



MeDevNet

**Capacity and Synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in
Greece, Cyprus and Malta for development**

SDDSM co-laboratory

Athens, Greece

13-15 April 2011



www.medevenet.org

Document Details

Project:	MeDevNet
Title:	SDD SM co-laboratory, Athens, Greece
Version:	V.01
Component:	C II: Capacity Building & Networking
Activity:	A 2: Organise and conduct series of interactive structured dialogue workshops in Greece, Cyprus and Malta with representatives from at least six NSAs and four LAs to develop a concrete strategy of cooperation.
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Which initiatives/actions should be undertaken by the Greek NGOs in order to overcome their current dead-end situation?

A Structured Dialogic Design co-laboratory

Executive Summary

This co-laboratory is part of a cycle of trainings and other activities organised within the framework of the European project “Capacity and Synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Cyprus and Malta for development”, MeDevNet in short.

The MeDevNet project is implemented in the target countries Greece, Cyprus and Malta.

The overall objective of the project is to enhance cooperation of NGDO platforms and LAs in the three countries, Greece, Cyprus and Malta in order to become efficient agents of development and to participate in the planning of and the debate over EU development policy.

The estimated results are: Increased networking, communication and structured dialogue among a broad range of actors involved in international development cooperation, NSAs & LAs in partner countries and EU institutions which will lead to the development of a concrete strategy of cooperation. Capacity built in each partner and associate partner organization on networking, lobbying and advocacy with a focus always on international development cooperation issues. Reinforcement of the communication with the developing world through the cooperation with the experts from UCLGA and the migrants forums.

The MeDevNet project is funded by the European Commission under the EuropeAid program.

Further information can be found at www.medevnet.org

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Introduction

This co-laboratory is part of a cycle of trainings and other activities organised within the framework of the European project “**Capacity and Synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Cyprus and Malta for development**”, MeDevNet in short.

The MeDevNet project is implemented in the target countries Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The project is 75% funded by European Commission and its duration is 18 months.

The **overall objective** is to enhance cooperation of NGDO platforms and LAs in the three countries, Greece, Cyprus and Malta, to become efficient agents of development and to participate in the planning of and the debate over EU development policy.

The **specific objectives** are to:

- Establish collaboration, networking and coordination among Development NGDO platforms and LAs across Greece, Cyprus, Malta with EU institutions and UCLGA
- Empower and build Capacity within Development NSAs and LAs to create effective strategic actions for Development and Cooperation
- Increase dialogue about Development issues

The **estimated results** are:

- Establish a platform to facilitate capacity and synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Malta and Cyprus, as well as to facilitate exchanges of expertise between them in order to develop coherent strategies for Development through structured dialogue.
- Increased networking, communication and structured dialogue among a broad range of actors involved in international development cooperation, NSAs & LAs in partner countries and EU institutions which will lead to the development of a concrete strategy of cooperation.
- Capacity built in each partner and associate partner organization on networking, lobbying and advocacy with a focus always on international development cooperation issues.
- Reinforcement of the communication with the developing world through the cooperation with the experts from UCLGA and the migrants forums.

Partners:

- Development and Education Centre European Perspective
- Future Worlds Center (FWC) – Cyprus
- KOPIN – Malta
- Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of Attica – Greece
- Valletta Local Council – Malta

Associate partners:

- Greek Platform of Non Governmental Development Organizations – Greece
- NGO Platform ‘The Development’ – Cyprus
- SKOP (Solidarjeta u Koperazzjoni) – Malta
- Greek Migrants’ Forum – Greece
- Migrants’ Solidarity Movement – Malta
- The Association of Palestinian Community in Cyprus – Cyprus
- Cameroonian Diaspora in Cyprus – Cyprus
- Municipality of Leukara – Cyprus
- UCLGA – Panafrican

Initiatives/actions undertaken by the Greek NGDOs in order to overcome their current dead- end situation

During the co-laboratory, the participants engaged in a structured dialogue focusing on the following Triggering Question:

Which initiatives/actions can be undertaken by the greek NG- DOs in order to overcome their current dead-end situation

During the SDDSM the participants engaged for three afternoons in a structured dialogue focusing on the above mentioned Triggering Question. The lead facilitator of the SDDSM, Dr. Yiannis Laouris, served as the person coordinating the process. Co-facilitators and CogniscopeTM Operators were Ms. Tatjana Taraszow and Ms. Ilke Dagli.

The participants of the co-laboratory shared 31 ideas/initiatives in response to the question.

During the following stage, the participants categorized their ideas into the following clusters:

- Cluster 1: Developmental Education
- Cluster 2: Collective action
- Cluster 3: Finding Financial Resources
- Cluster 4: Structural Changes



The following figure illustrates into which of the four clusters each obstacles was categorized.

The participants then cast votes for the three ideas that they each felt were most important. The following ideas received votes:

31: (5 Votes) Developmental education

4: (4 Votes) Collective action

10: (4 Votes) Structural Changes in the organizations

11: (3 Votes) Pressure on the State mechanisms

24: (3 Votes) Develop initiatives for funding

2: (2 Votes) Networking

5: (2 Votes) Finding Fixed Resources

7: (1 Votes) Transparency

15: (1 Votes) Identifying links between the problems of the developed countries and the countries of the third world

1: (0 Votes) Information

3: (0 Votes) Non-commercialization

6: (0 Votes) Coordination

8: (0 Votes) Consultation

9: (0 Votes) Broadening the participation base

12: (0 Votes) Donors-Subscribers

13: (0 Votes) Promotion of volunteerism

14: (0 Votes) Available funding

16: (0 Votes) To unify forces

17: (0 Votes) Create synergies with relevant bodies

18: (0 Votes) Create an NGDOs record

19: (0 Votes) Institutional Financing

20: (0 Votes) Presenting the projects

21: (0 Votes) Public awareness

22: (0 Votes) Set off goals and projects in every direction

23: (0 Votes) Ethics Charter

25: (0 Votes) Promotion of reliability

26: (0 Votes) Ideological development of the members

27: (0 Votes) To address themselves to the Society

28: (0 Votes) Democratic governance

29: (0 Votes) Publication of the NGDOs actions

30: (0 Votes) Separating charity work from humanitarian actions and actions of solidarity

Total Votes Cast: 25

Out of the population of 31 proposed ideas, 9 received one or more votes. This is described scientifically by the parameter of *Spreadthink*⁴ or divergence (ST or D respectively), whose value in this case is 15% of disagreement. According to numerous studies, the average degree of spreadthink is 44%. Spreadthink is defined as $(V-5)/(N-5)$ where N is the total number of ideas and V is the number of ideas that received one or more votes.

Based on experience, we can conclude that the participants showed divergence in their ideas regarding the issue, which is higher than the average. This suggests that the participants do not yet demonstrate a high amount of consensus and they might continue to interpret the issue in a different manner.

The results of the voting procedure were used in order to select ideas for the following structural process. The participants were able to structure all 9 ideas which received votes. The resulting “Tree of Influences” demonstrates the most influential ideas, i.e. those which could be most effective in overcoming the current dead-end situation of the Greek NGOs. The tree or map is constituted by four levels of influence.

Tree of Influences

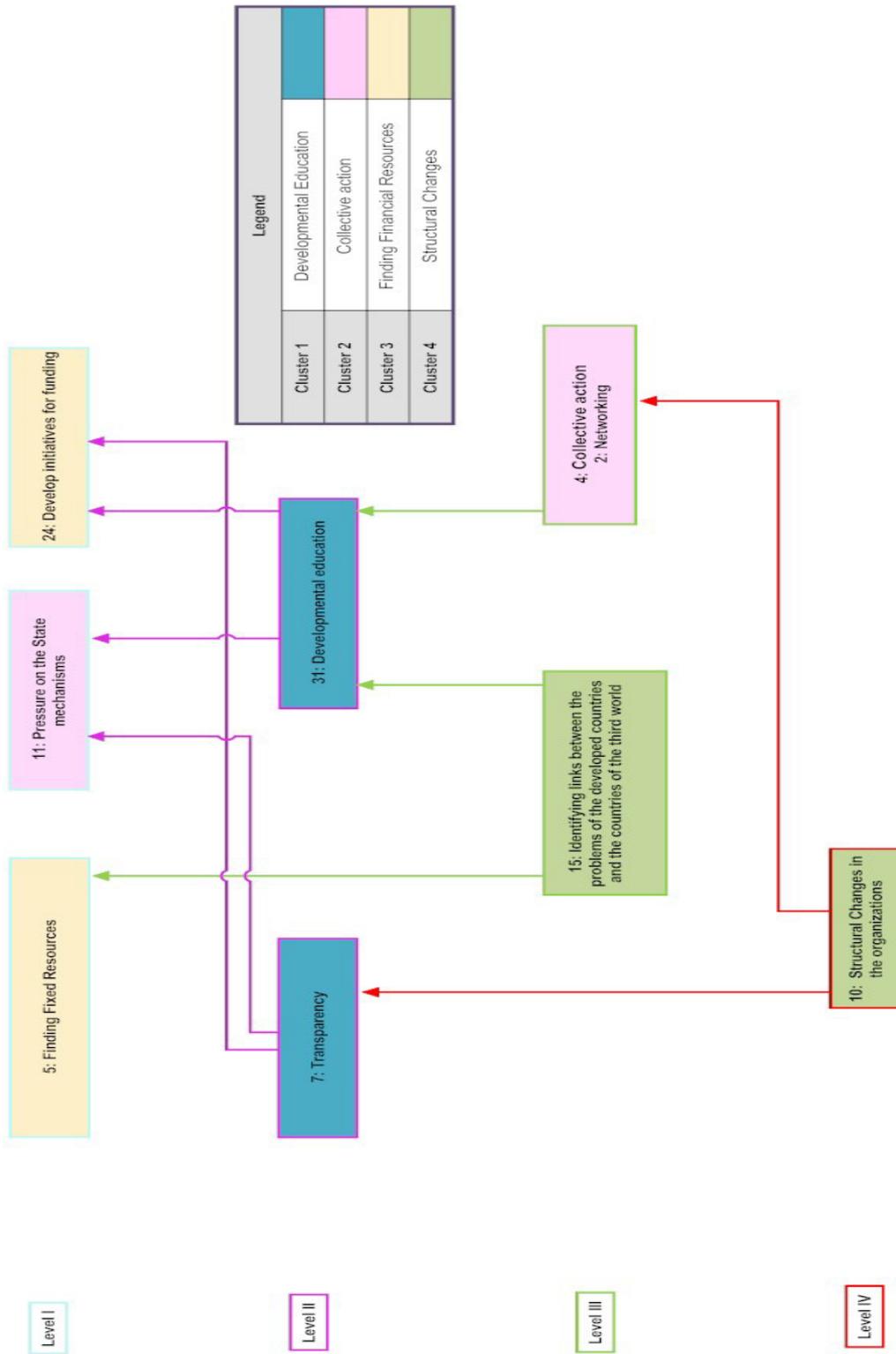
The ‘tree of influences’ or influence map is made up of four different levels. Ideas at the bottom are considered to be the most influential. Making progress or achieving results in the bottom ideas/obstacles makes it a lot easier to address those that lie higher in the map.

In summary, almost all participants agreed that the following ideas are the most influential and agreed that further actions on these root causes will achieve the desired results.

Idea #10: Structural Changes in the organizations

The way this tree should be interpreted is that the actions which aim to support this initiative will have the greatest influence in achieving large-scale organisational change. Progress made through this initiative will create a positive chain of facilitation because it is influencing directly or indirectly practically all initiatives that lie above it.

The idea that lies at the root of the roadmap can be addressed firstly by taking this initiative and work towards a plan/solution for structural changes by acting collectively as a network to identify the links.



Conclusions

With respect to the goals of the co-laboratory from the perspective of the implementation of the SDDSM process, the following is noted:

1. A list of 31 ideas/obstacles was generated in response to the Triggering Question. This is considered satisfactory, even though the average reported in the literature is 64.
2. The ideas/obstacles were clarified and discussed throughout the SDDSM, thus enabling participants to achieve a better understanding of the views of other members and greatly expand their own and others’.
4. Participants voted for 9 of the ideas/obstacles that they considered most important. They subsequently managed to “structure” 9 of these ideas and produce an influence map.
5. The influence map produced in response to the Triggering Question, containing 9 ideas/obstacles in the form of the Tree of Influence or roadmap comprised of 4 levels.
6. The participants had time to discuss and reflect on the influence map and in general agreed that the arrows in the map made sense to them.
7. More importantly, the structured dialogue process empowered the consortium team to identify the most influential initiatives for overcoming the current dead-end situation of the Greek NGDOs.

In sum, the application of the SDDSM process supported the Consortium to identify potential mechanisms that when addressed accordingly and productively will bring new perspectives and approaches to the given problem. Of course the methodology itself will only generate the raw data in the form an ‘Influence Tree’ or roadmap and further input and analysis is needed from the participants to find a way forward.

Table: List of Ideas

- 1: Information
- 2: Networking
- 3: Non-commercialization
- 4: Collective action
- 5: Finding Fixed Resources
- 6: Coordination
- 7: Transparency
- 8: Consultation
- 9: Broadening the participation base
- 10: Structural Changes in the organizations
- 11: Pressure on the State mechanisms
- 12: Donors-Subscribers
- 13: Promotion of volunteerism
- 14: Available funding
- 15: Identifying links between the problems of the developed countries and the countries of the third world
- 16: To unify forces
- 17: Create synergies with relevant bodies
- 18: Create an NGDOs record
- 19: Institutional Financing
- 20: Presenting the projects
- 21: Public awareness
- 22: Set off goals and projects in every direction
- 23: Ethics Charter
- 24: Develop initiatives for funding
- 25: Promotion of reliability
- 26: Ideological development of the members
- 27: To address themselves to the Society
- 28: Democratic governance
- 29: Publicating the actions of the NGDOs
- 30: Separating charity work from humanitarian actions and actions of solidarity
- 31: Developmental education

Facilitator Team

Main Facilitator

Dr. Yiannis Laouris is a Senior Scientist and President of the Cyprus Neuroscience and Technology Institute. He heads the “New Media Lab”. Neuroscientist (MD, PhD) and Systems engineer (MS) trained in Germany and the US. Publishes in the area of neuroscience, learning through computers, the web and mobile phones and about the potential role of IT to bridge the gaps (economic, gender, disabilities etc.) in our society. He is a senior SDDSM Facilitator and has several publications about the theory of the science of dialogic design also together with its Founder Prof. (emeritus) Aleco Christakis. He collaborated with Prof. Patrick Roe to implement SDDSM co-laboratories for COST219ter and COST298. He also collaborates with the EDEAN and DfA projects.

Assistant Facilitators

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Theodora Tzamou

Organizer

Dr. **Eugenia Vathakou** is a well-known Greek scholar active for at least a decade in peace as well as development issues. She has been the motivator behind the establishment of the Greek Platform for Development NGOs and represented Greece in DEEEP and CONCORD. She is also the author of the book “Crises and Peace Processes as Autopoietic Systems in World Society: Examples from Greek-Turkish Relations”. From her post in Development and Education Centre European Perspective, Eugenia collaborated with Future Worlds Center in projects as such as: Accessing Development Education, MeDevNet and TeachMDGs.

Editor

Ms. Anna-Maria Drousiotou has a degree in Economics from the Aristotelio University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She began her career at AGB Nielson Media Research analyzing and training TV audience ratings data and software to media planners from nearly all the Cypriot Advertising Agencies. She then moved on to work in several Advertising Agencies for the past 10 years as a media strategist and media planner working on accounts such as Coca-Cola, NIKE, AMEX, Honda, Nestle, Louis Vuitton, Haagen-Dazs, Frou-Frou Group of companies and others. She has been with Future Worlds Center since March 2007, first as project coordinator of the Safer Internet Awareness Node and later in other roles. She also served as Coordinator for the MeDevNet project.

Participants

Representatives from the following 12 NGDOs, all members of the Greek Platform of NGDOs for Development:

Γιατροί του Κόσμου

Ελληνική Επιτροπή Διεθνούς Δημοκρατικής Αλληλεγγύης

Ευρωπαϊκή Προοπτική Κέντρο Ανάπτυξης και Εκπαίδευσης

Κέντρο Μέριμνας Οικογένειας και Παιδιού

Ελληνική Αναπτυξιακή Δράση

Action Aid Ελλάς

One Earth

Handicap Care Hellas

Athens Network of Collaborating Experts

Ελληνική Εταιρεία Μελέτης και Έρευνας της Διαφορετικότητας ο ΚΟΧΛΙΑΣ

ΠΛΑΤΩ Παγκόσμιος Ερευνητικός και Υλοποιητικός Οργανισμός Ανθρωπιστικής Βοήθειας και Διεθνούς Αναπτυξιακής Συνεργασίας

Methodology: The Process of Structured Dialogic Design

The term “Structured Dialogue” is sometimes used to simply denote a dialogue more organised than the simple “talking” and exchange of ideas. In contrast the Structured Dialogic Design¹ (SDDSM) process is a methodology, which supports the generation of truly democratic and structured dialogue amongst teams of stakeholders with diverse views and perspectives. It is particularly effective in the resolution of complex conflicts, interests, and values, and in achieving consensus based on a common understanding and strategy. It is grounded on 6 complex systems and cybernetics axioms and 7 laws from systems science; it has been grounded both scientifically and empirically in hundreds of settings on a global scale for the past 30 years. Scientists and practitioners worldwide are guided by the Institute of 21st Century Agoras².

The Cyprus team has extensive experience in the application of the methodology. They have utilized it in many public debates in order to facilitate organizational and societal change. For example, they have utilized it in many European networks of experts. The COST219ter³ is a network of scientists from 20 countries (18 European, the USA, and Australia) who were interested in exploring the question of how new technologies ambient intelligence and next generation networks can make their services more useful to people with special needs. The COST298⁴ network also aims to make broadband technologies more accessible to the wider public. The scientific communities of Cost219ter and Cost298 utilized SDD in order to outline the obstacles, which inhibit the application of the above technologies on a wider scale. Based on the results of the SDDs, they designed corresponding strategies for the next 3 years. Insafe⁵ is a European network of 27 Safer Internet Centers who used SDDs in many meetings in order to identify the inhibitors, produce a vision of the future, and agree on a plan of action. More information is available on the CyberEthics Cyprus Safer Internet website⁶.

The UCYVROK⁷ network utilized SDDSM in order to determine the reasons for which young people in Europe do not participate in European programs. The results were presented to the European Parliament. The SDDSM methodology was also used in order to ease the dialogue between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots since 1994. This dialogue culminated in the creation of a peace movement. Many reports are still being utilized by the network, and are available on the program’s page⁸.

SDDSM was designed especially so that it can assist non-homogenous groups in tackling complex problems within a reasonable and restricted time frame. It facilitates the annexation of contributions by individuals with vastly different views, contexts, and aspirations, through a process that is structured, conclusive, and the product of cooperation.

A team of participants who are knowledgeable of a particular situation, generate together a common outline of ideas based on a common understanding of the current problematic situation and a future ideal one. SDDSM promotes the focused communication between participants and supports their ownership of the solution as well as their actions towards implementing it.

Structure and Process in a typical SDD Co-Laboratory

When facing any complex problem the stakeholders can ideally approach it in the following way:

1. Develop a shared vision of an ideal future situation. This ideal **vision map** serves as a **magnet** to help the social system transcend into its future state.
2. Define the **problematique**, also known as the wall of inhibitors i.e., develop a common and shared understanding of what are the obstacles that prevent the stakeholders' system from reaching its ideal state.
3. Define **actions/options** and produce a roadmap to achieve the goals.

The three phases are implemented using exactly the same dialogue technique. Each phase leads to similar products:

1. A **list** of all ideas and their clarifications [SDDSM is a self-documenting process].
2. A **cluster** of all ideas categorized according to their common attributes [using a bottom-up approach].
3. A document with the **voting results** in which participants are asked to choose ideas they consider most important [erroneous priority effect = most popular ideas do not prove to be the most influential!]
4. A **map** of influences. This is the most important product of the methodology. Ideas are related according to the influence they exert on each other. If we are dealing with problems, then the most influential ideas are the *root causes*. Addressing those will be most efficient. If we deal with factors that describe a future ideal state, then working on the most influential factors means that achieving the final goal will be easier/faster/more economic, etc.

In the following, the process of a typical SDDSM session, with its phases, is described in more detail.

- First** The breadth of the dialogue is constrained and sharpened with the help of a **Triggering Question**. This is formulated by a core group of people, who are the Knowledge Management Team (KMT) and is composed by the owners of the complex problem and SDDSM experts. This question can be emailed to all participants, who are requested to respond with at least three contributions before the meeting either through email or wikis.
- Second** All contributions/responses to the triggering question are recorded in the *Cogniscope II*TM software. They must be short and concise: one idea in one sentence! The authors may clarify their ideas in a few additional sentences.
- Third** The ideas are clustered into categories based on similarities and common attributes. If time is short, a smaller team can do this process to reduce time (e.g., between plenary sessions).
- Fourth** All participants get five votes and are asked to choose ideas that are most important to them. Only ideas that receive votes go to the next and most important phase.
- Fifth** In this phase, participants are asked to explore influences of one idea on another. They are asked to *decide whether solving one problem will make solving another problem easier*. If the answer is a great majority an influence is established on the map of ideas. The way to read that influence is that items at the bottom are root causes (if what is being discussed are obstacles), or most influential factors (if what is being discussed are descriptors of an ideal situation or actions to take). Those root factors must be given priority.
- Sixth** Using the root factors, stakeholders develop an efficient strategy and come up with a road map to implement it.

Further Information on the science SDDSM

The interested reader who might want to find out more about the underlying science of structured dialogic design may begin by researching the terms “Lovers of Democracy”, “Hasan Ozbekhan”, “Aleco Christakis”, “Club of Rome”, “Structured Dialogic Design”, “Cyprus Civil Society Dialogue”, etc. Available are also two books co-authored by the Father of the science^{9, 10}. A number of wikis are also dedicated to the science^{11, 12, 13}. Selected publications include a Description of the technology of Democracy¹⁴.

There are several publications of the Cyprus group, which describe the application of SDDSM in the Cyprus peace-building process^{15, 16, 17}.

Furthermore, two recent publications provide an easy-to-comprehend introduction to the methodology and the ethical considerations associated with its application^{18, 19}.

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Acknowledgements

The Facilitation Team that organized the SDDP co-laboratory would like to thank all the participants for their participation, their enthusiastic contributions, time, energy and expertise they brought to the dialogue. Their hard work, perseverance and humour made the workshop's experience both richly diverse and productive.

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