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Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



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SALTO-YOUTH
EASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS
RESOURCE CENTRE



Education and Culture

Seminar on youth participation in the context of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus (EECA)

14-16 October 2014
Chișinău, Republic of Moldova

REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young people in the eastern Europe and Caucasus region today are the first generation brought up in a democratic system and they are essential agents for transition and change.

The Seminar on Youth Participation in the Context of the EECA was held in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova on 15 and 16 October 2014. It was organised by the partnership between European Commission and Council of Europe in the field of youth in co-operation with the Ministry for Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova and the SALTO Resource Centre for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

In the EECA region, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership started its regional co-operation activities in 2008 by organising workshops and symposia on youth policy development in eastern Europe and the Caucasus in Hungary (2008) and Poland (2009), youth policy co-operation in the EECA region in Ukraine (2011), health and well-being of young people in the EECA region in Georgia (2012) and the role of youth work in promoting democratic citizenship and participation in Armenia (2013).

For the Seminar on Youth Participation in the context of the EECA around 50 policy makers, researchers, youth workers and trainers, youth NGO representatives and activists, mostly from the EECA region but also other European countries were gathered to discuss the **realities, needs and tendencies of youth participation** and the possibilities of its promotion, and to come up with **recommendations** for the region to foster youth participation in policy processes.

The seminar was **officially launched** by Octavian Bodisteanu, Minister for Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova, Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Moldova and José Luis Herrero, Head of Office of the Council of Europe in the Republic of Moldova. Guest speakers stressed the fact that youth is the future but also the present of society and has a key role to play in transition, as today's young generation is the first one to have been brought up in a democratic system. It was also stressed that there is a strong need for building a culture of youth and civic participation in the EECA region, taking into account the newly emerging forms and tools of exercising participation. Indeed youth policy is a sector that concerns multiple agencies and governmental sectors.

The two days of work at the seminar gave the participants a chance to hear reports from Tomasz Bratek (Head of the Polish National Agency for Erasmus+/Youth in Action) and Professor Dr Serdar Degirmencioglu (Doğuş University, Istanbul) on the current realities of youth participation, tendencies and more specifically on the situation of youth participation in the EECA region. They also outlined opportunities for improvement.

The seminar also presented the opportunity to develop a number of **recommendations** created by the reflection group on youth participation, convened by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, and to come up with concrete examples of how the recommendations can and should be used and applied in the EECA region. **Examples included** the use of information and communication technologies and opportunities for digital activism, cultural expression, campaigning,



but also continuous use of more conventional structures such as publicly funded youth centres in rural areas to foster participation. Emphasis was also placed on the need to bridge the gap between rural and urban youth and possibilities between youth and institutions and between theoretical rhetoric bases and concrete working structures. Once more it was agreed that work should be done to strengthen the position of the local level and involvement of the community.

Participants also had a chance to share some good examples of youth participation from their own countries, among which local co-management structures, mobile applications for youth active participation, non-formal education weeks in schools, local youth centres, youth banks, etc.

The seminar was concluded with a “dreaming” session about youth participation in 2020, where people dreamed about increased mobility of youth in the EECA region, a ministry only for youth with young ministers, each municipality having a working youth council and authorities respecting and valuing the potential and power of young people in the community.



Background of the seminar

The EU-Council of Europe youth partnership

Since 1998 the Council of Europe and the European Commission have run joint programmes in the field of youth, with the overall goal to foster synergies between the activities of the two institutions in this sector and to complement each other where appropriate. Priority areas today are the promotion of knowledge-based and participatory youth policy and high-quality youth work practice with special emphasis on regional co-operation in and with Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, South-Eastern Europe and the southern Mediterranean. The current Framework Partnership Agreement between the two institutions covers the period 2014-16. The work plan focuses on (non-) participation of young people, social inclusion (and barriers to it) and the role of youth work in supporting and empowering young people.

Participation in the EECA context

Since 2000, the topic of youth participation and citizenship of young people has played a key role for the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership. In the framework of training of youth workers and youth leaders, European Citizenship training courses more than 30 training courses have been organised with the aim to promote active citizenship among young people. These training courses led also to the publication of a *Training-Kit on Citizenship, Youth, Europe* (T-Kit No. 7). " In 2005-07 the Youth Partnership also supported activities within the Council of Europe campaign "All different – All equal – for diversity, human rights and participation", particularly a symposium on participation and citizenship. In the framework of its activities to achieving a better knowledge and understanding of youth, it organised a series of research seminars focusing on the topics of participation and citizenship: "What about youth political participation?" and "Young people and European citizenship". These activities have been documented in the *Youth Knowledge* series (# 2: *Revisiting youth political participation* and # 7: *European Citizenship*), others in articles in the *Coyote* magazine.

Most recently youth participation was particularly addressed during events in the south Mediterranean focusing on youth and citizenship (November 2013, Jordan), youth participation and social media (July 2013, Tunisia), "Arab Spring: Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms" (August 2012, Tunisia) and "Empowerment of youth organisations and youth-led civil society initiatives in the south Mediterranean framework" (March 2012, Malta).

Moreover, the issue of youth participation and citizenship played a crucial role in the reflections from the conference on the future of youth policies "Youth in 2020" (Budapest, 2013) and the symposium "The Current Crisis and Youth – Impact and ways forward" (Strasbourg, 2013). And finally, the reflection group on youth participation (June 2014, Brussels) discussed issues such as "why participation?", "what is youth participation?", and "how is youth participation learned?" All these events underlined numerous challenges and the importance of taking into account the socio-political context in which young people live.

As far as the eastern Europe and Caucasus region is concerned, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership started its regional co-operation activities in 2008. Since then two workshops on youth



policy development in eastern Europe and the Caucasus were held in Hungary (2008) and Poland (2009), discussing more generally on the needs and challenges for policy making in the field of youth in the region. The Symposium on Youth Policy Co-operation in the EECA region in Ukraine (2011) specified these issues and also looked at strategies for co-operation in and with the region. The Symposium on Youth Policy and Health and Well-being in the EECA countries was held in Georgia (2012) to discuss the special needs of young people in the region. In 2013 the Symposium on the Role of Youth Work in Promoting Democratic Citizenship and Participation took place in Armenia, taking a further step in promoting and strengthening civil society structures in the region.

The SALTO EECA Resource Centre

SALTO EECA Resource Centre was formed in October 2003 by the European Commission to support the co-operation within the YOUTH Programme (2003-07) and further in the Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013) with Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus region. Nowadays it continues its mission within Erasmus+/Youth in Action supporting following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.

Today's aims of the SALTO EECA Resource Centre are to raise visibility and awareness of the Erasmus+ / Youth in Action Programme opportunities in the field of youth for the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation, to provide support and expertise to National Agencies of the Programme by contributing to events promoting co-operation in the field of youth with the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation, to promote international co-operation with the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation and to support project organisers in the development of contacts, partnerships and projects.

In this respect SALTO EECA RC organises information activities by enabling organisations from Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation to have easy access to the Erasmus+ / Youth in Action and promoting co-operation with counterparts in programme countries. Furthermore, it organises training events in order to support non-formal education and Erasmus+ Youth development in the youth field. Developmental activities through seminars and study visits aim at building long-lasting partnerships between organisations from Eastern Partnership countries, the Russian Federation and programme countries.

SALTO EECA RC also provides support for organisations interested in development of co-operation with Eastern Partnership countries and Russian Federation or Programme Countries within the ERASMUS+ Youth, for project co-ordinators, youth workers, trainers, youth leaders, EVS Volunteers and National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Youth.

Objectives of the seminar

The following objectives determined the focus, activities, content and format of the seminar:

- presenting the findings of the reflection group on youth participation and its recommendations;
- exploring the relevance of these recommendations for the EECA region;
- analysing and collecting good practices of youth participation for wider use in the EECA.



Profile of participants and their expectations

Around 50 policy makers, researchers, youth workers and trainers, youth NGO representatives and activists, mostly from the EECA region but also other European countries attended the seminar.

Participants were expected to explore and discuss new forms and trends of civic activism and understand their applicability in the EECA context, to think about ways to motivate and empower and to get involved and participate. Participants shared that they would like to hear and learn about tools and programmes, projects and media that foster participation; exchange good practices and also find partner for their initiatives.



Seminar in action: a brief summary

European and national institutions safeguarding citizen participation

The seminar was officially launched by Octavian Bodisteanu, Minister for Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova, Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Moldova and José Luis Herrero, Head of Office of the Council of Europe in the Republic of Moldova.

Speakers stressed the fact that young people are the future but also the present of the society and they have a key role to play in transition, as today's young generation is the first one to have been brought up in democratic system. They shared their belief that one can witness and increase youth participation in different spheres of life (culture, sports, politics, social transformation, etc.). Of course there are still challenges such as unemployment and health care in the region, but the development shows progress. Development of citizen participation and bottom-up approaches to policy making are one of the big changes and transitions which the EECA region is experiencing at the moment. For some countries in the region the changes are radical and apparent (Moldova, Ukraine), especially with new developments in European integration and EU association processes.

Speakers noted that the Council of Europe and the European Union have and share the ambitious objectives and tasks of supporting transition and empowering youth to take ownership and face the challenges ahead of them.

It was also stressed that there is a strong need to build a culture of youth and civic participation in the EECA region, taking into account the newly emerging forms and tools of exercising participation. Today it seems there are no borders for youth participation; it changes the landscape and makes people more connected. Indeed youth policy is a sector that concerns multiple agencies and governmental sectors. There is a need to support, maintain and develop existing and new networks of spaces (youth councils, parliament, etc.) to foster youth participation on all levels. Erasmus + with its youth chapter and the activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (No Hate Speech Movement, World Forum for Democracy, etc.) were offered as good opportunities for all, to foster learning and mobility and in support of youth policy development.

Realities of youth participation in Europe and the EECA region

This theme was addressed by Tomasz Bratek, from SALTO Resource Centre Eastern Europe and Caucasus and Professor Serdar Degirmencioglu from Doğuş University, Istanbul. They shared their views and analysis of research conducted in Europe and the region on youth participation realities.

Participation "is widely regarded as an essential, if not the most important, principle of the democracies of our time, and European institutions and organisations have repeatedly emphasised the importance of youth participation to foster young people's active citizenship, enhance their integration and inclusion and strengthen their contribution to the development of democracy".

Active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional levels is essential in order to build more democratic, more inclusive and more prosperous societies. Definitions of participation used in today's discourse are inclusive, than rather exclusive.



Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. (Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, 2003)

There is an impression of general disillusionment and distancing of youth from politics and institutions, and thus opportunities of participation. There is also a question whether there is still a need for youth participation, or maybe rather a need for reconsidering participation, as it is a dynamic process and is ever changing and developing its paradigm with changes in the society at large. Across Europe youth do mostly not belong to associations or organisations (the so-called 'unorganised') so the new digital era provides the opportunity for more people, who were somewhat even excluded, to get involved and mobilise.

The modern reality and culture of participation in the EECA region are of course still rooted in the historical background of the Soviet era and the influence of communist regimes and ideology. Though today many of the ex-Soviet countries have gone through transition and are in the process of developing in a more democratic manner and form. Key achievements of transition in the post-Soviet period (1991-2014) could be summarised as the development of civic liberties, civil society development, worldwide international mobility and e-participation. The results of the transition differ widely among the countries, but each country made significant progress in comparison with the Soviet era.

Key aspects and work that need to be done to foster youth participation are: to create opportunities and a supportive environment and to develop the capabilities of young people to be involved and influential. Based on analysis and research in the countries of the region, it is obvious there are of course challenges and tasks to undertake, but there are a few key needs and areas where more focus and improvement are needed.

- The local level is crucial to generate support for youth-led initiatives on youth participation. It starts from the local community (e.g. street, district, school, etc.). Young people have proved that they are able to transform attitudes and values in their own communities. When they participate in community development in areas that concern them, they are encouraged by the realisation that they can influence their own situation, as well as that of others.
- Youth participation has to involve both urban and rural youth and communities.
- Youth parliaments and youth councils can be key actors in the structured dialogue between the youth sector and the authorities. It is very important to improve young people's ability to participate effectively in political processes and to minimise the risk that they may be manipulated by political parties and politicians.
- The process of preparation of the National Youth Strategy and the implementation of youth policy action plans has to provide opportunities for real participation of young people and youth sector representatives in the decision-making process.
- Capacity building is a key factor for success in all entry points to participation. Building participation skills is a long-term process.



Why participation is important

The main focus points of the discussions of the seminar were the concept of participation, the need and importance of participation, forms and new trends which are widely connected especially with the new information era and social media development. It offered a space to have one more look at why participation is important, what it is in today's reality and how participation is learned.

Participation is still traditionally seen as a trigger change, a bridge for generational and social gaps, a means of connection of sectors/people, a way to bring up social challenges in the community and its development and a fostering and nurturing ownership of the community. It helps to start with yourself to make the desired changes. It is regarded as a good and practical way to exercise, learn democracy and active citizenship, express and be present in the community, bring in new blood and new ideas into society and open the chances and opportunities for a better living environment in communities.

Sharing forms and good practices for participation in Europe

Seminar participants were offered an opportunity to discuss and present the understanding, forms and tools for youth participation from their countries and communities, and to discuss the ways in which people can learn to participate. Below are a few examples from across Europe of some new tools.

- Civic initiatives – A number of youth-interest-based groups are creating their own social, cultural and urban environments with making the community more youth friendly, more adapted to their needs (bike tracks, street art corners, healthy lifestyle centres, eco-friendly spaces, youth clubs and youth houses, etc.).
- Youth organisations and councils on various forms and levels, youth-led labs for social technologies to get non-organised groups into the loop.
- Digital activism – New ITC and media as means of being involved have become easier and more accessible than ever. Good examples can be different mobile applications for active citizenship, connecting easily to municipal authorities and feedback to national governments and parliaments. In general, the use of social media and networks for online activism and mobilisation, creating opportunity for participation, seems to be one of the leading trends today.
- TEDx as an arena for expression is being used specifically for youth.
- Non-formal education weeks for civic activism and weeks of youth self-governance in public schools and other educational institutions.
- Interagency councils on youth policy making, from planning to monitoring.
- Programme of the youth banks.
- Online and offline participatory budgeting.
- Communication and participation in decision making through blogs of public authorities.
- Youth information and counselling centres across Europe.



Participants also had a chance to share their practices in workshops, where they shared and discussed tools more in-depth and in detail

Youth Voice Romania, Romania

Youth community organising methodologies are used within the following two projects: Youth Voice Romania (Partners Foundation for Local Development) and “Youth public participation against discrimination in rural communities” (Centre for Sustainable Community Development CSCD) which aim to give youth a voice and support them in finding out the main problems affecting their age group and coming up with solutions for the identified problems. The whole process, from identifying the problem to negotiating with the allies and opponents, to running campaigns and advocating for their cause is entirely youth led. The community organisers (youth workers) are only responsible for facilitating the group processes.

Grassroots activism, Russia

Participants from Russia shared their initiatives of grassroots activism using media, and shared a number of websites and mobile applications which can be used by youth and also other citizens to voice their concerns and also participate in decision making through the new forms of media. It is clear that people are often online, or connected through mobiles, so it is possible to hear citizens if the authorities have the technological means and platforms. The fact that many municipal and even federal authorities today are using new media for connecting with citizens, gave people the opportunity to think and reflect about the community needs in their surroundings and also helped in general to decentralise decision making in cities and small communities. The new forms of media have also created opportunities to express themselves in non-traditional ways, such as art blogs, street action, etc. Below are some of the websites and applications shared by the participants: www.delaisam.org, www.yopolis.ru, www.partisaning.org, photo Internet project “Портрет Горожанина” (portraits of citizens), Mobile application “ДомДворДороги” (house, court yard, roads), “Я – активный гражданин” (I am an active citizen), Internet journal “Большой город” (big city).

Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Units (EPYRU) e-learning platform, Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine)

The EPYRU e-learning portal is a special online tool for civil servants and NGO leaders who are involved in youth policy elaboration, implementation and evaluation (<http://elearning.am.com.ua>).

EPYRU leads the way with a unique series of modules (in Russian) that will keep youth policy makers and NGO leaders well informed and up to date. The first module, on evidence-based policy, is already online, and everyone is welcome to register and take part. A presentation of the course and introductory videos can be found on the e-learning front page. Future modules cover other EPYRU priorities, namely cross-sector co-operation (October 2014) and enhancing stakeholder involvement in youth policy, including that of young people themselves (October 2014).

The third module of EPYRU e-learning will specifically cover the following topics (with very clear and practical instructions):



- how to develop positive youth policy;
- how to motivate young people and what is youth motivation about;
- the methods and approaches for youth participation;
- positive practices of youth participation from EaP countries and the EU;
- youth policy glossary;
- links to manuals on youth participation, etc.

Factory of active citizenship, Hungary

The project was about the organisational structure of children's and youth municipal councils, which is a possible way to get youngsters engaged in local communities. The main idea behind it is to mirror the local government's structure and give children and youngsters the chance to elect their representatives in order to advocate and protect their interest at local level. The model was developed in France and established in Hungary in the early 1990s. In Hungary, there are more than one hundred different children's and youth municipal councils that work effectively while focusing on youth participation. The idea of a factory of active citizens is based on the children's and youth municipal councils. Youngsters without any experience of participation, and without any knowledge about democracy and citizenship, can come to the factory (which is the children's and youth municipal councils) where they learn and gain new skills and competences. The "production process" lasts until the end of their mandates and within the time they spend in this organisation they become a more aware and active citizen in their localities. Thus the product of the factory is an active citizen.

Projects to make youth policies accessible for all, FYROM

The approach and the project aim at making youth policy accessible, understandable and open to all youth groups living in the community in its diversity and multiculturalism. The idea is to translate the youth policies of the country into youth-friendly languages and formats, into minority languages and sign languages, to open real chances for knowing about the policy and knowing how to get involved in its implementation and planning. This helps people with all different needs to be able to read, see and understand the policy documents and learn how to use them to their own and their community's benefit. This approach also touches on the issue of youth policy reflecting the diversity of the community and also searches for ways to bring youth policy to unorganised groups and to include them as well in these policy areas.

Online youth grant system, Armenia

Participants shared the existing mechanism of youth grants that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has initiated. The grant system opens opportunities for organisations to apply online and get feedback and evaluation from experts on applications. The expert group consists of governmental representatives and young people working in the field, youth workers, young trainers and experts. The grant system provides grants based on the national action plan for youth and follows its priorities for a certain period of time. Participation and active citizenship are one of the key areas financed by the grant system.



New forms and trends in youth participation

Youth political participation through new technologies: a step towards e-democracy?

Input from Chiara Lorenzini, freelance expert

With the arrival of the Internet, many researchers envisaged the possibility of the establishment of an e-democracy or a digital democracy.

New spaces of political participation were opened thanks to some of the characteristics of the Internet:

- an interactive, active and creative medium;
- a rapid source of information;
- easy to create network and online projects/events;
- platforms and interaction without hierarchy;
- easy to react/low cost.

Youth is naturally inclined to use ICT and social media and young people are “digital natives”.

According to some statistics, the percentage of Internet users in the EU28 is around 73%. The peak is in Estonia with a 100% Internet penetration rate and the lowest level is in Romania and Bulgaria with around 55%.

Traditional forms of political participation such as demonstration, protests, petitions (such as Change.org), etc. are now happening online. This might take not much in terms of time or personal commitment, but it can be pretty effective. US Senator Todd Akin is an example of the efficacy of these new tools. When he suggested that women’s bodies were able to prevent pregnancy in cases of rape, the outrage expressed on Twitter went “viral” and quickly spread to other social networks and blogs, while reporting on the subject was amplified by traditional news channels such as CNN. Before the introduction of “Web 2.0” technologies, his words would probably have provoked only a small protest, organised in a physical space where fewer people would have been able to participate. In this case, the success of the online protest resulted in the US Republican Party reducing support for Akin’s re-election campaign.

Traditional political institutions are also adapting to these new forms of participation. The EU Youth Report 2012 affirms that an increasing number of young people contact their public authorities through the web. And it is more and more evident that public authorities are adapting to this new situation.

Examples:

- extensive use of social media to engage youth during US President Barack Obama’s 2008 electoral campaign;
- by 2009, 80% of the United States’ Congress members had set up their own YouTube channels, enabling unfiltered communication with their constituents;



- the Government of the Republic of Croatia's Twitter account;
- Matteo Renzi, the current Italian Prime Minister, is an assiduous user of Facebook and Twitter accounts; he organises Twitter sessions to reply to tweets received;
- AbgeordnetenWatch: the biggest German platform for political dialogue that gives citizens direct contact with their political representatives at the local and national levels. The site affords citizens the opportunity to pose questions to politicians and has approximately 400 000 visitors per month, while more than 80% of all Members of the Federal Parliament answer questions on the site;
- IJAB, the German agency for international youth work, runs the European online platform Youthpart. This platform allows youth to propose and give opinions on local and regional projects. Through the platform, young people discuss local projects, municipal budgets, health and social issues with local authorities and youth organisations and can influence decisions or actively participate in amending of statutes, strategies or annual programmes.

But it is still too early to conceive a proper functional and inclusive digital democracy. There are many challenges ahead, including:

- reliability of information that can be found on the Internet; the need to form critical minds in order to be able to read through and select proper information;
- political discussions through social media are often accompanied by an oversimplification of the political message (difficult to analyse issues in just 140 characters for example);
- easy to withdraw from confrontation and discussion of different opinions; the risk of self-referential positions. If there is no influence, can we still talk about political participation?
- new technologies might widen the gap between those who are already involved and those who are not, those that have an access to new technological tools and those who do not;
- digital divides: generational, social and economic conditions, people with disabilities who have access only through costly devices, etc.;
- Internet control by authorities;
- copyright issues and the absence of national and international normative frameworks on the rights and duties of Internet users.

Many researchers and practitioners agree that there should be some preconditions in place to realistically aim at a digital democracy, as for example:

- 1) equal access for all to the Internet and ICT tools is vital. Some question if access to the Internet should be considered as a human right;
- 2) promotion of media literacy to create and manage digital content;
- 3) civic/citizens education enhanced in schools to creative selective and critical minds able to "read" the information on the Internet;
- 4) normative framework in place.



Institutional forms of participation: structured dialogue with young people

Process and the co-management system of the Council of Europe

Input from Raluca Diroescu, SALTO-YOUTH Participation Resource Centre; Janne Lindstrom, Advisory Council of the Council of Europe

The structured dialogue with young people was introduced by the European Commission to allow young people to feed into the decision-making process at local, regional, national and European levels on issues that concern them. It offers young people the opportunity to discuss with policy makers and share their suggestions, recommendations and concerns. It is part of the EU youth strategy and is also supported by the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme under Key Action 3.

The fourth cycle of the Structured Dialogue started this year under the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU and will continue under the Latvian and Luxembourgish Presidencies until the end of 2015. The overall topic of this cycle is youth empowerment for political participation and access to youth rights. The process was revised to make it more inclusive, sustainable and simple.

Co-management in the Council of Europe is a unique structure of managing the youth sector. The Advisory Council on Youth is made up of 30 representatives from Youth NGOs and National Youth Councils and works on equal standing with the Steering Committee on Youth. Together these bodies make up the Joint Council on Youth that makes all decisions relating to the youth sector. In addition to the management, the Advisory Council (AC) is entrusted to advise all the other sectors of the Council of Europe on matters that affect youth. This means that the AC works with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress and also the Council of Ministers. Co-management gives youth representatives real say in Council of Europe policy matters and young people a voice. It is an example of a political participation structure that the AC believes should be implemented on global (the UN), regional (the EU), national, national-regional and local levels. It is the next step for youth councils and parliaments in giving young people ownership of policy processes affecting their lives.

The two facilitators presented the two processes and asked the participants in the workshop to share their experiences of direct participation of young people in the decision-making processes in their countries. Representatives from Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Poland and Azerbaijan attended the workshop and shared their experiences and ideas.

The Slovak representative working for the Youth Ministry informed the participants in the workshop about the involvement of young people in his country in the preparation of a new youth strategy. Consultations with young people and working groups were organised and they were given the opportunity to shape the strategy together with decision makers. More than 1 000 young people were involved.

The Hungarian representative, a youth worker, mentioned that the government focuses primarily on youth unemployment and most strategies tackle this problem. Youth Student Councils exist and work alongside Local Councils, but unfortunately in most cases young people serve just as decoration and their input is not taken into account. At local level in Hungary there are Children and Youth Municipal Councils that work very well and are very much appreciated by young people. They give young



people a first opportunity to get involved into decision making and represent a good chance to learn to participate further in life.

The Polish participant, a youth worker as well, talked about the Polish Council of Youth Organisations. He also complained that at local level the youth representatives in city councils serve just as decoration. Civic education is delivered in schools in Poland and workshops focusing on political participation are organised together with various debates. The participant mentioned a lack of offer for young people who are members of political parties.

Application and use in the EECA context

Participants from Azerbaijan talked about the structures that allow and support young people to participate in their country. They mentioned the existence of a Youth Foundation that finances projects for young people. Young people were consulted on a youth strategy, both in physical meetings and online. Civic education is delivered in schools and debates are organised to encourage young people to express themselves on topics that concern them. Schools co-operate with youth organisations on projects that support young people's participation in society.



Working with the recommendations on youth participation

In the 2014-16 working period the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership has the following focus points:

1. participation/citizenship, including new concepts and tools;
2. social inclusion;
3. recognition and quality of youth work.

A particular emphasis is dedicated to geographical co-operation with the eastern Europe and Caucasus region, South-Eastern Europe and the south Mediterranean.

In the 2014 activities of the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership the issue of youth participation and citizenship played a crucial role in the reflection group on youth participation (June 2014, Brussels) which discussed issues such as “why participation?”, “what is youth participation?”, and “how is youth participation learned?”. The reflection group on youth participation met to assess the knowledge base on youth participation; to identify the essential key findings and conclusions of existing policy, applied work, and research; and to produce recommendations towards policy, research and practice.

One of the main objectives of the seminar in Moldova was to discuss the recommendation made by the reflection group on youth participation, trying to find their application and adaptation in the EECA region. The recommendations were discussed and a few practical proposals were made, which can be found in the table below.

Recommendation	Concrete actions proposed
<p>1) Acknowledge and promote <i>diversity in forms and forums of participation</i> by extending the scope of participation in order to allow for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) sub-cultural elements, forms of self-expression, new and unstructured ways of participation; b) both, new as well as old forms of participation; c) participation in both urban and rural settings; d) participation in daily life, community life, educational and work settings, public space, youth-care and welfare systems, civil society, culture and across political, social, individual and virtual contexts; e) debates on democracy and contentious issues in Europe – participation cannot be disconnected from debates about politics, paths for citizens to have an impact on political decisions or the problems of social exclusion and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organising festivals for self-expression, for getting to know these sub-cultural groups better (national theatres, sub-cultural youth groups, improvised theatre, street festivals) - elections (old) – shadow elections (new) for youth that cannot participate in elections - community events (eco-actions common for urban and rural areas, clubs by interests in urban and rural areas)



inequalities.	
<p>2) Promote participation for all youth, with particular attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) non-organised youth; b) disabled, disadvantaged, marginalised, disenfranchised youth; c) youth in rural areas; d) gender-specific barriers to participation; e) youth in care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to tell why it is important : use of provocative message, interesting, appealing for youth (campaign, “participate or else your village will be closed tomorrow”) - establish the system of youth banks, have a way to defend their ideas for local action/activism, co-operation in little villages between local governments and community, schools - work the practice of the youth quotas
<p>3. Promote tools and services to foster participation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the legal and political framework ; b) permanent and direct (face-to-face) dialogue with youth (by/with policy makers, public administration, policy experts, teachers, youth workers, multipliers) ; c) information and services (face-to-face and online), clear and transparent communication culture ; d) open days, lobbying, campaigning and other promotional methods ; e) youth task forces, ombudsmen, persons of trust, mentoring systems ; f) policy debates with youth, structured dialogue, co-management, consultations (face-to-face and online) ; g) good practice documentation, easy-to-access manuals ; h) training of youth and multipliers/policy makers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have a publicly funded national network of youth support centres, youth centres, youth work structures in all local communities - NFE weeks in public schools to show and promote active youth participation - promote online youth work systems , as youth is online and their tools to learn and participate are and should be online
<p>4. Promote and strengthen youth structures by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) supporting youth NGOs and youth initiatives ; b) organising debates and dialogue with youth ; c) facilitating critical reflection on participation, policy and democracy; d) supporting relevant communication, consultation and co-decision structures ; e) raising awareness about participation amongst youth ; f) using and disseminating available tools and information channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information is crucial: there is a wide need to use modern technology to spread information on opportunities and youth policy - face-to-face approach: meetings each 3 months between youth structures in different levels - facilitating critical reflections: - local governments need to provide financial sustainability, by financing NGO structural grants
<p>5. Promote lifelong learning opportunities to foster participation across settings by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bring in the same event educators to exchange ideas and promote publicly and visibly opportunities to learn



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) generating holistic and inclusive learning models encompassing formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities ; b) considering diverse settings that can offer formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities and promote co-operation structures ; c) ensuring that youth are aware of the democratic opportunities available and they have access to diversified channels of information; d) ensuring that the <i>Revised European Charter on the Participation of Youth in Local and Regional Life</i> is widely consulted and used by local and regional authorities and youth; e) making learning attractive and employing democratic and participatory approaches, such as peer learning, learning-in-action, etc. ; f) maximising outreach to all groups of youth, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups ; g) developing and providing mentoring and diverse support structures ; h) understanding skills needed for effective participation and ways to foster them in and out-of-school learning environments ; i) promoting skills and competences for participation and learning (e.g. media literacy) ; j) establishing links to other learning arenas (such as democratic citizenship education, human rights education, intercultural education) ; k) revisiting the content of citizenship education and make sure it is updated in light of the current socio-political context ; l) equipping educators (<i>both in formal and non-formal settings</i>) with the capacities for developing and implementing processes that encourage the learner's ability to develop motivation and competences for participation ; m) exploring the potential of democratic and participatory pedagogies in formal and non-formal settings that allow exploration of the interest and initial knowledge of learners, critical questioning of what is being learned, application of what is learned to the daily life and further exploration ; n) encouraging synergies with non-formal settings for genuine opportunities for participation and links with the community ; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organise trainings for the professionals in the field - develop an online platform and manual to share good practices and experiences to provide learning experiences
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o) offering flexible and easy-to-access training opportunities to youth and multipliers, trainers, policy makers and administrators, particularly training for youth to interact with institutions and training for institutional staff to interact with youth; p) considering ethical and quality standards in learning objectives ; q) continuously documenting and disseminating good practices. 	
<p>6. Promote research to better understand and disseminate good practices by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) supporting research on processes and new forms of youth participation, b) improving knowledge on the diverse ways through which participation is learned and experienced, and their impact on learners, c) promoting in-depth qualitative research and practice on youth political participation to foster a better understanding of new forms of political participation, d) better understanding online participation, its importance and limits, and how it gets articulated with other forms of participation e) disseminating knowledge on youth participation to policy makers and youth in an accessible manner, f) disseminating examples of good practices in facilitating participation of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, g) organising debates around youth participation, h) publish findings and outcomes. 	<p>(recommendation „g” - Organising debates around youth participation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organise a joint round table - call for applications for participants from both governmental structures and NGOs to attend the debates - establish partnership with debate federations



Dreaming for 2020

Participants were offered a chance to think about a vision and their wishes for youth participation in the EECA region in 2020. They shared wishes and needs for youth, including:

- a ministry just for youth, with local offices in each city;
- an appointed youth ombudsman;
- famous people working as youth ambassadors;
- each local municipality has a working and influential youth council;
- youth making and implementing youth policy;
- institutions are able to hear and listen to what the general public and youth are saying;
- governments ask youth for support and their “know how”;
- the power and potential of youth are respected and valued;
- yellow pages about youth projects in newspapers;
- young people do not exclude or segregate themselves and work to make a change;
- around 40% of young people in Europe are involved in Erasmus+;
- EECA countries can also apply for Erasmus+ grants;
- youth has quotas in the government and local/national parliaments;
- increased youth participation in elections;
- no visa borders to participate and be mobile;
- youth coming together as a village: building it, decorating it and living in it as a community.



Evaluation and conclusions

The seminar ended with evaluation and ideas for some small steps to take further the theme back home. Participants shared also the next steps they will take to transfer the information to their organisations and structures through reports, small info seminars and workshops, and through passing motivation and inspiration on to their colleagues within their organisations and local communities, in order to continue working towards strengthening youth participation in all levels and spheres.

It was agreed that the report of the meeting will be made available for further use to participants and also interested stakeholders. Furthermore it will serve as a good basis for the work on adapting participation related materials and manuals for the EECA context.

Summary of the evaluation of the seminar by participants

Question	Average out of 10	Comments
How do you like the working spaces and accommodation?	7	The fact that participants were in three different hotels made it less comfortable. There was a need for more working spaces. The seminar hall was not fit for much interaction and at times participants were squeezed into a small room.
Communication with and within the group	9	Would have been good if local participants also stayed in the hotel. There would be more interaction. In general the fact that everyone was in three hotels make it hard to interact at social times.
Results of the meeting and its usefulness	7	More time was needed to work on recommendations, though the seminar gave us the chance to share and hear a lot of good ideas that can be used in the EECA region.
Methodology of the seminar	7.5	There was a need for more time for getting to know each other, so as to give us a chance for more networking. It would be useful to have a small 'reader' in form of a booklet before the seminar on background of youth policy, youth work in the EECA region. It could have been useful to use more interactive, creative methods, there is a feeling that only the tip of the iceberg was addressed, even though a lot of information was passed around and shared.



APPENDIX

Programme of the seminar

Wednesday, 15 October 2014

- 9h30 Official opening and welcoming addresses
- Octavian Bodisteanu, Minister for Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova
 - Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Moldova
 - José Luis Herrero, Head of Office of the Council of Europe in the Republic of Moldova
- 10h30 Introduction to the seminar: programme and purpose, by Natalia Nikitina, facilitator, and Hanjo Schild, EU-Council of Europe youth partnership
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 Key note speech:
- Realities of youth participation in Europe, by Serdar Degirmencioglu
- 12h15 Working groups on why youth participation is needed, what is the role of youth participation in community life
- 12h45 Youth participation gallery: observation of the group vision
- 13h00 Lunch break
- 14h30 Key note speech:
- Realities of youth participation in the Eastern European and Caucasus region, by Tomasz Bratek, SALTO EECA Resource Centre
- 15h15 Working groups on how the information presented is reflected in (working) realities, which forms of YP are relevant, how young people learn to participate
- 16h00 Coffee break
- 16h30 Summing up of groups work: pair consulting and exchange of group work results
- 17h00 Work with recommendations on youth participation: how to use them in EECA context; presentation of the results
- 18h00 End of session
- 19h00 Dinner



Thursday, 16 October 2014

9h30 Workshops on structures and forms of youth participation: institutional co-operation, structured dialogue, co-management... by Raluca Diroescu, SALTO-YOUTH Participation Resource Centre, financial support of development of youth co-operation, by Natalia Nikitina, facilitator, new forms of youth participation – youth participation online, social movements etc., by Chiara Lorenzini, consultant

11h00 Coffee break

11h30 World café: exploring international and national tools of youth participation in youth work: volunteering, Youth Bank, Youth Councils, self-government youth bodies in educational institutions, youth information centres

13h00 Lunch break

14h30 Learning space dynamic: techniques of youth participation – local experience (two rounds of workshops by participants)

16h30 Coffee break

17h00 Dreaming session: follow-up planning of development of youth participation

17h30 Evaluation of the seminar

18h00 Dinner and final social evening, farewell party

Friday, 17 October 2014

Departure of participants



List of participants

Name	Organisation/institution
Armenia	
Ms. Mane Madoyan	Freedom of Information Center of Armenia
Ms. Nvard Petrosyan	Youth events holding center
Azerbaijan	
Mr. Ramiz Aliyev	"Common Sense" Youth Organization
Mr. Orkhan Mammadli	Youth Exchange Public Union
Austria	
Mr. Alen Hadziefendic	Erasmus Student Network - University of Graz
Estonia	
Mr. Jaan Urb	Estonian National Youth Council
Georgia	
Mr. Mirian Mamulashvili	Creative Development Center
Ms. Nato Antia	LEPL "Children and Youth National Center", Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia
Germany	
Ms. Karina Hildebrandt	Free-lancer
Hungary	
Mr. Barnabas Gulyas	Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils
Mr. Hunor Peter	Kolozsvári Magyar Diákszövetség
Republic of Moldova	
Ms. Vitalie Cîrhană	"Millenium" Training and Development Institute
Mr. Mihai Mogildea	Association for Development, Voluntary Service and Information for Youth "Without borders"
Mr Constantin Turcanu	Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova
Mr Andrei Nicolenco	Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova
Mr Doru Cîrsoiu	National Youth Council of Moldova
Mr Maxim Pîrjivskii	„Eco Visio”
Mr Vitalie Postu	Pro Community Centre
Mr Sergiu Gurău	„Eco-Răzeni” NGO



Name	Organisation/institution
Mr Nicolae Loghin	Students Alliance of Moldova
Poland	
Mr Mariusz Dyduch	Center of Education and Development Profes
Romania	
Ms. Mihaela Bolohan	EuroDEMOS
Ms. Adina Calafateanu	Center for Sustainable Community Development
Ms. Andra Hututui	Center for Public Policy
Russian Federation	
Ms. Olga Panova	National Youth Council of Russia
Ms. Nadezhda-Mariya Voronova	Non-governmental inter regional youth organisation "Association of Young Leaders"
Ms. Ksenia Nazarenko	National Youth Council of Russia
Serbia	
Mr. Dragan Radosavljevic	Glas Manjine (Minority Voice)
Slovakia	
Ms. Lenka Curillova	A.D.E.L. - Association for Development, Education and Labour
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	
Mr. Matej Manevski	Center for Intercultural Dialogue, National Youth Council, Local Youth Council Kumanovo
Ukraine	
Ms. Veronika Gryshchenko	American Councils for International Education
Mr. Anatoliy Ihnatovych	All-Ukrainian Youth Public Organisation "National Students' Union"
Ms. Iryna Kulesha	Lutsk City Council



Facilitator and Rapporteur	
Ms. Natalia Nikitina	Facilitator
Ms. Zara Lavchyan	Rapporteur

Guest speakers	
Mr. Octavian Bodişteanu	Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova
Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola	Head of Delegation of the European Union to Moldova
Mr. José Luis Herrero	Head of Office of the Council of Europe in the Republic of Moldova

Institutional representatives	
Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Moldova	Mr. Ion Donea
Delegation of the European Union to Moldova	Mr. Fabien Schaeffer
Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe	Mr. Janne Lindström
Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic	Mr. Tibor Škrabský
Expert Doğuş University, Istanbul	Dr. Serdar Degirmencioglu
Freelance expert	Ms. Chiara Lorenzini
Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth	Mr. Davide Capecci
	Ms. Viktoria Karpatska
	Mr. Hanjo Schild
Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit	Ms. Evgeniia Petrivska
SALTO-YOUTH Participation Resource Centre	Ms. Raluca Diroescu
SALTO Resource Centre Eastern Europe and Caucasus	Mr. Tomasz Bratek