot of Centro Zen L'Arco - Zenmon J in Rome. He is a zen buddhist priest trained at San Francisco Zen Center and a teacher recognized by the Japanese Soto Shu. He studied under the guidance of Zen masters including Thich Nhat Hanh, Tenshin Roshi - Reb Anderson and Maezumi Roshi. He also received the Avalokiteshvara initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He holds a Laurea degree in Indian and Eastern Religions and Philosophy. Former adjunct Professor of "Zen" at the John Cabot University of Rome, and of "World Religions" at the American University of Rome, he now teaches at the Faculty of Psychology of Sapienza University. He leads regular meditation courses at the Rebibbia Prison of Rome and he is the founder and chair of the European Buddhist Union Network of Buddhist Chaplains. He is co-honorary president for Buddhism of Religions for Peace Italy. He is the Author of the book: Lo Zen Soto e I koan - La Via della Presenza di Spirito.
- **Father Aitor de la Morena:** Born 9 May 1984 at Madrid (Spain). Roman Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Madrid since 11 years ago. Bachelor in Theology in Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso (2012). Master in Classic and Christian Literature in Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso (2018). PhD in progress in Sophia University Institute (Florence, Italy). In Trinitarian Ontology. Currently Delegate of the Archbishop for Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue. Teaching Religions and New Religious Movements in Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso.

- **Ranjit P. Kaur:** Born in a Sikh family in India, grew up & studied there. Living in Germany since about last 40 years. Worked as a software engineer in the public sector in Berlin. Since many years, voluntarily cooperating as a spokeswoman for Sikh Gurdwara Berlin with many interfaith groups in the city. I am one of the founding members of the NGO “Berliner Forum of Religions” and chairperson of its registered association. This association is financed by Berlin Senate. I am an active member of its various groups like “Long night of religions”, “Religious dialog for children & young persons”. Since last two years, am also actively participating in “Metropolitan Regions Project”, a cooperation project of “Religions for Peace Europe e.V. “ and Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion.
- **Prof Em. Dr. Paul Weller:** He is a Christian in the Baptist tradition. He lives mainly in Germany, but also the UK. He is a Non-Stipendiary Research Fellow in Religion and Society and Associate Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, where he is an Associate Member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion; Visiting Fellow of the Research Institute for Peace, Security and Social Justice, Coventry University; and Emeritus Professor, University of Derby. His publications include Time for a Change:Reconfiguring Religion, State and Society (2005); co-authored Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality: Britain in Global Contexts (2013); and Hizmet in Transitions: European Development of a Turkish Muslim Inspired Movement (2022). He conducted research (2016-2019) for the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE on Classroom Challenges for Teaching About and Addressing Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region. He is a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council Peer Review College member and has been Expert reviewer for the European Commission’s Research Executive Agency, and its Directorate General Justice and Consumer Rights.
- **Prof. Antonio Angelucci:** He is member of the Scientific Council of the Research Centre “Religion, Law and Economy in the Mediterranean Area” (REDESM), University of Insubria. Member of the College of the Doctoral School of Law and Human Sciences, University of Insubria. Member of the Scientific Council of the FILIS Master, University of Insubria. Member of the Inter-University Research Centre “International Forum Democracy & Religions” (FIDR). Former Member of the Working Group for the survey on the definition of anti-Semitism approved by the IHRA at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.
- **Shivaraja Deva – Giambruno Legnaioli:** Born on August 21, 1948, he has been interested in Hinduism since his youth. Yoga practitioner and teacher, he also delves into Ayurveda. In 2001 he joined the Italian Hindu Union - Sanatana Dharma Sangha, where over the years he held meetings, conferences and events especially in the Lazio area.

He represents Hinduism in the Interreligious Roundtable of Rome, contributing, among other things, to the creation of the Interreligious End-of-Life Manifesto. He has participated for years in the meetings of the Board of Directors of Religions for Peace Italia as a representative of Hinduism, offering his contribution to the development of a sincere and increasingly productive dialogue.

- **Jana Baena** (Spanish name Guadalupe de la Concepción, Madrid 1981): She is a conservative jewish member of the Bet-El Masorti Community in Madrid. Since March'24 she belongs to the synagogue's Board of Directors as Secretary, and also participates in the Funding and Security Departments. She has some notions regarding situational awareness, risk matrices, safety and security due to her experience as a drone pilot license instructor, as well as for having obtained a private pilot license in Spain. She currently works as a private teacher for students with special needs like attention deficits, hyperactivity, self regulation issues and others.



On November 21, 2024, Religions for Peace (RfP) Italia organised the institutive meeting of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Security in Rome. The Constituent Meeting of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Security emphasised the importance of interfaith dialogue in fostering peace and security. Key speakers highlighted the evolving security landscape in Europe, noting a rise in targeted attacks on places of worship. The meeting featured representatives from various faith traditions, including Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, and Baha'i, who shared their perspectives on peace and security. The Interfaith Council's founding charter was presented, emphasising local and Pan-European collaboration to address security challenges and promote mutual understanding and respect among faith communities. The Constituent Meeting of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Security featured discussions on the importance of interfaith dialogue and peace initiatives. Key speakers included a European Union member, a Roman Catholic priest, and various religious leaders from diverse backgrounds. They emphasised the need for interfaith cooperation, the protection of places of worship, and the promotion of mutual respect and understanding. Specific issues such as the rise in hate crimes, the impact of the October 7th events, and the challenges of religious prejudice were highlighted. The meeting underscored the urgency of these efforts to foster peace and coexistence, especially for the new generation.



3. Other Activities

3.1 Partnership Agreement with the European Parliament

In February 2024, Dialogue Platform signed a *Partnership Agreement* with the European Parliament, establishing a long-term collaboration aimed at strengthening civic engagement and democratic participation. A key focus of this partnership was supporting the **#UseYourVote** campaign and the **Together.eu** initiative in the lead-up to the *2024 European Elections (EE2024)*, held from **6-9 June 2024**.

These efforts aimed to raise awareness and encourage active participation among EU citizens, employers, workers, community leaders, and industry organizations, emphasizing the importance of voting in the European Elections.

As part of this collaboration, Dialogue Platform played a proactive role in amplifying the campaign's outreach by:

- Sharing and promoting official campaign materials that underscored the significance of participating in the European Elections.
- Providing timely and accurate information about the 2024 elections through its social media channels, newsletters, and other communication platforms.

In line with the 2024 Partnership Agreement, Dialogue Platform expanded its involvement beyond communication activities by organizing three events at the European Parliament's Infocenter in Brussels. These events were co-hosted by the EP's Civil Society Outreach Unit and aimed to foster dialogue on civic participation and democratic values. Additionally, Dialogue Platform actively participated in several events organized by the European Parliament's Partnership Team, further contributing to the collective efforts to engage citizens and promote democratic involvement across Europe.





3.2 Certificate of Recognition from EP President Roberta Metsola

As active partner in the ongoing communication campaign launched by the European Parliament in view of the forthcoming EU elections, IDP received its official "Certificate of Recognition" during a ceremony held on 6 May at the European Parliament (EP) in the presence of President Roberta Metsola.

Before the Metsola's speech, a short documentary was screened to participants to remind Europeans why the Union's ideals around peace and democracy are fundamental. It is a joint effort to motivate European citizens to exercise their democratic right to vote.

President Roberta Metsola emphasised fostering voter engagement, safeguarding democratic values, and combating misinformation. She highlighted the importance of collaboration among European institutions, media, and civil society to ensure free and fair elections.



3.3 Dialogue Summit 2024, Belgium, 22 – 25 May 2024



At the #DialogueSummit in Belgium between 22 and 25 May 2024, over 150 dialogue practitioners and civil society representatives from more than 40 countries gathered in the Namur region. They exchanged ideas and inspired each other through social projects they carry to promote a culture of living together in peace.

Throughout the four-day event, participants delved into a wide range of topics. These included intercultural and interfaith dialogue, civic engagement, youth participation, and gender equality. In the workshops, participants shared their perspectives on environmental issues and the role of civil society, including the civil society in contributing to the solution of these societal challenges.

In 15 workshop sessions, participants discussed how to prevent intolerance and polarisation and the role of dialogue in combating racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, xenophobia, and sexism in their respective countries. On the summit's last day, participants discussed the need to double the peace-building efforts in local and international contexts.



3.4 Youth Advocacy Team

In September 2023, IDP, in collaboration with Fedactio, launched the **Youth Advocacy Team** to foster youth involvement in the planning and development of events targeted at young audiences. The purpose of this initiative is to consult with young people on upcoming activities, ensuring their input is integrated into the creation of event agendas that resonate with their interests and priorities. By giving youth a platform to shape the content and structure of these events, IDP aims to make these initiatives more engaging and relevant for younger generations.

As part of this effort, in 2024, IDP held four youth consultations, engaging members of the Youth Advocacy Team in productive discussions about the future direction of key activities, particularly the Deliberative Democracy Days. These consultations were conducted across a variety of formats: three in-person sessions and one held online. The dates of these consultations were as follows: February 20, April 24, June 24, and September 19, 2024.

During each session, young participants actively contributed valuable insights, ideas, and recommendations for the upcoming events. Their feedback focused on several key aspects, including the preliminary event program, content themes, formats, and even specific details like the room setup. This collaborative process allowed participants to suggest modifications and refinements, ensuring the events better align with their preferences and needs.

The impact of these consultations was significant, with youth input being fully integrated into the program of the Deliberative Democracy Days. This approach not only empowered young people by giving them a sense of ownership over the event planning process but also ensured that the final outcomes were more relevant, dynamic, and engaging for youth audiences. By involving young people at every stage, IDP is fostering a more inclusive and youth-centered approach to civic engagement and event development.



3.5 Participation in the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 12 March 2024

In 2024, between March 10 and March 22, the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women convened in New York. Over the span of two weeks, the event hosted hundreds of panels and conferences, featuring esteemed speakers from across the globe and drawing a participation of at least 10,000 attendees.

On March 12, as part of the NGO CSW68 Forum, the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, in partnership with the Journalists and Writers Foundation, organized a dynamic panel discussion delving into the theme: Transforming Tomorrow: Amplifying Youth Voices to Foster Gender Equality. Held at the Church Center for the UN in New York, the event brought together a diverse array of voices dedicated to dismantling barriers to gender equality.

The panel aimed to shed light on the intricate factors involved in achieving gender equality, acknowledging its multifaceted nature and underscoring the inherent complexity embedded within societal structures, historical biases, and cultural norms. Furthermore, it sought to spotlight young people as paramount drivers and allies in the pursuit of gender equality, while also sharing good practices in youth advocacy.

The panelists stressed the imperative need for a comprehensive and sustained effort to address the issue of gender equality, contemplating strategies that could yield long-term results, with particular emphasis on the active involvement of youth as agents of change and influential advocates for equality.



Ali Mustafa, Civil Society Representative to the United Nations Department of Global Communications and a long-time advocate for youth empowerment and human rights, emphasized the importance of meaningful participation of youth leaders in decision-making mechanisms. Leveraging over 15 years of experience, Mr. Mustafa highlighted the transformative power of youth-driven initiatives and their indispensable contribution to advancing policy reforms aimed at achieving gender equality.

Hayrunnisa Kalac, Project Manager at the Alliance for Shared Values, echoed Mustafa's sentiments, emphasizing the crucial role of young leaders in advancing gender equality. Through highlighting exemplary practices and successful projects, Ms. Kalac underscored the imperative to empower emerging young leaders to enact positive change within their communities.

Fatima Altunbas-Kaya, Project Manager at the Federation for Global and Democratic Organizations (FMDO), shed light on the resilience of newcomer girls and young women as they navigate gender-based challenges in host countries. In her presentation, Ms. Altunbas-Kaya shared compelling narratives that exemplified the potency of empowerment amidst multifaceted obstacles, drawing from a spectrum of programs and projects she has spearheaded in Belgium in recent years.

Ludmila Malai, EU Project Manager at the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, concluded the panel discussion with a reflective analysis of youth advocacy for gender equality as a quasi-organic phenomenon. Leveraging her expertise in European Projects, particularly her role in managing the Citizen Z project, Ms. Malai underscored the inherent evolution of youth movements in catalyzing societal change towards gender equality. Drawing from preliminary findings gathered through extensive consultations with young individuals from diverse EU countries, she presented emerging trends, particularly regarding the topics that young people deem of critical importance. Based on the compiled data, it became evident that youth considers gender equality, human rights, and justice as absolute priorities demanding immediate attention.

All in all, the event, which attracted over 80 participants, exemplified a concerted effort to amplify youth voices and champion gender equality on a global scale. Centered on inclusivity, economic empowerment, mental health, and cultural perceptions, the panel offered a nuanced exploration of the challenges and opportunities in the pursuit of gender equality. It underscored the imperative for holistic solutions with a focus on empowering young people to take center stage in driving progress. In their closing remarks, the esteemed speakers reiterated the need for sustained collaboration and collective action in dismantling barriers to gender equality and underscored the significant potential of youth voices in advancing this critical cause.

The event concluded on an optimistic note, with attendees reaffirming their commitment to cultivating a more inclusive and equitable world for future generations.

The panel discussion served as a source of inspiration, reigniting a sense of urgency and determination in the persistent pursuit of gender equality. Empowering young voices to champion the principles of justice, equality, and human rights continues to be a primary objective in achieving this collective aspiration.



4. Publications and Dissemination

4.1 Position Paper on European Elections 2024

In June, in light of the 2024 European Parliament elections, the Intercultural Dialogue Platform (IDP) issued a statement outlining its expectations for policymakers and the European Parliament and calling for Stronger commitment to Democracy, Human Rights and Social Inclusion Following 2024 European Elections. As a civil society organization dedicated to promoting human rights, social inclusion, and democratic values, IDP has called for concrete actions in several key areas essential to building a more inclusive, fair, and democratic Europe.

IDP's position paper highlights **seven core areas** of concern:

- **Democracy:** IDP urges policymakers to safeguard the rule of law, ensure transparency and accountability, and promote free and fair elections. The platform also advocates for the expansion of deliberative practices such as citizens' assemblies and participatory forums, alongside measures to bridge the citizen-politician gap.
- **Human Rights:** The IDP calls for enhanced protections for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants while combating discrimination in all forms. Additionally, it emphasises the need to support independent media and the freedom of expression, alongside a strong commitment to addressing inequality and extremism.
- **Gender Equality:** IDP advocates for gender quotas, equal pay, better access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and stronger measures to combat gender-based violence and discrimination, particularly in political and employment settings.
- **Social Inclusion and Cohesion:** The platform stresses the importance of equal access to education, healthcare, and employment, particularly for vulnerable groups. It also calls for stronger social safety nets and policies that promote diversity and inclusion.
- **Combating Intolerance:** IDP emphasizes the need for policies addressing racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and hate speech, while fostering greater public awareness and education on these issues.
- **Civic Engagement:** The platform advocates for increased collaboration with civil society organizations and the promotion of citizen participation through public forums, online consultations, and youth empowerment initiatives.
- **Intercultural Dialogue:** IDP calls for continued support for cross-cultural exchange programs and policies promoting mutual respect, empathy, and interfaith harmony across the EU.

In its statement, IDP urges European Parliament members and policymakers to advance these issues, ensuring that the European Union remains a beacon of democracy, inclusivity, and respect for human rights. By addressing these concerns, IDP believes Europe can better reflect the diversity and values of its citizens in a rapidly changing world.

To consult the full version, visit :

<https://dialogueplatform.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Expectations-from-Policymakers-and-the-European-Parliament.pdf>

4.2 Sakharov Prize Ceremony

Every year since 1988, the European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize to individuals or groups who have dedicated their lives to defending human rights and freedom of thought. This year, the EP awarded the 2024 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Venezuelan opposition leaders María Corina Machado and President-elect Edmundo González Urrutia, recognizing their unwavering commitment to restoring democracy in Venezuela. Dialogue Platform, along with other civil society organizations, took part in the Award Ceremony on December 17 in Strasbourg. The event brought together laureates, finalists, and CSOs to discuss shared values and strategies for promoting democracy, peacebuilding, and human rights worldwide.

On December 18, following the Award Ceremony, several civil society representatives had the opportunity to engage directly with the finalists through a series of panel discussions. The day began with a panel on Women as Protagonists in Peacebuilding. The First Panel: Women as Protagonists in Peacebuilding

The First Panel: Women as Protagonists in Peacebuilding

The panel featured Pascale Chen from Women Wage Peace and Reem Al Hajajra from Women of the Sun, both emphasizing the vital role of women in peacebuilding efforts.

Chen discussed Women Wage Peace, an Israeli movement founded in 2014 after the Gaza War, which has since grown to over 44,000 members. Their activities include parliamentary advocacy, public marches, vigils, and conflict-resolution webinars. Similarly, Women of the Sun, an independent Palestinian organization, works to amplify women's voices in political and peace processes.

Al Hajajra highlighted the challenges women face in conflict zones, stating, "War enters our homes without permission, and us, women and children, are the first victims. But today, we are not only victims; we are protagonists in peacebuilding." Both women concluded with a unified message: "A mutual agreement between Israel and Palestine is the only way to achieve peace."



The Second Panel: Fighting Corruption and Advocating Human Rights

The second panel featured Zhala Bayramova, the daughter of Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu, an Azerbaijani academic and anti-corruption activist currently under house arrest for his efforts to expose government corruption. Bayramova shared the personal sacrifices made by her family in the fight for transparency and justice in Azerbaijan.

She remarked, *“Injustice thrives in the shadows; therefore, we must shine a light on it,”* urging global institutions to act. Bayramova stressed the international significance of Azerbaijan’s human rights crisis, stating, *“Fighting against corruption and for fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan has to be a global action.”* Her call for global solidarity underscored the worldwide struggle against authoritarianism.



The Last Panel: The Democracy Crisis in Venezuela

The final panel focused on the ongoing crisis in Venezuela, with María Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urrutia, the 2024 laureates, standing as symbols of the Venezuelan people's resilience. Represented by her daughter Ana Corina Sosa, Machado addressed the audience remotely due to safety threats. Sosa emphasized the urgent need for international collaboration to bring an end to the Maduro regime, stating, *"Dictatorship murders people."*

President-elect González urged civil society organizations to act as mediators between citizens and institutions, stating, *"Venezuela's mission is everyone's mission."* Both laureates stressed that while the Sakharov Prize is an important recognition, the fight for democracy and against corruption in Venezuela is far from complete.

Interactive Workshop: Advocacy Tools for Global Change

The event concluded with an interactive workshop where human rights experts and civil society representatives discussed how to leverage the Sakharov Prize for mobilizing public opinion, strengthening advocacy campaigns, and engaging policymakers. The participants shared innovative strategies to amplify the voices of activists and forge global alliances to combat repression and human rights violations.

The 2024 Sakharov Prize ceremony reaffirmed the European Parliament's commitment to human rights, freedom, and democracy.

For IDP, this experience was profoundly valuable as it reinforced our mission to advocate for justice, equality, and the protection of fundamental rights. The event celebrated the interconnected global struggles for justice and equality, aligning with our efforts to amplify marginalized voices. By highlighting women's leadership in peacebuilding and activists' work against corruption and authoritarianism, the ceremony provided inspiration and strengthened our determination to continue driving positive change in our communities.



4.3 Interviews

As part of our efforts to promote and disseminate the objectives and activities of the CitizenZ Project, IDP conducted a series of interviews throughout the year. These interviews served as a platform to engage with key stakeholders, gather insights, and foster dialogue on critical topics related to the project's goals.

Interview Categories

European Parliament Members (MEPs)

IDP engaged with current members of the European Parliament to discuss their perspectives and gather input for the CitizenZ Project. Notable interviews included Alicia Homs Ginel, Marco Tarquinio and Brando Benifei.

European Parliament Candidates

To capture the views of emerging voices and potential policymakers, interviews were conducted with candidates for the European Parliament, including Bram Vandeninden, Suzana Carp, Chelsea Nshuti and others.

Experts and Academics

A diverse range of academics and subject-matter experts contributed valuable insights into the themes explored by the CitizenZ Project. Key contributors included Dr. Cenap Mustafa Aydin, Prof. Jean-Benoît Pilet and Dr. Rys Farthing.

Gender Experts

Recognizing the importance of gender perspectives, IDP interviewed leading gender experts to ensure inclusivity in the CitizenZ Project. These experts included Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Joanna Maycock and Sana Afouaiz.



5. European Projects

5.1 Citizen Z

Coordinator

01.11.2022 – 31.10.2024

The Citizen Z project (2022-2024, funded under the CERV program of the EC) aims to respond to the European Commission's priorities outlined in the European Democracy Action Plan and the EU Citizenship Report 2020. Its primary focus is to enhance civic engagement and democratic participation among EU citizens, particularly youth, through the use of deliberative methods.

By actively involving young people in decision-making processes, the project seeks to stimulate their interest in civic and political life. Citizen Z aligns with the European Committee of the Regions' 2019 call for a "cultural change" toward experimenting with deliberative democracy tools at the local level, emphasizing that the most authentic democratic participation emerges from the immediate, local contexts closest to citizens. To address potential disinterest in European issues at the local level, the project applies a "glocalisation" methodology, allowing participants to examine European issues from a local perspective and frame local challenges within the broader European context.

Special attention is given to the principle of intersectionality, ensuring the inclusion of groups often underrepresented in civic processes, such as migrants, disadvantaged communities, women, and girls. Preliminary work, such as pre-consultations, is conducted to identify and engage these groups effectively.

A multi-stakeholder approach is central to the project, facilitating genuine dialogue among diverse groups (academia, youth representatives, civil society organisations, policymakers, practitioners, trainers, and facilitators, etc.) and ensuring that the project's findings—particularly youth recommendations from the two rounds of deliberations held in Belgium, Italy, Croatia, and the Netherlands—are impartial, relevant, and actionable for policymakers. The project's innovative design combines deliberative processes with a multi-territorial approach, creating a spillover effect between local and European levels of civic participation.

The first round of deliberations centers on addressing local issues, while the second round contextualizes these local concerns within broader EU-level challenges and explores how EU policymakers address them.



5.2 Protone Project

Coordinator

01.03.2023 - 28.02.2025

PROTONE is an EU co-funded Project which has been proposed in the context of the growing need for greater guarantees of protection of public spaces, in particular places of worship, due to the increasing wave of terrorist attacks and intolerant acts on European soil.

The project is based on cooperation between different faith-based organisations from three Abrahamic religions, with the aim of overcoming the differences between their respective security cultures and improving their ability to address security threats through a coordinated response.

Protone adopts a holistic and comprehensive approach that requires taking into account all the different aspects related to the buildings and communities to be protected, including a pluralistic definition of threats that should be extended to non-violent and non-terrorist acts as well including verbal assaults, vandalism, burglary and arson.

At the methodological level, the project is mainly based on qualitative and ethnographic research, which was considered the most appropriate for mapping the sources of threats in the vicinity of places of worship and preparing an adequate response from religious communities. Furthermore, the methodology is enriched by the integration of the Vulnerability Assessment Model, which allows faith-based organisations to detect vulnerabilities in places of worship that expose them to external attacks. The target group is multi-layered and consists of Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, religious leaders, volunteers heads of places of worship, visitors and finally, the general public in the communication and dissemination phase. The consortium is composed of 8 organisations from Southern Europe (Italy and Spain), Western Europe (Belgium and the Netherlands) and Central Europe (Germany)



6. EU Project Development

6.1. MinDS Horizon Europe Proposal

As part of its commitment to advancing deliberative practices and democratic innovation, IDP, in partnership with UCL (Belgium) and multiple universities and research centers from Denmark, the UK, Switzerland, France, and Spain, developed and submitted a 3-year project proposal titled MInDs (Multilingual and Inclusive Citizen Deliberations Solution) under the Horizon Europe Program.

The MInDs project aims to advance democratic participation in multilingual contexts by combining AI technologies with human expertise. It leverages cutting-edge language technologies, including speech-to-text, machine translation, text-to-speech, and large-language models, along with a customized simultaneous interpreting platform. Together, these tools facilitate seamless communication among citizens from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The project focuses on integrating and optimizing these technologies to create a comprehensive system specifically designed for multilingual citizen deliberation.

At its core, MInDs seeks to foster more inclusive and representative democratic processes by overcoming language barriers. Through interdisciplinary research and user-centered design, the project aspires to deliver a platform that not only enhances the efficiency of multilingual communication but also respects cultural nuances and promotes mutual understanding among participants. By doing so, MInDs aims to make deliberative democracy more accessible and engaging for a broader segment of society.

The project received a highly positive evaluation, scoring well above the required threshold. However, due to funding constraints, it was not selected for funding. Recognizing the importance and potential impact of the initiative, the project consortium has committed to reapplying in the coming year and is currently working on an enhanced proposal for submission.

6.2. Peaceguard Horizon Europe Proposal

As part of its commitment to addressing polarization, intolerance, and promoting a more respectful and peaceful society in Europe, IDP, in collaboration with multiple universities, research centers, security practitioners, and civil society organizations from Belgium, the UK, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, and France, developed and submitted a 3-year project proposal titled PEACEGUARD under the Horizon Europe Program.

The PEACEGUARD project focuses on tackling security challenges and criminal activities stemming from rising tensions impacting Muslim and Jewish communities across Europe, particularly in the aftermath of the events of October 2023. Its primary goal is to equip police authorities with a comprehensive understanding of these tensions while developing both proactive and reactive measures to mitigate potential criminal activities. The direct involvement of law enforcement agencies ensures that the methodologies, tools, and training developed are practical, effective, and tailored to meet the specific needs of police work.

A key aspect of the project involves examining how these tensions translate into criminal activities across various European countries, including Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and the UK. It will identify patterns of similarity while considering cultural and societal factors that influence these dynamics. Furthermore, PEACEGUARD emphasizes the integration of dialogue into broader community security strategies, focusing on embedding these practices into law enforcement efforts to reduce crime and defuse tensions affecting Muslim and Jewish communities.

The project will also explore the role of interfaith and intercultural dialogue in fostering cooperation and trust between police authorities, community representatives, and faith leaders. Central objectives include the development of specialized tools, methodologies, and training curricula for police authorities, prosecutors, and judicial actors to enhance their understanding of the cultural and societal dimensions linked to these crimes.

Additionally, PEACEGUARD will leverage AI and technological tools, such as discourse analysis software, to help law enforcement detect rising anti-Muslim or anti-Jewish sentiments while maintaining ethical standards and safeguarding civil liberties. Ultimately, the project aspires to build sustainable cooperation between faith leaders and law enforcement through ongoing initiatives such as periodic training programs, e-manuals, and continuous dialogue. By doing so, PEACEGUARD aims to contribute to long-term peacebuilding and security across Europe.

7. Contributions

7.1 5th Citizen Participation and Deliberative Democracy Festival (EC, DEMOS)

The 5th Citizen Participation and Deliberative Democracy Festival, held from June 12-14 in Brussels, celebrated the work done at the intersection of two European Commission's priorities: A new push for European democracy, with a focus on innovations in participatory and deliberative processes, and the European Green Deal. Over the course of three days, three IDP colleagues actively participated in multiple panels and workshops, engaging in discussions and exploring the latest innovations and initiatives in citizen engagement and deliberative practices.

7.2 Partes Workshop

In February 2024, IDP participated in a workshop in Amsterdam on the protection of places of worship. The event was organised by the European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) within the Partes Project framework. The participation in the event turned out to be an opportunity for the Protone representative, Massimo Ronco, to express support and establish synergies with the twin EU co-funded project, Partes.

The workshop featured small group discussions focusing on various aspects, including existing security measures at Places of Worship, experiences of religious discrimination, and perceptions of safety within communities. Participants also examined the communication channels currently in place between religious communities, public officials, and the media, elaborating on proposals to improve them further.

The workshop saw the participation of religious representatives, public authorities, and subject matter experts from the Netherlands to delve into the recent attacks against places of worship and identify the existing security gaps.

The workshop led to productive discussions and collaborative efforts among the stakeholders involved. It started with an analysis of the main findings of the research activities conducted within the Partes framework, underscoring the relevance of non-terrorist attacks, such as arson and other acts of vandalism. A second analysis, conducted by Gemeente Noard-East Fryslan, was useful in shedding light on the undercurrents of right-wing extremism targeting refugee centres, offering valuable insights into related security concerns. In the afternoon, interactive exercises and simulation scenarios were conducted to improve participants' skills in identifying the vulnerabilities in the cases considered and the more recurrent factors that allow for an incident or attack.

During the lunch break, participants had the opportunity to network and exchange ideas informally, fostering greater connectivity and cooperation.

Overall, the workshop served as a crucial platform for stakeholders to come together, share insights, and forge partnerships in the collective effort to safeguard Places of Worship and promote social cohesion.

7.3 Shrines Workshop

On January 23 and 24, IDP participated in the first tech workshop organised by Shrines.

The event was an occasion to present potential innovative technologies and discussion on their application for preparedness and prevention in the context of protecting places of worship.

More than 50 guests attended the Workshop, including representative of 6 different religious groups, 4 members from the SHRINES community, researchers from the Politecnico di Torino and Ithaca Srl as well as relevant companies developing safety & security systems such as Inim, Capetti Elettronica S.r.l., MAVTech and Aitek S.p.A..

The workshop was a great occasion to discuss about new technologies vital for protection public spaces and facilities, furthermore partners had the chance to share their experiences and best practices on safeguarding cultural and religious heritage.

The event set an important milestone of the SHRINES project in connecting the technological applications to the real needs of the places of worship.

7.4 ECPS Summer School 2024: Populism and Foreign Policy: How Does Populist Politics Influence Foreign Affairs?

In the first week of July, the European Centre for Populism Studies (ECPS) hosted its highly anticipated 2024 Academy Virtual Summer School. Over five days, with two sessions each day, more than 60 selected participants—including three colleagues from IDP—engaged in thought-provoking and insightful lectures delivered by leading experts, academics, and practitioners. The primary focus of the discussions was the intersection of populism and foreign policy.

As in the previous years, the Summer School featured a Case Competition centered on a real-world issue. Attendees collaborated in teams to develop innovative solutions and propose policy recommendations. Following the competition, participants authored policy papers that were subsequently published on the ECPS website. IDP contributed to two of these policy papers:

- Anticipating the Trump Effect: Strengthening the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum Amid Populist Pressures
- Revising the Trumpian Legacy in U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Latin America

