

A JOINT DIPD-DUF-DEDI GUIDE

HOW TO BUILD A YOUTH WING

30 TOPICS TO DEBATE AND CONSIDER



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2012

EXPERIENCES THAT CAN INSPIRE

Citizens in Denmark like citizens in other parts of the world followed the events leading up to the uprising in Egypt in early 2011 with a mixture of joy, surprise and anxiety.

With *joy* because we strongly believe that the rights demanded by the people in Tahrir Square were expressions of the human rights we all subscribe to as members of a global community; with *surprise* because we had not seen a revolution in the making in this part of the world; and with *anxiety* because we know from other parts of the world that revolutions do not always end up as successfully as they start.

We continue to closely follow history unfolding in Egypt. In one sense we are outside observers who register events as they unfold, knowing very well that we have only limited influence on what is happening inside the country, which is just as it should be. At the same time our organisations have established friendships, relationships and partnerships with different parts of Egyptian political and civil society, and we therefore feel more closely involved in the destiny of Egypt than the average Danish citizen might be.

Considering the critical role of the Egyptian youth in the uprising, all of the three Danish organisations involved in the development of this Guide have decided to engage with different groupings of youth in Egypt to support them in their different ways of contributing to the building of a democratic society and a democratic culture. We know from the development of our own society how important the active involvement of the youth is.

The idea of a 'Guide on Youth Wings' was conceived during the visit to Denmark of a delegation of young members from Egyptian political parties, organized by the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy and Danish political parties with the support of the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute, and with contributions from the Danish youth. At the end of the visit, one very clear recommendation from the Egyptian delegation was to offer more guidance on Danish experiences with the setting up, roles, responsibilities and workings of Danish youth wings of political parties.

While very different in ideological outlook and organizational structure, all eight parties in the Danish Parliament have a youth wing. Today it would be inconceivable for a political party in Denmark not to have a youth wing to

perform a number of vital functions for a democratic party like bringing up new generations of party activists and candidates; mobilizing new generations of possible supporters for the party; setting new agendas which will in time be mainstreamed in the mother party; and in general acting as a ‘nursery’ for the democratic culture which needs to embrace a political party.

We have no agenda about ‘exporting’ the Danish way of setting up and managing youth wings. In fact, there is no one Danish *model* for how to run a youth wing. What this Guide offers is no less and no more than what you see outlined in the six chapters: Danish experiences organized around a total of 30 topics that can hopefully inspire political parties and youth party members in Egypt and other countries as well.

The fact that all of the youth wings in Denmark have contributed to the development of this Guide is a statement in itself. It reflects a shared understanding among the youth of the Danish political parties that while the competition between different ideas of how they want society to develop is a key part of the democratic system, it is equally important that there is room for open dialogue and sharing of ideas in our system and culture of multiparty democracy.

It is in this spirit that we offer this Guide for inspiration, and we invite all those interested to join hands to take the ideas forward.

Finally we would like to thank representatives from political parties in Egypt who generously agreed to contribute to the guide in the spirit of multiparty dialogue.

Bjørn Førde, *Director*

DIPD – Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy

Kåre Månsson, *Secretary General*

DUF – Danish Youth Council

Jakob Erle, *Director*

DEDI – Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute

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We owe a tremendous thank you to all the Danish and Egyptian youth politicians and activists who participated, discussed, criticized and openly shared their experience during the elaboration of the present inspirational guide. Thanks a lot to every one of you and all the best in your future political life and struggle:

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A special thanks to Marie Helmstedt for a lot of editorial advice during the whole process.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE GUIDE

The development of this inspirational guide took place in the first half of 2012.

Three workshops were carried out in Copenhagen in which representatives from a wide range of Danish youth parties openly shared their political experience with each other and with the consultant and writer of the guide, Vibeke Vinther. Their experience was written down and the youth politicians were once again consulted.

Mistakes and misconceptions were clarified and a new seminar was held in Cairo with the youth representatives from various Egyptian political parties giving their comments, questions and critique to the inspirational guide.

Based on their inputs the guide was re-edited and finally individual interviews were carried out with youth politicians in Cairo and Copenhagen in order to get the individual stories and experiences, which supplement each chapter.

GREETINGS FROM DENMARK

Youth politicians in Denmark have during recent time been keenly tuned into the worldwide media coverage of the Arab Spring and your courageous fight for democracy. It has been tremendously inspiring to observe how you, the Arab youth, have been at the forefront of the dramatic change in your society.

On this note of respect, we would like to share our experiences gained over the years as activists in various youth wings of political parties covering the whole ideological spectrum of the Danish democracy.

The first Danish youth wing of a political party was founded as early as 1904. Today, 108 years later, our presence is felt more than ever. The eight Danish youth wings contribute actively to the public debate, representing young people's points of view in national political discussions on a daily basis, thereby making the Danish democracy more vibrant than it would otherwise be.

We are obviously a mixed group, as we are also political opponents and we run our organisations very differently. As such, it is rare for all of us to work together for the same cause. Nevertheless, we wanted to join forces in writing this booklet with the aim of sharing some of what we have learned in the process of building our parties and voicing our ideas and concerns in the context of a democratic society.

We have divided the booklet into six chapters focusing on the building up of a youth wing, development of political positions, members, the relationship to the mother party – and campaigning and working with others.

It can only be a short version of our experience – the Danish experience – and there is obviously an enormous difference between our reality and the challenges you are right in the middle of today and in the years to come. The disparities are clear but so are the similarities. Being young, activists and youth politicians we also have a lot of things in common, and the similarities have definitely emerged during recent shared meetings and workshops but they are also striking when reading the interviews in the present guide. A wide range of debates, challenges and struggles are common for all of us.

We sincerely hope that our reflections and experiences will serve as an *inspiration* for you in coming years. May they also serve as a small token of gratitude for all the inspiration we have received from you during the recent years fight for political change in the Arab world.

Youth wings from Denmark,

Young Conservatives

Danish Libertarian Youth

Danish Liberal Youth

The Social Liberal Youth of Denmark

The Social Democratic Youth of Denmark

Socialist People's Party Youth

CHAPTER 1

BUILDING A SOLID HOUSE

THE BASIC SET-UP



THE ISSUE

When you start building a youth wing you gather together because of a common political understanding and a shared political vision you want to develop further and fight for.

Discussions about organisational set-up might not be on top of the agenda – but you have to prioritize them and make sure you get them there. The best way to facilitate an open political debate and to secure democratic decisions is by taking the time to set up clear structures and regulations answering:

Who within the youth wing is authorized to take what decisions at each level? And who must authorise them to do so?

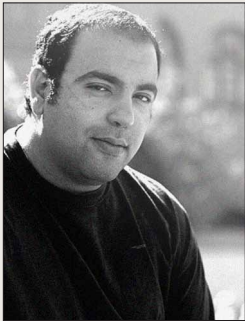
In your answer you define your internal structure and your regulations. You describe all parts of your political work, including the mandate of the Board and sub-committees, the voting rules, rules for candidature, regularity of meetings, powers of local committees and their relationship to the central organisation.

The regulations enshrine democracy within your organisation. They define the rights of individual members and secure transparency in all your decisions. Once in place, they come to define your organisational culture. They can be amended, but cannot be revisited every other day. It requires the approval of a congress to enact them, and it will take at least one congress meeting to change them.

Once you have defined the legal statutes they have to be followed at every point and they can only be changed in a constitutional way. It is just like governing a democratic country. It has to be based solely on the rule of law. If you want to live in and build up a democratic country it is absolutely key that you act democratically yourself, both within the youth wing and in your interaction with others. And you start with the rules and regulations.

“IF YOU REALLY WANT TO START A NEW PARTY, THE FIRST THING YOU SHOULD DO...”

Mahmoud Salem, also known as “Sandmonkey”, has been heading the Youth Committee of the Free Egyptians Party since the early days of its foundation. After one hectic year of experience he boils his most important lessons learned forming a new party down to five pieces of advice. And a warning!



“Don’t do it..!” Mahmoud Salem gives his response rapidly when asked for his best advice to anybody who would want to form a new party in a country in transition. He is the Head of the Youth Committee of the Free Egyptians Party, one of Egypt’s major political players, and his experience is: The workload is tremendous. It’s exhausting. It takes all of your time 24 hours a day. And you have to do everything at one time. If somebody should insist on taking up the challenge of forming a new party anyway, he would set the four major priorities from the beginning (if the political climate allows

you to prioritize at all!).

1. We have learned that it’s so extremely important to get your internal communication in place from the beginning. You should invest all you can on this. Get the systems in place. After the revolution there is a lot of confusion. Avoid some of it by having a good internal communication and ensure everybody is on the same page.

2. Work on your ideological stand. You need to have a very clear vision of what you want your country to look like, how you see the development – and it should not be a beauty-scenario. Be realistic and formulate how you will get there. As for The Free Egyptians Party we still do not have the bible yet, it takes months of discussion and a lot of work from our policy office before we get there.

3. Invest in your youth committee: Invest in training, training, training... Train people in their capabilities to do teamwork and to trust in each other. All the problems we have here have their roots in poverty. Poverty makes people fight for their survival – it does not build a culture of working together as a team. But that is what we need. We need lots of people working together to build a strong party.

4. Practice what you speak. If women’s rights are on top of your political agenda obviously you should make sure you have women in your office. And take your point of departure in peoples’ realities. You can’t go to poor people and talk about the difference between being liberal and socialist. They are just not there. You have to connect to the roots by showing them a specific impact in their lives – and based on that you can start discussing politics.

5. And if you want the youth involved you have to give us some autonomy. In the Free Egyptians Party we have youth committees. We operate on a centralized basis and have a number of officers replicated in the governorates. They can carry out their work independently from the local governorates rather than referring directly to the Head of the Youth Committee.

FIVE TOPICS TO CONSIDER AND DECIDE UPON

1ST TOPIC

NAME, PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP

The first thing you want to do when writing your organisational regulations is to state your name and your overall purpose: a short formulation of who you are and what you want to achieve. It will be a relatively complicated business to change the purpose again. It is therefore wise to make a formulation that gives a true and fair description of the purpose of the organisation without being too specific, but you should state your orientation to clearly mark your position, preferences and interests.

Being a youth wing, you will touch upon age as one of the membership criteria. Each youth wing operates with its own age limits. In some youth wings it is 30 years, in others 35 or more. On the same note, it is also worth considering having a minimum age for joining.

Furthermore, you will define your membership fee and your financial year, the period for which you will collect the fees and draw up your annual accounts. For the sake of convenience, this will typically be identical to the calendar.

Finally, you will have to register in a legal manner. How to do this, the cost involved, in which way and what you need to have in place before registration will differ from country to country. Make sure you know the rules of your country from the very beginning of the establishment of the youth wing.

2ND TOPIC

CONGRESS AS THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY

The Congress (or General Assembly as it is sometimes called) is the highest decision making authority of a democratic organization, this is where the democracy unfolds. The Congress is the place where the broad spectrum of members will meet to decide on the future direction of the party.

Decisions taken here can ONLY be reversed by another Congress. As such, the meeting of the Congress will be the most important organisational event of the year. The members will meet, debate, elect the Board and vote to set out the following year's organisational and political priorities

Define the circumstances of the Congress clearly. Make it predictable and emphasize the need to allow members ample space to debate and have their say. When elaborating your rules you should at least agree upon:

- *When and how the Congress should take place:* You might want to hold the annual Congress on a specific day every year, in order to make it predictable. Over the years, members will know and plan accordingly.
- *The notice for the invitation to the Congress:* Allow good time for members to meet and prepare in local groups or groups of interest. They might want to formulate proposed amendments together. Notification of Congress in good time does indeed favour the democracy within the party.
- *How to invite:* Again it is important to be predictable. State exactly how and when members will receive the invitation e.g. by email, newsletter or letter and make sure you are able to comply in practice.

- *Who has the right to vote and who is eligible:* Do you want to create a horizontal structure where all members have the right to vote, or do you want to create a structure where only Presidents from the local branches of your party have that right? You will also state the voting procedures. How do the candidates stand for election? How many votes are needed to be elected? And how many minutes does each candidate have to deliver their speech during the Congress before the elections? Do you want a quota-system in order to secure a fair representation of women? Or do you want to find an alternative supporting mechanism?
- *The formal agenda:* A lot of things are due to happen during a Congress. The better the agenda is planned, the better debates and discussions you are likely to have. To ensure the transparency, accountability and the internal democracy you have to state a minimum of certain indispensable items to always be included in the agenda. This should at least be: Approval of annual report and accounts and approval of the coming year's political and organisational plan and budget. If these items are not clearly spelled out as Congress-decisions, the Board will simply have too much power within the organisation. Furthermore, included in the agenda you will have debates, proposed amendments, election of the Board and other items suitable for your organisation.

3RD TOPIC

MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURE

The Congress will elect the Board, the President and the Vice-President. How many members will your Board have? If you choose to have a large Board, one of the advantages will be the possibility of filling many positions. On the other hand if you prefer a smaller Board it will probably be much more operational.

A common practice is to choose a sizeable Board and designate an Executive Committee consisting of the President and four or five members. The Executive Committee will be quite operational and meet frequently in order to discuss all kinds of – also minor – issues, which you would not want a larger group to get into.

In the course of time you will have local branches all over the country, and it should be an easy and non-bureaucratic task to establish one. Define your minimum-requirements: How many people are needed in order to set up a local branch? Do local branches have to agree on all political views – or do they have room for developing their own political statements, and how do you ensure the local branches will establish rules and procedures in line with the ones already agreed upon? What kind of initial training programme should they receive in order to follow your minimum requirement for the party line?

Committees can be formal groups appointed by the Board or by the Congress to elaborate on certain political or organisational priorities (e.g. position on health policy, educational policy, a policy on women's rights or on organisational issues, such as communication, membership-recruitment, preparation-of-Congress etc.).

Do the committees lay down their own priorities within a political framework? Is the President the spokesperson in the public and in the press as well? Or is this the responsibility of the Board?

Both ways of organizing have their pros and cons: The choice is either a structure with a high level of delegation of political responsibilities (encouraging many active members to work and participate) or a structure with a lower level of delegation of powers (giving the Board a higher level of control, centralizing decisions).

Working groups will be more informal in nature. They could originate from a specific decision of the Congress (wanting a proposal for a position on certain issues before deciding if it should be a political priority) or they could originate from a desire of specific members to draw up a certain proposal on a position in order to convince everybody that this should be official policy.

The dynamic of such groups can be invaluable for the development of a democratic and vibrant youth wing. It is highly recommendable to stimulate them, but also to set up clear frameworks and guidelines for their work – thus preventing them from working in vain.

EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS

Who – besides the Board – will have the authority to call for an extraordinary Congress? For democratic reasons, you will want members to be able to make the call but it is also important that a critical number of members support the idea. You can express this as an absolute number or as a certain percentage. The higher the number, the more difficult it will be to carry through an extraordinary general Congress by initiative of the members.

HALF THE MEMBERS + 1

Different youth wings will have different procedures for the election of the Board members. In one of the Danish youth wings the procedure is as follows: The Board candidates will present themselves in a written form three weeks before the Congress and answer questions such as: Which experiences do you have from political work? Which areas do you want to get engaged in? How do you see the development of our youth wing in the future? Why should we vote for you? The written presentations are distributed to all Congress-participants. The participants can vote for half of the members needed for the Board + 1 in order to ensure a fair representation from eventual minorities.

4TH TOPIC

RULES OF PROCEDURE

By establishing your organisational regulations, you lay down the fundamental rules of the democratic game. In this connection, you should also establish “Rules of Procedure”, i.e. for the meetings and the work of the Board.

The rules of procedure will typically be at the top of the agenda at the first Board meeting after the Congress. How detailed the Board will want to define this will vary from one youth wing to another. The following are topics you should at least decide upon for the sake of transparency and democracy:

What should be the *notice for the summons for the Board meetings*? Defining this you will take into consideration the amount of time the individual Board member needs to prepare and maybe also consult other members on specific issues.

How will the *agenda be drawn up*? In defining the agenda, standard items such as Approval of Minutes, notification from the President and/or others, Any Other Business are usually included. You will probably have more standards to add.

What are your *rules for forming a quorum* (the size of the majority needed for taking a decision)? How many members should be present in order to form a quorum – in order to be able to take a decision? In many places it is more than half of the members of the Board.

What will be the *roles and responsibilities* of Board members? Normally, the Congress will elect the President and the Vice-President afterwards it is for the Board to constitute itself and distribute the different roles and responsibilities.

What will be the *procedures for the writing, distribution and approval of the minutes*?

5TH TOPIC

AMENDMENT OF REGULATIONS AND DISSOLUTION

Even though you carefully define your regulations, you will inevitably need to change one section or another from time to time. Since the rules are adopted by Congress it will take another Congress to change them.

When defining the procedures for such a process you can for instance consider if a proposal for *amendment* of the rules should have a longer time limit compared to other proposals for the Congress. You can also consider if you want to specify that a certain number or percentage of members should be present in order for the change to be allowed.

When spending all your energy starting up a new organisation, you do not want to think about an eventual *dissolution*. However, it is wise to set up the general framework to be prepared for such a situation.

“IT’S WORTH ALL THE HOURS OF VOLUNTARY WORK – ESPECIALLY DURING TIMES OF ELECTION”

The start-up and development of the youth wing has become Rasmus Brygger’s passion. It is a “laboratory for learning” and takes up all his time. Summing up he has four major lessons learned. And one huge achievement!



“Above everything it is a lot of fun and once you have started you just want to get it all up and running and reach your targets.”

Rasmus Brygger is the present chair of the youngest Danish youth party, The Libertarian Youth. And if the members allow him to do it, he will continue his mission for at least some years to come. So far, his most important pieces of advice are:

1. When starting up don’t underestimate the importance of your systems and your internal communication. When we first launched the party there was obviously a great deal of hype around us and a lot of new members were attracted. But we did not have the proper systems in place, neither the IT – to register – nor our lines of communication. This was a mistake, and this way we lost a lot of members. These days, I spend most of my time on organizational issues and our focus is on retaining members far more than on recruitment.

2. Define your political foundation and the line of the party very quickly. If you don’t have a clear line you can’t expect the local committees to follow it. And this is really crucial. Otherwise you will find yourself in a lot of confusion and there will be too many mixed messages reaching the public. Even when local committees run their smaller campaigns and communicate with the local press the messages have to be consistent and in line with the overall political position and line.

3. Be a copycat. Have a good look at other youth wings in your country and internationally. Don’t spend a lot of time inventing something already figured out by others. See how they communicate and do it better. See how they make campaigns and do it better. And cooperate with them whenever it is possible. We have established a set of training activities for our local branches in cooperation with another youth wing – not our closest competitor though – we save a lot of resources carrying out these more random activities together

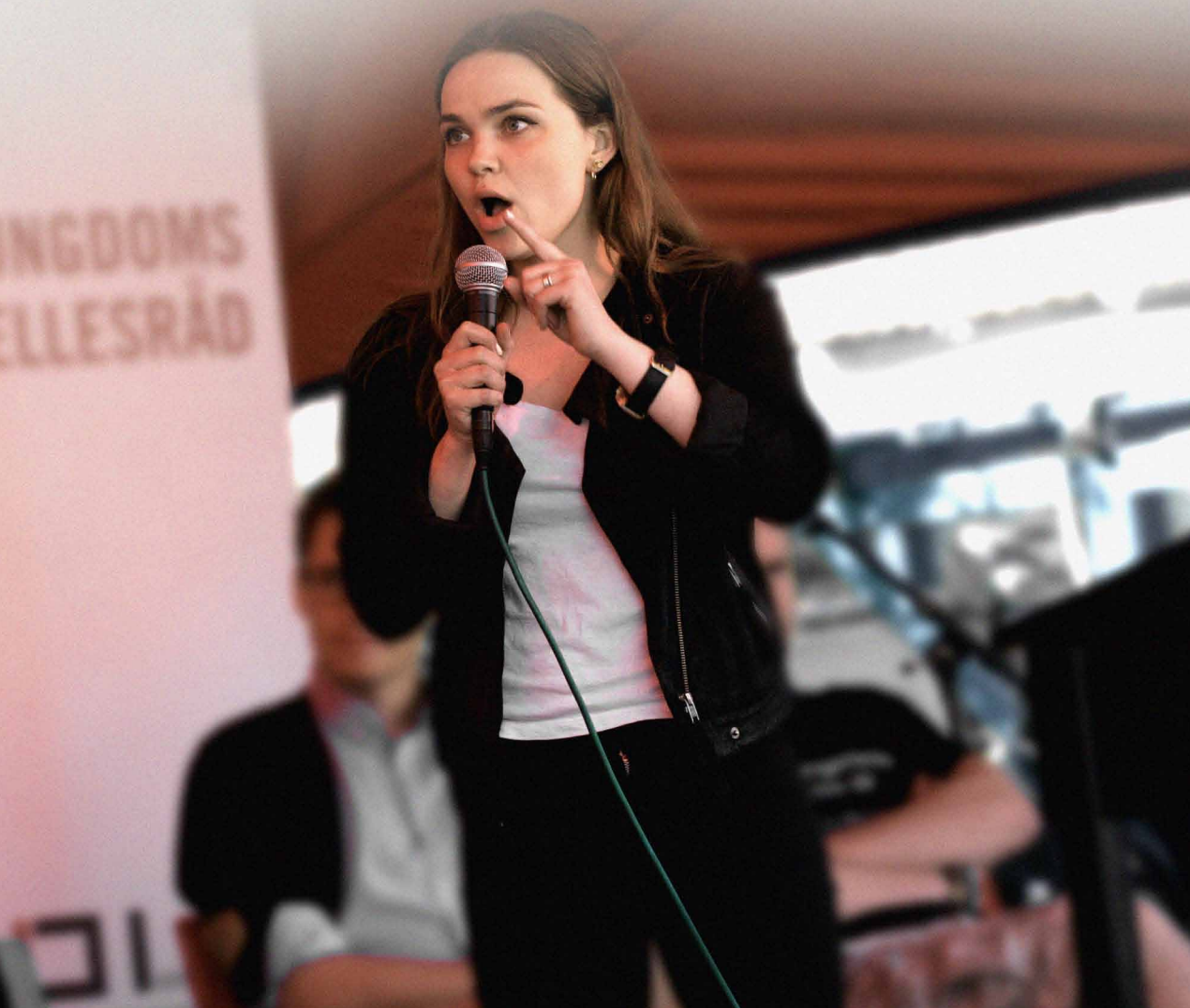
4. Encourage the teamwork. In our case, it was tempting in the beginning to direct the responsibility for different tasks to one single person. This is not recommended because people leave, travel and you find yourselves without knowledge about important parts of the organization. Encourage teamwork because this also gives added quality and value to the work.

The major achievement was definitely the collaboration with the mother party that led to the greatest success of the Libertarian Youth: During the 2011 elections the most liberal party of Denmark came into parliament with nine mandates. We went from zero to nine out of 179. It was marvelous, and the work we did as a youth wing made an enormous difference.

CHAPTER 2

YOUR CORE WORK

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL POSITIONS



THE ISSUE

Being the youth wing of a political party you will want to be in an ongoing process of developing new policies – indeed an inspiring and never-ending task. When doing this, we are sharing our visions, ideas and hopes for a future society. It can be quite hard to think of a better way of spending your time.

Developing policies, political positions and suggestions is not a profession you will be taught at any university or other educational institution. The capacity to make policy proposals – and in the end getting them approved and making a difference for people – is a capacity you will develop and acquire through the efforts you put into the organisational and political development of your organisation.

There are many ways of doing this. For sure, the development of the new policies will occur in interaction between your ideology, political platform and the actual course of events. You will also find that within your party a lot of policy-development will start over a cup of coffee after a meeting or during a social event for the members.

The first informal sharing of visions and ideas will afterwards go through all the formal democratic processes that you agree upon as being the right ones for your organisation. It is therefore also a good idea to think about who is taking part in these informal meetings and sharing of ideas. Is it always the same few people, and are both males and females taking part in this?

"INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IS INDISPENSABLE IN ALL OUR ACTIONS"

Truly democratic decision-making is time consuming and not always practical when a young party has an extreme urgency to develop political positions. Nevertheless, the internal democracy is indispensable in The Egypt's Freedom Party according to Taher El-Shafei: "How can we fight for democracy, transparency and decentralization if we do not walk the talk 110% ourselves?"



When The Egypt's Freedom Party was founded in the groundswell of the Egyptian Revolution one of the first actions of the new members was to define the principles from which all future political positions would originate. Once defined everybody agreed to act according to the values.

"We had been criticizing the former regime, now we had to act – not only talk – and show how another society could be built," says Taher El-Shafei, one of the founders and now the Head of the party's Cairo-governorate.

For the first six months of the new party's lifetime the structure of the party was indeed democratic – according to the principles. It became a self-corrective process in an ongoing optimization, going through different phases: Eight different committees were established, each one responsible for part of the party's organizational and political development and every six weeks the coordinators of the different committees would change in order to leave room for new persons and move on to other responsibilities:

"We found that this was a good method to secure the direct involvement and engagement of the members and everybody was really on the same page. But we also learned that we all have our specific competences and capabilities. It's not a good idea to leave people who are experts in the organizational build-up in charge of developing political positions and vice versa."

Thus, The Egypt's Freedom Party left their initial model and way of doing things and established two main offices each with their own responsibility: organizational and political development.

"It's a huge task to develop the positions of a political party within a very short time. On some subjects we just go ahead ourselves, on others we will ask different NGOs, technocrats and other experts to give us some briefings and based on that we elaborate on our political stand and send it for discussions and further comments from the members," says Taher El-Shafei.

The members are divided into three sub-groups: 1) the silent members – the ones supporting the party economically without being active themselves; 2) the volunteers – who will be active from time to time when invited by the party to join in; and finally 3) the working members – who spend at least 10 hours a week working with all different projects.

"Obviously, all papers defining our political positions have to be discussed and approved by our members. We call meetings where the volunteers and the working members will usually show up. This is important for us, as they are the ones who will carry the messages through. We do our best to reach the silent members through email and newsletters, but this is definitely not always an easy task in Egypt," says Taher El-Shafei.

FIVE TOPICS TO CONSIDER AND DECIDE UPON

1ST TOPIC

POLITICAL FOUNDATION AND PROGRAMME

When establishing a youth wing you start by defining your political foundation – the universal values from which all of your political positions will originate. It is recommended for this definition to be broad and not directly based on current affairs and politics.

Your political foundation is your analysis of society. It defines how you perceive society. How you think it should change – and whose side you are on. So you will ask questions like:

Why and for whom do we engage in politics? How are our visions being constrained within society? And how can we see this change?

A political foundation is also specific. It is not sufficient to be very broad and e.g. to state a desire for “real democracy”. Your discussions and your differences will be revealed when you elaborate on how you wish to see democracy unfold in practice.

You can for instance describe the relationship between religion and state, globalization, gender, the distribution of resources, taxes, rights, freedom, education, and foreign policy. You will draw up your overall political positions, which all members should sign up to if they want to join you. You will also define from which general ideology you derive your political leanings: Liberal, conservative, religious, socialist, radical, etc.

Later on you will transform your *political foundation* into what you could call your *political programme*. Contrary to the foundation, the programme can change from year to year according to the current political affairs and your continuous effort to come up with political answers and your specific positions to this. It is debated and voted on by the members at the annual Congress.

2ND TOPIC

HOW TO DEVELOP POLICIES

It is the overall responsibility of the Board to prepare and invite members to the annual Congress. Included in the invitation, members should find the Board’s proposal for the political programme for the coming year.

There is no single answer to how a political programme should look. Nor is there a single answer to the best way of formulating the *content* and the subsequent process of debating and voting for it.

You can divide the programme into the *organisational part* and the *political part*. In the organisational part you elaborate on the desired organisational achievements for the year to come: The amount of new members you want to recruit, your workshops for capacity-building, membership-communication etc. In the political part you elaborate on the coming year(s) political position and desired achievements.

The programme and its annual budget commit the Board and provide the frame for the annual activities. It is of the highest importance for accountability and transparency to have a realistic plan – feasible and easy to follow. You should also determine the responsibilities for the actions, the annual reports and accounts. Those are key measures in your internal democratic checks and

balances helping to keep the Board accountable for its actions to the Congress.

Irrespective of how it is done, the Board will have the overall responsibility for drawing up a proposal to be discussed during the annual congress. The Board can reach a proposal for the organisational and political programme in different ways. The Board itself can be the editorial group (or designate a group of members or the policy office to be the editorial group under the auspices of the Board) without consulting the members in a formal way before the Congress. The members will debate and complement the proposal during Congress and accept or reject.

This method is quite effective compared to a more formal process in which you invite members, different sub-committees and local branches to give their input to the Board before the actual formulation of the programme even starts. Inputs could for instance come from the Educational Committee, the Health Committee or from a group of (or a single person) passionate members who will feel strongly about the formulation of a position on a certain issue (e.g. the rights of persons with disabilities, women, children etc.). It might prove helpful for everybody to have a standard for the content of such proposals. It could be a minimum of three pages: An analysis of the issue, reflections on other parties' positions and finally arguments and recommendations for the new policy of the youth wing. Make clear deadlines and keep to them.

A lot of effort is put into the formulation of the programme and people are eager to discuss it during the Congress. A good management of the discussions requires a good preparation – and enough time. Make sure – when formulating your rules and regulations – that the invitation, the proposals and the programme are sent to members a certain number of weeks in advance.

DIFFERENT POLICY LEVELS

A youth wing will have different levels of policy in their formulation of short-term and long-term goals and visions. One Danish youth wing operates with three different policy papers:

- 1) A quite ideological principle-program, which defines the long-term vision and which is hardly ever revised.
- 2) A 3-4 year political programme, which sets the political goals five- and ten years ahead.
- 3) Finally, they have an annual “perspective and action plan” setting the organisational and political priorities for the coming year. This paper is discussed, modified and approved every year at the Congress.

GENDER – HARD TO WALK THE TALK

All Danish youth wings are totally committed to women's rights. However, the commitment is far from obvious when you take a deep look into the statistics. During the last 108 years the major youth wings have been chaired by a total of 203 different presidents. Only 25 of them were women. One of the youth wings has never had a female president and two of them have only had one female president throughout the century long history of the parties.

3RD TOPIC

WAYS TO DEBATE AND DECIDE

The Congress is your highest decision-making authority and an extremely important event to sustain the democracy within the organisation. This is where the members meet, speak, give their opinion, advice and vote for the coming Board, which will be elected to serve the members. Therefore make sure that mechanisms and a culture are in place that ensures a fair representation of different members during the debates (e.g. minority groups, women etc.).

Different youth wings have different ways of debating the political plan of action. Some parties will only debate the Political Programme and the proposed amendments, whereas others are open to all kinds of discussions and decisions of political proposals – also the ones that have not been proposed previously in writing to manage and facilitate debate during Congress you can:

1. Communicate a clear deadline for delivery of the proposed amendments. And make sure to communicate to everybody when and where on your website they will be accessible.
2. Hand out all papers to members by the start of the Congress.
3. Be careful not to overload the participants with papers. Encourage everybody to be short and precise in the formulation of proposals, proposed amendments – and in the formulation of the Political Programme. Formulating the papers in a short, direct and provocative manner makes it easy and inspiring to read, react and discuss.
4. Compile an intelligent agenda for the Congress. The most radical proposals should be the first ones on the agenda. If you do not have time to discuss all items you can refer the less controversial ones to the first upcoming Board meeting.
5. Establish your rules on when to vote for what. If a certain paragraph in the Political Programme is met by a proposed amendment and even a proposed amendment to the proposed amendment a good rule of thumb is: Start debating and voting about the most radical of the proposed amendments, following the second proposed amendment, then the proposed text. Afterwards, it will be the responsibility of your President to draw conclusions.
6. Once a proposal has been formulated it is the responsibility of the proposer to gather support for it. Afterwards the floor is open for everybody to discuss. It might also be possible to propose an amendment from the platform.

4TH TOPIC

THE RESOLUTIONS

The youth wing will also need to formulate policies during the year responding to the political developments. This can be done through the formulation of resolutions during the regular Board meetings. Some resolutions might have to be approved later by the Congress but in many cases the resolutions will be day-to-day political comments on specific events and it would not make sense to address them later during Congress.

DEFINE YOUR POLITICAL CULTURE

The culture of a youth wing is key! It is key for attracting new members, key for the development of solid politics, key for setting a strong political agenda. It is worthwhile discussing what kind of culture you want to cultivate. What kind of behaviour will you want to encourage? And what kind of behaviour do you want to discourage?

Some parties define a set of values to benchmark the organisation. Internal democracy, transparency, mutual respect, equity and easy access for members to decisions and the decision-making bodies have proved to be useful values for some parties. Dynamism, openness, frankness, a culture of discussions and disagreement are values that have proved to work for others. Appreciation of differences is key!

When debating your internal culture you might also want to reflect on how to solve internal conflicts even before they arise.

Obviously, when people with strong political opinions get together they will have lots of struggles and fights. Most of them ensure the dynamic everybody will want to see in a youth organisation. But some might be harmful to the accepted political culture and the core values. A lot of youth wings have experienced (as have political parties all over the world) how the struggle for power of individuals has split the party, requiring years of reparation to rebuild a solid political structure.

In developing your own ways of managing this challenge in an open manner, you may want to consider the following:

1. Be alarmed when a struggle for power becomes more personal than based on policy differences.
2. Set up the rules of the game at the start of i.e. the internal election. It could be rules like: When it's over, it's over! The winner will be committed to making sure the losing team is included in committees, working groups, etc.
3. Ensure – and demand – from the President that she/he is President of the *whole* organisation.

INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS TO THE RULES

A lot of rules, procedures and traditions that apply to the annual Congress can be confusing to new members. One of the Danish youth wings invites all new members to arrive a few hours before the start of the Congress to have a shared introduction to what will happen and engage in exercises on how to debate at the Congress. During the introduction all new members will prepare a short political presentation on any subject they choose and make the speech standing at the speakers' podium in front of their fellow members. In this way, taking the floor at the podium in front of everybody is demystified – and it is much easier to participate in the real Congress.

"WE ARE JUST TOTALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT POLICY DEVELOPMENT"

"I tend to get like five ideas daily for new political positions," says Ditte Søndergaard, the president of the Social Liberal Youth of Denmark. And she is not alone. A recent questionnaire shows that almost all her members' favourite youth wing activity is policy development. The structure of the organisation is therefore almost completely flat, inviting everybody to participate.



The Social Liberal Youth wing considers itself as being a little bit different from the rest of the Danish youth wings. They are not that much into organising campaigns and events and other activities normally connected to a youth wing. Almost all – if not all – members are studying law, medicine or political science. The majority live in the major cities, and they are all passionate about fine-tuning the democratic procedures and the development of new political proposals:

"Others probably find us a bit nerdy, but people who sign up here are just very much into the core of what a political party is all about. It's just our shared passion," says Ditte Søndergaard, referring to a recent questionnaire in which members were asked if they preferred to be involved in activities around press, communication, membership recruitment, policy-development etc. "Almost everybody, maybe with a few exceptions, preferred policy development," says Ditte Søndergaard.

Over the years the social-liberal youth has developed and fine tuned the democratic processes for how to start-up, research, present, debate, vote for – and maybe also eventually get their suggestions through all the way up to the Congress of the mother party.

"The start-up of new policy-proposals emerges from the desire of one or more members to see a certain change. I normally get like five such ideas a day – and so does everybody else I think. For instance we discussed women's representation on Boards. Should we suggest a quota-system as in other countries, where a certain number of seats on a board are reserved for women, or what would be our stand on this highly debated issue?"

In order to develop their policy the youth wing followed the common procedure. They undertook solid research; they interviewed women on Boards, influential women who are not on Boards and experts; visited countries with quota-systems; talked to people in favour of and against quotas; and read a long list of reports. Based on this, the group in charge wrote a proposal.

"The Board passed the proposal, and eventually we submitted it to the annual Congress of our mother party where it was actually also passed," says Ditte Søndergaard, describing this as one of many examples of the youth wing exerting its influence on the mother party:

"Passing proposals through the Congress of our mother party is one way of influencing. We also have quite a close collaboration with a lot of members of parliament. We have an enormous amount of resources when it comes to the research and elaboration of new proposals – this way around it is not hard to get influence. They know our proposals are well documented and professional," says Ditte Søndergaard.

CHAPTER 3

MEMBERS

THE PILLAR OF EVERY DEMOCRATIC YOUTH WING



THE ISSUE

One of the most important factors when you start up a youth wing is to have a strategy in place that is well communicated in the organization outlining: How do we take care of new members? How do we introduce them, and how do we keep them?

This is indeed the point where a lot of political parties have failed. It is the difference between being successful or not. Are you prepared for a lot of new members, and does everybody involved know the messages to communicate and the strategy to keep our members?

The communication and the relationship with members will be crucial for the sustainability of any political party. The members will constitute your pillar. The stronger they are, the stronger will the youth wing be in its ability to communicate, set an agenda and achieve the desired political change.

In democratic societies, youth wings play an extremely important role in providing civic education to their members. Youth wings are unique places for members to come and get political training, to analyze and discuss political issues with like-minded people who are also deeply interested in the development of their society and the world.

Many young people involved in politics will state that the culture within their party is unique and not found anywhere else in society. Within youth wings who succeed in stimulating debate and involve everybody on different levels, members will get new knowledge, get challenged – and challenge others.

“FORGET ABOUT THE MEDIA EXPOSURE – THAT’S NOT HOW WE GET NEW MEMBERS INVOLVED”

Immediately after the Egyptian revolution and the foundation of the Social Democratic Party they experienced a huge influx of new members. A year later, the situation has changed. It’s extremely hard to encourage people to commit for a longer period. The social democrats are exploring a new strategy.



“Before the revolution 1% of the Egyptian middle class was interested in politics. Obviously, with the revolution this all changed. And this is positive. Now we have like 20–30% of the middle class passionate about politics, discussing it all the time – fighting for the revolution,” says Nehal El-Banna from the Egyptian Social Democratic Party. And even though Nehal El-Banna regrets that a lot of things did not turn out as she had hoped during the days of the revolution, she just does not want to turn pessimistic.

Until the revolution Nehal El-Banna belonged to the 1% interested in politics and the fact that this number has now been multiplied by 30 is according to El-Banna here to stay – and overall positive. But engaging and organizing people in party politics has proved to be a tremendous challenge faced by a lot of different parties. People do indeed show up for the demonstrations, they engage in the revolutionary movement – but not in party politics:

“People just don’t understand it is important to get organized in political parties after the revolution and continue the work this way. Party politics smells too much of the old regime, the old system, corruption, lack of information. And it’s ironic, because we are the new Egypt, we have of course nothing to do with the old system and the old way of doing things. So what can we do? This is a common challenge for almost all of the political parties,” says Nehal El-Banna, stating that it is simply not a deeply rooted phenomenon within the Egyptian culture to get organized.

Based on that experience the Social Democrats figure that in order to change the common thinking, they have to show a real impact in people’s life. Get people engaged and involved by showing very specifically how they can make a change in everyday life. And for the Social Democrats the real and lasting change comes when people get organized.

“We gathered people, and they were learning our principles by carrying them out in practice. Our message can at times be complex, but once people understand the benefits from being organized on a long term basis, they realize what we stand for,” says Nehal El-Banna. And the effort proved useful. Afterwards, regardless of whether the student had won or lost the university elections they would tend to become members of the party.

“This is indeed how we will work in the future. It’s a long-term strategy, but it works. Forget about the media exposure, because this is not how you get new members. You have to meet them directly and show them how you can have an impact on their life,” says Nehal El-Banna.

FIVE TOPICS TO CONSIDER AND DECIDE UPON

1ST TOPIC

NAME, PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP

For people who agree upon your political foundation, it should be simple to join. Formulate your membership criteria as simply as possible. A suggestion would be to establish two categories with the following considerations:

Members: Two important issues for everybody to consider are the age criteria and the membership fee. Furthermore, you can consider any other particular membership issues applying to your party. This could be a free membership of the mother party (if there is one).

Supporters: Having defined your membership criteria, you can establish a group for those who are likely to support you (e.g. financially or just moral support), but do not fall within your criteria for full membership.

2ND TOPIC

RECRUITMENT OF MEMBERS

Your members are the pillars of your party. For some parties it will be important to have a lot of members, whereas for others the emphasis is more on the loyalty and the dedication of their members.

Your initial discussions might be: Where do you see your party within two to five years? How many members do you have? Who are they in terms of gender, social background, regional representation, etc.? What kind of activities are they carrying out? What are you offering to challenge them, keep them, and empower them?

The answers to these questions will substantiate your membership strategy. Starting from your political programme, you can formulate three strong reasons to join your party. You can focus on political messages, but also on the advantages enjoyed by members, such as access to political discussion and activities to promote change etc.

Keep the same messages on all recruitment material, both online and offline. And make it easy to get membership material through Facebook, your website – or on the spot.

On the basis of your political platform, you will also want to discuss the target group for your party. Whose position are you taking? Would young people from this group become members of your youth wing – or should you implement specific activities to reach them?

The crucial issue is how to get people to actually sign up and become members. A lot of people will show sympathy, join you for demonstrations or smaller events – but to actually sign up as a member is often a big step.

All youth wings have realised that it is of major importance to meet people where they are (schools, universities, demonstrations, debates etc.), open the dialogue, listen – and see how you together can make a difference. People tend not to sign up at the first request, but if they are invited to your events and called a couple of times they eventually get more involved and might want to sign up.

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Almost all Danish youth parties know that one of the best ways to recruit members is through the passionate people who have already joined you. Make sure you give every-body who signs up your recruitment material. If appropriate, you can choose to run small membership recruitment competitions. Another opportune occasion is during electoral campaigns or during your activities. Make sure to bring just a small flyer and explain to your target group why it is so important that they join you.

A Danish youth wing on their experiences when recruiting members during the national election:

“There is absolutely no doubt, the hey-day for recruitment of new members is during the electoral period. When our mother party is successful in the TV debate, we feel the effect immediately. New members will find us through Facebook or the web, and they will sign up. During the last election campaign, our membership increased by 20%. Now comes the hard challenge to make them stay with us. It’s a challenge for everybody. Young people are quick to sign up – and afterwards quick to leave again.”

3RD TOPIC

RECEPTION

The first impression the new member will get from your party can be quite critical and determine whether he/she stays with you or leaves for another party.

Carry out some initial discussions – again rooted in your political platform – about how you convey your core values in your “welcome programme”. If you state you want to be open and inclusive, how are you being this in practice and who will be responsible for it?

A welcome programme could include:

- A personal call from the President, a Board member or a dedicated member volunteering on this important task.
- A welcome-to-the-youth-wing email in which you tell more about your policies, your activities and how to become engaged.
- An invitation to an introductory café session in which you discuss and present your political positions. It’s always a good idea to mix political discussions with social interaction afterwards, where new and former members can get to know each other – including males as well as females.

Once you have agreed on certain values concerning your reception and welcome programme, it is important to communicate this very strongly to every-body. Establishing a youth wing means initiating a new culture. Talk about your culture from the beginning – and walk the talk.

RETAINING MEMBERS

There is no single way to retain your members, but experience shows that creating an open organisation where members get new knowledge and skills, where they actively debate and can influence the political positions of the organisation is indeed a must, if you want a dynamic place to which people will feel attached and stay.

You will obviously want to discuss and develop this issue on a continuous basis with your members who will be the ones to come up with new ideas on how to keep improving the dynamics of your youth wing.

The following list of member activities has proved to work for others, and some of them might work for you:

Café meetings every Thursday as an interactive platform for engagement inclusive for all delegates and members. They will start with a short introductory presentation (by a party member, an opponent – or somebody else from outside) followed by formal and later on informal discussions. People tend to like them, they know they are there every Thursday and it's a good forum to discuss the affairs of the week with people who are passionate about politics.

Weekend seminars every six months. This is a more formal political education in order to build the members' political and organisational capacities. You will build your curriculum according to the importance and the priorities of your organisation.

Informal groups consisting of smaller discussion groups, where those who share a similar political passion will meet, formulate papers and presentations for debate, political positions and maybe future official policies of the party.

Mere socializing should not be underestimated. It strengthens the cohesiveness of the group and might also attract new members. Do sometimes invite people for purely social activities (you will end up talking politics anyway).

MENTORING NEW MEMBERS

When asked, people tell you that they will often tend to stay in youth politics for two reasons: The aspiration to make a political difference and the establishment of new friendships. As a new member of a youth political organisation it might be difficult to attend a meeting without knowing anyone and without being familiar with the common rules and procedures. One Danish youth wing has established a *mentor* programme. All new members are given a mentor, who will guide them through the first year of their membership. The guidance will be on issues such as politics, procedures for the annual Congress and on how to become active. After one year, the new member is ready to become a mentor themselves.

5TH TOPIC

THE RIGHTS OF THE MEMBERS

In the democratic organisation you should elaborate on the equal rights accorded to all members of the organisation. These could for instance be 1) the right to be part of decision-making; 2) the right to maintain equality; 3) the right to remain as a member of the youth wing; 4) the right to resign from the youth wing; 5) the right of access to information and documents; and 6) the right to take new initiatives.

"START LISTENING, STOP TALKING"

The Socialist People's Party Youth wing has had a particular challenge for many years. Popular as it is, new members are signing up every day, but the majority has a privileged middle or upper class background, rather than the workers the socialists want to represent. "It's a challenge for the whole political system," says the head of the wing, Gry Möger Poulsen. And she is optimistic because a new initiative is finding ways to be more inclusive.



In many ways the Socialist People's Party Youth wing has many things running their way. It's the most popular youth party in terms of members. The present government counts six socialist ministers, three of whom came almost directly from the youth wing – and its influence on the politics of the mother party is known to be considerable.

But as head of the youth wing running on her second term, Gry Möger Poulsen also faces challenges: "By far more than half of our members have what we could call an academic background. It's an issue for us, but it also reflects an imbalance in the political society as such," says Gry Möger Poulsen,

referring to the fact that more than half of the present members of the Danish parliament have got an academic background.

Trying to actually change the situation within the Socialist People's Party Youth wing the party launched a new strategy that has now been running for six months and shows some optimistic results. Realizing that the attractive members with a non-academic background would not come to the wing – the wing decided to come to them:

"The campaign was quite simple. We went to the technical schools on a regular basis and got to know people. But instead of talking about us, we actually invited the students to tell us about themselves, the challenges they are facing, and their suggestions and answers. We never asked people if they wanted to become members. We only asked for their email and if we could contact them again," says Gry Möger Poulsen.

The new "start-listening-stop-talking-approach" turned out to be worthwhile for the Socialist People's Party Youth wing and for the students from the technical schools. Four out of ten answered yes to the invitation following the meeting and signed-up to become members:

"We are learning a lot of things having the technical school students on board. First of all, it's actually quite rare that politicians or other youth wings have approached them before we came to get their point of view; secondly they are quite suspicious about politicians and politics, saying they don't believe in them, that they don't understand them and stuff like that."

For the future, it is of major importance to ensure that the new group of members don't feel like strangers invited to a university party when being part of the Socialist People's Party Youth wing activities, and – not least – to ensure that they run for higher positions.

"In our speeches and in our actions we put a lot of emphasis on tolerance, mutual respect and space. We want them to take their space and seek influence. And to influence us, our positions and what we stand for. Once they are in the decision-making bodies they will be taking part in the creation of an environment that will attract more people like them. But of course, it's all part of a democratic process that does not just come overnight. But we must do what we can to stimulate it," says Gry Möger Poulsen.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

SMS AND WHAT ELSE?



THE ISSUE

An important tool for keeping the members of a youth wing informed is through your lines of membership communication. Continuous communication is what makes the individual member feel part of something bigger, and it strengthens the attachment to the party.

A good communication platform will allow you to share the information quickly with everybody at one time. It will also provide room to debate different political analyses, to build up your organisational and political skills and get inspired and continue the debate outside the formal and informal meetings.

Using your communication platform you can start the political debate about your political programme months before your Congress, making the formal debates here more qualified and better prepared. And using the communication platforms the Board can communicate with the members, get inspired, get challenged – and send the challenge back again.

It takes an effort to build up your communication and your debate forum encouraging people to participate. But do invest. Your communication will be linking the different branches of the organisation together. And eventually your way of communicating, presenting yourself and addressing different issues will be part of your face towards the public.

In the start up of a new party, your first choice of media will probably be the SMS. In a society in which a lot of people do not have access to the Internet, nothing beats SMS and twitter in order to reach everybody at a time. In the following we explore the benefits of building up a communication platform supplementing the SMS.

“VOLUNTARY WORK IS AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF OUR PROGRAMME”

The Freedom and Justice Party has set itself an ambitious target: The recruitment of 3 million new and active party members within the next three years. The future work of the volunteers will be essential for the party's efforts to prove to the Egyptian population that they can make a real difference.



After the Egyptian revolution, the Freedom and Justice Party quickly became Egypt's major player in terms of members and influence. Affiliates to the Muslim Brotherhood and people from outside signed up without the party even running any membership campaigns. After one year of existence, the party in the Giza governorate alone, where Aly Khafagy is Head of the Youth Committee, counts 23, 000 members of which more than half are between the ages of 18 and 35.

“Our advantage in terms of recruiting new members was obviously our historical experience. We have a strong heritage from the Muslim Brotherhood. During many years people have seen our work in the street and in the villages. They know who we are and they trust us. Furthermore, people here are quite religious, and we were the first religious party people could join,” says Aly Khafagy.

To form a new party and the introduction of all the new members ensuring they were all in line with party politics was an enormous logistical and organizational challenge. All members go through a one year affiliation period before they will move on to “Level 2” and thereby get access to the voting and formal decision making bodies. During the affiliation period they are offered an introduction programme to politics, youth, economy, rules and perspectives, etc. In return, the members are expected to participate in the training and in volunteer activities in order to move further to Level 2.

“For us it is important to get people directly involved from the beginning. We involve them in the political work and in the social work,” says Aly Khafagy, explaining that the ambition for the coming years is 3 million new and active members, and that these people are to play a very active role within the party – and the Egyptian society as a whole:

“We have a big challenge in front of us, we need to correct the perception people have of us today and we will do that by showing results and bringing practical changes to people's lives. We will be doing this through our political decisions and through the social work in the streets and in the villages by large groups of volunteers,” says Aly Khafagy, acknowledging that a lot of experience and lessons learned are still to be harvested:

“Until now people tend to stay with us, but it is still very early to say how it will be in the future. But as we say: Tell me, and I will forget; show me, and I will remember; involve me, and I will stay forever. We need to get people involved – and there is work enough for everybody.”

FIVE TOPICS TO CONSIDER AND DECIDE UPON

1ST TOPIC

COMMUNICATING YOUR PLAN OF ACTION

Members are key to any youth wing. As we touched upon in the previous chapter a lot of parties find themselves in a continuous effort to recruit new members and keep them within the organisation. A lot of political debates and capacity building (and thereby also the retention) of your members can be carried out through well planned internal communications.

A good starting point for the elaboration of a member communication strategy is therefore to look at your political programme and ask yourselves and a group of members:

How can our communication with members support us in reaching our political targets? What new information do our members have a need for? Through which media should we reach them? How often? And how can we involve members in communication work and engage them in the communication of the political messages?

2ND TOPIC

THE CONTENT OF THE COMMUNICATION

Knowledge is power. Some youth organisations underline the importance of reaching all members with the same communication at the same time – and also, on the other hand, to be careful not to overload members with too many emails.

For the general overview, you might choose to group the content of your communication in the different categories listed below. These are all *examples* to inspire your communication discussion. You will want to add some and exclude others according to your resources and ambitions. You will probably not want all of your newsletters for instance to include all your categories of content. But your list will make you aware if you are omitting content you were actually keen on touching upon. Your priorities will – together with all other parts of your communication – be your external face. This is how the members, and others, will perceive you.

Content-list for Inspiration:

- *Activities and planning of coming events:* What, where and when – are more members needed to join the preparations?
- *Political analysis:* Develop this discipline over time. Invite people from outside to give you advice or provoke you. Or start a relay between members. One member gives her/his analysis of the week – and passes the baton to another member.

- *Political education:* You might choose to build up the internal political capacity on a specific issue, for instance half a year before your annual Congress. Plan how you can involve members and others in the capacity building of all of you in a creative way.
- *Letter from the President:* Gives the analysis of the week or month seen from the perspective of the party.
- *News from regions:* Don't underestimate the importance of the inspiration different members will get from receiving news from each others' activities – and the importance of being visible in the central media of the youth wing.
- *Group achievements:* If you want to encourage teamwork within your organisation you can highlight specific targets reached by groups of people working together.
- *News from inside:* Within your own party you will have stories people will be interested in. It could be recently developed discussion papers from a certain committee, a new resolution from the Board, an interesting internal debate. Find your own news stories and share them.
- *Fundraising:* Like everybody else you will be in a constant search for contributions and donations. Make this clear also in the communication with your members and be very clear about the use of the money. Also use the possibility at least once a year to thank members for their donations and encourage them to consider an additional one! Show them what a difference it made!

3RD TOPIC

INTERNAL MEDIA

The obvious choice for communication with your members is of course SMS, Facebook and other social media, newsletters and the web. Using these three media in an integrated fashion makes sense. Consider how to prioritize your list of content and be realistic when you plan your communication.

Facebook or other social media are the obvious choice for day-to-day communication. This is where you share your immediate and informal communications and this is where members – and others – have the possibility of joining you in an informal and direct dialogue – *in public*. It's important to consider what kind of dialogue you choose to stimulate your supporters with on Facebook and how this fits with your values and political platform.

Some parties prefer to take the critical debates face-to-face in a closed forum, thus using Facebook as a one-way communication tool where the Board and/or Presidents of different committees will post news about events and political questions. Members will typically like, share and post smaller comments. Others use Facebook as an alternative to a membership forum on their website, for political debates, because they – deep down in their heart and their political platform – believe in open and frank debate.

It is always a good idea to discuss the benefits and implications of the different strategies with your members before you choose the right direction.

The Newsletter is a good supplement to Facebook. This is where you give your members more in-depth quality weekly or monthly communication and this is where you remind passive members about their membership and why they should stay with you. Choose your list of content and your frequency of publication – and deliver.

Web: Youth wings will not have the resources for hiring communication professionals and therefore managing the web can be an uphill struggle. Plan your website according to your resources. As a minimum follow the decisions taken when formulating your communication policy and direct people to your Facebook group and newsletters, if this is where to find the news.

Some parties consider the website as their business card. This is where non-members will get the first impression of the organisation. Consider if defining such a target group could help you plan the content of your web. Make your political positions, internal rules, campaigns and core political statements easily accessible on the web. You want people with little or no knowledge of you to feel welcome and inspired, and to contact you for more information.

4TH TOPIC

COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

All parties come under fire in politics. Some youth wings will put an effort into explaining the situation seen from their – or the mother party's – point of view.

Others will be eager to organise meetings with the members, maybe with the participation of external experts, analyse the situation together without necessarily defending the position of the mother party.

Others again will take the opposite position and be clear about their point of view even though this is not supporting the mother party.

It's a good idea to define your strategy at the start of the crisis and to be proactive in communication with members. In general, youth wings will report that it does not necessarily affect them and the loyalty of their members when the mother party is under fire. It all depends how they handle the situation.

5TH TOPIC

COMMUNICATION BY MEMBERS

Some of your members might be eager to contribute to the youth wings' communication on their own initiative. They might form editorial communication committees on a voluntary basis. You might be able to encourage even more members to participate by building their capacities in this field.

Others have successfully carried out opinion letter workshops providing members with the right tools to participate in the public debate expressing the opinion of the party – and themselves – in a range of local media.

Others spend some time during the annual Congress to launch various press competitions and celebrate the members who managed to get the highest amount of opinion pieces in the local press.

Speech workshops in which members are trained to take the floor, deliver a

speech and discuss with political opponents are quite popular amongst youth wings. Invite professionals from outside to do the first part of the training and deliver the basic tools. Afterwards it might be a good idea to cooperate with an opponent youth wing with which you always disagree. In the debates members from both youth wings will be trained in sharpening their arguments.

WAS HE HERE??

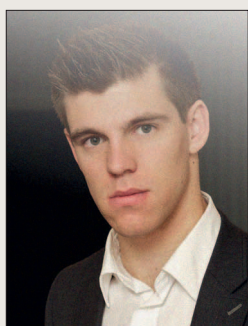
“Many events taking place in the party are not well communicated to party members. I remember that one day there was a session organized in one of the party secretariats to which one of the prominent Egyptian authors was invited. I knew about this event by chance, and later while discussing with another party member who is a fan of that author, I asked him why he did not attend this session. He answered “WAS HE THERE?” There is room for a lot of improvement in our internal communication.”

SIDE BY SIDE

One of the most popular – in terms of membership – youth wings in Denmark went through tough times when the mother party faced severe criticism due to certain political decisions. The youth wing communicated strategically to its members about the political gains of the mother party, organised debates and discussed the controversial issues with its members. It was also open about disagreeing with the mother party. After six months of hard criticism and a tough public debate, the number of members of the youth wing remained almost intact. Some members even defended, on their own initiative, the difficult political decisions in the press.

“WHY PEOPLE STAY WITH US – AND WHAT WE DO TO PRE- VENT THEM FROM LEAVING”

Almost half of the Liberal Party's members of the Danish Parliament has got a past in the youth wing. The aspiration to become a future political candidate contributes to a dynamic and vibrant atmosphere within the youth wing, which tends to be one of the major reasons why people stay.



The list of candidates is expanding quickly when the president of the Danish Liberal Youth, Morten Dahlin, counts the prominent Danish politicians who started their career within his youth wing: The former prime minister, the party's present political spokesperson, a long list of former ministers, a wide range of mayors throughout the country, and the present Secretary General of NATO:

“It's beyond any doubt a great advantage to start in the Liberal youth wing if you want a political career within the Liberal Party. We have 47 members in the present parliament, and 21 of them started here,” says Morten Dahlin, the head of the

youth wing for almost one year.

The close collaboration with the mother party is an important factor in terms of maintaining an interesting and attractive atmosphere:

“It is part of the Liberals' greater political project to ensure good relations with the youth wing. New political talents keep on emerging from here. And for us, the youth politicians, it is quite stimulating to know that your mother party actually invites you to give your say on different specific political positions and also on the overall strategy. It contributes to a serious and professional attitude. We know that our suggestions are taken into consideration and that they might eventually end up in new and more liberal laws affecting the whole country,” says Morten Dahlin.

While the political cooperation with the mother party is an important – and for many an extremely attractive – part of the life and mission of the youth wing, it is still not its primary function. The Liberal Youth was established in 1908 with the purpose of securing general public information with a liberal focus. The youth wing is still aspiring to be a liberal spearhead through initiatives carried out by and for members:

“To keep our members we have to re-think our public information all the time. New members tend to be younger and younger. We have to adjust our work to the different age groups. The young ones need quite a lot of training and capacity building whereas the older members only stay with us if they are involved in more academic discussions and the development of the political positions,” says Morten Dahlin, who also underlines the importance of the learning of valuable competences as a factor which tends to make people stay:

“You will not only find many former members of our youth wing within parliament. They also hold many leading positions in the economic life. I guess it's quite natural. As a youth politician you first of all learn about politics and how to get political influence. But you also learn to network, debate, listen to others, take decisions – and not least motivate others.”

CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIP TO THE MOTHER PARTY

BEST FRIEND OR BEST WATCHDOG



THE ISSUE

Every youth wing will have its own relationship with the mother party. The relationship will be built during years of working together in all kinds of ways.

Some youth wings may have been founded even before their mother party, thus possessing a very strong and independent identity, and they may feel quite free to expose their disagreement with the mother party in public. Other youth wings will always be supportive of their mother party and would hesitate to criticize its actions outside the closed meeting room. Others are in between.

Supportive and critical – but common for almost all: The youth wing will be more *ideological* than the more *pragmatic* mother party.

Whatever the relationship, the youth wing and the mother party share the same values, the same political ideology, and the same vision for society. For this reason, a disagreement between a youth wing and its mother party is not likely to be exposed in public if it would compromise the common political goal of the whole party.

They will cooperate in a wide range of ways, and during the election campaigns the mother party's dependence on the youth wing becomes apparent. Here the youth wing often shows its enormous potential for mobilizing, organising and campaigning. Members of the youth wing will – free of charge, of course – run the campaigns for both new and more experienced candidates, even for ministers. They work day and night, and they make a real political difference.

Most often the relationship between mother party and youth wing is generally supportive in the sense that both work for the common goal. Also many young talents who end up as MPs or even ministers have been incubated in the youth wing. For that reason many see the work in the youth wing as the starting point of their political career.

“BE CRITICAL AND INDEPENDENT WHEN WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE MOTHER PARTY”

There is a certain pride connected to the Young Conservatives. Founded in 1904 it was the first political youth wing at all in Denmark and on top of that it was founded 10 years even before its mother party. The self-esteem also reflects the attitude of Kristoffer Beck when talking about the relationship and the collaboration between the ‘two conservatives’.



“It’s hard to say what the ideal cooperation between the youth wing and the mother party should be like, but I think the way we are doing it works quite good,” says Kristoffer Beck. “The fact that we are ten years older than our mother party, that we actually were here before them, means that we are quite independent – and it has always been like that.”

Whether you as a youth wing were established before or after your mother party Kristoffer Beck underlines the importance of being totally independent and critical. “Not just somebody the mother party can call and tell what to do and think.”

“I believe that due to our history, we are more independent than others, but it’s a very strong part of our culture. Of course this will result in discussions from time to time, but that is also what it’s all about. It is a relationship between two equal partners. We are not here to please the mother party. We are here to discuss and work for conservative policies and a conservative agenda,” says Kristoffer Beck, who also emphasizes the fact that the conservative youth is not a mere producer of future conservative local and national politicians.

“Our role is indeed also to train young people in the conservative values and support them as future debaters,” says Kristoffer Beck.

The fact that the conservative youth is indeed an independent organisation can also be seen as an extra advantage these days, since the mother party is in crisis with facing historically low opinion polls. The bad numbers have no effect on the followers of the youth wing, because it now has more members than at any time during the last 20 years. According to Kristoffer Beck this is because people know they are different from the mother party, “and maybe also because people tend to stick together in times of crisis.”

FIVE TOPICS TO CONSIDER AND DECIDE UPON

1ST TOPIC

FORMAL AND INFORMAL COOPERATION

There are many ways of establishing formal cooperation between a youth wing and the mother party. Some youth wings are offered a seat on the Board of the mother party, maybe with the right to speak but without the right to vote. Some are invited in a smaller or larger delegation to participate in the Congress of the mother party, thus using the opportunity to deliver open and sharp speeches to the delegates. Some youth wing members will have seats on different mother party committees at the local and national level. Other mother parties offer free membership to all youth wing members who will then receive all the communication circulated by the mother party to its members.

Informal cooperation between the two sections of the party will take place in a variety of ways.

The youth wing can, by definition, allow itself greater space to communicate. It can be more frank, more provocative, and therefore at times deliver statements or actions which the mother party supports, but without actually having to say it. The youth wing can also use its youthful identity to set an agenda in a provocative way and the mother party can take advantage of this and continue the debate.

When you discuss your relationship to the mother party you might want to focus on the issue of *independence*: What kind of relationship can you establish in order to support your mother party the best way possible and gain the maximum influence – without losing your independence

TAX IS HOT

Tax on financial transactions is a hot issue within the European Community and in Denmark. The government is against such a tax, while the youth wings of two of the three government parties are strongly in favour. They are using their influence and setting an agenda in order to put pressure on the government – but also indicating that their mother parties were originally in favour of such a tax, but the third party in the government coalition is against it.

2ND TOPIC

BEST FRIEND AND BEST WATCHDOG

Common to all youth wings is that they will use their youthful identity to support the mother party in setting creative agendas. The youth party may not be loyal to the mother party on every single issue, but it is so in terms of overall political outlook or ideology.

But how does the youth wing react when it finds that the mother party is compromising too much on political positions and on shared ideology? This is indeed a valid question to ask and debate at an early stage of the life of your youth wing.

Arguably, there are three positions a youth wing can take (some might adopt different positions at different moments of time) when positioning itself vis-à-vis the mother party:

The more supportive youth wing would rarely criticise its mother party directly in public, but indeed during closed meeting. The attitude would be: “In the public we fight our political enemies – not each other”.

The more critical watchdog will always insist on expressing its opinion in the public debate no matter how contradictory this might be to the position of the mother party. The attitude would be: “An open public debate is one of the most important tools in the development of a free democracy. We express our opinion no matter what.” Even these youth wings would always be extremely careful not to cause any damage to the public support of their mother party.

And the position in between: The youth wing always seeks to support the mother party as far as it can, but from time to time it will challenge it in public. This will only come about after a serious decision, and it will be done in the most constructive way. The attitude would be: “We support our mother party as far as we can, unless we are in total disagreement. The only thing to do in order to be loyal to ourselves and our members is to be open about it.”

3RD TOPIC

WHEN POLITICAL POSITIONS DIFFER?

The youth wing will often take a more radical stand on the various political issues compared to the mother party. This is only natural, as the youth wing does not have to compromise on specific political agreements with other parties. As mentioned above, the youth wing can choose different strategies to express its differences with the mother party.

How often and to which extent disagreement will/should/can happen will differ from party to party. But experience shows that there can definitely be room for a wide range of positions and thus also *potential room for quite a lot of influence* if the youth wing manages to push the mother party in its own direction.

It can be as difficult to push your mother party as any other party to adopt your specific agenda. You will most likely choose one or two topics to focus upon. And you will probably be using some of the same tools as you would in any campaigns to gain influence.

4TH TOPIC

THE ROLE OF YOUTH WINGS DURING ELECTIONS

The national election is the height of any democracy and as such also an important time for collaboration between the youth wing and the mother party. Traditionally, this is when everybody stands together. The youth wing and the

mother party will work jointly for votes, influence and the power to move society in the desired direction.

The youth wings will choose which candidates from the mother party to assist. This could be first-time candidates or previous ministers. The chosen ones can normally be sure they have a campaign manager and a team willing to work day after day for their candidacy. Experience shows (and this is regardless of the size of the mother party) that the mother party's dependence on the youth wing is quite noticeable during elections.

Obviously, the youth wing can use this clout to campaign for their favourite candidates – but normally they will also show their loyalty to the party by campaigning for the frontrunner.

STOP TALKING – START LISTENING

A Danish youth party is inviting politicians to visit different schools for vocational training and *listen* to what the students have to say. Instead of the traditional model where the politicians are talking and the audience is listening, this is the other way round. The politicians are seated as listeners and the youth is in the panel answering the questions from the politicians after having delivered their speech.

5TH TOPIC

FUTURE POLITICAL CANDIDATES OR AGENTS FOR CHANGE?

In some youth wings, it might be controversial to talk about “making a political career” or to characterize the youth wing as a “talent factory” for the production of future political candidates.

The joining of the youth political party is considered an active engagement in the development of a democratic society in itself, and it is important to attract all kinds of people to join the youth wings, not just the future generation of politicians. Some youth politicians therefore define themselves as ‘activists’, thereby keeping a distance to the formal political system.

At the same time, it is a fact that the majority of the politicians in some Danish parties will have joined the respective youth wing before entering into national politics. Such a process is in no way surprising. People will enter youth politics having a strong political commitment, and eventually the engagement develops and new ways of gaining influence and making politics will appear. Also, having joined, campaigned and negotiated for a youth wing for years will provide the youth politicians with major political skills and a solid network not available to everybody. And all of a sudden, the former youth politicians are attractive candidates running for political office.

But the point of departure is worth keeping in mind in the development of the youth wing. As expressed by a Danish youth politician from the Young Conservatives:

“The most important thing for us as young members of a political party is

to be active players in the political agenda. It is important to take a stand and say it out loud, it is almost more important to take a stand on the other political parties and engage actively in the discussions. But one has to acknowledge that it is not about convincing everybody. It's about discussing and debating. That's what makes things happen – what makes people come to a decision on an issue.”

It is a splendid mission for a youth wing in its own right to engage, inform and debate – and to help people make up their own minds.

"YOU JUST CANNOT OVERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL VOICE OF THE YOUTH"

Raised in a politically active family, member of the Danish Parliament, Ulla Tørnæs, has always felt a natural urge to be involved in politics. A core family value is to seek political influence, take responsibility and thereby always striving to change society in a more liberal direction. Starting her political career as president of the Liberal Danish Students and Vice-president of the International Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth was totally in line with her childhood conviction.



"My first political achievement was in the early 1990s. The Berlin Wall had been torn down and there was an urgent need for democracy building in the former communist countries. I was the Vice President in the International Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth and we played an enormous role working together with the youth in the East European countries supporting them in their tremendous task of how to get organised as youth and build up their political structures," says Ulla Tørnæs.

Today she is able to look back on a political career covering almost 20 years as Member of Parliament for the Danish Liberal Party – 10 of them as a Minister of Education and Development respectively.

"Whenever I am with young people, I never miss an opportunity to have a conversation about the major importance of youth being organised, getting involved and taking responsibility. Obviously, it is also the hard way. It's much easier to stand by the side and criticize others. But you can't overestimate the importance for the democratic society of young people engaging, and we really have to encourage this as much as we can," says the former minister.

She points to three important factors:

First, the concrete political skills acquired through the youth political work, where the mistakes, challenges and experiences are invaluable factors for those who later on become MPs.

Second, the direct political influence the youth gets through the direct access to Members of Parliament or – in case the mother party has the power – to the actual government.

Third, the bold messages from youth expressing their views from a solid platform in terms of their youth wing is often very creative and a good stimulus to the political debate.

The combination of formal and informal cooperation between the youth wing and the mother party is hard to beat: "Within our party we have formal cooperation with the youth wing. They are represented on our Board, and once a year we have a formal meeting for all of us where the youth wing presents their views on a long list of issues. On a more day-to-day basis the youth wing will also approach us in a more informal way with their ideas and formulations for new policies."

She also points to the national elections as the hey-day for the two parties to work as a team, the youth wing taking the responsibility for a lot of the practical work, but in which the youth is also indispensable for the development of political campaigns and messages.

"A lot of meaningful cooperation is taking place all the time, but without the independence of the youth wing to come out with sharp messages – also in the recruitment of their members – we would lose half of the potential and the creative potential of the youth," says Ulla Tørnæs.

CHAPTER 6

CAMPAIGNS AND COLLABORATION

AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES



THE ISSUE

For some youth wings, campaigning is an integral part of their political thinking. Awareness-raising and political change through campaigning is deeply rooted within the DNA of youth members. Training members in how to campaign is of the highest priority, and the party members might define themselves as *campaigners* more than as youth *politicians*.

For other youth wings, campaigning is a tool to create attention and debate, using means such as public debates, presence in the press, activities at educational institutions, etc. Such youth wings will not prioritize the building of campaigning skills amongst their members to the same degree as the first group will.

When discussing your political platform we suggest that you consider how campaigns will work for you.

Are campaigns an end in their own right, serving to enhance the political skills and awareness of members and campaigners and the general public? Or do they serve as one of many communication tools in your effort to set an agenda and reach your political objectives?

We hope you will find inspiration in this chapter, including reflections on when and how to join forces and work together in likely and unlikely alliances.

“YOU LIARS..!”

CAMPAIGNING ONE YEAR AFTER THE REVOLUTION

One year after the Egyptian revolution, “The Liars” campaign emerged as a grass root protest against SCAF and the state-dominated media. Movies showing military violence against civilians were shown in streets throughout the country. “A true Egyptian campaign with informal organization and easy for everybody to participate in,” says one of the participants, Hossam Mamdouh.



“The Military Liars” or the “Askar Kazboon” campaign is one of the most successful post-revolution campaigns. It is very simple and everybody can join it! Hossam Mamdouh, 29 years old and member of the Board of the Awareness Party has been amongst the thousands and thousands of young Egyptians taking part in the campaign since its launch in January 2012, one year after the revolution.

The campaign was initially started by a small committee and quickly became an extended grass root movement aiming at debunking the military’s dominance of the state media. It developed into a guerilla theater initiative chanting anti-military slogans and setting up impromptu screenings, usually on busy streets and in public squares, showing abuses committed by Egyptian security forces across the country.

Activists would go from street to street and air small movies of clashes between the military and protesters. “We would give people another picture of who the SCAF are than what they normally see on the state controlled television,” says Hossam Mamdouh.

Initially, the movement hoped it could force the SCAF to resign by calling attention to its abuses over the past year: more than 80 people killed in crackdowns on demonstrations, female protester subject to virginity tests, and at least 12.000 civilians brought before military courts.

“One of the many challenges of the revolution has been to get the true story out to the Egyptian public who is totally dependent on the state controlled TV for their information,” says Hossam Mamdouh. “Most media-exposed actions took place exactly in front of the Egyptian state-run TV on the first anniversary of the revolution. We screened the film on the TV-building itself and protested not only against SCAF but also against the state media responsible for the dissemination of the pro-regime propaganda,” says Hossam Mamdouh.

The screening on the wall went on for days, every evening hundreds of people would come and watch the Kazboon film and key events from the revolution:

“It united people, but it is still very difficult to judge what people got out of it. People have different levels of education; some don’t have any education at all. We don’t know what takes place in peoples’ heads or if we manage to change their minds. But we just have to move on.”

FIVE TOPICS TO CONSIDER AND DECIDE UPON

1ST TOPIC

KNOW YOUR CAMPAIGN

When you start preparing your campaign, you should have *one* short-term and *one* long-term objective, and they should emerge from your political programme. You will probably have other objectives as well, but having one prime objective to measure your success or failure against is indeed important. The world has seen a considerable amount of failed campaigns because the importance of this aspect was underestimated.

Before you start preparing a campaign you will discuss and agree upon the following:

What is the overriding purpose of the campaign? Is it to change behaviour, start a debate, recruit new members, create awareness or change policy?

Who is your target group? Different people use different means of communication. While some can be reached through social media like Facebook, others cannot. Often the personal encounter and meeting people where they are (e.g. through public events) gives good and long term results even though it demands a lot of resources.

How do you measure the (interrelated) immediate and long-term effects that you want to see coming out of your action?

Once you start setting up the indicators for your short-term and long-term objectives, you should be realistic about your achievements. This will be your guiding principle once you start planning your activities, but before doing so you might test the validity of your ideas by asking:

Are volunteers likely to join us on this issue?

Is the press likely to cover us on this issue?

Can we convey a message that is sharp enough to draw attention?

“It’s difficult” might be the answer to all three questions. Then you might decide to move further ahead on another subject, or you might just decide to continue anyway, because the issue is of such importance to you.

Having answered the questions you will start planning your campaign.

2ND TOPIC

CAMPAIGN PLANNING – TOP-DOWN

The Danish Socialist People’s Party Youth distinguishes between two kinds of campaigns: The Top-Down and the Bottom-Up.

Top-down campaigns are approved by the Congress and further developed as a responsibility of the Board. Local branches will indeed participate in the development and in the implementation, but the Board will have the responsibility for implementing the campaign, which will usually target a nationwide audience.

You can use the following checklist when planning a top-down campaign. Also see below the example on how the Social Democratic Youth of Denmark executed a national campaign involving students and the press focusing on the poor conditions in many state-run schools.

- *Name of the campaign*
- *Political need for change*
- *The target group*
- *The time frame*
- *Long-term objective*
- *Short-time objective*
- *Budget*
- *Cooperation with others*
- *List of activities (volunteers, PR-plan, the web, communication with members)*
- *Questions and answers to confront critical opponents*
- *What does success look like?*
- *What can go wrong and how to prevent this?*
- *Evaluation and lessons learned*

3RD TOPIC

CAMPAIGN PLANNING – BOTTOM-UP

Bottom-up campaigns such as those managed by the Socialist People's Party Youth take another approach. In addition to setting a political agenda, the overall objective is actually to empower people by making them aware that they can actually change conditions locally by getting organised and involved in local politics – in this case the Socialist People's Party Youth.

Members of the local branch of the youth wing might start by walking from house to house, asking people about their concerns – and possible ideas for a solution. Having identified different causes they will select one relevant for campaigning using the following questions:

Is it important for a considerable number of people?

Is it easy to communicate – for the citizen and the press?

Is there a clear objective for the campaign?

Is the problem relevant for everybody – or is it mainly young people, children, the elderly?

Is the campaign able to run for a considerable period of time?

Having decided that the topic can actually lift a campaign involving a lot of people, the group will start gathering more knowledge and debate amongst members and local citizens on how to solve the problem. What specific suggestions are found locally on how to solve the problem?

Afterwards, the specific preparation of the campaign will start. An important piece of advice is to be realistic about the objectives compared to your own resources and – most importantly – to be *part of the problem you want to solve*.

If you want better education for children, start setting up homework-support groups.

If you want better playgrounds, take the initiative to build one – show how it can be done.

If you want more men to be engaged in women's rights, then make sure to have men at the forefront of your campaign as well.

In this way people will observe that you are not only spotting a problem, you are also being an active part of the solution. You are not just criticizing, you are also promoting solutions.

4TH TOPIC

THE INVOLVEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

The involvement of volunteers will differ from party to party. As stated previously, some parties consider campaigning as just another activity, and leave it to the most dedicated and qualified members. Others see campaigns as an aspect at the heart of their work. In developing and participating in the campaigns, their members are empowered and made aware of their situation, of politics and of how to promote change in cooperation with others.

Some youth wings have the experience that setting up a specific campaign committee is extremely helpful for the gathering and development of campaign skills. The committee will be composed of a group of people with interest in (and flair for) campaigning, and eventually they will become experts and serve the rest of the party with their knowledge in the development of the campaigns. Some parties find that campaigning is such an important part of their way of working and want everybody to possess campaigning skills. They put massive efforts into building the capacity building of their members (through newsletters, workshop and during the annual congress) to develop the skills.

Your choice will obviously depend on the amount of resources you have to invest in the capacity building of your members as such, but also on your political position on campaigns to begin with: How important is campaigning considered to be in your political platform? Is campaigning an integral part of your awareness raising and your effort to reach your political targets? Or is campaigning considered as just another tool amongst others to draw attention?

These are fundamentally different ways of perceiving your campaigns and members, and naturally the perception of your organisation will reflect your way of designing your campaigns and the involvement of volunteers.

Having said this, the key to a successful campaign will be the involvement of volunteers and in the long run, the following seems to be the rules of thumb: Volunteers will only participate if they have influence on the shaping of the campaign, and volunteers do not want too many meetings – they want action. Be very specific with tasks and the room for influence.

5TH TOPIC

BEST COUNTERPART AND YOUR STRONGEST ALLY

Your cooperation with other political parties can be a very strong tool to set an agenda and reach an objective. Obviously, you can also cooperate with other likeminded organisations (student branches, trade unions, etc.) but here we will focus on the benefits – and challenges – of working with other youth wings. You will most probably have the same considerations in your cooperation with other partners.

Entering into formal cooperation with a political opponent or competitor can be a sensitive issue. You might be sharing knowledge, resources, platforms, contacts, press exposure and volunteers, and you will do it for the sole reason of pursuing a common objective.

Two kinds of cooperation can be considered: cooperation with your political allies and cooperation with your political opponents.

Cooperating with an opponent with whom you agree to disagree is a well-known tool used at all levels of political life – also by youth politicians. Nothing is better at attracting attention than an unlikely alliance, and you might also want to consider this in your cooperation with other counterparts!

Having a debate between two political opponents is the perfect way to enable both sides to present their arguments, ensuring that they will be challenged. Volunteers often fancy these debates and cheer for their favoured politician. This is not only a discipline for official MP candidates. Youth wings can also run debates during and in between election campaigns, addressing political issues of special interest to young people.

The cooperation with your political ally might be easier to arrange and agree upon.

Entering into this kind of cooperation, you might still need to compromise.

It is indeed recommended that you make a list of “sensitive issues” beforehand together with your counterpart(s), and talk them carefully through and agree on how to handle them. Some of them might be very “practical” but nevertheless extremely important for your good and sound cooperation. The following is a list of common sensible issues for inspiration:

How can you work to ensure that all parties are exposed equally in the press? This is difficult as you cannot control the press, but your spokespersons might be able to take turns and avoid competing for attention.

How do you ensure that everybody takes on his or her part of the workload as agreed? A solution could be a lead-party model, in which one youth wing takes the lead, managing the lion’s share of the workload – but also gets the main part of the credit/public exposure.

Joint authorship of materials, shared press releases, placement of names and logos on the material, shared website, etc. may seem like minor issues, but they can cause tremendous discussion.

Having started with the difficulties, obviously what counts in the long run is that you decide on your cooperation because the shared political challenge is too important not to face it together. In joining efforts you communicate to the world how serious you find the problem and attract much more attention.

When talking about cooperation with others, most parties will mention their sister parties in other countries as their best friends and counterparts. A lot of parties will have very good ties and seek to visit each other at least during the annual Congress. Others will hold annual orbi-annual meetings where they meet, share, debate and analyse the current political situation in the region and globally.

“FIGHTING CHICKENS” IN THE NEWSPAPER

Two Danish political youth-wing leaders share a blog on the front web-page of one of the country’s major dailies. It’s called “Fighting Chicken”. The two bloggers will take turns to challenge each other – and their mother parties – every other week. The tone is sharp, yet respectful. The readers tend to like it. They get their weekly dose of strong political analysis seen from two different points of view. And they will draw their own conclusions. For the two youth wings, the exposure is obviously invaluable.

“GENERATION GARBAGE CAN UNITE TO FIGHT YOUTH UN- EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE”

Peter Hummelgaard has been the President of the Social Democratic Youth of Denmark for the last four years. Actually, his period is soon coming to an end, and he has already listed himself as a candidate for the Social Democratic Party ready to run for a seat in Parliament for the next round of elections.



Four years is a long time in youth wing politics. But in spite of Peter Hummelgaard's experience, the present European campaign "Generation Garbage Can" is the first one of its kind in terms of volume, partnership – and probably also seriousness.

"Europe is in deep trouble and the politicians are scrapping a whole generation right now because they haven't taken the problems seriously enough. In Spain every other youth is out of a job. And in Europe it's every fourth. The crisis is very, very serious and we the young people are definitely amongst the first to feel it," says Peter Hummelgaard.

The nature of the problems – and the fact that everybody is hit in the same way by the same crisis – has united the European Social Democratic Youth in a new way in the form of a stronger and more united campaign:

"We have always worked very closely together, learned from each other and met twice a year. But this is the first time we are all together in the same campaign carrying it out on national level and on a shared European Platform," says Peter Hummelgaard.

The campaign has been named "Generation Garbage Can", making further explanation unnecessary. The campaign has focused on the national level with campaign activities on- and off-line, public debates and political pressure. Moreover, a task force has worked at the European level to target European politicians and to lobby for more public spending and investment in jobs for youth:

"On the national level, one of our priorities was a public questionnaire just before the last election looking into peoples' priorities. How did they consider youth unemployment? It turned out it was on top of the voters' agenda and we used this fact to put pressure on the political parties to promise public investment and to guarantee educational offers to young people out of work," explains Peter Hummelgaard. On the European front the priorities have been the same but on a larger level. The Social Democratic Youth parties are lobbying the politicians in the European Parliament to provide youth guarantees, to compromise on the current dominant "saving doctrine" and instead invest in jobs for young people, their lives and future.

"It's obviously a hard struggle in very hard times. We see that it is extremely important to be very, very professional and well coordinated when we have our meetings with the politicians at national level and in the EU. The politicians have little time and they are also stressed by the crisis. We need to be very well prepared, have good arguments and good documentation. In this respect coordination of messages and sharing of experience between the social democrats in the different European countries is just crucial," says Peter Hummelgaard.

DIPD

Danish Institute for Political Parties

Established by law in May 2010 by the Danish parliament. The purpose of DIPD is to strengthen and complement the Danish democracy assistance, particularly through supporting political parties and multi-party systems in selected developing countries. The institute works towards realization of its purpose by supporting party cooperation and capacity building of democratic parties in developing countries

DEDI

The Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute

An independent institution established in Cairo in 2004 as a project under the “Danish-Arabic Partnership Program” with funding from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The strategic aim of the Institute is to enhance political life in Egypt and Denmark, and in Europe and the Arab World at large, and to improve mutual understanding and dialogue between communities living in these areas.

DUF

The Danish Youth Council

An umbrella organisation and common platform for around seventy volunteer organisations working with children and young people in Denmark. DUF’s member organisations are extremely diverse, but they have one thing in common: They all share the aim of encouraging the active involvement and participation of children and young people, not just in specific activities, but in society in general.

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Young peoples' cry for democracy has overturned former dictatorships throughout the Middle East and North Africa. But after a revolution, new challenges emerge. Of critical importance in particular is the building of a new democratic state and the shaping of new democratic parties.

This inspirational guide, covering 30 topics to debate and consider when building up political youth wings, is a joint greeting from Danish youth politicians and activists to all young people working with politics in countries in transition.

The guide has its starting point in the rich diversity of Danish experiences of how to build up and run political youth wings which is one way of securing youth influence on national politics and on the public debate in a democratic society.

The guide is directed at anyone interested in the development of political parties and the involvement of youth. The guide seeks to give inspiration on how to engage and act democratically oneself, within the party, in the co-operation with others and in the building up of a democratic society after the revolution.

The guide is organised in six chapters with five different topics to consider and debate. It also includes 11 interviews with leading Egyptian and Danish youth politicians, who share their experiences of working within democratic parties.