

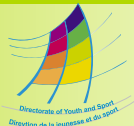


Forum MNE

GUIDELINES

FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH POLICY PROCESSES

Seminar "Youth participation in youth policy processes
in South Eastern Europe"
Montenegro 13 - 20 June 2008



Directorate of Youth and Sport
Dirección de la juventud y del deporte



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Introduction

The document in your hands has resulted from international seminar on “**Youth participation in youth policy processes in South Eastern Europe**”, held from 13-20. June 2008 in Montenegro.

Seminar was organized by Forum MNE, in partnership with CZOR (Serbia), Triagolnik (Macedonia) and CORNO (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The project was supported by European Youth Foundation of Council of Europe.

Seminar gathered young people, youth leaders, youth workers from seven SEE countries, who discussed the importance and tools for enhancing youth participation in youth policy development processes.

Why youth policy? Youth policy is a term used for strategic, sustainable, all encompassing and long term interventions regarding youth. It is a strategy for taking care about youth, support to their development, capacities and social inclusion. Youth is a group that has it's own characteristics, needs and rights and is a very important stakeholder in the social development processes. Thus, youth is on the agenda of every prosperous society which takes care about its resources and development.

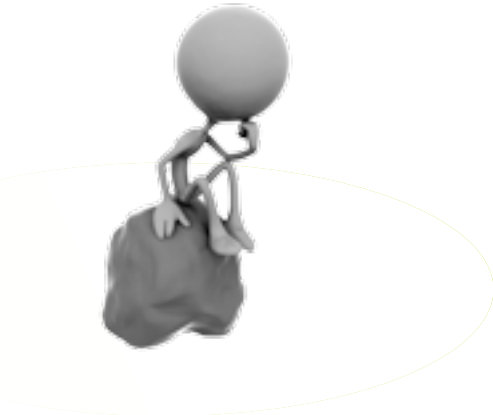
If the strategy is to be sustainable, based on real youth needs and rights, issues and resources, youth has to be included in the process continually. This seminar was aimed at discussing opportunities for enhancing youth participation in youth policy processes, based on experiences when such strategies were made and developed without youth participation, although youth should be first creator and not just consumer in the process.

One of the products of the seminar is this document – **Guidelines to youth participation in youth policy development processes**. It is comprised of concrete recommendations for enhancing youth participation, taking into account all relevant



stakeholders in the processes. It is of high importance to have in mind that this process, as any other, demands **partnership of all the stakeholders** in implementing structured and long term interventions in the field. One of the crucial preconditions to the process is **positioning youth on the top of each society's priority list**. Only by perceiving young people as important social group, as a valuable resource and not a problem, we can ensure quality and sustainable youth policies and their implementation.

Having the document in your hands means having a power in your hands to make a major contribution to youth participation in youth policy processes, and thus act towards the final aim of sustainable, democratic community development.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH POLICY PROCESSES - What does it mean?

Youth participation in youth policy processes means involving youth in all stages of youth strategies development, since participation is one of crucial principles of democratic and sustainable procedures and interventions. These are some of the important points that should be taken into account when it comes to the process.

- Involving young people in all stages of the process (creating, development, implementation, monitoring)
- Using appropriate, youth friendly methodologies and mechanisms
- Empowering young people with information, knowledge, skills
- Involving marginalised groups
- Connecting young people and authorities and building mutual trust
- Ensuring young people's approach and participation in decision making bodies
- Creating and empowering network of support to youth participation (parents, teachers, youth workers...)
- Ensuring sustainability of the process
- Basing it on needs and rights of young people
- Approaching young people as a resource rather than as a problem

Youth workers, youth leaders and young people who participated in the seminar were thinking in the frame of stakeholders' approach, i.e. **why and how** all important social stakeholders could **support youth participation** in youth policy processes and how that benefits wider society.

YOUTH

1. How do YOUng people benefit from participating in youth policy development?

By taking action, you become influential and useful members of society!

Participation provides an opportunity to directly express and fulfill your interests, rights and needs!

By being participative you gain more information, knowledge, skills and experience which will foster your personal and social development!

You will meet lots of new people and enrich your social network!

2. How can YOUng people contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

You can participate in campaigns, debates, initiatives, events regarding youth policy!

You also can get training in the field and become peer educator! You can get involved in decision making bodies (in school, municipality, parliament..)!

You can spread the information about the topic and related events! You can volunteer; get involved in the work of NGOs and other initiatives and lead activities and projects!

By participating yourself you will be a role model for your peers!

3. How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?

Constructive, enthusiastic, fulfilled and proactive young citizens are an immensely valuable strength of a prosperous, democratic society!

GOVERNMENT

1. How does government benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?

By supporting youth participation, government supports young people development into conscious, active and responsible citizens, who contribute to the development of democratic society.

2. How can governments contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

Local and national government can motivate young people for participation by campaigns.

Furthermore, they can directly empower young for participation by information and education trainings, workshops.

It is also necessary to increase level of mutual trust and knowledge in the relationship youth-government. Therefore, young people should learn about government, its role, composition, procedures, etc. Government should learn about young people, their needs, interests, ideas and capacities. This can be accomplished through information campaigns, direct meetings, quality citizenship education.

Having information, motivation and education, young people should take active role in decision making processes. For this purpose, government should create space and positions for young people in the decision making bodies and processes. Besides places and bodies in the very governments, they should also support creating independent bodies such as Youth Parliaments, Youth councils, etc.

Support to other structures working with youth – NGOs, institutions is also very important contribution.

Essential governmental support is funding, creating budgets for youth, on local, regional, national levels.

Other resources, such as human resources, premises, logistic support should be provided.

3. *How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?*

By supporting young people to participate in youth policy development processes, governments benefit in various ways. The participation empowers young people for democratic citizenship and contribution to the society development. It creates opportunity for higher response to actual needs of citizens/voters. Youth also becomes an immensely valuable resource which can take over a great part of social responsibility and thus contribute to its development.

Youth participation increases social, economic, cultural growth; decreases crime rate, unhealthy behaviours, drop outs, violence.

It also enables grass-root initiatives and changes, as well as those on national policy level.

YOUTH NGO'S

1. *How does youth NGOs benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?*

Youth participation in youth policy processes enables direct influence on decision making process. It activates and animates more young people. It also strengthens capacities of civil sector by building capacities of young people as agents of change and democratic development. It brings networking with other youth policy stakeholders and creates sustainable mechanisms for implementing youth strategies. It contributes to the visibility of civil sector, its credibility and clear role in democratic society. It enables creating sustainable, participative and thus long term interventions in the field.

2. *How can youth NGOs contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?*

Youth NGOs and NGOs working with youth are one of the crucial stakeholders in the process, taking into consideration that access and relationship between them are easy and open. The NGOs can initiate and organize wide scope of activities and projects which would foster youth participation in youth policy processes.

Interventions can be various:

- organizing information and education activities aimed at young people, and thus informing, motivating and empowering young people for participation in youth policy processes
- organizing information and education activities aimed at other important stakeholders and thus creating sustainable networks of support to the process
- connecting these two groups and fostering productive partnerships

- fostering networking and strengthening capacities by initiating and establishing umbrella organizations, coalitions, networks
3. ***How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?***

Wider community benefits in terms of building and recognition of youth capacities, responding to real youth needs and rights, uniting civil and public sector strengths, all directed to the community development.



SCHOOLS

1. ***How do schools benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?***

Education institutions which support youth participation in youth policy processes have multiple benefits. They educate and support responsible, active and conscious young people, strengthen youth capacities as well as community development, add to the quality of education programmes, bring into focus on of the crucial roles of education system – educating responsible and socially productive individuals.

2. ***How can schools contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?***

Schools are a space for delivering programmes on social and political awareness development. They can be an open space for discussing youth issues and fostering critical thinking. Furthermore, they can be a meeting point of youth and authorities. Schools can foster participation through supporting school parliaments and students' unions, giving space to the students' initiatives and projects, connecting students and community participation stakeholders.

3. ***How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?***

Contribution to the participative and prosperous society which is developed by responsible, active and fulfilled citizens is a result which is pursued by each educational institution.

PARENTS

1. How do parents benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?

Parents' benefit reflects in having better conditions for their children development into independent and successful adults who create and consume prosperous society.

2. How can parents contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

Parental support is essential for young people. Parents can enhance youth participation by supporting their children in getting active members of different NGOs, youth clubs, bodies, associations which enable them to actively participate in youth policy development. Parents can also get interested and involved themselves – youth clubs, school parents' boards, public discussions, etc. Parents can be informed about the activities in the field and find ways to participate themselves and empower their children for participation. Children raised in a way which promotes and enables life skills development – self esteem, responsibility, decision making, critical thinking, independence, problem solving, communication, conflict resolution, emotional awareness will be ready and better equipped for participation..

3. How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?

Broadening scope of opportunities and services available to young people, fresh ideas for development, active and progressive communities, will make the communities better place for living and development.

INSTITUTIONS

1. How do institutions benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?

Besides being clients, active youth are **partners** with institutions. This partnership brings quality, access to real needs and rights and its fulfilment, strengthening youth as a resource and future agents of social development.

2. How can institutions contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

Institutions can organize information and education activities. They can work on building trust between youth and institutions. Institutions can act as lobbyist for youth in partnership with government. They can promote young people and youth policy in the media.

They can develop more youth oriented and youth friendly programmes and services. They can ensure youth participation in their decision making processes. They can share their resources with the youth and youth NGOs.

They can mainstream youth issues in all the strategy in their fields. They can build partnership with the youth.

3. How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?

A more active and responsible society. A community closer to and more sensible of the institutions' work, holistic and joint approach in addressing community needs and issues.

DONORS

1. How do donors benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?

When supported and recognized as a resource, youth becomes an agent of change and development. Through building youth capacities, donors contribute to the sustainable development, on local, national and global level.

2. How can donors contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

Donors' main contribution is opening funds for youth policies and youth participation. Still, it is highly important that donors mainstream their programmes and field of interest with youth issues. They can also be partners in lobbying for youth policy and youth participation, and youth issues generally. Donors can influence global trends and flows of interest, resources, and awareness.

3. How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?

Building youth capacities build social capacities, on local, national, global level.

MEDIA

1. How do media benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?

Where media's mission is to contribute to the information, transparency, democracy and open society, it is very clear and realistic that youth participation in youth policy development is a social process that has to be reported on and given media space. Media benefits from it by fulfilling their mission, by gaining wide audience, higher visibility, gaining credibility and trust.

2. How can media contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

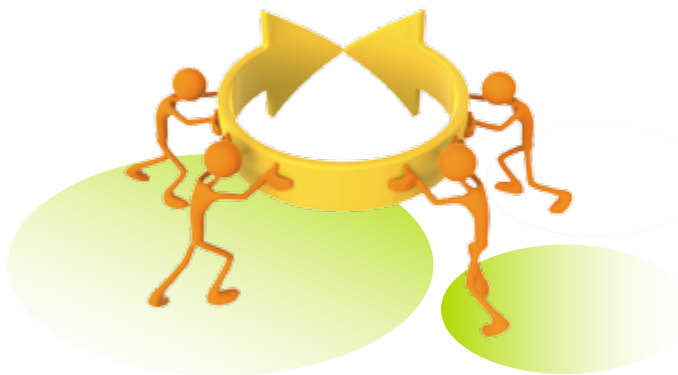
When it comes to concrete media activities which would support youth participation in youth policy processes, media role is crucial and can be realised through various functions:

- *reporting on youth policy campaigns and activities
- *creating campaigns, in partnership with other stakeholders
- *provide space for discussing youth issues and giving youth perspective on social issues
- *mainstream information on youth issues in various programmes
- *create and implement strategy for covering youth issues

3. How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?

Besides raising awareness and information level on youth issues, youth also becomes more visible as a group. Therefore, youth resources become more recognised and youth issues

more visible and likely to be solved. Youth contributes to solutions of common social issues and present themselves as a power society can count on. It is often a case that youth is perceived as a problematic group, rather as a resource group. This should be changed if we want mutual benefit in a youth-society relationship.



BUSSINES SECTOR

1. How does business sector benefit from youth participation in youth policy development?

By supporting youth participation and youth policy processes, businesses support building youth capacities in terms of critical thinking, social and personal responsibility, independence, life skills, and employability. This leads to better conditions for economic and market development.

2. How can business sector contribute to the youth participation in youth policy processes?

Business sector can allocate regular funds for supporting youth activities and issues. They can support already started initiatives as well as open funding competitions for new ideas and projects.

They can also make in-kind contribution, through offering their services to the activities (products, space, transport, etc.) They can build long term partnerships with NGOs and other institutions working with youth.

3. How does the wider community benefit from youth participation in youth policy processes?

Corporate responsibility makes communities prosperous and developed. Socially conscious entrepreneurs contribute to global development and growth.

STEPS FOR ENHANCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In the open space part of the seminar, where participants were supposed to suggest discussion themes in frame of the topic "Steps for enhancing youth participation", several very important issues were raised.

Overall impression was that young people are not seen as a priority in the participating countries, which is one of crucial obstacles in the process of youth policy implementation. Society in general, local and national governments, and other institutions and organizations has to recognize youth as a important social group whose needs and rights has to be addressed. In frame of recognizing and building youth as a resource rather as a problem, youth has to become a priority. Youth issues have to be mainstreamed in all policies and strategies, all ministries and fields. Being a group with specific developmental characteristics, and powerful social resource, youth has to be taken into account in every aspect of social life and by each and every social stakeholder, through both short term and long-term strategies and interventions.



HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BECOME PRIORITY IN THE COUNTRIES?

- Work on youth visibility, its recognition as a resource rather than as a problem
- Inform young people about their rights and responsibilities
- Make all youth-related information available to young people
- Ensure special PR of all activities for young people
- Empower young people to take place in decision making bodies and processes
- Mainstream youth issues in all strategies and documents, as well as in their implementation
- Adapt social system to be more accessible to young people
- Education – changes of education system for educating more proactive young people; special subjects in school – society/local community/government – civic education; education system has to respond to current social and economical context
- Elections – empower and motivate young people for being active in elections; demand clear, realistic and obligatory programmes for youth in political programmes of the parties
- Business sector – enhance corporate social responsibility, lobby business sector to understand young people's role in society
- Establishing youth funds for supporting youth initiatives
- Establish and run discussion groups on youth issues in local and national government/parliaments
- Ensure transparency of all NGO and governmental work

SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM ACTIONS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH POLICY PROCESSES

Short term

- Continuous and structured youth information
- Organizing attractive events (concerts, camps, protests, sport competitions, parties, socializing events)
- Making youth participation trendy and attractive through trendy events, excursions, performances

Long term

- Giving and sharing responsibility to/with young people
- Developing information centres, points and programmes
- Ensuring funds for youth activities
- Ensuring support in project proposal writing
- Mobility (educational, professional, tourist, exchange of experiences)
- Ensuring opportunities for youth employability (personal development, recognition of non formal education and voluntary work)
- Continuous, structured and planned engagement of young people
- Including youth issues in both formal and non formal education
- NGOs transparency
- Creating and **implementing** youth policies

YW PROFESSION IN LINE WITH YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Definitions, policies and standards for youth work profession should be set, implemented and monitored
- Youth work education should be institutionalised and highly available
- Formal and non formal education/youth work services should be incorporated and entwined
- Ensure work places for youth workers in schools, municipalities, youth clubs/centres, institutions working with youth
- Support governments/society to recognize the importance of youth work and youth work profession
- Increase institutional capacity in the process of administrative handling of the process
- Ensure sustainability of youth work
- Ensure systems for recognizing skills and knowledge gained through non formal education and experiences
- Regional networking (similar social and historic context, sharing experience and resources, capacity building)

CROSS MINISTRY COORDINATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES

- Raising awareness about the need to work jointly, to network and build real partnerships
- Ensure visibility of youth policy activities, information about work and developments in the field of youth policy
- Develop a strategy for the work of and with ministries regarding mainstreaming youth issues
- Ensure cross ministry coordination from the very beginning of the process, through all stages, not just in implementation
- Educate and build capacities of governments youth departments officers Reform of government and legislature in order to make youth policy implementation obligatory for government institutions
- Ensure youth representatives in each ministry



TOOLS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Law and policy level

National/Local youth strategies

Law for youth organizing

Advocacy level

Meetings with Authorities

Lobbying Government to support Bodies

Lobby teams

Negotiations & Mediations

Advocacy

Building partnerships

Meetings with stakeholders

Mapping organizations (partners/resources)

Campaigns

Media campaigns

Financial resources

Budgets for youth

Youth Fund

Networking

Youth Networks

Umbrella organizations

Local Youth Coalitions

Network of local Municipality Officers for youth

Mechanisms/bodies

Youth Parliaments

Steering Committees

National Youth Councils

Local/Regional Youth Offices and officers

Working groups for Local Youth Strategies

Forming Youth Consultative Bodies

Local Youth Centres

Capacity building

Trainings

Workshops

Youth Camps

Peer education

Education of youth leaders in small Communities

Education for youth researches

Education of trainers

Education for stakeholders

Seminars for Youth Officers

Fundraising trainings
Focus groups

Events

Open events
Community performances
Role plays
Invisible Theatre
Protests
Debates
Presentation in Schools /
University

Information and research

Researches
Publishing newsletters
Campaigns
Media campaigns
Press Conferences
Spread the word
Research presentation
Media – show, public
discussions, presentations

Participation

Voluntary work
Guidelines for youth
participation

More information about seminar available on Forum MNE web site

www.forum-mne.com

and Forum MNE youth portal
www.informishi.me

Guidelines for youth
participation in youth policy
processes
Forum MNE, August 2008.

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informativno obrazovanje



CENTER FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Centar za omladinski rad

