

## **BRIEFING NOTE for the report: *Journeys to Citizen Engagement: Action Research with Development Education Practitioners in Portugal, Cyprus and Greece.***

This report is the result of an action research project on **citizen engagement approaches used by development education practitioners and wider civil society in three countries hit hard by the economic crisis- Portugal, Cyprus and Greece.** The report provides an insight into some of the key elements and challenges of engaging citizens in working for a better world, especially in times of economic austerity and increasing unemployment in Europe. It includes a set of practical recommendations for improving engagement work as well as a 'toolbox' of methodologies and workshop plans to inspire further reflection within the development education community.

### **Key findings:**

**Lack of engagement strategies:** engagement activities often tend to be ad-hoc and project related rather than strategically planned as a long term process of supporting engagement *journeys*. Whilst there was quite a strong conceptual consensus about the fundamental characteristics of an 'engaged citizen' there was less clarity on the role of Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) in enabling this elusive 'engaged citizen' to emerge. Key discussions revolved around whether engagement work is about mobilising for pre-determined changes or facilitating open-ended learning processes.

**The DEAR 'bubble':** DEAR lacks explicit connections to local and national issues, and links and partnerships with other CSOs, social movements and local initiatives for change. There is concern that the DE sector speaks its own complex language and does not tailor engagement approaches to the real needs and concerns of citizens.

**Making local-global links:** connecting the global to the local in a way that is meaningful is an ongoing challenge for the DEAR sector and one which has been accentuated during the crisis, where in many cases there has been a rise in introversion, individualism and nationalism. DEAR engagement efforts are often missing a clear purpose that the people we are trying to engage can relate to.

**Richnesses:** The DEAR community has many richnesses and great potential to embrace change which is not being fully utilised. The time is ripe for reflection and adaptation in order to work towards more effective engagement approaches with the world around us, and ensure the relevance of DEAR in a changing world.

### **Key recommendations for DEAR practitioners:**

- **Be clear about your role in engagement processes-** is the role of a development educator to facilitate, mobilise, inspire and/or build bridges with broader civil society?
- **Connect to local realities and people's needs** – anchor your work in peoples lived reality but open windows to a wider, global reality
- **Develop ownership-** go beyond seeing people as 'target groups' and instead involve them as co-creators of change and in co-creating their own engagement pathways
- **Create new approaches and spaces for engagement-** experiment, explore and engage with alternative visions and initiatives for change being organised by citizens in their local communities
- **Tailor engagement strategies-** identify engagement 'hooks'
- **Cultivate values such as solidarity and community at the heart of engagement approaches**

### **More information:**

Read the **full report** [here](#)

Watch [the webinar!](#)

Contact **Amy Skinner**, DEEEP4 Research Officer for further details.