



Podium: Advocacy for Change

Podium is a social advocacy workshop that teaches youth and adolescents of marginalized groups in Kosovo how to advocate for the needs and rights of their community. In the workshop, youth and adolescents are trained to confront the challenges they face in their communities and gain public support for their causes or policies – helping them understand their role being resilient in social change by building their skills and confidence to advocate and build sustainable livelihoods.

Objectives

Podium supports the right of all Kosovo's youth and adolescents to be heard. It gives youngsters vital skills on conducting community needs assessment, managing campaigns, lobbying and influencing decision-making processes, and using media for raising awareness on social issues. It is a bridge that engages youth, institutions and media. The project motivates youth and adolescents to advocate about challenges that the community they live faces, by providing spaces for them to act as agents of positive social change.

The Programme

Six groups are chosen while focusing on the prioritization of vulnerable groups, the quality of the application (valuing grit and effort over writing talent) and the impact of the proposed problem (in terms of severity and scope, and whether the problem disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups). Afterwards, selected teams each consisting of five persons that come from Kosovo's most marginalized groups, are trained on how to become change-makers and find solutions for the issues that matter to them most, all while learning how to collaborate with duty-bearers.

The Lab staff initially identifies potential participants from marginalized groups living in Kosovo through introductory presentations that are organized in primary and high schools, youth centers or NGOs, mostly in remote and rural areas. The chosen teams are then assisted by their designated staff mentors to design solutions to the chosen challenges while focusing on:

- The establishment of relationships with Duty-Bearers
- Affinity Mapping: a tool used for generating ideas related to the issue and after grouping them according to their affinity or similarity
- KWL Chart Usage: A graphic organizing tool that helps people organize information, especially when there is a goal to be achieved:
 - a. What we know about the issue
 - b. What do we want to know about it?
 - c. What we learnt
- Trainings on Finance and Management
- Advocacy Research: A study that seeks to measure social problems with the aim of heightening public awareness by providing a catalyst to policy proposals and other action to alleviate the problem in question.
- The establishment of an Action Plan
- Lobbying with decision-makers
- Social Media Advocacy and Traditional Media
- *S.M.A.R.T* guide
- Direct Action Campaigning: Visibility, Marches and parades, Rallies, Sit-ins and Social Theaters.
- Network building

Over the three-days of the workshop, Podium participant teams work systematically with their mentor to come up with solution(s), while networking in their spare time. After the examination of the generated ideas in the workshop, three out of six teams are chosen for a continuous three-month mentorship from a professional staff mentor who will provide guidance on the implementation of their advocacy campaigns. The teams also receive a budget of **1000** Euros and extensive support from the Lab such as the provision of tools and spaces to assist them with project implementation.

Impact

So far, there have been **18** Podiums implemented, including **1,195** Direct Beneficiaries, **3,208** Indirect Beneficiaries and **128** duty-bearers. Participants have managed to generate impactful ideas to promote youth participation in decision-making, increasing the accountability of different organizations and institutions, and demanding empowerment of marginalized and disadvantaged groups in their communities.