



Erasmus+

SECOND  
EUROPE-WESTERN  
BALKANS **YOUTH  
MEETING**

THE BERLIN  
PROCESS – A NEW  
**IMPETUS FOR  
YOUTH WORK?**

PODGORICA,  
23 – 25 MAY 2018

Working document

Discussion in thematic groups  
leading up to participants' messages



*Over the course of one day, participants worked in three thematic groups to reflect on the following questions: In this field (youth participation, social inclusion, civic education), what do we do well? What are the challenges? What could be solutions to move forward? Can European cooperation help in this process, and how?*

*Below are the outcomes of these working groups, drafted by participants themselves at the end of each step of the process. The points made below represent the perceptions of participants on current youth work and youth policy related developments. Together with other inputs during the meeting, they served as a basis for the messages that were put forward by the participants at the end of the meeting.*

### **Taking pride: what do we do well?**

**Q: What are the three most important achievements of the youth sector in the region in this thematic area?**

#### **Youth participation**

RYCO - regional example

- The Governing Board of RYCO is based on the principles of co-management, which is exemplifying youth participation in decision-making processes and advocacy efforts.
- The establishment process was exquisitely participatory as it involved a lot of young people from both EU and WB6 countries and took into account youth perspectives in guiding the whole process.

Structured dialogue - examples of involvement from Serbia and Macedonia

- Participation of NYCs of Serbia and Macedonia in YFJ activities and European cycles of structured dialogue, direct participation of young people in European consultation processes with the idea of including youth's opinions in European decision-making. Even other organisations from the respective countries can take part in national consultations and give their opinions and ideas, thus influence European consultations.

Role of UN in youth participation - example from Montenegro

- UN agencies are extremely active in Montenegro. Their programmes are very participatory as they involve a huge portion of active young people in the country. However, the biggest challenge is the transfer of know-how, which often lacks.

Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform - regional example

- Online platform initiated by NGOs from WB6 countries (national youth structures and representative organisations). Example of providing young people with online space to bring their ideas to the floor. Has a bottom-up approach.

Promoters for European Democracy – example from Romania

- Young people are given skills and knowledge to organise events that promote democratic values. Initiative for others to become active in their respective communities. The project has been implemented for four years already. It is organised in cooperation with National parliament.

UN youth delegate programme - example from Slovenia

- The selected UN Youth Delegate was actively involved in both national and UN processes and was ensuring that young people from Slovenia were involved in consultation and capacity-building activities.

Multi-functional youth centres - example from Albania

- Multi-functional youth centres have been established in order to provide services to young people in local communities. They are co-managed by the government and civil society.

## Social inclusion

Montenegro has adopted strategies for inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities

Macedonian National Agency - grantees include at least 30% of young people with fewer opportunities in project activities, according to 2017 survey.

Regionally: One of the key priorities of RYCO's first call was social inclusion, which therefore has contributed to social inclusion.

Locally: Great examples of mentoring in Sarajevo

Education: Attendance of formal education is mandatory in every WB country until secondary school.

Kosovo: Is in the phase of drafting the third strategy with special focus on social inclusion. Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in Kosovo is investing in social inclusion projects and activities.

Serbia: Come to Am - Festival in Serbia aims to give the opportunity to young people coming from different social categories to come and express their talent.

## Civic education

Taking stock: What do we, as a sector, do well regionally in youth work and youth policy?

In terms of identifying what is going well, it is very difficult with civic education. It is not really mentioned in any of the policy papers we have on our table.

Civic education vs. non-formal education - related?

What does it mean to be a good citizen? How do we see civic education? As part of the school curriculum? Part of the NGO environment?

Civic education and participation are interdependent: In order to ensure active youth participation, we need quality civic education.

It's about the approach and how we teach it, the method and manner of education. This can be both in schools and in a non-formal educational environment.

“Practice what you’re preaching”: The school system is often a bit too strict when it comes to civic education. There’s no room for debates, inclusive decision-making etc.

There are positive examples from schools and civil society organisations engaging in civic education, e.g. in Macedonia.

What are the requirements for a civic education teacher? Why can't an art teacher teach civic education? Or can they? If the only reason for teaching civic education is to gain enough hours to get a salary, then this is a huge issue. We need quality teachers for the topic.

Erasmus Eurydice report on civic education is available with good knowledge and data.

Do we have any signs/actions/campaigns in the WB countries regarding civic education?

In school, you have to choose between civic education and religious education. In many areas, it's not even a choice, religious education is the only choice. Quote from textbook: "a good citizen does not criticise his/her government".

There are good initiatives in Serbia when it comes to civic education coming from civil society organisations, a programme has been running for 7 years.

There is often a generational gap between parents and young people. Highlighting an example from Bosnia, where some elementary schools are segregated and where high school students staged protests when politicians tried to segregate their school; the greatest obstacle for the students was convincing/breaking free from their own parents.

Interdependency between civic education and critical thinking. It is not necessarily something that is wanted by schools, politicians and governments.

Status quo is better than rocking the boat and potential change. Potential change could mean protests, which could mean conflict.

People who go on Erasmus exchange come back changed. They often come back more active with a changed mind-set, and they are positively engaging to make a change. But there's the challenge that not a lot of young people go on an exchange.

WB alumni network is a good example of how to show great experience with civic education - showcasing the international experience.

It is so important to use mobility more actively, both as school exchange but also through civil society organisations, e.g. European Solidarity Corps (EVS/Erasmus+ volunteering). Positive example: NGOs / civil society organisations do a lot on local and national levels to engage young people in civic education in a non-formal way.

OSCE and US embassy support efforts against school segregation: Bosnia has 54 segregated schools: OSCE and US Embassy take high school students that succeeded in their protests to keep their school integrated around to all 54 segregated schools in an effort to create some change.

### Taking stock: what are key challenges?

**Q: What are the five most defining challenges of the youth sector in the region in this thematic area?**

#### Youth Participation

Challenge 1 - Local level youth participation

- Support from formal structures with regard to funding, capacity-building and formal recognition
- Finding mechanisms to involve different groups of young people in youth policies, activities
- Combating youth apathy and current disinterest to engage in different initiatives through existing innovative mechanisms

Challenge 2 - Cross-sectorial cooperation & governmental support

- Lack of proper collaboration
- Lack of understanding among stakeholders (both a concrete role and the meaning of the whole process)
- Lack of understanding the role of NYCs and youth NGOs' in youth policy-making
- Lack of quality youth policies due to lack of collaboration

Challenge 3 - Lack of involvement of different groups of young people

- Decentralisation of youth activities, initiatives and services
- Exclusion of various youth groups (rural youth, unorganized youth etc.)
- Lack of proper democratic mechanisms for involvement (equal chances) of youth from youth wings of the political parties
- Lack of involvement of youth wings of workers' syndicates

#### Challenge 4 - Administration and regulation

- Lack of proper youth-related policies and regulations in the region (Law on Youth, Law on Volunteering, Youth strategies)
- Lack of interest of governmental structures to join existing functioning structures (Slovenia-RYCO)
- No umbrella organisation in Montenegro for young people (lack of formal representation on all levels)
- 'Favourism' in funding and granting schemes
- Lack of proper and quality policy implementation, with and for young people
- How to transform political commitment into (sustainable) actions (ex. RYCO's engagement in the region)

#### Brainstorming session

##### Slovenia:

- Lack of political participation of youth (viewed as a political gain)
- Low youth participation in elections, challenge is political participation of young people
- Lack of legal structures for youth
- Governmental influence on directions of youth policies (example of RYCO engagement, SLO seen as WB country, if it joins)

##### Montenegro:

- Challenges with WG for the new Law on Youth, not enough support to smaller/local youth NGOs and informal youth groups
- No umbrella organisation of youth NGOs, the current one is not representative enough
- Lack of support to local youth offices for developing local youth policies
- Lack of involvement of youth NGOs in public consultation processes about youth policies
- Lack of visibility in regard to carried out youth activities (on all levels)
- Poor volunteering policy (in the region)
- Youth seen as cheap/free labour

##### Belgium:

- Lack of involvement and engagement of informal youth groups in any formal processes (no 'freelance' representation)
- Lack of informality in formal processes that involve young people from various contexts

##### Albania:

- Lack of cross-sectorial cooperation in youth policies (youth issues are discussed only among youth but not with other formal stakeholders) on regional and national level (more actors in such dialogue)
- (De)centralisation of youth participation mechanisms (with regard to rural youth)
- lack of youth centres, services for young people etc. and lack of information provided to such youth groups
- Recognition of youth workers as profession

Serbia:

- Cross-sectorial cooperation
- Local level youth participation
- Recognition of youth initiatives by the formal structures (Ministries etc.)
- Human resources in the Ministry of Youth and Sports

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

- Local level youth participation - low level (still, there are initiatives to include youth in local decision-making, making sure under-privileged groups are there, too)
- Cooperation with government, stakeholders' cooperation
- Transparency and inclusion of various youth structures
- Youth NGOs deal only with mainstream topics ('easy' ones)
- Youth are not courageous enough to tackle other problems
- Political pressure/influence on youth policy-making

Romania:

- Lack of proper and quality policy implementation
- Favourism in funding and granting schemes

Germany:

- Lack of local branches of different associations for young people to get informed and engage (social exclusion of youth)
- Decentralisation of youth services

Bulgaria:

- Apathy
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of participation on local level
- Lack of information about possibilities for youth
- Lack of coordinated youth policy and strategy
- Lack of official youth council on regional level
- Internal challenges with youth structures (youth council and students' organisations)
- Political pressure on youth policy

Challenge 5 - Visibility of youth achievements on all levels

- Lack of visibility in regard to carried out youth activities (on all levels)

## Social Inclusion

Challenge 1: Language barriers to the involvement of participants from different ethnic backgrounds

Challenge 2: Human resources

- Sometimes societies are not ready to accept diversity (people with different religion, culture/ethnicity, sexuality).
- Need to train and prepare staff who are in direct contact with youth

Challenge 3: Stereotypes among young people - lack of sensibility, compassion, information

Challenge 4: Re-adaptation of young people in own society - young people with migration backgrounds

Challenge 5: Lack of documentation for internally displaced young people

Challenge 6: Lack of Inter-sectorial cooperation that benefits young people

Challenge 7: Lack of funds

### Civic Education

Challenge 1: Quality of Civic Education

There is a huge issue regarding the quality of civic education provided in the formal school sector.

Challenge 2: Lack of policy and strategies

This challenge is very related to challenge 3 as well. Without having specified civic education as a strategic priority, it is difficult to create positive change.

Challenge 3: Lack of political will and governmental support

Civic education teaches critical thinking and having your own opinion. This is not necessarily in the interest of politicians and governments in the region.

Challenge 4: Ownership

What are the roles of the different stakeholders? Who are the different stakeholders? Government? Institutions? Schools? Civil society? What are the values of civic education?

Challenge 5: Media

What is the role of media in civic education? Free media vs. state owned/propaganda. This situation leads to political messages, hurtful campaigns etc. Are the media friend or foe in this regard?

Extra challenge: CORRUPTION



## Taking control: addressing the challenges/innovative solutions

**Q: What are possible solutions to the five most defining challenges of the youth sector in the region in this thematic area?**

### Youth participation

Possible solutions:

#### Challenge 1 - Local level youth participation

- Use and engage all relevant stakeholders, especially vulnerable youth
- Increase the level of information about possibilities to take part in local level initiatives (digitalisation and simplified language)
- Tailor-made approach in engagement with different types of young people (more business and marketing approach)
- Partnership with educational institutions
- Going out from offices
- Ownership of initiatives (involvement of young people in every part of the initiatives)

#### Challenge 2 - Cross-sectorial cooperation & governmental support

- Albania (New methodology in drafting legislation (consultations and cooperation with various interest groups)
- Separate governmental/institutional support for youth organisations and youth policies
- Involve all stakeholders all the time in everything important
- Coordination with the donor society to avoid overlapping and create links between different events and activities
- Use and mapping of existing tools that are efficient
- Monitor, check and evaluate activities

#### Challenge 3 - Lack of involvement of different groups of young people

#### Challenge 4 - Administration and regulation

- File complains, raise awareness, have more courage to deal with misuse of funding or favourisim
- Capacity building of youth organisations to use existing, constitutional, legal tools for advocacy
- Tools for transparency and accountability
- Establish quality standards for youth policy by various stakeholders

#### Challenge 5 - Visibility of youth achievements on all levels

- Digital tools, conveying messages in understandable languages

## Social inclusion

Challenge 1: Stereotypes and prejudice

Solution: Providing scholarships for young students, and providing exchanges for NEET young people for exchanges in WB6

Challenge 2: Lack of organisational capacities

Solution: Capacity building, starting from bottom up, from the basics and networking. Finding strong partners with enough capacities and experience.

Challenge 3: Funds

Solution: Increase the budget for implementation of projects. Enable/support WB6 countries to become Erasmus+ Programme countries; establish National Agencies.

Challenge 4: Lack of inter-sectorial cooperation that benefits young people

Solution: Evaluate the added value of similar projects. Include different entities in projects, besides the already included partners. Include them in the process regardless of their personal interest.

## Civic education

Challenge 1: Quality of civic education

For schools:

- Make a credited civic education programme
- Standardised requirements and indicators
- Change the content of civic education, to ensure quality content
- Annual quality control/accreditation procedure: if your institution is accredited, you get state support, making it attractive for schools to have quality programmes
- Ensure teacher training on this topic

Thinking of ourselves as stakeholders: What can we do?

- E.g. Serbia: engage with NAPOR (national youth workers association) in order to implement the accredited system. Creating the system shouldn't be an issue, but state support/funding could be.
- E.g. Bosnia - Unicorn: align with students; OSCE and US embassy to stage protests, ensure political pressure to make a change. This happened with a local high school; make it happen on a bigger level.

Challenge 2: Lack of policy and strategies

- Regional initiative for civic education: we need it as a strategic priority
- Develop a regional declaration
- Cooperation with National Youth Councils
- Lobby with national and local politicians

- Which are the relevant ministries? Ministry of Education? Ministry of Youth? Contact and engage with all of them. A regional plan/strategy/document on civic education would be helpful on national and local level.

#### Challenge 3: Lack of political will and governmental support

- E.g. Bosnia - Unicorn: align with students, OSCE and US embassy to stage protests, ensure political pressure to make a change. This happened with a local high school; make it happen on bigger level.
- We are passive, what can we do?
- Lobby! Who are the relevant stakeholders? Who could we make alliances with?
- Get people to vote. Make campaigns for elections and ensure a bigger percent of people voting. Campaigns are essential when it comes to voting - voting means making an informed decision. Work with NGOs to raise awareness of the importance of voting among young people. Then, voter turn-out will hopefully be higher, which could lead to possible political change.

#### Challenge 4: Ownership

- Map all possible and relevant stakeholders
- Figure out the interests of the stakeholders
- From challenge 1: The accreditation system should involve state, schools and CSOs, thus creating co-ownership.

#### Challenge 5: Media

- Media literacy is part of civic education
- Change communication channels; organise targeted campaigns: Where are the young people? On which channels can we reach them? Social media, are we on these platforms? We need to get better at communicating what we do and how we engage with our target groups. Highlight the importance of critical thinking; create a user friendly civic education app? Team up with Apple, Netflix, Facebook etc.  
The youth sector should have its own media channel. Humor is essential in this regard, e.g. comics, satire. Team up with existing children shows.

### Taking a wider view: The value of Europe

**Q: Why would we have a European dimension? What do we get from that?**

**Q: How would you strengthen the European dimension of the youth sector in the region in this thematic area?**

#### Youth Participation

Relevant because...

- Geographical connection to the EU
- Economic connection to the EU
- Cultural diversity

- Diversity in Unity
- Sense of identity and sense of European citizenship
- More opportunities for the WB6
- Be careful if joining the EU and embracing EU values means adapting to the EU and not bringing anything our values in
- Ability to influence the EU policy
- Ability to learn from the EU practices

Actions to promote a European dimension:

- Getting feedback from young people to keep in mind what they want to gain from the EU
- Mobility activities - sharing know-how and finding common solutions for similar problems
- Raising consciousness that Europeans are not only from certain countries, but from all countries in the continent
- Role-play simulations to learn how decision-making takes place in the EU institutions
- Activities of the NYCs and YFJ, other European NGOs
- Jobs and internships abroad (in the Member states) for WB6 countries
- Simplify administration and regulation in order to open up towards new perspectives
- Further promote studying and working in the WB6 region (bring Europe to Western Balkans!)
- Further enhance cooperation between youth workers from MS and WB6 (on projects)
- Create more quality opportunities (projects, activities and similar) in the WB6 region that would attract more EU youth workers, students, professionals
- Include European dimension in governmental reforms (educational systems and similar) in order to make it more appealing for the MS

## Social Inclusion

Share of best practices and European values  
Similar problems/issues

Opening up brains of young people in a greater dimension  
Giving young people the opportunity to not only think locally  
More access to opportunities  
Don't give them the fish - Teach Balkan youth workers how to fish - Capacity building the organisation  
Sustainability of quality of the organisation

## Civic Education

When we talk Europe - do we talk EU or Europe as a continent?  
Is EU choosing stability over democracy in the Western Balkans?  
Globalisation is here to stay - we need to engage in the European dimension  
What are the European values? What are Balkan values?

What do we get from that?

- We are a part of something bigger and better
- A change of mind set and believing in the ideal behind the principles of the EU and Council of Europe
- RYCO is a very concrete example of cooperation with other European countries
- Sharing of best practices
- Clear perspective of what we (WB youth) should do and what others can learn from us
- Important point when we use "them" and "us"
- Do we just use it normally or are we thinking European vs. non-European?

Why would/should we have a European dimension?

- Europe is a peace project
- We need values
- Reconciliation
- EU has post war experience that is valuable for the WB
- European citizenship in relation to global citizenship - human rights - rule of law - democracy - liberty
- It's important for the EU itself to have a peaceful neighbourhood in the Balkans
- Creating the best possible opportunities for young people

How would you strengthen the European Dimension of the youth sector in the region in this thematic area?

- Intercultural dialogue, exchange and learning
- Mobility - both student exchange and volunteer mobility