The challenges young people are facing today are complex and diverse. There are more opportunities to learn and participate but fewer established pathways. Last June we experienced strong momentum for participation with the opportunity of contributing to Europe’s edification through the European elections. The possibility of free choice is not granted everywhere: there are still countries where the population is deprived of free and independent elections.

As we witnessed in June, young people tend to evade traditional participatory forms, such as the elections, and are searching for new ways and new approaches to be part of society. The European Commission already acknowledged this fact in its 2007 Communication entitled «Promoting young people’s full participation in education, employment and society» and called on Member States to increase the investment in young people to promote their education, employment, social inclusion, health and active citizenship in a lifecycle approach. Key to young people’s full participation is access to good jobs which also requires qualitative and relevant education. All young people need to have the skills and possibility to achieve personal accomplishment and social well-being. Promoting the full participation of young people and providing opportunities for them to express their creative energy is also a basic component in building innovative, knowledge based European economies.

Youth participation is still at the top of the European agenda as a priority for the coming decade when it comes to youth policy. The new strategy entitled «Youth - Investing and Empowering», proposed by the Commission in April, includes an overarching goal aimed at improving the access and full participation of all young people in society.

Civic participation is a large concept going far beyond participation in the elections. One of the concrete manifestations of young people’s participation is, for example, the voluntary service which enables young people to acquire skills and develop values such as mutual understanding, dialogue and intergenerational solidarity and thus make an important contribution to society.

Another form of empowerment for young people’s is structured dialogue. To be involved in reflections and discussions on Europe and on global issues, be it the environment, immigration or health policy, is also the way to shape the face of Europe and bear responsibility for the future. Since the structured dialogue with young people is supported, among others, through the Youth in Action Programme, notably by means of Action 1.3 (Youth Democracy projects) and Action 5.1 (Meetings between young people and decision makers), I would like to invite young people to seize those opportunities offered by Europe, to get involved and make a difference, not only for their immediate environment, but also for Europe and the rest of the world!

Feel committed! Participate!

1 http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

Pascal LEJEUNE
Head of Unit
European Commission
Directorate-General for Education and Culture
Youth in Action Programme
**Youth participation in Action**

The Youth in Action Programme put a strong focus on the participation of young people in democratic life in order to encourage them to be active citizens. The programme defines participation on the basis of the Council resolution on the common objectives for participation by and information for young people:

- To increase the participation of young people in the civic life of their community;
- To increase the participation of young people in the system of representative democracy; and,
- To allow a greater support for various forms of learning to participate.

Alongside Youth Initiatives, Youth in Action introduced 2 new activities which, in essence, may be considered the most “participative”.

**Action 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects** of the YOUTH in Action Programme offers financial and technical support for groups of young people eager to play an active role in society. It can be a project which: promotes the involvement of young people in participatory structures; develops the dialogue between public authorities and groups of young people; facilitates the dialogue between public authorities and young people who are not members of organizations; creates structures or strategies for bringing young people closer to political decision-making; identifies and overcomes obstacles to the participation of young people in democratic life.

Because this is a new Youth in Action activity (Action 1.3), there is a free place for innovation. Nevertheless, it’s clear that a Youth Democracy project has to be based on a real partnership, both at local and at trans-national level. More technically, a project should involve at least 2 countries with 2 local partners per country.

**Action 5.1 “Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy”** is aimed at initiating a dialogue between young people, the youth field in general and the policy makers. It is per excellence, the instrument provided by the Youth in Action Programme to implement so called “Structured Dialogue” in the Youth field.

These meetings can be organised at national or European level and can be aimed at either opening a space for political debate or consultation or for building bridges between different stakeholders, such as a dialogue between the formal and non formal education fields.

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As described in the previous paragraphs, there are new opportunities offered by the programme to support Youth participation. However, it still needs some development in terms of promotion, setting common understanding of this concept in quite a diverse European youth field, and in providing useful resources.

In this context, in 2007, the European Commission asked our Resource Centre to widen its scope of action to tackle this new priority and to help promote political and social youth participation.

In response, SALTO-YOUTH Participation is working to gather and disseminate resources and information related to this priority through its website and publications. The aim is to create a space for reflection and for exchanging practices and ideas that should enable young people and youth workers to develop quality participative projects.

The purpose of this issue of the magazine is to give the floor to those who have developed actions and projects aimed at increasing the possibility for young people to take an active part in society. In the following pages, you will find some inspiring projects which have been supported by National Agencies over the past two years.

In this post European election context, which showed a low level of participation in a majority of member states, it is also important to discover some initiatives that promote new forms of participation (E-Youth Work, Youth Participation & Inclusion) as well as to reflect on the major challenges that still exist to establishing the real engagement of young people in democratic life.

And last but not least, this magazine also includes also some significant examples of educational support provided in the field of participation by the Resource Centre over the past two years, such as the training courses for Action 1.3 “Get Involved”, the Seminar on Youth Influence at local level and the publication on the Coaching developments in the programme countries entitled “Where is my Coach”.

SALTO Participation hopes that you will enjoy reading this magazine and that you will find it useful and inspiring.
European cooperation in the youth field has been strengthened since the European Commission published the White Paper in 2001. Cooperation today is based on three general areas of activity:

1 - Cooperation through the open method of coordination on four common objectives: participation of young people, information to young people, voluntary activity among young people and better knowledge of young people,

2 - Mainstreaming of a youth perspective in other policy areas*

3 - The European Youth Pact.

Documents addressing European and national structures exist, but does the structure itself guarantee success for real youth participation? There are many methods of lobbying youth interests, however, there is still a need to map out the methods of participation and discuss good practices, taking into account visions and hopes as well as priorities for the coming decades. With this in mind and with a focus on YOUTH PARTICIPATION as one of the main priorities in the field of youth policy, it seemed an appropriate moment to look deeper into the structure of the national frameworks for cooperation and to map out methods designed to be implemented directly at local/municipal level.

Thus during one week in March, the Swedish National Agency together with SALTO Participation and Jönköping Municipality organised a seminar on youth influence at local level.

The objectives of the seminar were to exchange knowledge, practices and experiences in terms of youth participation, discuss the present situation and future challenges in the youth field; explore different European and national funding possibilities for strengthening meetings between young people and decision makers, and to create a compendium of existing methods that supports successful work on youth participation. The purpose of this compendium was also to make it easier for everyone working in the youth field to find guidance and inspiration.

Further implications of the event included encouraging contact and sharing of best practices between youth workers, integrating an international dimension to their national realities; using European programs such as Youth in Action and the Council of Europe, and last but not least, developing greater understanding of other existing national funding in The European Commission.

Greater focus on national context

In order to have a better overview of the situation in different countries, we asked all the participants to describe the national structure by which young people have the opportunity to influence/participate/contribute to the life of their community.

In addition to this, they were asked to describe how they work with youth influence and if possible, identify success factors.

Last but not least, they were also asked to describe one practice that best illustrated an activity that they have recently carried out in their organization.

The starting point for this was questions tackled during the seminar such as: ‘what works?’ in different national contexts and under different circumstances, and ‘what does not work?’
Non-formal learning

The seminar’s pedagogical platform was founded on Non-Formal Learning and focused on interactive discussions rather than theoretical inputs. The aim was to facilitate well-grounded discussion and the sharing of opinions and ideas, engage participants in finding a common ground and move towards some potential concrete outcomes from this new knowledge.

Profile of the participants

The participants were chosen from different areas of representation of youth participation. The group was composed of operative youth workers active at municipal level and active youth leaders and young people themselves who have practical knowledge and expertise in the topic. The selection of participants was made by the respective National Agency.

Advance Planning Visit

The advance planning visit was organized in February in Stockholm and was very successful. We had fruitful discussions and exchanged ideas with Salto Participation Resource Centre, our trainers and Jönköping Municipality, the municipality hosting the event which has worked successfully on youth policy and young people’s influence at various levels. This pre-meeting made it easier to identify the profile of the participants and to structure the program. We also spent time highlighting the issue of youth influence in a European environment and which methods were practised in local/regional structures of various kinds.

Principal challenges

The seminar proved that the conditions for real youth participation were not equal for all the countries represented.

This applies, for example, to the objective of promoting young people’s voluntary activities. There are wide differences in the ways different European countries organize, support and view national youth structures. It was however, possible and positive to discuss similarities and differences and to see common trends towards more far-reaching cooperation. Involving politicians in the work to a greater extent is a great challenge and young people are still significantly under-represented among elected representatives in local government and on central-government committees and boards.

Sweden is at an intermediate level in terms of national coordination. In Sweden there is a ministry responsible and national targets for youth policy. But it is the Swedish municipalities which have autonomy so youth policy is not governed by the State.

The level of participation of young people in non-governmental organizations in Sweden, for example, is relatively high in international terms, but is lower than among the adult population and has declined in recent years, particularly among young women as stated in a Swedish National Report to The European Commission.1

A kind of forum for youth influence exists and has been recognized in all countries represented in the seminar, with minor variations. Among the most common forms the following could be mentioned: youth councils, youth parliaments, youth ombudsmen, citizen’s proposals etc.

1 Source: the Swedish National Evaluation Report to the EU Commission on the youth-political cooperation in EU (2008-11-08).

Success factors

There are a number of aspects which support successful youth influence activities at a local level. Some of the success factors were highlighted during the seminar.

The overall conditions agreed to by all participants were that in order to have real influence all young people should have access to influence, especially in areas such as - education and training, life-long learning, mobility, employment, social inclusion, combating racism etc.

It turned out that some municipalities in Europe had formalized this work by, for example, adopting some form of cross-sectoral strategy for work aimed at improving the living conditions of young people. The cross-sectoral cooperation here implies that the roles young people play (in their local societies) should be more diverse.

Young people need a mutual relationship with different sectors of their communities in order to enliven their organizations and support action plans with a youth perspective in them. If this works, their communities better recognize youngsters, they can be more active and the action plans can be more sustainable.

Most youth constellations (like youth forums, youth councils, youth parliaments etc), however, often resemble adult decision-making structures and primarily prove that young people and youth leaders/workers etc linked to them often feel the pressure to conform to traditional adult decision-making structures, which is not always an appropriate or effective approach.

Given the structural and cultural differences between the countries, it is clear that it is not possible to copy a project or define a perfect recipe for real youth influence in another local or national context.

However, there were some indicators that seemed universal. Success factors such as owning responsibility, flexibility and encouragement were key to good results in most of the youth projects that were presented during the seminar.
I. Krakow, Poland

Lukasz is a student in his hometown, but he also volunteers as a scout leader. One way he uses to promote youth participation in his environment is to arrange “familial picnics”. He describes it as a kind of meeting where inhabitants can meet each other and have a good time together.

The most important thing, he says, is the time the youngsters spend preparing the meeting. This gives them a chance to contact the decision makers for help and, on these occasions, they are likely to help out. This also helps the decision makers to see the good side of the youngsters.

Picnics, Lukasz thinks, are very popular in all countries. They can also be varied in a lot of ways and have different themes such as “European Picnics” or “Picnics with European Funds”, to give some ideas about and input from European customs and possibilities.

The reason this is a good way to work with youth participation is that it is a good opportunity for young people to do something, not only for themselves but for society. It is also good to have co-operation between young people, decision makers, entrepreneurs and all the “actors” who live in the region, as it facilitates the cooperation between young people, decision makers, entrepreneurs and all the “actors” who live in the region.

2. Piteå, Sweden

Monica is a youth coordinator in the municipality of Piteå in the north of Sweden. The most successful initiative for youth participation in her context is “a Bag of money”, an ongoing process of meeting young people on their own terms. The money is available for young people between 13 – 20 years of age. It can be used for any activities, such as skate ramps, concerts or computer events.

The idea for the activity must come from the youngsters themselves and the time between the application and the decision for financial support should be a maximum of 7 days! As a youth coordinator, Monica has the role of counselor during the process and gives positive energy to the youngsters. She also helps them get the right tools for making the project real. To make communication as easy as possible she uses the internet and SMS, as well as personal meetings, when contacting the youngsters.

The success factor, Monica thinks, is the money, which can be spent quite independently by the youngsters, together with the pedagogic set up with a lot of help and support if needed. The “Bag of money”- initiative has been rewarded by the local business community. In the price justification is written: “To dare to change the track and test new ideas requires courage. It also requires that one dares to acknowledge ones shortcomings and the need for development. Piteå municipality has made all of this and the initiative has quickly established itself as a model for other municipalities around the country.”

3. Donegal, Ireland

Kellie works as a youth councillor in Donegal Youth Council in the Republic of Ireland.

In April 2008, she participated in the organization of an “Agenda Day” in a local town called Letterkenny together with seven other councilors. This brought together 80 young people and 30 key adults to discuss four main issues affecting young people in the area. The issues of interest at the time were anti-social behavior, the mosquito (high frequency device to move on young people gathering in the wrong places), facilities and discrimination.

The councilors themselves chose the venue, the food, the program, sent out invitations, and along with other young people they worked as facilitators and note takers on the activities during the day. A Youth Councilor and the chair of the Joint Policing Committee jointly chaired it.

The day began with speakers from the community, both young and old, with presentations by the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Youth Information Center on The Mosquito, and an overseas student studying at the local college. After presentations, round table discussions started on the subjects in question. The young people had their own session and the adults had their discussion in another room. At the end they gathered together in a common (and very honest) discussion. Everything discussed during the day was noted and all participants got their own copy of the document. It was also presented at the Local Electoral Area Meeting. It is still a work in progress.

1 Interview by Helena Gilling

METHODS

One of the main aims of the seminar was to explore the methods, which have been developed to reinforce understanding and knowledge of real youth influence in the youth field.

Participants from different countries and different backgrounds shared several methods. The compendium we are creating shows a variety of existing methods that are tested and used by youth workers and young people themselves and that support successful work on youth influence. While looking deeper into the ways in which the Swedish National Board for youth affairs works, four main methods of uncovering the needs of young people when it comes to their living conditions, interests and engagement in local society, were highlighted:

1 - The interview technique (as the name implies, this method involves talking with people and asking them questions),

2 - Questionnaires, which are used in almost all countries as it is possible to collect answers from a large number of people. Here a questionnaire LUPP (local follow-up of youth policy) used in Sweden and conducted by Swedish Boards for youth Affairs could be mentioned as a good example. The questionnaire itself includes many questions about young people’s living conditions in Sweden.

One section is especially dedicated to politics, society and influence. In this section young people could relate their views on social issues, political participation, major policy initiatives and influence in society.
A method for finding out strategies and direction for youth policy in a country could be to set up FOCUS groups. These groups involve a number of demographically similar people at a single time. In Sweden it all started a few years ago when the Swedish Board of Youth Affairs was given the task of investigating how well young people could affect their own living conditions and if young people had real influence in Swedish society. One way to find out about this was to create so called “focus groups”. During these discussions one of the ideas that came up was to highlight the issue of youth influence at a European level. The purpose was to find out about the relationship between European documents on youth influence and local structures in the different countries and how it was possible to work with real influence within this set-up. It was also a chance to discover similarities and differences and to see what we can learn from each other.

In many cases there is no need to conduct new research to uncover the information needed, but rather to find existing research. Therefore one of the most valuable sources, especially when it comes to youth influence, is to read the documents already available at European level about the subject.

The methods used today are generally regarded as adequate. The open method of coordination, used in European member states, has been productive in the sense that it has reinforced an already largely established focus on national youth policy. But what meetings and what forms of dialogue exist between decision-makers and young people in our countries?

The methods discussed during the seminar (both during the interviews with a journalist and informally) can be used by young people, youth leaders, decision-makers, and anyone else who works with youth issues.

There are many methods for organizing meetings and most of those considered in this report take place in community venues such as youth centers/other youth gathering places. Real meetings among young people and politicians, for example, can be one stage of creating growth, survival and development in a municipality or organization.

1. The European Council adopted the open method of coordination in 2002, it is calling in particular on the Council to establish the common objectives and a timetable for follow-up reports from the Member States for each priority. It is also stressed that those policies and initiatives that affect the young people both in a national and at European level take into consideration matters such as the needs, the situation, the living conditions and the expectations of youth.
The above quote concisely describes what the essence of participation is: full involvement of the (young) person, activity/non stillness and availability of opportunities. The latter also comes into play through a specific sub-action of the “Youth in Action” Programme: 1.3 - “Youth democracy projects”.

Since 2007, SALTO-YOUTH Participation has taken several initiatives to promote this particular Action but also youth participation in general.

**Our flagship**

“Get involved” is a training course for youth workers/leaders/policy makers who want to develop “Youth democracy projects” with young people.

It aims to foster the competences necessary for carrying out such projects and has been implemented three times: Antalya, December 2007, Pamplona, Sep. 2008 and Castello Branco, April 2009, “serving” more than 80 participants.

It comprises a participatory, experiential and dynamic learning infrastructure. Participants are invited to explore and cooperate in the field of youth participation. Good examples are presented and exchanged in order to inspire without, however, restricting the creativity and individuality of the participants. Quality is sought practically, with concrete actions to be taken and measures to be applied. Youthpass, the Key Competences and self-assessment have been integrally inserted into the curriculum. The elaboration of project ideas and the creation of an action plan highlight the importance of following up the learning which occurs.

What makes a Youth democracy project?

So far, “Get involved” has amply contributed to shaping the “art & practice” of youth democracy projects; it has actually created and nurtured strong links between the “what it sounds like” and “how in practice it could be” stages. As may be seen from the participants’ needs analysis, the “idea” behind youth democracy projects is often a bit unclear, and maybe even complicated:

- Can’t see a meaningful difference between action 1.2 “Youth initiatives” and action 1.3 “Youth democracy projects”. Aren’t they both promoting youth participation?
- If action 1.3 “Youth democracy projects” is inviting young people to a dialogue with politicians, how is it different to action 5.1 “Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy”?

Many are puzzled by the above questions.

The technical differences can be easily spotted in the Programme Guide. Essentially, a “Youth Democracy Project” is a youth initiative that should somehow encourage young people’s participation in the democratic life of their community, be it at local, regional, national or international level.

A “Youth Initiative” offers young people the opportunity to try out ideas and foster project management related skills (although, undoubtedly, the very fact that something is being done within or for the community illustrates a dimension that partly overlaps with what has been said above for “Youth democracy projects”).

Admittedly the line is thin; but similarities are there to remind us that underneath all “Youth in Action” Programme-related actions, there are common elements to be promoted and nurtured: European citizenship, active youth participation, inter-cultural understanding and respect between the peoples of the continent and beyond, to name but a few.

With Action 5.1 “Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy”, the differences are more evident: a “Youth Democracy Project” has an open format; it is a series/combination of various participatory activities (of diverse intensity and content) that build upon and link with one another. Action 5.1 is about a meeting and/or a seminar. Full stop.

**GET INV(ALL)VED**

“In a nutshell participation means to be involved, to have tasks and to share and take over responsibility. It means to have access and to be included.”

Peter Lauritzen, 1942 - 2007

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Iva Havlickova
Trainers
Athanasios Krezios

S A L T O
P A R T I C I P A T I O N
y o u t h
2009

Participants from France, Slovakia and Portugal have decided to carry out a project that will invite 100 young people from each country to create “a chair for every one of them, with symbolic design and meaning, according to their desires, needs, expectations and visions”. The results will be exhibited and inserted into a media campaign that will eventually call for the attention of politicians and lead to debate among them and the creators of the chairs.

Examples to inspire

A core element of the “Get involved” curriculum is the elaboration and development of project ideas. Their quality and content has so far shown that possible obscure points (such as those described above) become crystal clear and that deep conceptual understanding is achieved and leads to innovation.

Participation on screen

Participants from Denmark, The UK, Italy and others have decided to use video making (as this is something really appealing to young people nowadays…and totally accessible) and invite young people to express their views on the existing participatory structures in their respective countries and on how democracy works. An international meeting will offer a space for everyone to encounter the works and their creators, exchange opinions and ideas and draw conclusions and recommendations to be shared with politicians during open debates or through other mediums.

100 chairs

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ACTIVA_T

Participants from Portugal and Spain have decided to realize a project that will provide young people with the space and the means to work on and put down on paper their ideas about how to make youth activities - either run by associations, the Municipality or youth clubs/centres - more attractive or appealing to their needs and expectations. Through use of the Internet, and also during an international meeting, participants from both countries will have the chance to further elaborate their ideas and come up with a document that can play a consultative role for those designing National Youth Policies in the respective countries.

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“Get involved”; has it really helped young people to be more involved, to have a say and make a difference?

While keeping in mind the difficulties of monitoring the follow up of projects which occurred during the training courses, we reckon that competences and motivation have greatly increased. Concluding from the evaluation of all 3 previous courses, partnership and networking has been fostered, ideas have been elaborated and tuned, the concept of youth participation has been deeply comprehended while its practice in different countries has raised interest, and curiosity and inspired many. In parallel, knowledge of the “Youth in Action” programme has increased, inter-cultural sensitivity has been cultivated and the feeling of being a citizen of the European Union has been nourished.

So far so good

The current social, economic, cultural and political situation – defined by such major issues as increased unemployment, extension of the “youth age”, rapid development of new media/ICTs, a decline in interest in political processes along side the growth, in some countries, of extreme political parties will further shape the curriculum of the course, something of which the training team is firmly aware and ready to act on.

The widely held belief (and for a big proportion of the youth population, undeniably true) that politicians have/will never listen to young people is always a motivational obstacle that we are asked to face; but good examples from different countries (and, rather surprisingly for holders of this belief, from their respective countries), play a significant role in changing this attitude.

Still, decaying interest in political processes is probably sourced in what has been illustratively described as “deaf democracy” so the above mentioned belief is probably valid in several parts of the continent.

More than a few times during our training courses, we came across figures related to shaping youth policy (either participants or external speakers/contributors) who genuinely expressed their interest in such actions and who are ready to push things forward. Not only will they hear (listen??!!), but they expect and need to be told!

Who wouldn’t like to realize his/her full potential? Justifiably, through a rather long held experience of SALTO YOUTH Participation, young people would; definitely!

Young people are ready to get inv(all)ved!

Suggested reading

Council of Europe, 2007, “Have your say …”
The development of Action 1.3 and 5.1 in Germany since 2007

European Youth Policy and Participation started to be major topics in Germany in 2003. Since then various conferences, seminars and training courses have addressed both themes. So, when the new YOUTH IN ACTION Programme started in 2007, enriched by the two new Actions 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects and 5.1 Youth Seminars, youth organisations were already aware of the new focus of the Programme.

To encourage beneficiaries to develop projects in Action 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects, two information and planning days were held which firstly provided the 120 potential applicants from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Switzerland with technical information on the new Action 1.3 and some input on representative democracy and participation. Secondly, they offered the opportunity to discuss project ideas and meet partners from other countries.

The fact that Germany held the European-Presidency in the first half of 2007 supported the implementation of Action 5.1 Youth Seminars. To prepare the Presidency Youth Summit, two pre-conferences were organised.

In addition, in spring 2007 the German National Agency initiated an expert meeting on Structured Dialogue where relevant actors from the youth field came together and discussed the new concept for the implementation of the Structured Dialogue, published by the European Commission shortly before. These experts formulated criteria to help the implementation of Structured Dialogue in Germany and The European Union and to secure its impact.

These measures, the training and partnership building activities offered by SALTO Participation and the network of National Agencies as well as a general interest in participative projects in Germany resulted in 8 granted Youth Democracy Projects in 2007 and 17 granted projects in Action 1.3 in 2008. In Action 5.1, six Youth Seminars were granted in 2007 and nine in 2008.

European Youth Week 2008 was used to focus attention on European Youth Policy. In cooperation with EURODESK Germany and the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR), the German National Agency issued a Call for Proposals for small-scale projects that were to take place during European Youth Week in November 2008 and which focused on European consultation on the future of European cooperation in the youth field. Through this call 40 various projects were supported involving approximately 3,500 young people.

The experiences and activities of 2007 and 2008, together with the results of the expert meeting and the fact that the Action 5.1 budget could already easily have been spent in 2007, has led to the development of a refined national concept for the implementation of Structured Dialogue in Germany. At the moment (Spring 2009), promising concepts are being developed in several federal states.

The biggest remaining challenge, and one which is being formulated by most of the projects, is how to encourage the participation of politicians and those responsible for Youth Policy.

1 Equal Opportunity and Social Participation for all Children and Youth, 13.-16.04.2007, Cologne
2 “Youth moves politics”, a combination of local and regional activities organised by young people and a final conference on regional level the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia and an international seminar that was prepared by local conferences in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Lithuania and Poland with the title “Equal opportunities and European education” in Saxony-Anhalt.

1 Two questions were answered: What are the main challenges to be tackled by youth policies in the coming years? Which of these challenges are of an European Dimension and should become a priority for future youth policies at European level?
2 An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering, A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities, Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, April 2009.
3 According to this concept, that was published in the beginning of 2009, projects in Action 5.1 should fulfil the following criteria: Activities are co-ordinated on the level of the federal states (Bundesländer) by a regional coordination organisation - they consist of various local and regional activities - they involve in various many different partners on different levels as possible - they are supported by the relevant federal ministries - they involve politicians and foster a direct dialogue between young people and people responsible for youth policy - they directly and actively involve as many young people as possible - they are published at least on local and regional level - their topics focus on the needs of young people as well as on the official agenda of the Structured Dialogue.
Action 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects

1 - “Concept’08” organised by Dachverband der Jugendgemeinderäte Baden-Württemberg and partners from Germany and Finland with the aim of intensifying the cooperation between the Youth councils of Baden-Württemberg and Finland. In Summer 2008 the partners met in Germany and initiated an exchange of experiences on communal and European participation, including guests from Switzerland and Serbia. The common intention of the partners is the installation of a joint online platform aimed at the exchange of experiences and projects from all the youth councils in Europe.

2 - “Participation now – Youth hearing for Europe”, organised by Stadtjugendring Stuttgart e.V. and the twin towns of Strasbourg and Lodz. 60 Young people were interested in and qualified to work together on topics relevant to young people at a local level and with a European dimension. During European Youth Week 2008, they met in Strasbourg at the European Parliament and discussed their concerns with members of the Parliament. Following this they realised jointly developed projects aimed at influencing local politics. In Summer 2009 there will be a final conference to gather the results and to evaluate the project.

3 - “European Child summit 2009”, organised by Naturfreundedejugend Deutschlands and international partners from 6 countries. During the summit that took place in the city of Karlsruhe in Spring 2009, 80 young delegates aged 13 to 17 brought together their wishes, claims and ideas for the future (about, for example, Integration, Education, Environment) in an agenda containing demands and voluntary commitments and formulated a “Future Treaty”. This Treaty was discussed with national and European politicians.

Action 5.1. Youth Seminars


2 - “Chance Europe 2020 – Impulses for the European Youth Policy of tomorrow”, organised by FEZ-Berlin Kinder- und Jugendfreizeitzentrum Wuhlheide, Berlin in 2008. This International Youth Congress was aimed at the development of creative future perspectives and fostered a Structured Dialogue between 120 young people from 9 countries and people responsible for Youth Policy. The project continues in 2009.

3 - “Young people meet politicians”, organised by Fokolar-Bewegung e.V. in 2008. The project created a very successful and sustainable Structured Dialogue between 70 young people and politicians from the city of Solingen and consisted of a five-day workshop on European topics, including a one-day final conference with international guests. As a follow-up the group visited Brussels.

1 More information at www.jugendgemeinderat.de/dokumente/spotlights/concept08.pdf
2 More information at www.participation-now.eu
3 More information at www.kindergipfel.eu

1 More information at www.europa-geht-weiter.de
2 More information at www.brauche-ich-politik.de
The ZOEY Foundation for Arts and Culture has just finished its first Youth Democracy Project, aimed at making youngsters growing up in the outskirts of Lisbon and Utrecht more aware of democratic processes. KATERINA PEJOSKA and KOSTANA BANOVIC led this project, called “Under Construction”. What was it about? What were the main differences between the Netherlands and Portugal? And did they succeed in reaching their project goals?

Multiple phases
“Under construction” consisted of multiple phases. Firstly the young people involved were introduced to each other over the internet using different multimedia techniques, one of which was audiovisual pieces of art made from scratch.

“We used media to let them tell their story: Who am I, where do I live, what does my world look like?”

Thereafter the participants went to each other’s countries to find out what democratic citizenship means and what it does for them. Kostana explains: “The aim of this project was to give underprivileged youngsters a possibility to make their voices heard. Girls and boys with different cultural backgrounds engaged in a discussion within the group, as well as with a similar group in the other country. Each became more conscious of the other and of another culture by introducing them to a parallel world somewhere else in Europe. This helped them all to become aware of what democratic citizenship means locally as well as internationally”.

Portugal and the Netherlands

Why did they choose Portugal and the Netherlands for their project? Kostana: “The choice of these two countries is interesting. On first impression they are very different: the look, the climate, the culture. But when you look closer you realize that their colonial past has caused quite a few similarities. Both countries now deal with a lot of immigrants. For Portugal these are mainly people from Angola. In the Netherlands you come across many people from Morocco and Turkey, many of whom are underprivileged and live in the poorer outskirts of the city.”

“Portuguese youngsters are usually very willing to be active, but due to the strong influence of social hierarchy, youth initiative is hardly ever acknowledged. Therefore, a meeting with the mayor of their community showed some good potential for the future. Never before had he received young people, let alone listen to what they had to say. This was a great first introduction to the world of democracy. In a later stage this was stretched to a European level, to let them realize that Europe is not just something big you have nothing to do with. It’s also in the neighborhood you live in, in the cultural centre and even in yourself.”
Effects

Prior to the project, Katerina and Kostana had been warned by local youth workers that the young people selected were rather difficult. When the project started, the youngsters were taught how to handle a camera to get artistic shots and what the effect and impact of music can be. Their motivation showed by the amount of questions they posed and by the fact that they started exploring their own potential. Katerina: “In the beginning when they were making short video clips, you could see them becoming more certain of themselves as they got more aware of and open to what happened around them. The youth workers were very pleasantly surprised and proudly said that the most insecure young people were now blooming, and that the other group members became friendlier.”
1. Solidarity and cooperation
- There have been seminars and meetings to ensure that young people understand other nations and sympathize with other groups of young people in societies with regard to their lifestyles, cultures and religions. We have implemented inter-cultural learning in training schedules for young people in formal education (schools) and informal education and for youth workers.

2. Democracy and participation
- Young people have taken part in democratic processes at a local, regional, national and European level. This is essential for the region to be part of a democratic society. The young people have promoted the idea of youth parliaments. Politicians have been informed about Youth initiatives. We have ensured the participation of young people in the Board and working groups of the BSSSC. We have prepared young people for participation in political events in the Baltic Sea Region (conferences, seminars, meetings).

3. We have had seminars about how to help young people to develop their full potential (cultural, social, physical, economic). The seminars have also focused on how to improve health care, drug prevention, the policy of non-smoking and non-drinking, trafficking, and the prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

The project period involved a lot of intensive work for the BSSSC’s Work Group on Youth Policy (WGYP), with a lot of events and youth meetings offering several opportunities for young people to come together and exchange experiences and ideas. The activities resulted in closer cooperation between youngsters from different corners of the Baltic Sea Region.

1. Strong points of the project
The project has been successful and many young people from different countries around the Baltic sea have taken part in the discussions. The activities resulted in closer cooperation between youngsters from different corners of the Baltic Sea Region.

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At the BSSSC Annual conference in Turku, September 2007, two representatives from the youth team got full member status on the BSSSC Board. They now serve as an important link between politicians and youth; their voices draw the attention of the entire Board to youth policy.
Greta Juul, Norway
Malgorzata Ludwiczek, Poland

International adviser
Greta.juul@oppland.org

Partnership
Oppland County Youth Council, Norway
Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC)
Secretariat for Youth Affairs of Western Pomerania, Poland
The Youth Council of Western Pomerania/Rada, Poland
Cesis region, Latvia
Kalingrad region
Zealand County, Denmark
Tallin City Government, Estonia
Regional Youth Council Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

What kind of advice could you give to the potential beneficiary?

It is important to involve young people in the planning of the workshops.

OBJECTIVES

1 - Solidarity and cooperation - Young people’s understanding of other nations and sympathizing with other groups of young people in societies with regard to their lifestyles, cultures and religions (tolerance and respect).

2 - Democracy and participation – Young people actively take part in democratic processes at a local, regional, national and European level. It is essential for the region to be part of a democratic society. To promote the idea of youth parliaments. Politicians get to know Youth initiatives. To ensure the participation of young people in the BSSSC Board and working groups.

3 - Mobility - Young people are mobile and can easily travel for jobs, study and tourism purposes.

4 - Full growth for young people– to help them to utilise and develop their full potential (cultural, social, physical, economical).

What will be the follow-up?

In the future the Work Group on Youth Policy will concentrate its work on strengthening tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue among young people from the Baltic Sea Region.
The Work Group on Youth Policy stressed: “Cultural diversity and principles of tolerance are a guarantee for safeguarding democratic societies, acknowledging the right of every person to respect his/her human dignity”. BSSSC will support the creation of long-term and reliable mechanisms for effectively countering extremism on the grounds of inter-ethnic, inter-faith and inter-cultural relations as well as formation of tolerant awareness and behaviour. Furthermore the group will continue its work on health related issues such as healthy lifestyle and sustainable development.
Young people’s participation in elections

Many youth councils and youth organisations across the EU are committed to ensuring that young people will make their voices heard during the European Parliament elections in June. They are running campaigns and organising a multitude of activities to raise awareness of the upcoming elections and to encourage young people to vote. The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is supporting and contributing to these campaigns, and is providing a common umbrella for the “get-out-the-vote” effort of youth organisations. At the same time, the YFJ is working with the European Parliament and the European Commission, in order to contribute to the institutional campaigns.

Participation is about more than elections

Participation in elections, however, can only be effectively promoted in the context of a comprehensive policy of participation. Participation is about having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support, to participate in and influence decisions, and to engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. In particular, the YFJ believes that a ‘culture of participation’ needs to be created. This means that the European youth policy agenda has to develop hand in hand with the increased participation of young people in the decision-making processes on the matters that concern and affect them. Mechanisms and methodologies for the engagement of young people have to be further elaborated and should be of a participative and democratic nature. Policies affecting young people implemented by different administrations must be coherent and based on the understanding that young people are a part of the citizenry in a specific socio-cultural situation due to their age. Such policies should not be regarded as simply measures just responding to problems. Democracy and participation is a learning process that has to start at the grassroots level and needs to be further developed at all levels and at all ages.

Three main areas in which to develop a culture of participation

An effective policy for promoting the participation of young people should focus on three main areas of participation, with specific challenges to be addressed in each area: 1) participation in the community and in wider society; 2) participation in civil society and a system of participatory democracy; and 3) participation in representative democracy, which includes elections.

- Participation in the community and in wider society
- Participation in civil society and a system of participatory democracy
- Participation in representative democracy

Youth participation in the European Parliament elections

Young people today have greater knowledge of society and are better informed than previous generations. It is a myth that young people are more prone to influence from political propaganda or simply copy the political opinion of their parents. They express a strong interest in political issues such as employment and education, which directly concern them, but also in broader issues such as international relations for instance. Participation in the democratic process is very important and the right to vote is a key element, particularly in terms of the recognition of the views young people express. However, according to statistics, young people are more reluctant to participate in the democratic debate than other age groups. The European and national authorities should facilitate their participation in all elections, implementing appropriate information campaigns to motivate young people to go and vote in order not to waste their political interest and potential.
Remaining obstacles

To facilitate the participation of young people in all elections, it is first important that measures are taken to minimise technical and logistical obstacles and to make registration, voting procedures, etc. more accessible and youth friendly. Obstacles to young people’s participation must be identified and cross-sector plans and actions to overcome those obstacles should be developed in order to promote equal opportunities and provide sufficient social, cultural, educational and economic conditions to facilitate participation.

A second obstacle is the lack of appropriate information channels. Information regarding citizenship, and citizens’ rights, is not reaching young people through the existing channels. In the YFJ’s view these channels should be designed with the involvement of youth organisations and young people in the processes establishing them in order to better reach young people at both a European and national level.

The last major obstacle is a legal one, as not all young people have the right to vote. People under the legal voting age need the means and space to be heard and to participate in decision making—thus contributing to the development of global and European integration, as well as their own (national) societies. The European Youth Forum considers it crucial to address this specific obstacle in order to develop the rights and responsibilities of those young people under the legal age to exercise their rights of citizenship.

Fostering young people’s participation in politics

Young people “make a difference”. A precondition for young people’s participation is that their participation is taken seriously. Participation is only meaningful and concrete when young people and youth organisations are involved in and have influence over the development, implementation and assessment of policies in all areas of relevance to them, not only in youth policy.

As mentioned above, the crucial importance of local youth councils in the process of learning to participate should be better recognised. Participating in local civic life, and influencing decision-making and actions undertaken at local and regional level, sets the necessary basis for effective participation at national or European level. Action at every level should be taken to support and encourage the creation of such participatory structures, as they have a ‘multiplier effect’ at national and European level.

There is also an important role for the educational sector in encouraging young people to take part in representative democracy and promoting a culture of participation. The YFJ calls for programmes supporting learning on civic participation and citizenship education, which actively involve young people. Citizenship and democratic education should be provided in schools from an early age and educational institutions should be reformed in a way that allows and encourages young people to take responsibility for decision-making in schools.

To implement these measures, independent and participative youth organisations have an important educational function and they are reliable partners in overcoming the current deficiencies in the dissemination of information. By providing non-formal education, they increase the ability of young people to participate as active citizens now and in the future. They should therefore be fostered and granted sufficient financial resources at all levels. Their crucial role in promoting active citizenship should also be better acknowledged.

Eventually, the motivation to actively participate in decision-making processes is lower when citizens are unable to identify their influence. Lowering the electoral age would motivate the 16 to 17 year-olds to participate more in the democratic process. Lowering the voting age, along with the measures described above, would force politicians to formulate solid and substantial youth policies, addressing the specific needs of the younger generations. As participation in the democratic process is of utmost importance and as the right to vote and to be elected are key elements of citizenship, the European Youth Forum calls for the lowering of the voting age to 16. This measure, allowing for better recognition of the views of young people, would encourage them to participate more actively and with a better sense of responsibility in a democratic society.

Addressing these issues and taking the YFJ recommendations on board, the Member States, the European institutions, and first and foremost, the European Parliament, would be able to better attract and motivate young people to vote in the European elections.
Cameras and Action
Spain

Alba Moreno
President of Inter Europa
From 01/05/2008 to 31/01/2009
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Description and Aim
The creation of three short films featuring a group of 40 young people with learning difficulties. The productions consisted of a documentary, a fictional short story and a report describing the daily life experiences of these young people. The activities involved developing scripts and scenarios, designing stage sets, as well as testing and filming. The premieres of the productions were in the “Cines Modern” in Logroño and were attended by 300 people.

Objectives
- To give young people with learning difficulties the opportunity to be creators of their own audiovisual productions.
- To show them to the local community.
- To harness non-formal education and use it as a learning tool.
- To foster the development of creative abilities in young people.
- To offer knowledge and awareness about this group of young people to the local community.

What kind of advice could you give to the potential beneficiary?
We think that it is necessary to build more materials to raise people’s awareness about the lives of people living with learning difficulties. For this the projects must testify to their lives and the participants must participate in all of the phases of the project.

This is only possible if the young people with learning disabilities are part of an association and have a tutor to help, guide and support them.

What will be the follow up?
We will continue creating projects in which young people with learning difficulties can continue developing their capabilities, and show them to the local community. At the moment we are working on an action 1.2 (Youth Initiative) where we are producing a theatre musical developed by and starring the group of 40 young people with learning difficulties.

Strong points of the project
- The project was created for young people with learning difficulties
- The creation of a product that works as a learning tool and increases awareness in society
- It is a project that promotes learning through the medium of non-formal education
- The participants developed verbal and non-verbal communication skills, as well as the management of audiovisual equipment

Fundamental Activities
- Training for working with video cameras
- The creation of text and scenes for the 3 productions
- Screen testing
- Filming the productions
- Editing the productions
- Mounting and creation of the DVD
- Premiere of the productions

Difficulties the partnership faced?
The most difficult part of the project was testing the scenes. Due to the profiles of the protagonists, it was very difficult for them to learn the text or repeat the scenes.

Budget
The Spanish National Agency for the programme “Youth in Action”, granted us a subsidy of 8000€ for this project. Inter Europa has co-financed the project with a camera costing 3000€. The Riojano Institute of Youth has contributed 800€.
The original concept for this book started life from an historical calendar that was produced in 2003 by Oylegate Youth Club, with a suggestion that a short history of the national school be compiled. But what started life as a school history booklet has grown into a fully fledged 400 page book on the history of the Oylegate Glenbrien area.

Our early meetings consisted of brainstorming sessions, as we sought to identify potential articles. As more and more stories, characters, anecdotes, ballads... came to light, we came to realise the extent of the noteworthy and remarkable history of the area. To record, as best as possible, the folklore and history of our villages and town lands became our primary objective.

This collection of articles attempts to chronicle the area’s ancient and more recent history, its unique aspects, its claims to fame, its characters and its organisations, its stories and memories. We have tried to incorporate as broad a selection of stories as we could; sports and past times, religion, arts and culture, social history, education etc. In writing these articles, the authors, whilst giving regard to written material-historic and otherwise – have also spoken with many people of the area, recording their reminiscences and their folklore.

The objective of the project was to have interaction with senior citizens in our area, and other organisations in the community. We wanted to show the public that our teenagers are a great group, willing and interested in working together for the good of the community at large and finally we wanted to improve and develop teamwork skills, communication and organisational skills.

In 2002, Oylegate Youth Club received funding from Leargas1 for an historical calendar Youth initiative. This proved to be a very successful project, with great results. The youth club members learned all about the history of our community through listening to stories from more senior members of our community. They learned all the skills necessary for project management, communication and administration. As the calendar project proved so successful, and from listening and taking notes on all the stories and the history of our village, it was found that there was a lot of information around our relatively small village. The people involved asked us if we would write a book on the history of the community.

Our coach was local schoolteacher Annie Hayden. Annie was on hand throughout the project to ensure everyone’s expectations were met and individual needs were satisfied.

1 National Agency in Ireland
SALTO-YOUTH Participation together with National Agencies of the Youth in action programme has developed a European Coaching Strategy over the past few years developing tools; publications and training activities focused originally on Youth Initiatives and then on any youth projects within the Youth in action programme.

You might have heard about the Coach 2 Coach training course designed for youth workers and focusing on the support they can provide to help young people actively run their own projects. It is about finding a good balance between coaching and autonomy within the youth group. The Coaching Guide\(^1\) is a resource book aimed at providing good practices, concrete hints and guidelines to support youth initiatives and youth projects. The importance of increasing active youth participation through a non-directive approach is clearly put forward:

**Is the coach a Youth leader who manages the project?**

Let’s remember that this kind of coaching support for young people has been developed within the frame of an educative programme; young people should therefore learn to participate, make decisions and take responsibility along the way. Rather than giving the right answers, the coach tries to ask the right questions. The process is greatly valued, much more than the outcome of the project itself!

**Do young people achieve the best and most outstanding projects thanks to the support of their coach...?**

Is s/he the one with - the technical competence in sports, or dance, the one who trains the youngsters to learn a special technique? No, s/he is not! s/he cannot be part of the group, because s/he should support the group whilst remaining outside the project, keeping some distance from its implementation, becoming neither a manager nor a participant. Moreover s/he should support the process without creating a mentor/pupil or trainer/trainee type relationship… a position sometimes difficult to achieve!

**What does the coach profile look like?**

All of these points are put into question in the new coaching publication entitled “Where is my coach!” along with many others such as: could coaching be imposed on some youth groups facing difficulties? How long and when should coaching start? Should the coach be paid for his/her work and time investment? Is coaching support transferable to any youth projects? Can young people coach other young people? etc. You will also find many good practices developed in member states, and examples of concrete training courses and national standards. In short, a goldmine of information at European level concerning coaching developments, practices and ideas within the Youth in Action programme, provided by 15 National Agencies and with the specific support of the European Coaching Working Group.

What are the basic qualities standards required of him/her? For instance, it could be agreed that s/he should ideally have overall knowledge of the Youth in Action programme and some experience in youth projects. S/he should also have some skills in the following areas: communication, project management, facilitation, and group dynamics. As far as his/her attitude is concerned, s/he should be supportive & not directive, be an active listener, show patience & feel empathy with the beneficiaries etc.

\(^1\) http://www.salto-youth.net/Participationpublications/
We are a Youth Association called Intercambia. We work with youngsters and our main objective is to encourage young people from Europe to become more conscious about their European identity and different cultures. We also try to get our youngsters to take an interest in any news and events which are closely related to them, and we try to disseminate as much information, including about the programs we work with, as we can.

In our European Youth Week, our main objective was to inform young people about the Youth in Action program, as well as different ways to live, study, work or travel abroad. We had this idea because we realized that there is often a gap between information and the young people it is aimed at. We therefore needed to build a good bridge to close that gap. In order to do this, we thought the Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas, (Official Language Schools) in our region were the best way to start. In these Schools there are people who want to learn new languages and are interested in new cultures. They are also potential students who will study abroad or potential European Volunteers.

As we said before, we try to build a bridge between young people and information, but we think this bridge needs updating frequently and written information becomes quickly obsolete and not very environmentally friendly. For this reason, we thought making a website about European Youth Information was the best bridge we could build for our youngsters. www.europaerestu.eu is our website where people can find more information.

**DESCRIPTION AND AIM**

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**OBJECTIVES**

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**How did you come up with the idea?**

We have created a euro web portal www.europaerestu.eu where we upload interesting information about Europe and Youth. The website is divided into different subjects such as News, blogs, scholarships, how to learn a different language. We search for information on different web sites such as Eurodesk.org, where we also answer questions about issues we can help with. When we see some interesting news, about training courses, for example, we upload it.

**NEWSLETTER**

We have created a monthly news letter to distribute Information to other Youth organizations. We have almost 200 on our e-mail list, sharing information about European news, training courses, requests for grants, etc. There is also a space to share European experiences (EVS Volunteers, Exchange Participants, Leonardo projects, Erasmus Students, Inter-Rail stories, etc)

**Strong points of the project**

**FLEXIBLE / CLOSE TO YOUTH / INNOVATIVE METHODS**

**YOUTH RESOURCES:**

This part is one of the most interesting we have in our web portal. It is divided into 6 sections:

**INTERNERSHIP:** every scholarship, internship we know or find out about, we upload in the web portal. We go to the original website and copy the link, then write a brief about the deadline, venue etc.

**JOBS:** In this section we inform youngsters about websites dedicated to helping them to get a job abroad. There are many different times, places, and kinds of jobs.

**LANGUAGES:** Here young people can find out addresses, telephone numbers and websites about places and institutions where they can study and learn languages. These are national and international institutions, and we also talk about language exchanges in tea-shops (quite normal in our city)

**TRAVELLING AROUND EUROPE:** This is an interesting section for whoever wants to travel, because they can get some advice about passports, visas, hosting places etc.

**VOLUNTEERING:** this is the section for people who like helping others, or doing work camps, or whatever.

**YOUNGSTERS GUIDE:** A miscellany about different links such as anorexia, working in The UK and Ireland, etc.

**Difficulties the partnership faced?**

To be clear and useful for young people from rural areas.

**What will be the follow up?**

We would like to update all in one go, go deeper on some topics and print an EUROPEAN YOUTH GUIDE!
The development from a child to an adult is an exciting time, but it is also very often a challenging period in one’s life. During this time, young people have to deal with a lot of physical and psychological changes. Often adolescents with disabilities perceive this time of growing up in a different way to their non-disabled peers. “Young people with disabilities have to live with constraints due to their physical or mental condition; they feel restricted in terms of their way of life, they are dependent on their parents, they can sometimes be unsure about themselves and self-conscious”, explains John Patrick Clarke, the executive member responsible for youth policies at EDF.

A common fear for almost all young people throughout Europe is uncertainty about the future. But this issue is even more important to young people with disabilities, on the one hand due to their disability and the perception of society, and on the other hand due to the lack of opportunities and equal chances available to them.

Accessibility is a pre-requisite for inclusion

Young people have special needs, which should be taken into account in order to include everyone in projects and organisations. Here we are talking about accessibility in a broad sense. Accessibility notably means being able to enter and circulate in buildings, receiving information in a suitable format or communicating with other people.

The first step to reaching out to young disabled people consists in disseminating information in a format that they can use. When you are a partially sighted or blind person, a nice colourful brochure is simply not adequate. Organisations can, on a demand basis, provide information in Braille, use audio format on CDs, easy-to-read version 1 or via an accessible website.

When organising a meeting, some basic rules can make life easier for everyone. Checking if wheelchair users can enter the building and the meeting room, or have access to the Restaurant and toilets for example, is easy to do. Deaf people may need translation into sign language: having an English international sign language interpreter can be useful for participants coming from different countries. Sending the document in Word format in advance is helpful for blind people who can read it on their computer and prepare for the meeting. Of course, it is not necessary to plan everything for each meeting, but you could have a ‘special needs’ section in the registration form asking the participants what they will need to attend the meeting. This way, you can plan and address the needs of everyone and better involve all participants, with or without disabilities.

1 Easy-to-read is a written text using simple sentences, plain words, images, design and pictograms to illustrate the meaning. Easy-to-read is written in an adult and varied manner. This is intended to people with mental and intellectual disabilities.
Nadege Riche
EDF Policy Officer

Nadege Riche is in charge of ‘youth’, ‘information and communication technologies’ and ‘standardisation’ policies at the EDF secretariat.
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Good practice: technology for all

Some time ago, a meeting uniting young people from all over Europe, and speaking different languages was organised. A young, deaf person was there as well. Obviously, she could not hear what anyone said, so the organisers hired a paletypist or velotypist, that is a person who writes down in real time every word people say, thanks to a special keyboard. After a while, we realised that most of the participants were reading the text, as when English is not your mother tongue, it is sometimes easier to read than to listen! This is a good example of how technology primarily developed for a person with a disability can prove useful to everyone.

What is an accessible website?

An accessible website takes into account the needs of its different users, whether disabled or not. It means that you would have a more logical structure for easy navigation, subtitling or sign-language interpretation when using audio content for deaf and hard of hearing people, description of images for blind users, possibilities to enlarge the text for partially-sighted people. Developing an easy-to-read version is also useful for people with mental and intellectual disabilities. Website developers can refer to the web-accessibility content guidelines to create accessible websites (wcag).

Concrete example

Project Integration and Education of Youth with Disabilities through Arts and Sports
European Action 1 programme November 2004

The specificity of this project was not only its focus on arts and sports at the same time, but that it was a project involving young people with different disabilities - wheelchair users, the hard of hearing and the deaf, mobility impaired or visually impaired people - and non-disabled youngsters. In this way, the young people with different disabilities could learn a lot about each other and appreciate each other’s differences, thus aiding the process of mutual integration, even if it started in a relatively small group.

This international and “different ability” group was like a model of the outside world, where people have to constantly adapt to each other, to each others’ needs, differences and perceptions.

The programme included skills development workshops (arts, clay, painting, ballroom dancing, wheelchair dancing, pantomime, accessible sports, sports games with barriers and relay races, etc.), master-classes, study visits, role play, simulation games, and jointly prepared performances.

More information at:

European Disability Forum www.edf-feph.org
EDF Youth Committee (2006) Young and Disabled: Daily challenges for equality
Access – How to improve the inclusion of disabled people in international youth activities (2000) a European Youth Forum and Mobility International Publication
Karina Chupina, (IFHOH President and member of the EDF Youth Committee), “Role of European trainings, arts and participation in inclusion of youth with disabilities” In Coyote Magazine

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is the European umbrella organisation representing the interests of 65 millions disabled citizens in Europe. EDF membership includes national umbrella organisations of disabled people from all European countries, as well as European Non Governmental Organisation representing the different types of disabilities, organisations and individuals committed to disability issues. The mission of the European Disability Forum is to ensure disabled people full access to fundamental and human rights through their active involvement in policy development and implementation in Europe.
new forms of participation

Netari.fi – one method of online youth work

For those who are not familiar with the word netari or the activities associated with it, here’s a brief history behind it.

The beginning for Netari.fi was in 2003 when a few youth workers in the Helsinki capital area started to ponder the idea that there was no youth work in popular internet teen sites in Finland. The initial idea of the project was that, if the mass of young people who meet each other online all gathered in some physical surroundings, for example a marketplace, the community and municipal youth work would react strongly and people would be willing to work with the phenomenon.

Netari.fi started as a project in 2004 as a joint project between the municipalities of the Helsinki metropolitan area. Due to good results, in the fall of 2007 the Ministry of Education granted the City of Helsinki Youth Department project funding and a mandate to begin expanding the operation at a national level and also added online youth work to a government policy programme for the well-being of children, young people and families.

At the moment there are 23 municipalities around Finland involved in executing nationwide online youth work in popular Finnish social network sites. Netari youth work is performed mainly around two major Finnish social network sites popular among teens: Habbo and IRC-gallery. Approximately 120,000 young people visited Netari youth workers in these environments during 2008, during which meaningful discussions between the youth workers and 10,880 young people took place, plus a more in-depth dialogue with a further 1,386 people. Contact is made via real-time chats or asynchronous comments as well as other social media tools.

As well as virtual contacts, Netari organizes real world get-togethers for the young people who use the social network sites and Netari services there. Young people are also offered a chance to be trained as voluntary peer tutors who take part in the performance of online youth work alongside an actual Netari youth worker. These peer workers, known as “Apparit”, organize activities in online environments as well as real life meetings and camps. Online activities vary from poetry or story competitions to online discos and masquerades. In real life meetings, Apparit host games and quizzes and, of course, there is time to meet your online friends face to face.

As a new feature, Netari started a multi-professional co-operation at the beginning of 2009. Through multi-professional cooperation, the project aims to lower the threshold for young people seeking help from social and health services and who use the services of Netari. The Netari is also experimenting with co-operation with the police as a contribution to multi-professional work on the Internet. In practice multi-professional work means that in those real-time chats there is also a professional nurse, police officer or, in the future, also a social worker available to visitors in the midst of youth workers, peer workers and other visitors.

Online youth work and the Netari.fi online youth house are what you would call e-services. From 2003 to 2009 Netari has been developing online youth work methods and building structures to develop nationwide joint online youth work. E-services on the other hand could be seen as foundations to e-participation. One example of e-participation in Netari activities is peer tutor activities, but there is much more to be made in that field. From now on Netari will be focusing on developing e-participation methods and forms.

For youth workers Netari-type work has been very interesting, challenging and fruitful. When workers are typing with visitors there is real-time VoIP group discussion going on and you can consult your fellow youth worker on the fly about the chat discussion topics that are on with the teens. According to studies, there has been a demand among young people for online youth work and the need is greater than can be delivered.

Using social media tools as a means to execute youth work has proven to be a very successful and effective way to contact and communicate with those teens who are born internet-natives and use the internet as their main media. As a result, in the near future youth work will become more and more ubiquitous with the use of social media tools via different devices that have a connection to the internet. Therefore using social media tools as a working environment is also changing the ways in which human relation work can be done alongside more traditional methods.
**What do we do?**

- Strengthen and promote active participation
- Collect and disseminate information, projects and articles on active participation
- Support the management of youth initiatives and Youth Democracy Projects (sub action 1.2 and 1.3)

**How do we do it?**

- **Website**: [www.salto-youth.net/participation](http://www.salto-youth.net/participation)
- **Practical guide**
- **Action I.3 Booklet**
- **Newsletter**
- **Database of realised projects**: [www.salto-youth.net/static/yic](http://www.salto-youth.net/static/yic)
- **Magazine**
- **Organisation of events**
- **Training courses**: [www.salto-youth.net/Participationcourses](http://www.salto-youth.net/Participationcourses)
- **Partner finding database**: [www.salto-youth.net/partners-request!!](http://www.salto-youth.net/partners-request!!)
This document does not necessarily express the official views of the European Commission or the organisations and persons cooperating with the Youth in Action institutions. Participation Magazine 2009 aims to be a practical youth work publication and not an official policy document.