



YOUTH INFORMATION AS A BASE FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION: Boosting youth participation at local level

19-21 MAY 2010, LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death.”
(Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations)

European institutions and organisations responsible for youth policy have on several occasions emphasised the importance of youth participation to foster young people’s active citizenship, their social inclusion and their contribution to the development of democracy. Participation in the democratic life of any kind of community is about having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support to participate in society’s decision making and the possibility to engage in activities that contribute to building a better society.

In 1992, the Congress of local and regional authorities in Europe at the Council of Europe has adopted the first “European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”. It was revised in 2003 in order to address the changing issues experienced by young people. Among other things the charter stresses that participation of young people in local and regional life must constitute part of a global policy of citizens’ participation in public life and that various forms of participation must be implemented, which follow in consultation and co-operation with young people and their representatives.¹

According to the EU Youth report (2009) 62% of young men and 70% of young women declare that they are hardly interested or not interested at all in politics. In general, the interest of young people in the decision-making processes of their communities is relatively low.² Could part of the reason be that young people are often not aware of the importance of the decisions taken in their communities (spatial plans, setting up and financing kindergartens and schools, etc.)? These are the things young people often learn neither in schools nor in youth centres and clubs. It is obvious that being informed is the precondition for being able to participate actively. If young people are to be active in the political lives of their local communities, they should be informed and educated about these issues as well as offered an opportunity to participate actively in the decision-making processes. Authorities are in general obliged and responsible for informing the public of their plans, decisions and actions and in order to include young people in the process appropriate ways of reaching them should be found – together with the local youngsters.

¹ Source: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/BGKNGE/Participation.html?_locale=fr

² References: Political Participation of Young People in Europe – Development of Indicators for Comparative Research in the European Union (EUYOUPART), November 2005; Eurobarometer survey on Youth, 2007; EU Youth Report, 2009; European Social Survey



Including young people in the political life of their local communities could well strengthen their sense of belonging and being an important part of the community and might just as well contribute to a lower level of gravitation of youngsters towards the capitals.

This seminar will try to find answers to why and how this should or could be done – by identifying, presenting and exchanging best practices among local communities, active in the field of youth information, identifying the challenges of this process, and preparing recommendations for those communities interested in investing and developing instruments for the active participation of youngsters.