

# Youth Partnership

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



## Report

### Symposium on youth participation in a digitalised world

**Budapest, 14-16 September 2015**

#### 1. Introduction

The symposium Youth Participation in a Digitalised World was the major event of the EU–Council of Europe youth partnership in 2015 and was organised in connection with the annual meetings of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) and the correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYF). It took place at the Council of Europe’s Youth Centre in Budapest, from 14 to 16 September 2015.

#### 2. Background

For the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, youth participation has been a frequent theme over the last 17 years. More recently, in 2014, a reflection group on youth participation was organised by the EU–Council of Europe youth partnership. This reflection group discussed a number of analytical papers, which led to policy recommendations. In addition, the findings of this work were compared to the results of the multilateral co-operation project on youth participation organised by the German National Agency for Erasmus+/Youth in Action, which led to the joint recommendation “Amplify participation of young people in Europe”. In 2015 this work was continued by focusing the reflection on participation and democratic governance in the digitalised world and the role of youth policy and youth work in this respect.

In this framework the EU–Council of Europe youth partnership organised the symposium on youth participation in the digitalised world with the aim of answering questions emerging from recent events and activities, in particular the World Forum for Democracy in November 2014,

in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe No Hate Speech Campaign and the results of the study “Youth Participation in Democratic Life”, published by the European Commission in 2013.

Entering a digitalised world with its new ways of communication and educational approaches, different economic settings, political relationships and representative structures, has a crucial impact on (democratic) societies and forms of governance. In the context of growing political and social extremism across Europe and the challenges to existing democratic systems, the symposium’s aims were:

- to allow deeper reflections on youth participation and on the future of democracies in the digital era, and on the chances and risks stemming from the developments that young people are facing;
- to evaluate young people’s needs and aspirations, identifiable tendencies and prognoses;
- to share and discuss related policies and practice examples.

### **3. Preparing for the symposium**

#### **• Speakers and Participants**

Speakers were carefully selected to represent different institutions, projects, countries and fields of activity. Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport at the European Commission; Péter Szíjjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade for Hungary; and Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe participated in the opening of the symposium and addressed the plenary.

The symposium participants represented the areas of policy, research and practice in the field of youth (youth non-governmental organisations, youth workers, developers, trainers and campaigners) as well as experts from related fields (the media, economics, the information society, youth, data protection and cybercrime).

The Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) and the correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) were also actively involved throughout the event.

#### **• Online e-participation**

Online participation was organised to allow the active e-participation of more interested participants, co-ordinated by an online facilitator.

#### **• Analytical papers<sup>1</sup>**

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1. The analytical papers can be found in Annexes IV, V, VI and VII.

Prior to the symposium, four analytical papers covering the four thematic areas of the symposium were drawn up by experts to inspire the reflections and discussions during the symposium.

More precisely, the following documents were produced.

- a) "Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of democracy and political participation" by Geoffrey Pleyers.
- b) "Education for participation in a digitalised world" by Manfred Zentner.
- c) "Online communication tools leading to learning, identity and citizenship for digital natives" by Adina Marina Călăfăteanu.
- d) "Analytical paper on youth participation in digital world – Economic sphere and working life" by Sladjana Petkovic.

- **Preparatory team**

A small expert group from diverse professional backgrounds was organised to support the reflections on content, methodology and the selection of experts/speakers invited to take part in the process. It met twice prior to the symposium. The preparatory team consisted of: Manfred Zentner, Sladjana Petkovic and Adina Marina Călăfăteanu (all PEYR researchers); John Lisney (European Youth Forum); Daniel Poli (IJAB Germany); Bruno del Mazo Unamuno (Injuve Spain and CDEJ); Marine Manucharyan (Advisory Council on Youth); Raluca Diroescu (SALTO Resource Centre Participation); Karin Lopatta-Loibl (European Commission); Ana Gascón-Marcén (Council of Europe/Information Society); Marta Medlinska, Hans-Joachim Schild, Davide Capecci and Philipp Boetzelen (all EU–Council of Europe youth partnership).

- **Selection of facilitators and rapporteur**

Two facilitators and rapporteur were selected based on a call for interest. The symposium was facilitated by Andreea Hanganu and Dariusz Grzemmy, and the report written by Matina Magkou. Both facilitators were invited to the second preparatory meeting.

#### **4. The concept of youth participation**

The participation of young people is understood to be as broad as possible. In the recommendations of the above-mentioned reflection group on youth participation it was reiterated that the forms and arenas of youth participation should be acknowledged and promoted in all their diversity, meaning old and new forms of participation, in both rural and urban settings, in daily and community life, in educational and work settings, in public spaces, youth care and welfare systems, in civil society, (sub-) cultures and as collective or individual expression across political, social, individual and virtual contexts. Thus participation must be promoted for all youth, organised and non-organised, in cities and remote areas, regardless of

gender and age, and with particular attention to “virtually disconnected”, disabled, disadvantaged, marginalised, disenfranchised young people, for example migrants, refugees, asylum seekers or young people in care systems. Understanding participation is a precondition for further developing structures of democratic governance on every level, be it local, regional, national or international. Voting on or offline is only one element of representative democracies. “Open” participation in terms of power sharing/shared decision making (“co-deciding”), civic and social movements, direct democracy and even individual (and sometimes illegal) forms of participation, such as hacking, graffiti and body art / tattooing should also be considered. As an example, the guidelines for e-participation by young people in decision making at all levels – developed in a multilateral co-operation project by the International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany (IJAB) in 2014 – distinguish between two dimensions: direct, or transitive e-participation online, means that political decisions are influenced directly and structural links to political decision-making processes are enabled; indirect, or intransitive forms of e-participation, reach out to Internet users and encourage them to support certain issues and positions and thus contribute to the development of political opinion. The use of social media and the Internet is a good example of the opportunities that young people eagerly seize (like in the Arab Spring and other social movements around the world) but also of the threats they often face. On the one hand, it allows the expression of one’s opinions easily, the sharing of ideas and the quick organisation of large numbers of like-minded people. On the other hand they it carries the risk of online hate speech, bullying and other sorts of crime, as well the risk of being exposed to surveillance. There are also other diverse barriers to e-participation which young people face. Consequently, reflecting on youth participation and democratic governance it is not about how to make young people to vote, but how to support them in becoming/being active, critical, autonomous citizens, aware of underlying democratic values.

## 5. Four main thematic areas

The programme of the symposium was grouped around four thematic areas that are crucial for the digital age in relation to the participation of young people (and democratic governance).

- **Communication:** trends in information and communication technologies, (new) ways to communicate via social media and of getting informed, digital competences, innovative communication for fostering participation and engagement, freedom of expression vs. control.
- **Education:** new ways to learn and teach, online/e-learning vs. face-to-face learning, individual vs. collective learning, learning to participate, digital literacy, the potential of democratic and participatory pedagogies – both in formal and non-formal settings – learning to be critical or adjusted citizens, future of citizenship education, open education resources.

- ***Economic sphere and working life:*** new ways of working, for example telework, new working relationships – individualisation vs. collective employees’ representation, flat hierarchies vs. hierarchical command structures, network structures and shared responsibilities, new forms of entrepreneurship, changing work spaces, new economic formats and methods like the crowd-sourcing approach and using collective intelligence.
- ***Democracy and political participation:*** diverse forms of democracy – representative vs. direct democracies, open vs. repressive societies; local, regional, national and international levels of governance; role of civic and social movements, new forms of expression and engagement, protection of human rights, freedom of expression online, freedom of assembly and association online, perspectives of “Post-Democracy” and what comes after.

Discussions on these four areas looked from two perspectives: *chances and opportunities* and *risks and threats* for young people and addressed the questions.

- Where do we stand today?
- What are the perspectives and visions?

## 6. Working Format of the Symposium

The first part of the Symposium included two keynote speeches from a researcher and a youth representative.

Four working sessions around each main thematic area of an hour and 45 minutes duration were organised. In the first part of each session an invited speaker made an introduction to the topic and then participants were invited to participate in various labs to go deeper into the subject areas.

Each lab was organised in a semi open space, where selected experts were invited to give a short input followed by a discussion with the participants, moderated by the facilitators.

For each lab there was live reporting thanks to the volunteer rapporteurs who registered the key points of discussion on Etherpad documents that were available online so that online users could follow the discussions.

This report is strongly based on the notes coming from these volunteer rapporteurs.

## 7. The discussions and results of the symposium

The inputs and discussions at the symposium led to the following conclusions and key messages.

### *Key messages from the keynote speeches*

- **Roman Gerodimos, Bournemouth University: online youth civic attitudes**

Roman Gerodimos started his presentation by saying that there is no such thing as “one” youth and also challenged the term participation (for whom? why?). He mentioned that from his research young people are more inclined to participate in something that they relate to than to something more abstract. He claimed that young people can and want to express their voice but there are some terms and conditions that apply when they face something that is civically interesting. More precisely it needs to:

- be relevant to their life (me, myself , my community);
- transmit efficacy and hope (tangible outcome, empowerment);
- be emotionally engaging (effective/symbolic aspects);
- be visually elegant, beautiful or gripping.

Finally he underlined the great potential of digital technologies to nurture a civic culture of belonging/identity, collective memory, responsibility/duty, empathy, compromise and urban coexistence.

- **Julia Kloiber, Open Knowledge Foundation, Germany: open knowledge and net policy**

Julia Kloiber shared experiences of how digital tools can transform young people from data consumers to producers of content. She explained why data should be open, underlying their potential for transparency, releasing social and commercial value and enhancing participation and engagement. She claimed that by creating a tool and sharing data, you are empowering others to use this information and take action. She underlined the importance of mixing offline and online tools to better understand how the systems around us function and said that open data cannot only give important input but should also be a tool for building trust. She made reference to events organised by the Open Knowledge Foundation (like “Jugend hackt”) to stimulate young people to produce digital tools, get better access to information and develop skills, while supporting their opportunities for participation.

## **Thematic Area Communication**

The thematic area “Communication” dealt with trends in information and communication technologies, (new) ways to communicate via social media and to become informed, digital competences, innovative communication for fostering participation and engagement, freedom of expression vs. control.

### ***Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of communication (by Anna Ludwinek, research manager EUROFOUND)***

Anna Ludwinek talked about the opportunities and risks related to youth participation in a digital world and communication. She listed opportunities such as personal, peer-to-peer communication, the extraordinary potential to cross boundaries and reach out to a large amount of people, the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups, the creativity, ideas and inspiration derived and the potential for reducing prejudices. On the other hand, she identified risks such as cyber-bullying, the exclusion of certain groups, the effects on well-being (sleep deprivation, anxiety and depression) as well as the fact that anonymity might endanger responsible online behaviour.

She also made reference to the forthcoming European Quality of Life Survey (2016) of Eurofound, a pan-European survey that examines both the objective circumstances of European citizens’ lives and how they feel about those circumstances and their lives in general. A policy brief on the social situation of young people is also under way.

### ***Key items of the Labs on “Communication”***

- **Lab I.1 Input by Martin Fischer, Nerdy, Austria: GameOverHate – communication in video game communities**

#### *Main content of the input*

The group in this lab explored the relationship of young people with video games and their motivations for playing them.

Martin Fischer presented GameOverHate, an international initiative to tackle hate in online gaming environments and to foster inclusive gaming communities.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Main points from the group discussions*

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2. More information can be found at this link: <http://gameoverhate.tumblr.com/> (date accessed 15.11.2015)

While video games are becoming more and more attractive to young people, they also have an educational potential and youth researchers are more and more interested in discovering the topic.

The profile of the video gamer was discussed and the following remarks were made.

- There are certain preconceptions about the characteristics of a video gamer: male, young, urban, unhealthy lifestyle, anti-social, middle class.
- The reality is that the percentage of video gamers is 54% male, 46% female, the average age is 30.4-years-old. Some 25% of the EU's population plays games.
- The Irish Migration Centre's research shows that gamers are most exposed to international values and more likely to have international friends, given the access to the Internet.
- Games are quite diverse, with no regional, social or economic restrictions.
- Even if gamers are often less sociable people, they develop logical thinking. However, video gamers' communication continues in communities, they meet physically, discuss game strategies on forums, and talk about life during the games.
- It is quite a sexist environment, where girls (and minorities) try not to be visible in the gaming community; there is always the risk of harassment and public shaming is used as a community-management technique.

However, we often observe violence in games; hate speech, social exclusion related to the access to games, etc. Gamification as a way of applying gaming rules and elements to other ways of life was also part of the discussion.

Members of these communities usually share an interest in online gaming and generate interaction, which is enabled by the technologies. Sometimes these communities bring together users from very different backgrounds. What do you think about these types of interactions? Can they be beneficial for activation and engagement?

The messages that the group wanted to send to the policy agenda are that:

- the games sector wants to be self-regulated;
- gamers should be included in the development of codes of conduct because ethics is highly involved in debates around the theme;
- empowering minorities was also deemed to be a necessity, to match how it stands in the offline world.

#### **Further resources**

[www.fatuglyorslutty.com](http://www.fatuglyorslutty.com)

[www.notinthekitchenanymore.com](http://www.notinthekitchenanymore.com)

[www.inclusivegaming.tumblr.com](http://www.inclusivegaming.tumblr.com)

[www.feministfrequency.com](http://www.feministfrequency.com)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcqEZqBoGdM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcqEZqBoGdM) (latest video on Women as Reward in video games)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZAxwsg9J9Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZAxwsg9J9Q) (a TEDx talk from a woman who was targeted by an online hate campaign)

<https://medium.com/message/72-hours-of-gamergate-e00513f7cf5d> the twitter analysis of #gamergate)

<http://kotaku.com/banned-league-of-legends-youtuber-defends-his-trash-tal-1730635674>

Article and video on a YouTuber who was banned from League of Legends<sup>3</sup> for harassment but disagreed with the decision.

The reaction on social media from the gaming community when Jimmy Kimmel, a US late-night talk-show host, made fun of Let's Play, a central asset in the gaming community.

The video that started it all: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JigKmXwrA5Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JigKmXwrA5Y)

The gaming community response: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZJHhM5uKlg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZJHhM5uKlg)

Jimmy Kimmel mocks YouTubers: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtZgpEqfoal](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtZgpEqfoal)

- **Lab 1.2 Input by Sargis Khandanyan, CivilNet.TV, Armenia: challenges and opportunities for digital journalism**

*Main content of the input*

Sargis introduced CivilNet.TV<sup>4</sup> from Armenia and started his introduction with a reminder about the International Day for Democracy and that media are a key in instituting it. He introduced the topic of digital journalism and the challenges and opportunities that it presents.

Challenges related to digital journalism include:

- fast-growing digital content and the difficulty in keeping pace with innovation;
- the ability to verify information and the danger of propaganda;
- citizen journalism vs. professional journalism: although new tools make citizen journalism possible, there is still a question of trust;
- accessibility, since not everyone has access to the Internet, especially in developing countries.

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<sup>3</sup> League of Legends is a [free-to-play multiplayer online battle arena, real-time strategy](http://www.leagueoflegends.com) video game.

4. More information can be found at this link : <http://civilnet.am/> (date accessed 15.11.2015)

However, the group agreed that the opportunities identified by digital journalism are greater than the challenges, and include the following:

- it is inexpensive;
- it is accessible;
- it is resourceful, meaning that it gives unlimited access to a lot of web resources;
- ease of package and design – one can do it just with a smartphone, tools like timeline or datawrapper;
- wide availability of distribution channels (social media, apps, etc.);
- ability to offer live coverage of events (via periscope, meerkat, etc.) – in the future videos will take over text and images;
- digital journalism makes it easier to interact and engage with young people.

#### *Main points from the group discussions*

The main points raised in the discussions were:

- the most important thing is still how to get a story;
- some people do not know how to communicate visually;
- professional journalists nowadays do not only compete with fellow journalists, but also with “civilian journalists”;
- a question remains about how news can be verified; some tools are being developed in this direction, for example Jeffrey’s Exif Viewer, an online tool that helps in the verification of photos as it displays date, time and location data for the phone in order to verify if an image is what it purports to be;
- now that technology provides the tools for anyone to become a journalist, it is important to analyse the sources and expand media literacy;
- digital journalism brings a democratisation of the media, it gives the opportunity to people to interact, analyse and use the feedback; however, the question remains on how to engage more people in discussions, while still protecting journalism;
- online platforms are easy to use, they serve to build communities and create awareness; however, there is still a lot of hesitation from the decision makers’ side regarding their legitimacy;
- it is still important to activate young people’s participation and to engage policy makers from the beginning and to believe that you can have a real impact;
- investing at the local level can be the easiest way to start.

#### **Further resources**

- [www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/skills/digital-journalism](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/skills/digital-journalism)
- [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) online petitioning

- **Lab 1.3 Input by Airi-Alina Allaste, University of Tallinn, Estonia: social media and youth participation**

*Main content of the input*

Airi-Alina Allaste presented the results of research that took place in Estonia aiming to explore the link between youth participation and information and communications technology (ICT), finding new models of digital participation and identifying e-participation best practices while exploring the existent links between the use of social media tools in youth participation and human rights protection. The sample consisted of 16 to 26-year-old Estonians that took part in in-depth interviews and surveys.

She first contextualised the research by talking about the neo-liberal political trends in Estonia, the high-level Internet use, the fact that civic activism has been rather passive in the last 20 years and that there are negative connotations associated with activism as a result of the communist era, making reference to the biggest protest movement, ACTA, that in 2012 turned into a public event against the government.

*The main conclusions of the research were as follows.*

- Only 20% of the young people that participated in the survey believe that politicians are interested in young people's needs and interests.
- In Estonia, young people tend to be less active both in conventional and international causes compared to those in Western Europe.
- Even if young people do not declare themselves as being politically active or activists, they are convinced that the Internet could offer them the space and place to participate. Signing petitions, sharing, commenting or liking could be interpreted as participating in public life, but this participation is considered to take place from a safe and comfortable position. It was also mentioned that young people tend to be cautious about sharing and posting as it might influence their future professional opportunities since recruiters check online presence.
- Participation is linked to the educational and social background, for example young people belonging to the Russian-speaking minority tend to get less involved in online causes because of cultural aspects, fear and a lack of self-confidence.

*Main points from the group discussions*

The Internet is seen as providing opportunities for political engagement, provides quick and up-to-date information for participation in civic life and generates new means of direct democracy while creating pluralistic public spheres. However, two questions were raised, asking whether it does create equal participation opportunities and whether it reduces "real" social interaction.

Participants debated whether online activity could be considered as a gateway to political participation and stated that online activism is to be considered more as an indirect form of participation and that online participation tools should be well defined to support certain causes. Online participation should be viewed as process-oriented and we should realise that it takes time to get specific outcomes.

- **Lab I.4 Input by Ivett Karvalits, Eurodesk Hungary/Kate O’Connell, NYCI, Ireland: No Hate Speech Movement (NHSM)**

#### *Main content of the input*

The session started with Ivett running a brainstorming session with the participants on what defines hate speech. Hate speech was also contrasted with freedom of expression. The issue of anonymity was raised, as was the use of tools for spreading hate speech. Ivett also described the structure of the NHSM campaign, giving more details regarding the Hungarian campaign and presented the online tools and platforms. She mentioned that the project has been supported by the EEA grants and the training for multipliers was based on Bookmarks material, a manual on how to combat hate speech online through human rights education. Kate made a presentation on the campaign in Ireland and how the national youth council has engaged young people and organisations through the training of youth ambassadors.

#### *Main points from the group discussions*

The difficulties of the campaign were outlined and included the following:

- the fact that this was a top-down initiative led to challenges;
- there were struggles with funding resources;
- there was a lack of structural support from ministries and public authorities at the national level;
- not enough stakeholders in the national co-ordination committees resulted in a very homogenous group;
- meetings had to be online rather than in person because of distances involved;
- it was hard to react rapidly and collectively to current issues;
- it was a struggle to balance online and offline campaigns;
- there was a need to give opportunities to young people and not only ask for their contribution.

#### **Thematic area Education**

The thematic area “Education” dealt with new ways to learn and teach, online/e-learning vs. face-to-face learning, individual vs. collective learning, learning to participate, digital literacy, the potential of democratic and participatory pedagogies, both in formal and non-formal settings, learning to be critical or adjusted citizens, the future of citizenship education and open education resources.

***Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of education (by Manfred Zentner, researcher at Krems University Austria)***

Growing up in the new media environment implies omnipresence of information. Young people might be digital natives regarding their access to e-media and the Internet, but this does not automatically imply that they are skilled in using it. Digital media is already used in schools, universities and other formal and non-formal education settings and will be even more so in the future. It offers new opportunities for remote learning as well as for getting content into school environments that is hard to transport via books. Further, digital media changes the way people access information and web 2.0 offers new chances to provide information - thus new respectively enhanced media competences are needed. This is highly important especially for new forms of participation enabled by digital technologies.

Therefore, digitalised media changes political education in and outside the formal education system. (Young) people can immediately learn and experience new ways to access information and to contact policy makers, with activities and with other (young) people with similar attitudes. With digital technology more people can be involved in decision-making processes but they also need new competences.

***Key items of the LABS on "Education"***

- **Lab II.1 Input by Merja-Maaria Oinas, co-ordinator, Finland: Nuortenideat.fi: education for e-participation services at local, regional and national levels**

*Main content of the input*

The example of nuortenideat.fi,<sup>5</sup> presented by Merja-Maaria Oinas, is a Finnish nationwide youth initiative where young people can easily make suggestions, participate in and influence matters that affect them. It is promoted by the Ministry of Justice's online democracy services. Municipalities, schools, organisations and youth influence groups can use this service free of charge. The aims of the service are:

- to support the interaction and co-operation between young people and municipal, educational institutions, organisations and other actors;
- to bring up young people's opinions, discuss them and observe them in decision making;
- to offer young people accessible and equal opportunity to tell, ask and be heard;
- to offer young people the opportunity to follow the proceedings and decisions taken for them.

A training course and a campaign around the initiative are organised in co-operation with schools. What is important is that young people need not only identify the things that they want to be changed, but also propose solutions.

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5. More information can be found at [www.nuortenideat.fi/fi/](http://www.nuortenideat.fi/fi/) (date accessed 15.11.2015)

### *Main points from the group discussions*

Other similar initiatives shared in the room were:

- a moderated platform from Russia collecting initiatives to improve the environment that results in an NGO helping with fundraising for ideas and in young people creating business plans;
- a youth information platform in Norway that provides varied information on schooling, voting and legislation;
- e-platforms: enabling people in Russia to upload photos of potholes to local authorities; allowing people in Ireland to upload pictures of racist graffiti for the attention of the authorities; allowing anyone in Ukraine to report public litter.

Participants underlined that such participatory “tools” only work when the governments are responsive and questioned what happens when they are not.

Participants shared the opinion that all these initiatives require new skills to enable youth participation.

A final observation among the group was that countries with better economic development invest in centralised systems of consultation, while in other countries citizen initiatives are trying to fill this gap. This constitutes a new divide and an area to look into more.

Such initiatives and platforms make youth work even more politically relevant, in that it can facilitate this process and reach out to more young people. However, in countries where youth workers are municipal staff this might be easier compared to volunteer youth workers or other structures where engaging in youth participation becomes more difficult.

- **Lab II.2 Input by Stefan Ubiparipovic, European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL), Serbia: Intercultural dialogue and learning**

#### *Main content of the input*

Stefan introduced EFIL and shared his personal story on how he started becoming involved. He explained how the organisation is using e-learning and other digital tools to enhance intercultural learning beyond face-to-face interaction. He mentioned that during study exchanges they instruct young people how to avoid abusing new technologies in order not to alienate them from their host communities. He also introduced EFIL’s global competence certificate pilot project.

#### *Main points from the group discussions*

- The issue of fake identities online was raised and the threat posed by so much false information for young people. At the same time, there is a sort of social pressure to have a presence on social media.

- The Internet offers the chance to interact with people from different cultures (instead of a limited circle of people) so one is less prone to stereotyping.
  - There are, however, certain limits to acquiring intercultural competences from information technology. For instance, although emoticons have replaced verbal communication, some important competences can only be acquired through personal experience, besides texts, photos and videos.
  - The challenge is to provide young people with lifelong stability and the resilience to face changes introduced by new technologies.
  - Intercultural exchanges (like the ones organised by EFIL) are often for those who have the means. The groups questioned whether this is an outreach issue and whether there are ways to overcome the problem of elitism and to reach out to underprivileged young people. They observed that there is also a resistance among young people from closed communities.
  - There was a group consensus that intercultural communication topics should be introduced to the school curriculum and accompanied by opportunities for learning offered by information technologies.
- **Lab II.3 Input by Dmitry Khromakov, Politica Externa, Latvia/Russia: what a university of the 21st century should look like**

*Main content of the input*

The presenter Dmitry Khromakov comes from the Higher School of economics in Moscow, a young university established in 1992, and is involved in the magazine *Politica Externa*, which was established to encourage young researchers and journalists to share their views on a wide range of topics related to international affairs.

He introduced the relation between the university and new technologies and he claimed that thanks to new technologies a global student community is evolving. Moreover, an international community of students and teachers is growing. He claims that what makes the university so special is the participation of young people. The professors are young and open to students' ideas.

*Main points from the group discussions*

- The groups agreed that the initiative to transform universities should come from both students and professors.
- The pros and cons of online learning were addressed. Online courses can be more accessible and inclusive, attract a multicultural audience, be adaptable to a student's schedule, involve good teachers and give wider choices to the students. However, there are very few people that finish their studies online (there are motivation and discipline issues), there is a lack of contribution from the students and there is also not a

community feeling; the feeling of social responsibility is missing. The group agreed that being online as a university is not enough to create valuable content.

- Combining online and offline approaches was welcomed as the best option to follow in the field of training. The case of combining on-site courses at the university with online courses to give additional points to the students was mentioned as an example.
- The role of professors is to guide students in learning. The success of the university lies in seeing that students succeed in the future and become even better than the professors. There is a need for more skills-oriented training.
- Evaluation indicators and criteria for professors were also suggested as a way to improve their work, as was the need to provide educational/training opportunities to teachers to improve their own skills.
- The university could create links between students and their future employers/professionals from the field through online tools.
- There needs to be a change in the rigidity of the education system and students should be further involved in university governance.
- A generational gap regarding attitudes on digitalisation was identified between students and professors, as was the need to create open and knowledge sharing spaces where students and professors could exchange opinions and learn from each other.

A discussion around what the university of the 21st century should look like took place and the following points were raised:

- encourage the collection of projects developed by students and guided by professors;
- enhance the mixture of traditional and modern tools;
- increase attractiveness for students/ supporting innovation and creation;
- be more mobile, radical, and back to the roots;
- encourage learning by doing, practical and professional skills;
- engage and empower students, be more democratic, transparent and inclusive;
- get part of the lifelong learning agenda;
- provide equal opportunities;
- go beyond borders;
- question the university in general?

- **Lab II.4 Input by Karsten Lucke, Europahaus Marienberg: digital and social media in political out-of-school education**

*Main content of the input*

Karsten Lucke's presentation "Digital and social media in political out-of-school education" focused on the work of Europa-Haus Marienberg that is active in a rural area in Germany. Under the Think Europe label they provide educational activities about Europe to a target group that is not knowledgeable at all about Europe and that are not much involved or interested in politics. Their target group is young people aged 14 to 20 from all over Europe that usually come for a one-week seminar on political education, where trainers use mixed education methods. They firmly believe that face-to-face direct contact is very important, but they also employ IT tools for their training purposes. Following a week of training participants discover political processes through digital tools. The organisation is making efforts to position digital tools in political education that are relatively easy to use. They also use art in political education (graffiti, photo blogs, etc.) to give the opportunity to participants to disseminate results and peer-sharing. They have also developed understanding regarding privacy and security matters.

*Main points from the group discussions*

- it is a challenge to deal with prejudices coming from the community, the family or from cultural experience and to move towards an openness to learning about the political world;
- there is a challenge to prepare trainers and practitioners to use digital tools; the solution is to try to use one tool at a time and to break fears and resistance with digitalisation;
- public administration/public services face more rigidity and challenges when it comes to using digital tools; one way around this rigidity or reluctance is to set up private-public partnerships;
- it is important to accept that certain things will not work and we are still learning by doing; that's why sharing experiences becomes even more important;
- focusing only on the opportunities that can be explored online is limiting the success of different projects;
- the capacity of NGOs to facilitate such projects should be further promoted.

**Thematic area "Economic sphere and working life"**

This thematic area dealt with new ways of working, for example telework, new working relationships – individualisation vs. collective employees' representation, flat hierarchies vs. hierarchical command structures, network structures and shared responsibilities, new forms of

entrepreneurships, changing work spaces, new economic formats and methods like the crowd-sourcing approach and using collective intelligence.

***Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of***

***"Economic sphere and working life" (by Inga Tiede, Liquid Democracy e.V. Germany)***

Inga Tiede presented the concept of hierarchy, democracy and participation as reflected in the working practices of the organisation she represented, Liquid Democracy e.V. She made reference to a young generation of "Generation Y" professionals that have experienced prosperity during their educational years and the demands of the new professional world, while experiencing uncertainty as part of life and the reality that hard incentives do not apply any more. What this generation wants and needs is self-determination, the interlacing of work and private life and an interesting career. In view of the lack of qualified personnel due to demographic changes companies have to adapt their recruitment and attractiveness of working conditions

Liquid Democracy is a non-profit and non-partisan association exploring and running innovative ideas and projects for democratic participation. They believe that society is confronted with complex tasks. Therefore they see an increasing need for co-ordination. Their aim is to develop modern software tools to enable online participation in organisational or political decision-making processes, for example. The team is composed of software engineers, political scientists, philosophers, mathematicians and business economists under the age of 35. Their structure and decision-making process makes them unique. There are few specified procedures, few officially defined responsibilities and huge autonomy for employees and teams for self-organisation. Employees propose, discuss and decide on strategic matter and this adds a bottom-up decision-making process to top-down processes: a very "Generation Y-ish" workforce.

***Key items of the LABS on "Economic sphere and working life"***

- **Lab III.1 Input by Pierre-Julien Bossier, Belgium/Régis Pradal, France, InternsGoPro: social entrepreneurship and community building**

*Main content of the input*

The case of InternsGoPro was presented as an example of community building for youth participation through an online-offline community of social entrepreneurship. Launched in February 2015, InternsGoPro is a social enterprise working internationally to support young people and employers in bridging the skills gap between education and employment.

Supported by a network of 25 youth NGOs and the European Commission, it has co-created the “European Label for Quality Internships” and has launched the International Interns Day, to be observed on 10 November each year. They have also introduced an online system for rating internships in partnership with the European Youth Forum, the European Commission and major media.

InternsGoPro has received several endorsements and awards, amongst the Forbes 30 under 30 for promising social enterprises in 2016 and the “Entrepreneurs for Social Change” support programme from the United Nations Alliance for Civilizations and Fondazione CRT.

### *Main points from the group discussions*

The following questions/concerns were raised:

- The concept of e-reputation has been introduced in our era, which implies a high level of attention to be paid on online presence.
  - The example of ranking the internships places at the surface the question of how is quality defined and what is morally acceptable and what is not.
  - Even if such efforts are put in place, young people might still apply for poor-quality internships to get the necessary experience and contacts for entering the job market.
  - It is not easy to get on to the policy maker’s agenda, although at the same time there is a lot of pressure on civic activism to find solutions to issues.
  - How much should we embrace the model of social enterprise to support young people? Where are young people in these kinds of strategies? Is there a future for social entrepreneurship and where are young people in this scenario? What is their potential impact in the community? What is the exact investment in them?
- **Lab III.2 Input by Miriana Bucalossi, Provincia di Siena, Italy: Job Tribu project – new technologies for career guidance**

### *Main content of the input*

Miriana Bucalossi gave a presentation on the “Job Tribu project – new technologies for career guidance”, initiated by the Provincia di Siena with the support of the EU’s programme for Employment and Social Solidarity. She underlined that within the context of the European Employment Strategy, public employment services play a crucial role in promoting people’s active participation in the job market and in favouring investments in human capital on the part of businesses and institutions. The great challenge for employment services lies in offering

career guidance to the younger generations. New technology can play a crucial role in the necessary process of reflection and reorganisation of public employment services that must now support increasingly dynamic and complex individual transitions amid multiple instances of lack of work and “different” forms of training, work experience and professional activity. The Job Tribu project understands that the development of ICT offers new ways and styles of interaction that open new dimensions for participation of young people in the European labour market.

- **Lab III.3 Input by Jelena Miljanic/Marija Novkovic, UN Agencies Montenegro: Youth Employment Solutions and Tranzit Platform**

#### *Main content of the input*

Elena Miljanic presented two initiatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Montenegro: the Youth Employment Solutions (YES) initiative<sup>6</sup> and Engaging citizens in policy making.

Youth Employment Solutions is a web portal for collaborative youth employment solutions based on three principles:

- employment is young people’s main concern, top life aspiration and priority;
- young people are willing to get involved in decision making and solving social issues;
- the majority of young people in Montenegro use the Internet.

The portal gives young people the opportunity to meet online and offline, to discuss youth unemployment and their concerns, and to devise and implement solutions for them. The project addressed three issues.

- a) What skills are young people missing and what skills do they want to develop?
- b) Entrepreneurship as an opportunity and not as a last resort.
- c) Institutions related to youth employment.

Four projects were selected for funding.

- a) From idea to employment – motivating young people to start their own business.
- b) Skills for rural tourism and promoting rural tourism as a self-employment niche.
- c) Green houses production, providing young people with skills for green house production.
- d) Developing a website for promoting and booking private accommodation.

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6. Blogs about the initiative: <http://bit.ly/eWeEBb> and <http://bit.ly/lcgQbot>

The project managed to grasp the momentum of young people, include vulnerable youth and enabled young people to develop solutions, while introducing innovative ideas to Montenegro for the first time. However, lessons learned were that more time was needed for each project and each phase, young people are more interested in proposing ideas and action, and face-to-face interaction is important.

Engaging citizens in policy making aimed to change the way citizens and their governments interact and transform citizens from passive beneficiaries to active participants. This resulted in the “Open Ideas for Montenegro” competition, aimed at finding solutions rooted in technology.

The “Be responsible” civic app was developed by a team of teachers and students of the University of Montenegro as part of the UNDP’s 2013 Open Ideas for Montenegro. It is aimed at reporting corruption and all kinds of minor violations. The developers later teamed up with the Ministry of Finance and as a result citizens became even more involved in reporting. This has led to a continuous transparency loop and puts more pressure on businesses to comply with tax regulations. Since late 2013, over 4 000 civic reporters have been involved and 7 000 cases of fake fiscal receipts, illegal labour and violation of consumer’s rights were reported. Acting upon these reports, authorities have imposed close to 1.500.000 euros in fines. The government donates half of any fines collected to community projects chosen by the public.

#### *Main points from the group discussions*

Questions were raised about the sustainability of the project and the funded projects. Some support will be offered from Innovation Lab in Kosovo for assistance, help and mentoring. Projects that were not funded did not start, but their initiators were involved in the new phase of the programme.

The group agreed that such projects and programmes provide young people with skills, the mindset, attitudes and skills that are useful in life in general and not just in employment.

It was mentioned that similar initiatives were implemented in Bosnia and in Estonia (ENTRUM and SINA).

There was also a question related to the youth-led character of the programme. Although it was UN-led, it did take into account what young people said and proposed. UN structures invest in co-operation with different institutions and representatives from the business, public and third sectors, however it is more an ad hoc co-operation rather than a systematic one aimed at bringing about impact and change.

Evaluating such programmes was also considered a challenge and the commitment from the UN to achieve measureable outcomes was underlined.

The issue of trust among citizens was also raised; for example whether initiatives such as the Be Responsible App made people feel that they were spying on each other. However, people’s willingness to do something about misuse was emphasised.

- **Lab III.4 Input by Antonio Carlos Ruiz Soria, Economia Creativa Consultancy: digital and creative economy**

*Main content of the input*

Antonio's (Economia Creativa Consultancy<sup>7</sup>) input was related to entrepreneurship in the digital era.

Challenges and opportunities were discussed in the group and the following were identified:

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- boost for economy</li> <li>- new job positions</li> <li>- fast and easy communication</li> <li>- access to data and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inequality</li> <li>- pressure</li> <li>- lack of funding</li> <li>- lack of experience</li> <li>- high competition</li> <li>- isolation</li> <li>- fast-changing domain</li> </ul>

The following points were raised:

- work and life environments can be very different and create multiple identities;
- society should become more open to anything new;
- for young people it is really important to create value and to communicate;
- being part of a network enables young people to develop their own entrepreneurship ideas;
- each failure can be a window of learning.

Finally, the importance of building a team and developing co-working mechanisms was also underlined.

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7. Economia Creativa Consultancy is helping their clients (government bodies, NGOs, businesses and cultural organisations) understand how the global economic and social changes affect the ability of their businesses and institutions to create the best action plans, identifying the power of their own story, harnessing creativity and linking culture to their organisation storytelling. They advise businesses, policy makers and institutions on strategy, organisational efficiency, creativity development, investment feasibility and project development. They run workshops, training sessions and innovation camps for team building, project development, creativity and innovation. More information at: [www.economiacreativa.eu/](http://www.economiacreativa.eu/) (date accessed 15.11.2015)

### *Main points from the group discussions*

Among the topics raised during the discussion were the following.

- Examples of companies which train young people and increase awareness among them and provide them with some techniques for developing business plans and skills for entrepreneurship.
- Can youth work actually help and enforce youth entrepreneurship?
- There is a downside to entrepreneurship in that it puts all the responsibility on one person, although society should have more back-up plans for boosting the economy and making further investments.
- The personal skills needed in order to be a productive entrepreneur were highlighted, with critical thinking being underlined as one of them.
- Not all young people have the same starting potential and for this reason training becomes even more important.
- Competences and great ideas are not enough if the social environment is not conducive to development.

### **Thematic area “Democracy and Political Participation”**

The thematic area “Democracy and Political Participation” dealt with diverse forms of democracy – representative vs. direct democracies, open vs. repressive societies; local, regional, national and international levels of governance; role of civic and social movements, new forms of expression and engagement, protection of human rights, freedom of expression online, freedom of assembly and association online, perspectives of “Post-Democracy” and what comes after.

#### ***Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of “Democracy and Political Participation” – Geoffrey Pleyers, FNRS/Université de Louvain, Belgium***

Geoffrey Pleyers shared his thoughts on new hopes and new challenges for democracy in a digitalised world beyond the online-offline divide. He claimed that current movements are not street movements; they are square movements combining online-offline realities. While the Internet has become global it does not lead to global movements – usually these movements are still local or national. Social media does not replace mass media and digital solutions are not magic solutions and should not be used exclusively. Inequalities have not disappeared online.

The two biggest challenges for democracy in a digital era in Europe are the “divorce” between young people and the European institutions and the need to create representative democracy.

In conclusion, young people do participate but in non-conventional ways, through protest, direct participation and personal commitment. Alternative forms of direct participation are being developed. Democracy is not just a claim; it has to do with emancipation, personal integrity and commitment.

We can learn two lessons about young people's participation: it is based on face-to-face interaction and young people are directly addressing youth issues and promoting values relevant for their future, a campaign for hope, democracy and opportunities for youth.

Still, politics in a digital world remains a reality today.

### ***Key items of the LABS "Democracy and Political Participation"***

- **Lab IV.1 Input by Jochen Butt-Posnik, JfE/Daniel Poli, IJAB, Germany: thinking online and offline participation together**

#### *Main content of the input*

The speakers presented two multilateral co-operation projects of their organisations.

The first one was "youthpart" that looks for new formats in the area of e-participation and raises the issue of participation of young people in a democratic Europe through peer-learning, the drawing up of guidelines, the production of software and the support of local projects, a cross-sectoral approach and successful e-participation by young people. The second one was "Participation of young people in the democratic Europe: peer learning" which aims to enable an exchange of methods and concepts, which manage to reach less active, particularly disadvantaged target groups.

The speakers made a number of recommendations to the audience:

- projects and policies should be aligned with young people's realities (both online and offline);
- e-participation should lead to a direct impact on the decision-making process;
- we should consider time and resources;
- participation takes place in various forms and arenas;
- learning to be a democratic citizen is key in today's world;
- although there is still a lot to learn, there are many good examples that we should learn from.

The experts underlined that while the projects focus on peer learning among experts and they explore existing expertise from international contexts, they consider them as a journey through a complex field aiming at new discoveries, recommendations and guidelines which can be incorporated into the debate.

*Main points from the group discussions:*

- open youth participation is part of good governance in the 21st century;
- “unconscious competences” and critical thinking skills should be the starting point for conscious decision making and impact (think before we “like” something);
- citizenship education can help by transforming schools into new partners with youth work instead of protecting young people from political influence and indoctrination, and strong ethical consensus is needed to achieve a comprehensive approach to political literacy. Learning becomes even more important in the effort to promote values for the type of society we want to live in;
- further reflection is needed on the evolution gaps in representative democracy;
- political parties seem to become more questioned based on the fact that new technologies require quick responses and reactions from politicians;
- the complexity and unpredictability of the current world requires wider discussion and involvement of many layers of the society (take as an example the current refugee crisis);
- what is required is a transparent and open administration involving people in direct decision-making issues relevant to their needs;
- democracy should be reinvented and based on values or at least “checked” by a supervising body assuring quality of representative democracy;
- media pressure, lobbying groups and other influential groups are also tailoring and influencing the decision-making processes;
- democratic deliberation might be a missing link to making representative democracy work; being representative is not enough for being democratic;
- democracy needs more time than just a few clicks in the web.

Further material: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUHpGEEHSM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUHpGEEHSM) Amplify youth participation in Europe.

- **Lab IV.2 Input by Raluca Diroescu, SALTO Resource Centre Participation, Belgium: current challenges in youth participation**

*Main content of the input*

Raluca presented the contribution of the SALTO Resource Centre on the discussion of youth participation. She started by underlining that young people are a highly heterogeneous group in society and that participation, as a concept requires a conceptual stretching.

SALTO- Participation targets the following trends and challenges.

- Work within the RMSOS framework (Right, Means, Space, Opportunity, Support)<sup>8</sup> through enabling access to information, motivation, skills, effective communication and awareness of the impact of youth related initiatives.
- Better understanding of participation (through research, good practices, policy).
- A decrease in institutional forms and an increase in unconventional forms of participation among young people.
- Increased alternative forms and changing arenas of participation.
- Propensity to participate in daily life linked to social status, financial situation or cultural background.
- The role of civic education in learning to participate.
- Learning to interact with young people and attracting them to participate in daily life.

The approach and strategy of SALTO- Participation focuses on:

- strong and long-term partnerships with strategic partners (European Commission, Erasmus+ National Agencies, EU–Council of Europe, Youth Partnership, etc.);
  - combining practice, research and policy;
  - long-term vision and innovative activities;
  - devising recommendations and ultimately a strategy to increase the participation of young people in Europe.
- **Lab IV.3 Input by Vadim Georgienko, Ukraine: mobile voting, Civil Society app and e-self-government**

#### *Main content of the input*

The Voting from Mobile 2014-15 project’s main goal was to draw attention to the possibilities of new technologies to strengthen the role of citizens in decision making. Vadim Georgienko presented the Civil Society App that was created to enhance e-self-government and lifelong active citizenship. He mentioned that about 3 million people were covered (eight regions in the east and south of Ukraine) and 51 000 of them participated in “mobile voting” during parliamentary elections.

The main points made by the speaker were as follows.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information see info about the RMSOS framework at the “Have your say!” manual on youth participation of the Council of Europe available at [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/Have\\_your\\_say\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/Have_your_say_en.pdf) (date accessed 08.10.2016)

- Citizens need secure and reliable systems to participate online that do not distort the results of their opinion and participation in decision making. It is important to consider active citizenship as a set of at least four features: flexible decision making, local social entrepreneurship, investments by citizens and informative environment.
  - The success of outreach strategies for digital participation is determined by their competitiveness in the lives of already busy people who are bombarded with too much information. Vadim Georgienko defined three main ways for such tools to affect people's lives: (a) they should provide more easy and effective ways to solve problems in living environments; (b) they should help make money; (c) they should be fun and entertaining.
  - He referred to "e-self-government" as a method for addressing challenges based on social investment, social entrepreneurship and flexible decision making with the help of ICT and "lifelong active citizenship"
- **Lab IV.4 Input by Nadine Karbach/Eva Panek, Liquid Democracy e.V. Germany: Project "EUth" – Tools for e-Participation**

#### *Main content of the input*

The lab started with a presentation by Eva Panek and Nadine Karbach from Liquid Democracy on their project EUth – Tools and tips for mobile and digital youth participation in and across Europe.<sup>9</sup> This is a Horizon2020 project, which started at the beginning of 2015 and involved eleven organisations and associations. The aim of the project is to get more young people involved in political decision making and increase the trust of young people in European political institutions. This is achieved through an open and easy-to-use online participation platform along with different mobile tools and apps for smartphones and tablets. This way, young people can get involved whenever and wherever they wish with minimum effort. The platform will be available for use by youth organisations and administrations of any size and level all over Europe.

The project is based on five years of co-operation between the organisations involved. They wanted to provide tools and services to people who would initiate participatory projects. The presenters underlined the importance of this framework needing to be flexible and easy to use by youth workers who have a lot of experience with youth participation but less with digital technology. The objective is to develop an attractive platform that meets the needs of project initiators and the end users – young people themselves. The services include assistance in the form of structured counselling and training services, which are offered for free to all people interested in using the platform. EUth offers software tools, tips for combining online and offline activities and how-to-do guidelines. The guidelines work with an automated system and

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9. More information at: [www.euthproject.eu/](http://www.euthproject.eu/) (date accessed 15.11.2015)

will have pop-up windows to support users. There will be five pilots in the project for testing, feedback and optimisation. The development is planned in three cycles; the first launch was in February 2016, the second one will be in January 2017 and the third one in August 2017. By the end there will be about 10 participatory processes and the project will be finalised in March 2018.

### *Main points from the group discussions*

One question was posed about the challenges so far, to which the presenters answered that while looking for the most appropriate participatory processes they can only choose 10 from among such a wide variety. They would look not only for established and widely used processes but also innovative processes. There was a question about whether they will collect data on the users (their socio-economic background, education, etc.) but the answer was no, owing to the strict regulations in the EU.

The danger of fragmentation of awareness and competition among brands was raised. The solution proposed by EUth is to have an umbrella branding so that the projects co-operate instead of competing.

The question on how to fill the tools with ideas and make them unique and sustainable was thought over even before the application for the Horizon2020 funding. They have developed a dissemination and marketing plan that makes use of existing structures of youth work and includes training for youth workers on how to become a bridge between young people and policy makers.

The danger that such a platform can end up being only a consultation tool and taken out of the hands of young people was raised.

### **Reactions from the final panel discussion**

A panel composed of people representing different institutions<sup>10</sup> made some comments at the end of the symposium.

Some of the elements raised included the following.

- The symposium managed to reflect a common understanding of what we need but a lack of concrete data related to young people and participation that could be useful for policy makers and those working with young people.

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10. The panel was composed of Karin Lopatta-Loibl (European Commission), Antje Rothmund (Council of Europe), Marine Manucharyan (Advisory Council on Youth), Jan Vanhee (Youth Working Party/European Steering Committee on Youth), Ida Birkvad (European Youth Forum) and Manfred Zentner (Pool of European Youth Researchers).

- There is therefore a need for ongoing dialogue in the “magic” triangle (academia, policy, practice).
- A reference was made to the results of the 2nd Youth Work Convention for youth workers and its input to understanding their role.
- There is a need to connect the online and offline worlds and not to create separate structures for youth participation.
- E-participation with, from and by young people can help us develop and shape better governance.
- The new and existing inequalities need to be analysed.
- The focus should be on how to enhance the digital competence with the aim of giving all young people (who so wish) an active part in our societies.
- The fact that young people lack the confidence to influence the system should be transformed.
- Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to research should be adopted and there is a need to be concise on the concepts used.
- A blended approach to learning is needed.
- We should examine how democratic hierarchies can be a reality in the future in an even more digitalised world.

## **ANNEXES**

- Annex I: Programme**
- Annex II: Analytical paper “Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of democracy and political participation”, by Geoffrey Pleyers**
- Annex III: Analytical paper “Education for participation in a digitalised world”, by Manfred Zentner**
- Annex IV: Analytical paper “Online communication tools leading to learning, identity and citizenship for digital natives”, by Adina Marina Călăfăteanu**
- Annex V: Analytical paper on youth participation in digital world – Economic sphere and working life, by Sladjana Petkovic**
- Annex VI: Key messages resulting from the symposium**
- Annex VII: Evaluation of the symposium**

## **Youth Partnership**

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



EUROPEAN UNION



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## **Agenda**

# **Symposium on youth participation in a digitalised world**

**14-16 September 2015**

**European Youth Centre Budapest**

**Zivatar utca, 1-3**

**1024 Budapest, Hungary**

**04/09/2015**

## Monday, 14 September 2015

09h00 – 12h30	Arrival of participants
12h30 – 14h00	Lunch
14h00 – 14h20	Welcome by Antje Rothemund, Council of Europe and Karin Lopatta-Loibl, European Commission and introduction to the programme by Hanjo Schild
14h20 – 15h30	Keynote speeches, including discussion and exchange: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Roman Gerodimos, Bournemouth University: Online youth civic attitudes</li><li>- Julia Kloiber, Open Knowledge Foundation, Germany: Open knowledge and net policy</li></ul>
15h30 – 16h00	Coffee & tea break
16h00 – 17h00	Keynote addresses on youth participation in a digital world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy at the Council of Europe</li><li>- Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in the European Commission</li><li>- Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary</li></ul>
17h00 – 18h00	Getting to know each other – who are the participants of the symposium?
19h30 – 20h15	Official opening – anniversary addresses at occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Budapest
20h15 – 22h00	Buffet dinner

## Tuesday, 15 September 2015

09h00 – 09h30

Two parallel reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of ...

- "Communication" – Anna Ludwinek, research manager EUROFOUND, Ireland
- "Education" – Manfred Zentner, researcher Krems University Austria

09h30 – 11h00

Four parallel labs

"Communication"

- Lab I.1 Input by Martin Fischer, Nerdy, Austria: GameOverHate - communication in videogame communities
- Lab I.2 Input by Sargis Khandanyan, CivilNet.TV, Armenia: challenges & opportunities of digital journalism

"Education"

- Lab II.1 Input by Merja-Maaria Oinas, Koordinaatti, Finland: Nuortenideat.fi: education for e-participation services on local, regional, national levels
- Lab II.2 Input by Stefan Ubiparipovic, European Federation for Intercultural Learning, Serbia: Intercultural dialogue and learning

11h00 11h30

Coffee & tea break

11h30 – 13h00

Four parallel labs

"Communication"

- Lab I.3 Input by Airi-Alina Allaste, University of Tallinn, Estonia: Social media and youth participation
- Lab I.4 Input by Ivett Karvalits, Eurodesk Hungary / Kate O Connell, NYCI, Ireland: No Hate Speech Movement

"Education"

- Lab II.3 Input by Dmitry Khromakov, Politica Externa, Latvia / Russia: How a university of the 21st century should look like

- Lab II.4 Input by Karsten Lucke, Europahaus Marienberg:  
Digital and social media in political out-of-school education
- 13h00 – 14h30 Lunch break
- 14h30 – 15h00 Two parallel reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of.....
- “Economic sphere and working life” – Inga Tiede, Liquid Democracy e.V. Germany
  - “Democracy and Political Participation” – Geoffrey Pleyers, FNRS/Université de Louvain, Belgium
- 15h00 – 16h30 Four parallel labs
- “Economic sphere and working life”
- Lab III.1 Input by Pierre-Julien Bossier, Belgium / Régis Pradal, France, InternsGoPro: Social entrepreneurship& community building
  - Lab III.2 Input by Miriana Bucalossi, Provincia di Siena, Italy: JobTribu Project- new technologies for career guidance
- “Democracy and Political Participation”
- Lab IV.1 Input by Jochen Butt-Posnik, JfE / Daniel Poli, IJAB, Germany: Thinking online & offline participation together
  - Lab IV.2 Input by Raluca Diroescu, SALTO Resource Centre Participation, Belgium: Current challenges in youth participation
- 16h30 – 17h00 Coffee & tea break

17h00 – 18h30	<p>Four parallel labs</p> <p>“Economic sphere and working life”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lab III.3 Input by Jelena Miljanic / Marija Novkovic, UN Agencies Montenegro: Youth Employment Services and Tranzit Platform</li> <li>- Lab III.4 Input by Antonio Carlos Ruiz Soria, Economia Creativa Consultancy: Digital and creative economy</li> </ul> <p>“Democracy and Political Participation”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lab IV.3 Input by Vadim Georgienko, Ukraine: votings from mobile, Civil Society app and e-selfgovernment</li> <li>- Lab IV.4 Input by Nadine Karbach / Eva Panek, Liquid Democracy e.V. Germany: Project „EUth“ – Tools for e-Participation</li> </ul>
19h00 – 20h30	Dinner
20h30 – 22h00	Project fair and networking evening

### Wednesday, 16 September 2015

09h00 – 09h45	<p>Impressions from the first 1,5 days of the symposium by Matina Magkou (rapporteur)</p> <p>followed by questions and answers</p>
09h45 – 10h30	<p>Nuala Connolly, National University of Ireland, Galway: Towards digital literacy for the active participation and engagement of young people in a digitalised world</p> <p>followed by questions and answers</p>
10h30 - 11h00	Coffee & tea break
11h00 – 12h00	<p>4 working groups on</p> <p>Key messages to youth policy, youth research and youth work from a perspective of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Economic sphere and working life</li> <li>- Democracy and Political Participation</li> </ul>

**12h00 – 13h00**

**Closing session:**

- **Key messages from the working groups**
- **Conclusions by Karin Lopatta-Loibl (European Commission), Antje Rothmund (Council of Europe), Marine Manucharyan (Advisory Council on Youth), Jan Vanhee (Youth Working Party / European Steering Committee on Youth), Ida Birkvad (European Youth Forum), Manfred Zentner (Pool of European Youth Researchers) and Hanjo Schild (EU-CoE youth partnership)**

**13h00**

**Lunch and departure**

The symposium will be facilitated by Dariusz Grzemny and Andreea Hanganu; facilitation of the labs will be additionally supported by Adina Calafateanu and Marine Manucharyan.

## Annex II: Analytical paper “Reflections on risks and opportunities for youth participation in the field of democracy and political participation”, by Geoffrey Pleyers<sup>11</sup>

### I. Democracy in Europe

#### 1. Risk / Challenge: Post-democracy

Colin Crouch’s (2004) bestseller “Post-democracy” illustrates a preoccupation that is widely shared: *while formal democracy is now solidly established in a record number of countries, the wealth and substance of democracy has considerably declined in the last decades*. Economic globalization that puts states in competition and jeopardizes their tax system and welfare state; the rising concentration of money in the hand of the very influential “1%” that now owns more wealth than the rest of humanity and the “marketization” of electoral politics goes together with the classic phenomena of a progressive loss of interest in politics by many citizens. EU institutions are indeed often painted as both a “paradise for corporate lobbies” (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2012) and as a place where bureaucrats and experts took over most of the power of elected representatives and citizens.

Worries about a decline of citizens’ participations both at the national and European levels have been confirmed with recent 2014 European elections, marked by high abstention rates and by far right nationalist parties achieving more success in many countries. Distrust towards formal politics and the European Union is particularly strong among young people. While young citizens used to be the age category most favourable to the EU, distrust towards EU and its institutions has considerably risen in the aftermath of the post-2008 crisis. The 2012 Eurobarometer shows that 50% of young people distrusted the EU in 2012; almost 50% of them consider that things are going in the wrong direction in the EU (see also Willems et al. 2013).

The challenge of democracy in Europe and the future of Europe are deeply connected. Among young progressive activists in Europe, the sense of social agency at a specific level (local, national, European or global) is a determining factor for their identity construction at a particular scale. The sense of social agency at the European level plays a major role in the disdain for the European Union and the European identity among progressive young activists (Pleyers, 2015). The more activists believe they may have an impact on EU policies, the more they feel European. On the contrary, those who are convinced that the European institutions pay no attention to civil society arguments and will stick to their neoliberal agenda do not feel very European, nor consider Europe as an important scale of action. The development of new

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ways of participation for young people and the renewal of democracy at the European scale are thus urgent challenges for those who wish to reconcile young people with the European identity and the European project.

## **2. Opportunities: a renewal of democracy**

The move downwards from the “peak of democracy” – that Colin Crouch places in post-war Western countries – is confirmed by many indicators. However, the first part of the 21st century is also a period of the rise of *a wide range of citizens’ initiatives, campaigns and concrete practices that contribute to the expansion of democratic practices and democratic considerations in all realms of life.*

### **a. Protest: denounce the symptoms of post-democracy**

Young people are far from apathetic but participate mostly in non-conventional ways. Both in Western and Eastern Europe, they took a leading role in movements that pointed to the actual and structural limitations of representative democracy and the symptoms of post-democracy at the national and European levels. They have denounced an “*empty democracy*”, considering that policies with any real impact on their lives are settled within circles upon which citizens have no impact.

In Spain, the 15M movement started as a denunciation of a ‘democracy without choice’; many citizens felt that the 2011 general elections did not offer a choice between real alternatives. Over Europe, the Indignados and Occupy movements in Western Europe denounced the rising inequalities as a threat for democracy. A wide range of similar movements for a deeper democracy also emerged in Central and Eastern Europe, testifying the rise of a “second generation” of democratic movements (Pleyers & Sava, 2015; Jacobsson, 2015), after the 1989 protest waves and in opposition to the “NGOization” of civil society in the region. In 2013, young people took a leading role in the creative protests reclaiming more democracy in Sofia (Baruh, 2015). There were also mass protests against the political corruption that led to the approval of a gold mining project in Romania and against law projects that endangers the freedom of expression in Hungary. Youth have also reclaimed fair elections and more democracy in Moscow and St-Petersburg, and massively mobilized in Armenia. Across Europe, these movements emerged partly as a “generation movement”, as it mobilized young citizens belonging to a generation that has grown up in a neoliberal environment of income insecurity with diminished welfare state, where neither work nor public services can be taken for granted.

### **b. Practices: Exploring and implementing democracy**

Young people involved in most of these movements dedicated overall much less energy to protest against the government and the limits of institutional democracy than to explore and

implement alternative forms of democracy on the squares, in neighbourhood or in daily life. They consider democracy not only as a claim addressed to the government but as a personal commitment that must be embodied in concrete practices.

Democracy and political participation has thus to be understood in a much broader way than voting in elections or taking part in a protest. Many young people opt for “prefigurative activism” based on a strong consistency between their practices and values. Some implement direct democracy in decision making processes and place experimentations in horizontal and participatory discussion and deliberation processes at the core of their activism whether in activists’ camps, neighborhoods, thematic working groups or online deliberations. Occupied squares or neighborhood meetings become “spaces of experience”, understood “*as places sufficiently autonomous and distanced from capitalist society and power relations which permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity*” (Pleyers, 2010). Beyond opposing neoliberalism, these camps provide spaces for socializing, sharing ideas and experiences, celebrating, mixing private and public, making friends and struggling for a better world.

In recent years, occupations of disputed territories to oppose infrastructure projects have also multiplied across Europe. They combine the practices and culture of young alter-activists camps with elements of transition and protest activism. The protest against the Rosia Montania gold mine project in Romania connected rural and urban protests and had a deep impact on civil society. In France, thousands of young people have occupied territories to oppose infrastructure projects and explore alternative ways of live in the “ZAD – Zone à défendre” (“Area to be defended”). The occupied territory becomes both a space of resistance and direct confrontation and a space of experience where direct democracy organization and ecological practices are implemented.

Daily-life itself is another arena of political participation and social transformation. Young people are often more interested in cultural / lifestyle change than in the mechanisms of institutional politics. Daily life provides spaces to participate in multiple ways, including critical consumption (local food, de-growth, veganism...), that have been invested by many young people. They consider that the roots of social change thus lie in a change of one’s lifestyle and in alternative practices at the local level and that it is their personal responsibility to lower their impact on the environment. Young “transition activists” combine a concern to build oneself, a major challenge of late youth, a deep concern for global challenges, whether human rights, democracy or global warming, and a will to root their life and activism in local spaces of life (neighborhood, university, affinity groups...).

Beyond the private/public frontier, these young progressive activists provide ways to live democracy as an experience, a practice and a personal commitment. They remind us that

democracy lies not only in citizens' active participation in public decision making but also in a way of life that is not limited to the relations between citizens and the state. It is an emancipation project that lies in "people practices oriented towards the presupposition of the equality of anyone with anyone" (Rancière, 1998: 15), which takes a particular meaning today with refugees and migrants. Rather than big discourses, many young people choose to take concrete action.

## **II. From indignation to institution?**

### **1. Risk/Challenge: the gap between youth and institutions**

A major challenge of democracy in the first part of the 21st century lies in the wide gap and the profound misunderstanding between what institutions and what young people mean by participation. Many young transition activists share mistrust towards institutions in general, and fear that scaling up their activities at the national or European level will lead to the institutionalization that they are trying to avoid.

Part of the problem lies in the *gap between the institutional vision about youth participation and the experience-oriented practices of participation privileged by young people*. Many young people prefer cultural and personal forms of political commitment and experience-based, expressive and horizontal ways of participation. Their focus on experience, loose structure and horizontality is little compatible with an institutional perspective. Many young people are generally distrustful of institutions which embody, in their eyes, a 'top-down', state-centred approach to political life which they reject. Representation itself is contested by some young activists, as stated by the slogan "They don't represent me". They seek to construct autonomous spaces of experience outside institutions, where they implement participatory values and share their opinions and personal experiences, such as social movements or square assemblies or social media.

This gap often results in deep misunderstandings between active young citizens and institutions. On one side, many young activists develop monolithic and often very simplified views of institutions and in some case even a rejection of all intervention by institutions and all dialogue with political and institutional actors. On the other side, institutions fail to consider these forms of political participation as genuine participation. In addition of existing training for young people to understand EU institutions, Sofia Laine (2012) thus suggests that trainings should also target institutional actors and offer them elements for a better understanding of young people.

## 2. New opportunities / New challenges: to combine forms of participation

Prefigurative actions, practices of direct or responsible democracy bring insightful answers to some limits of representative democracy, but they also have their limits. Concrete actions at the local scale bring some important changes, but may not prohibit economic, social, food or environmental policies to mobilize resources in the opposite direction. **Is it possible to change the world without transforming institutions? Many of the recent movements are also confronted with one of the limits inherent in loosely structured movements** (Mathieu, 2011: 40): they can initiate and orchestrate citizens' mobilizations as a substitute for established organizations of civil society, but they are unable to close the struggle because they are not used to negotiating and signing agreements emerging from conflict, and will not claim to represent a political body.

While the first years of the "2010s movements" in Europe were dominated by anti-institutional stances, the main challenges of some processes and actors that have emerged since 2013 seems to be the combination rather than the opposition of different forms of participation and models of democracy.

Various attempts to combine direct and representative democracy have been conducted by youth movements explorations in recent years. In Germany and Northern Europe, the Pirate party invited its members to vote online and decide the stances that its elected activists would adopt in the local or regional assemblies. After some electoral successes, the party failed to manage the tensions between the feature of representative and direct democracy. In Italy, the 5 Stars party claimed to transform politics based on horizontal and participatory practices but soon became dominated by its authoritarian leader.

In Spain, the young indignados that occupied the squares in 2011 created the new political party "Podemos" with the aim to translating the practices of direct democracy to institutional politics. They also face the challenges of the move from indignation to organization and from a horizontal movement to a party with a strong charismatic leader. Rather than contesting representative democracy, these movements may be considered as exploring ways to complement representative democracy and empower citizenship. The combination of informal practices and institutional democracy remains however a major challenge.

The latest elections of the UK Labour party leader offer another illustration of the impact and surprising forms of the intrusion of young progressive activists in the formal political arena. In 2011, when they occupied St-Paul square in London and other city squares around the country, they opted for ways of "anti-politics", direct democracy and opposed institutional forms of participation. Four years later, young people brought a numerous and enthusiastic support to a 66 year-old "old-style" leftwing politician. He didn't gain this support from a savvy use of social

media and geeks technologies, nor by transforming his campaign meetings into trendy shows. He mobilized young people by proposing an alternative political message to a generation that has suffered austerity policies as well as by embodying a personal ethics and authenticity. Is that a "new way of doing politics"?

### **III. Risk & opportunity: online participation. Beyond the online/offline divides<sup>12</sup>**

In order to understand the role of the Internet in the 2010s young people mobilizations, we need to transcend oppositions between the 'virtual' world of cyber-activism and the 'real' world of mobilization on the streets and squares. Activists often condemn "clicktivism" as a form of online activism that is out of touch with reality and that gives the impression of participation even though it only has a narrow impact on society (Cardon, 2010; Morozov, 2013). Paulo Gerbaudo (2012) reminds us that, in the streets of Cairo as well as in New York, those who occupy the squares insist on being distanced from "those who comment and 'like' on Facebook" and they rally to "get people off the Internet".

Beyond the over-emphasis on the power of Internet, recent movements point to three main features of movements of our times.

1. The use of Internet has not led to a predominance of virtual actions and movements over mobilizations in 'physical space'. On the contrary, since 2011, the occupation of urban public spaces - and more particularly symbolic spaces - *has been a major feature of* these movements.
2. Though the Internet is a global virtual space, the use of social networks by activists has actually rather contributed to the construction of national and local movements.
3. The social networks and the Internet have not replaced mass media. Our media ecology consists in a superposition and some articulation of mass media, social media and alternative media. Alternative and activist media have reached the largest audience when they linked up with mass media.

### **IV. The rise of conservative youth and of far right movements, parties and values**

Democracy in Europe and the EU itself find themselves under criticisms from two opposite sides. On one side, progressive young activists consider that the EU embodies the symptoms of post-democracy and hasn't fulfilled the democratization promises on which it was founded. On the other side, EU institutions and identity also suffer criticisms from far right parties and

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<sup>12</sup> This point is developed in the text "Facebook movements or square movements?", In: Emmy Barouh, "The Protesters", Sofia: New Bulgarian University Press, pp. 104-109

movements, that mobilize many young citizens, both in Western and Central & Eastern Europe, both in the wealthy North (Sweden, UK) and in South Europe (Italy, Greece...).

While youth is often identified with progressive movements and values, all young people are not progressive. In his analysis of Youth in the 2008 European Value Survey, Bernard Roudet already pointed to a “general tendency of values across generations coming closer<sup>13</sup>”. More recently, we have seen thousands of young people joining the marches against same sex marriage in France or Spain, with the same energy and the same repertory of action as their progressive counterparts: creative direct action, humour, sit in...

We should distinguish two phenomena here that sometimes combine in the same protest or under the same vote, but are analytically different: a rise of conservatism values among youth and the rise of extreme right movements and parties among young citizens.

All the active young citizens are not in favour of more democratic and open values. Extreme right parties and far right cultural movements have also attracted many young people, both in Western and in Central and Eastern Europe, from True Fins and the French National Front to Pole neo-fascists. Two far right parties, the Danish People’s Party (DFP) and the French National Front (FN), became the biggest parties at their national levels at the 2014 European elections, with a high tool among young voters. We should study them with the same conceptual tools as those we use to understand progressive activists, including the analytical focus on subjectivity, the construction of oneself, new information and communication technologies... Various ethnographic analyses show indeed that they successfully combine nationalist identities and global networks, traditional values and very modern repertory of action, including online activism, youth culture and expressive/creative forms of activism (e.g. Toscano & Di Nunzo on CasaPound in Italy). Likewise, social media provide young people with a tool to participate in democratic debates. However, it has also become a public space to spread racism that is not allowed in other public spaces.

## **V. The challenge of social inequalities**

While some challenges towards a better participation of young people in representative democratic processes are common among this age category, other are specific to different categories of young people. Classic socio- demographic categories (gender, social classes, ethnic dimension...) have also a significant impact. A challenge of major importance for democracy is the inclusion of “*excluded youth*”, notably those from poorer socio-economic background, discriminated ethnic groups and suburbs. In Southern Europe, this category has extended with the economic crisis. Therefore, policies to foster youth participation should thus

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<sup>13</sup> “Une tendance générale au rapprochement des valeurs entre les générations”

target specific sectors of young people and help them to overcome specific barriers or take into account their specific modes of participation.

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**Annexes:** From Facebook movements to Square movements

## **Annex III: Analytical paper “Education for participation in a digitalised world”, by Manfred Zentner**

### Introduction

Education is seen as the most important means to integration in society for young people; knowledge is the key to success, skills are needed to enter the labour market and almost every profession needs certain accreditation of training or experience and lifelong learning is a must for everyone. But the framework for education has changed tremendously in the last decade because of the development of more and more digital(ised) concepts and offers. More people than ever before have access to various “online” offers of education, Methods of teaching, learning and evaluating changed since the use of digital media in the classroom (and beyond), and an increasing mass of content is stored digital and accessible for “everyone” – who has knowledge on how to find it; and also how to judge the value of this content.

Education in the digitalised world needs new skills for both, educators and learners – among others there is handling new digital instruments, knowing how to deal with personal data and more enhanced forms of media literacy.

This paper deals with the challenges of media pedagogy in the digitalised world, new forms of teaching and learning – in formal, non-formal and informal settings – as well as the need of education for political participation and especially for (political) participation in the digitalised world.

#### 1. What is education?

What should young people learn and who can teach it?

Education is seen as the main instrument to prevent and tackle poverty, social exclusion and discrimination especially by reaching out to disadvantaged groups, and thus fostering upwards social convergence. Education plays an important role in promoting inclusion and equality, it should build up mutual respect and builds up the foundation for active citizenship. Furthermore education is regarded the main means to successfully enter the labour market in a highly competitive economy. These high expectations on the value of educations are expressed in the Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020). But the question remains what education to these ends is?

The various education systems in Europe face several challenges, like a high rate of early school leavers without finishing secondary education, but also quite a high percentage of pupils score poorly in reading, science and mathematics as international tests show. This is evidence for a mismatch of expectations and requirements of the education system and its outcomes.

Furthermore, we are currently facing rather a skill based approach to education than a knowledge based concept, focusing, eventually, more on the usability of knowledge.

In the EU guidelines for the employment policies Member States are asked to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the education systems to raise the skill level of the workforce, allowing it to better anticipate and meet the rapidly changing needs of dynamic labour markets in an increasingly digital economy. And consequently the recently published draft joint report ET2020 highlights six new priority areas reflecting the expectations on quality education:

1. Relevant and high-quality skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes, for employability, innovation and active citizenship:
2. Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences:
3. Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era:
4. Strong support for educators
5. Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility
6. Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency of education and training systems

Especially the third area focuses on the importance of ICT mentioning the promotion the use of ICT as a driver for systemic change to increase quality and relevance of education at all levels and fostering the availability and quality of open and digital educational resources and pedagogies at all education levels. But also in other areas the importance of ICT is highlighted as in the concrete issues digital literacy as well as the opportunities of the usage of digital technologies is mentioned: In the first area the reduction of low achievement in mathematics, literacy science and digital literacy is a main issue as well as developing and strengthening of transversal skills and competences in particular digital entrepreneur and linguistic competences. Enhancing of critical thinking and cyber and media literacy is an issue in area 2, training of digital competences of educators is crucial in area 4.

All in all the importance of digital literacy in contemporary debate on education is beyond dispute.

## 2. Challenges of pedagogy in a digitalised world

The EU Youth Report 2012 highlighted the still ongoing increase of daily computer and internet use among young people (EU Youth Report 2012, pp260). It also points to the fact that young people's confidence in their computer skills grows with their educational level. Furthermore, the report shows that "learning by doing" is seen as the main way of acquiring ICT skills formal education and social contacts (friends and relatives) follow after.

The developments in technology ask for more skills beyond the basic cultural skills of reading, writing and calculating; digital skills and media literacy are main elements of current curricular in formal and non-formal education.

The definitions of digital literacy reach "from simply being technology fluent to the ability to apply information literacy skills (e.g., locating, extracting organizing, managing, presenting and evaluating information) in digital environments to broader, more complex conceptual

frameworks that encompass a wide variety of skills, understandings, norms and practices (Meyers et. al. 2013). Current definitions of digital literacy combine important elements like ability to find and evaluate information in digital resources, but also to create and share information online in user-generated platforms. It emphasises critical thinking to judge and interpret underlying ideologies and also to understand the needs of addressed audiences. Another perspective interprets digital literacy as the general capability for living, learning and working in the digital society. Meyers et. al. ask for a holistic perspective that combines skills, mental models and practices and point out that this concept of digital literacy should also involve a reflexive understanding of oneself in relation to technologies and networked structures (Meyers et. al. 2013).

A digital literate person is not only a critical consumer of information but also a technically skilled creator of information and an ones responsibility reflecting active participant in the digitalised world.

Jenkins (2006) identified a number of new skills beyond the traditional competences of reading, writing and calculating that have to be mastered in order to be a full member of a participatory culture. A participatory culture is described as a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, and in which its participants believe their contributions matter – and this description holds in a high degree for the modern Web 2.0.

The skills that Jenkins recognised include play (experiment with one’s surroundings as a form of problem-solving); performance (adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery); simulation (interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes); appropriation (meaningfully sample and remix media content); multitasking (scan one’s environment and shift focus as needed to salient details); distributed cognition interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities); collective intelligence (pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal); judgment (evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources); transmedia navigation (follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities); networking (search for, synthesize, and disseminate information); negotiation (travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms).

Jenkins also points out the need of political and pedagogical intervention beside the ongoing self-socialisation of youth in popular culture by highlighting three main reasons and hence affirms the role of education to promote equality and mutual respect also as a foundation of active citizenship:

- 1) The Participation Gap — the unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow.
- 2) The Transparency Problem — the challenges young people face in learning to see clearly the ways that media shape perceptions of the world.
- And 3) the Ethics Challenge — the breakdown of traditional forms of professional training and socialisation that might prepare young people for their increasingly public roles as media makers and community participants. (Jenkins 2006, 3)

### 3. Integrating digital technology in teaching and learning

Digital resources and media are not only topics of education they become more and more important as instruments of teaching. Elements of e-learning find access to formal education in schools as well as in tertiary education: flipped classroom, self-study using digital media, blended learning or game-based learning are used by many teachers as means to activate their pupils and students by using more “modern” techniques.

Various trend researches like the NMC Horizon report focus on the possible and expected future developments from usage of new technologies in teaching and information. In the 2015 reports the new Media Consortium (a consortium driven by IT companies like Apple, Adobe or Oracle together with academic partner institutions) various new developments are predicted to be very influential in the next years for education worldwide. For example MakerSpace-Labs will become important not only in self-organised and non-formal settings but is seen to be integrated in formal education for promoting and fostering creativity and problem-solving skills. BYOD (bring your own device) refers to the trend that people are bringing their own devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones) to the work- and study environments and use these for work. This trend asks for the opportunity to connect to the school's, university's or company's network and get access not only to the internet but to the internal servers, this asks for new IT security solutions. (NMC 2015)

In the informal setting remote learning offers are of high importance since they allow access to information beyond the formal education setting. Here, for example, blended learning (the mixture between instructor's lead and self-study sessions) is seen to become more important than pure online learning since it enables more exchange with the teachers and helps to foster equality better.

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) run by universities or by (commercial) training centres enable people to attend courses and even gain certificates in other countries. MOOCs were also seen as an instrument for promoting equal changes and inclusion by reaching out to disadvantaged people since most of these courses are free to attend (only certificates are fee-based) but it seems that this offer cannot overcome educational differences since people with lower education are less likely to stay in these courses.

MOOCs run by big universities are also seen as a threat to the tertiary education system in smaller countries, where these courses might even replace existing offers from smaller universities.

The development towards a stronger integration of digital technology in teaching and learning is an indicator for the dissemination of digital technology in everyday life around the world. This can also be observed in the non-formal sector as well as in youth work and in youth services. Already for a long time youth centres had to be equipped with computers to access the internet, currently they should rather provide W-Lan access points so the kids can connect their own devices (BYOD) or should think of remote offers (live-streaming of parties, or even online youth centres). And youth information centres need to have online services as well.

#### 4. Does participation need education, information, knowledge or competences – or all?

Beside the integration of digital media into the education system as issues or as instruments for teaching and learning the questions of relation of education and (political) participation occurs.

Many scholars postulated certain competences as a prerequisite for political participation; these are the competence of political analysis and judgement, the competence of methods, and the competence of political decision making and acting. For acquiring these competences for example in political education (in or out of school) basic political knowledge is a precondition.

Thus, active participation in the democratic system be it in as voter or otherwise active citizen has knowledge and competences as preconditions. For a rational decision making access to information is essential as well as the ability of judging the relevance, accuracy and objectivity versus ideological bias of any information. Citizen participation should be – ideally – based on a comprehensible aggregation of all available opinions and their reflective and rational combination to a valid opinion.

Currently a debate on the opportunities for active political (online) participation fostered by digital media – especially the Web 2.0 – concentrates on two aspects: on the one hand the opportunities for the users to create information and get involved in opinion making processes in online social media and on the restricted access to various information on the other hand. In the first topic the debate focuses on the prerequisites (factual knowledge, performance skills, language skills, creativity and other foundations for getting involved in the participatory culture – and therefore digital literacy) and the limits (e.g. clicktivism) of such participation. The second stream of discussion highlights the problems and limits of selection of information out of a seemingly infinite pool. Here are two different approaches of reduction of complexity problematized. The first can be seen in the personalisation of information by the users themselves when using RSS feeds, twitter or special selection of news which reduces the sources of information and eventually can lead to separated publicities with totally different information. The second approach to a restriction is the filter systems of the information providers like google or facebook. In the case of facebook an algorithm based on various criteria like affinity, or time decay decides on the selection of information and status messages in the personal stream and thus invites to react more on messages and information that “seem” to be more interesting to the user than other and thus reinforcing the affinity. Also google will provide different search results depending on previous search history, or the place and time of the search. Both cases of information restriction – individual decisions or automated algorithms – might lead to the loss of relevant “alternative” information that should be included in the decision making process of active participation.

Dörre and Bukow (2014) argue that these forms of information reduction is not a new phenomenon that exists exclusively in digital media; the reinforcement of personal opinion can be found in any personal social network (offline as well as online) and the filter and algorithms are not abolishing any information. But in the end, discussing and problematizing these shortcomings of information selection with digital media should be one element of digital literacy education and of media pedagogy.

But more and more political educators use digital media especially online networks like facebook or twitter but also online gaming or programming of apps as methods for knowledge transfer, fostering responsible behaviour or promoting equality. Even hacking a webpage can be a successful tool for political education

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**Annex IV: Analytical paper “Online communication tools leading to learning, identity and citizenship for digital natives”, by Adina Marina Călăfăteanu**

*Digital Natives are communicating differently: email, IM, chat![...] Digital natives are sharing differently Blogs, webcams, camera phones. (Prensky, 2004)*

Information and communication (ICT) plays an increasingly significant role in young people's life. Even it had been disagreement about whether ICTs has positive or negative force on young people, it is also widely argued that given the widespread and pervasive impact of ICTs on young people's lives is important to understand these new forms of communication and to employ them for positive purposes, having them defining feature of modernity. (Bauman, 2004) Research has not yet systematically addressed significant new tendencies and definitely the research outcomes are not able to integrate the constant innovation happening in the field. Going over the traditional ways of participation, the 'digital natives', (Prensky, 2001) are using Internet more and more to communicate and less primarily to get information.

When it comes to the approach that young people have on using the online communication tools, the outcomes of the research processes vary from having these tools used to create new instruments for social inclusion and freedom from discrimination and violence and access to resources to having young people using the online communication tools to disengage , to create communities that would be from the traditional structures or to isolate. (Wyn, Cuervo, 2005)

The exchange of e-mails and of instant messages became for the digital natives the most common form of communication. The availability, the presence, the personal log and using these tools to learn social norms (Stald, 2008) would be the first determinants for young people's preference for the online communication tools. Even if the access to the online tools is still unequal and theorists also claim that the preference for the online communication might digitally divide young people and expose them to harassment and risk, considering the fact that there are still on their way of developing the critical thinking skills that would allow them to choose, most of young people would prefer these tools as it allows them to being simultaneously present in several spaces. (Stald, 2008; McKay S. B., Thurlow C., Toomey Zimmerman H., 2005).

In terms of usage of the forms of online communication, young people are choosing different forms for specific reasons. When it comes to searching for information on Internet, Google is the first tool. For engaging with friends, the over 82% of the young Europeans have profiles on the social networking sites (Eurostat, 2015) and they would prefer using Facebook, most of the times ignoring the advertising on it. (Barefoot Creative, Communicating with Teens and Young People). The preferences for the mobile instant messaging (MIM) applications have gained as well considerable importance for young people. Consequently, applications like WhatsApp or Viber allowing 'native digitals' to send real time text messages both to individuals and groups at no cost essentially shifted the preferences of young people for the online communication

tools. The preference for these tools is determined by the low cost, intent, community, privacy, reliability and expectation. Except for planning and coordinating with friends and peers, the advantage that young people see in using these tools is related to the gift-giving rituals where certain text messages are exchanged as gifts among friends. (Church, de Oliveria, 2003).

When speaking of the preference of the digital natives for the online communication tools, 3 crosscutting themes are constantly being discussed: identity, citizenship and learning. (Stald, 2008, Wyn J., Cuervo H., Woodman D., Stokes H., 2005). In terms of learning, the "Net generation", the "cyber-kids", divided between the "ICT havers" and "ICT have-nots" (McKay S. B., Thurlow C., Toomey Zimmerman H., 2005) have the opportunity to get to develop new skills and competencies through using the online communication tools, having them developed in an era where the nature of social interaction had been changed. (World YOUTH Report, 2003) In terms of learning, the net generation is developing differently its social behavior - socializing online and "being socialized". Even if the cyber space had been exposing young people to hate speech and discrimination and in some cases the online violence had been transferred to the offline world, most of the young people would prefer to use synchronous forms of chat and online discussion stating that in the online world what you say and produce allows people to judge you, while the "lookism" highly rated in the offline world. (Prensky, 2004). Their learning process is definitely impacted by the media culture but together with their peers, they get to build new communities, communities that have different boundaries and are structured in a totally different manner than the traditional ones.

What is definitely sure is the fact that young people master the online communication tools and have been creating online communities that go over the traditional boundaries, out of the physical space and in demand of new possibilities. Through the online communities, young people are able to get involved, to find opportunities to participate, to act for international causes and to have as well communities of interest. Consequently, the approach goes definitely closer to the maximal citizenship theories and offers new means of political involvement and active citizenship. Essential for the online communities is the fact that young people would see them as spaces where they can learn and discover where they can share information and acquire knowledge.

When it comes to the new means that contribute to young people's identity building processes, the ICT and using the online communication tools ensures the access to this age segment to new ways of expressing, to giving the opportunity to the introverts to make their voice heard in the cyber space. (Wyn J., Cuervo H., Woodman D., Stokes H., 2005) As with the online communities, the new cyber-identities that are being built through the online communication tools are global identities, dynamic ones, essentially determined by other types of interaction that are happening in the online world. More than this, the online communities would allow young people to link to different groups and to build up their identity based on the belonging to a wide range of groups.

In terms of citizenship and participation, the Net generation, using the messaging, emails, blogs and websites, is able to create new forms of political participation and of civic engagement. Just like adults, young people often use internet to build up meaningful social networks. Using the synchronous forms of chat and online discussion allow young people to discuss subjects that haven't been invested with great interest by the "offline generations". The digital natives meet in discussion groups, are able to cooperate and to plan activities that would decisively contribute to social change.

"Europe's future depends on its youth. Yet, life chances of many young people are blighted". (An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities, 2009) If Europe's future depends on youth, then is the high time for the European countries to focus more on encouraging the social and political participation of young people. Even if different measures and policies had been put in place to ensure the dialogue between the decision makers and the youth, few of these mechanisms permit the online dialogue and are offering the online communication tools that young people are keen on using. Young people use mobile phones, tablets, netbooks, laptops and computers and ICTs are more and more used in schools for teaching. Consequently, the 'cyber-kids' would definitely participate if the dialogue mechanisms would be tailored to their needs and preferences.

In the digital era where young people are constantly present in the online space through video streams, chat rooms, blogs or social media, their exposure to risk is inevitable. In this context, the way risks are managed is to be of a concern for the decision makers. For this purpose, the No Hate Speech Campaign had been an excellent tool for raising the awareness of young people and for promoting equality, dignity and diversity in the online space. With all the concerns regarding the isolation and disengagement of young people in the digital era, it is essential for the practitioners, policy makers and adults around them to understand that the digital natives have different preferences for the communication tools nowadays. Young people communicate differently, build up identities that allow them to be in several places at the same time, create and develop online communities, having new modes of participation based on online participation and click-activism. Consequently, the digital natives' preferences for the new communication tools had definitely determined the need for a new approach on youth policies and for new mechanisms to be involved with the decision making processes, mechanisms that would be based on their preferred tools of online communication.

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## **Annex V: Analytical paper on youth participation in digital world – Economic sphere and working life, by Sladjana Petkovic**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this analytical paper is to summarize the state of affairs in the debates around the topic of participation in the digitalized world focusing on economic sphere and working life of youth in Europe. The paper strives to reflect on current challenges and opportunities in the field as well as to state further needs for development of policy and practice.

While it is widely accepted that economic growth relies on research, innovation and successful transformation of businesses, it is important to note that young people are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in economic trends. Since the labour market in Europe has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, the demands of globalization and the move towards a high-skilled, more service based economy has created many new challenges for workers in Europe, particularly young people.

Accordingly, available data reveal that there has been a great deal of political rhetoric about preparing, equipping and 'skilling-up' young people for the knowledge-based economy. The old beliefs and orthodoxies concerning the labour market have been replaced by such concepts as 'lifelong learning', 're-skilling' and 'flexibility'. Flexibilities can be required in many key areas: skills; attitudes; time/working hours; conditions of employment; work-life balance etc. It also takes many forms. The concept of "sliced life" (Lauritzen, cited in Williamson 2006) – the need to simultaneously learn, earn and live – has also been identified as a particularly vital issue in the case of contemporary youth (Williamson 2006: 14-15).

Furthermore, this paper acknowledges the current economic outlook and the collapse in demand for young workers have hindered the chances of young people successfully moving from education to work. This transition is now fraught with insecurity and risks, as getting a first job is a major challenge in the majority of the EU Member States. Access to quality education, training and apprenticeships schemes are also a question of concern in respect to youth's capacity to choose independently a life project and as well for the level with which these schemes are driven both ways, being decided by those shaping the labour market structure and young people (Eurofound, 2011). Consequently, the risks of a delayed process of transition to labour market has a severe impact on life projects of young people in the long-run, as it does affect their access to social security schemes, professional development and, not the least, the self-esteem and resilience.

However, it is widely accepted that young people hold the key to Europe's future dynamism and prosperity, assuming that their talents, energy and creativity will help Europe to grow and become more competitive as we move beyond the economic and financial crisis. Acknowledging that it is of critical macroeconomic importance for Europe to boost the number of people with the appropriate skills (which is especially true today as digital technologies are transforming every area of economic life), it is important to stress that, paradoxically, Europe is facing a significant and growing shortage of the people capable of leading innovation to capitalize on advances in digital technologies, despite the high levels of unemployment.

## Reflecting on facts and figures: What went wrong?!

As previously mentioned, there are number of evidences showing that recent economic crisis has had disastrous implications for young people in terms of their employment, social inclusion and ability to lead dignified and autonomous lives. Although it has decreased – from more than 23% in 2013 to less than 21,4% in July 2015 – the youth unemployment rate is still very high in the EU (with peaks of more than 40% in several countries).

Importantly, the EU youth unemployment rate is more than double the overall unemployment rate (20% compared with 9%) and masks big differences between countries: there is a gap of more than 40 percentage points between the Member State with the lowest rate of youth unemployment (Germany at 7%) and the Member States with the highest rates, Greece (50%) and Spain (49%). Furthermore, more than 7 million people in the 15-24 age group are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs), while 11% of those aged 18-24 are early school leavers<sup>14</sup>.

Even before the crisis hit, labour market segmentation was identified as a major problem in many Member States, so one can claim that today's situation just reflects a set of serious structural problems. Very often, for example, high youth unemployment rates co-exist with increased difficulties in filling vacancies which points to the existence of labour market mismatches, due to inadequate skills, limited geographic mobility or inadequate wage conditions.

The conditions of youth employment in general have worsened in Europe due in particular to the deteriorated economic situation and the financial and economic crisis proving that the young are at much greater risk in terms of precariousness. Having in mind that the right to decent work and protection against unemployment are fundamental human rights, quality-employment plays crucial role in providing preconditions for the autonomy and wellbeing of youth in Europe and throughout the world (EYF 2013). Unfortunately, the evidence show that discrimination against young people in the labour market, as well as in the provision of services, is a pervasive reality in Europe: young people are discriminated against on the basis of their age as well as other individual characteristics - real or perceived - including gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic origin, disability, religious beliefs or social and educational background<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, as a result of growing youth unemployment, young people are experiencing increased levels of poverty and social exclusion, and there is a widening economic gap between older and younger generations. The growing income gaps and standard of living between generations has increased social tensions and has led to political unrest in many parts of Europe.

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<sup>14</sup> Source: Eurostat, July 2015

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap Statistics (March 2013), [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics).

Therefore, the subject of youth employment has received especially close attention of the European officials mostly because of its correlation with social exclusion and the destabilizing effect this can have on society at large. The issue of youth empowerment, agency and participation are therefore central to any discussion of youth employment policy and the future of work today. It is proclaimed that young people should not be treated as the passive objects of policy concern. Rather, they should be reconstructed as active agents in working out solutions to social problems such as youth unemployment.

### **The concept and perspectives on youth transition to working life**

The literature provides number of evidence that integration of young people into society has traditionally been seen as the result of a linear, institutionalized sequence of steps: education and/ or training, after which young people were considered ready to meet the demands of employment, which in turn would have positioned them in certain occupations: these symbolize a full citizenship status. These are the basic elements of the standard life course model that was constructed around an adult status based on paid work and the family (Chisholm 2011). In contemporary modern societies, however, young people's transitions to adulthood in general and to work in particular have lost their linear nature. Most importantly, growing attention is posed on the fact that young people's 'navigations', and 'trajectories' need to be understood in terms of fluidity and change<sup>16</sup>.

The picture is however more complex than the traditional view would have entailed. Transitions into and through the labour market are important milestones for young people, but they are not the only troublesome transition young people must face, as they are concurrently engaged in navigating education and training - at times, though, they experience none of these, as in the case of NEETs.

The literature shows that a major source of diversification among youth in contemporary society is the fragmentation of life course transitions (Chisholm 1997) marked with de-standardized and prolonged pathways that not only take longer to complete but are also individualized and often very complex. These transitions have de-coupled, they follow different rhythms and logics – they lead to fragmented lives and transitions, which individuals have to reconcile in the attempt of balancing their identities (Bauman, 2001).

Besides, a clear distinction between dependency and autonomy, and between youth and adulthood, which has been central for the standard biography for many young people, does not correspond to young people's subjective experiences anymore or to their current or future real life situation (Cuzzocrea, Magaraggia 2013). Increasingly, they live in situations of partial dependency and may alternatively be looked at as young adults rather than youth.

Moreover, under conditions of individualised and fragmented transitions, subjectivity plays an increasingly crucial role, as individuals must integrate decisions into their life plans (Coles, 1995; MacDonald, 1998). The increased relevance of young people's subjectivity in

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<sup>16</sup> There is plenty of literature illustrating and discussing these concepts. For an easily available text, see Chisholm et al. (2011).

constructing their biographies locates the concept of de-standardized transitions at the centre of the relationship between structure and agency (Giddens, 1984), i.e. between the capacities of young people to elaborate their own trajectories and the conditions they face in their contexts of reference.

De-standardised transitions often represent a challenge not only for young people themselves, but also for policies addressing youth transitions which are sometimes highly contradictory. As a response, government and policies of public institutions try to turn them into institutionalised trajectories with formal structures and predictable outcomes. There is wide acknowledgement that for young people this may represent a dilemma since, on one hand they find that the trajectories that are provided by the institutions do not correspond to their actual life situations. On the other, their abilities may not correspond to the actual demand of the labour market, making highly individualized trajectories possible only to a minority who has fairly good access to resources and, also, skills and courage (Kovacheva, 1998; du Bois-Reymonds, 1998).

The dilemma between young people's transition experiences and transition policies however has been conceptualised in the literature as "misleading trajectories" (EGRIS 2001). This definition refers to a comprehensive understanding of social integration in which systemic success (qualifications, jobs, income etc.) and subjective satisfaction (experience of recognition and motivation) are interrelated. It has been argued that policies have to be flexible enough to provide contextualised solutions to individual cases. Furthermore, the individual contexts can only be assessed and considered appropriately with regard to subjective dimensions if the individuals concerned are actively involved in the definition of problems, objectives and needs regarding their own biographies. Consequently, young people's active participation is a central prerequisite of policies aiming at young people's social and economic integration, as underlined by Walther et al. (2002).

### **Policy responses**

As young people are a strategic group in order to have an integrated society as a whole, problems like youth unemployment or disengagement with formal institutions have led to increase efforts in producing programmes aimed at reducing transition-related risks at the European level. Yet, several policies and programmes come to be structured around a concept of social integration that is narrowly interpreted on the basis of a labour market centred view, a perspective which does not take sufficiently into account the complexity of young people's lives.

Current work being done across Europe therefore suggests that the integration of policies for young people have to be structured in a way that allows young people's active participation in the shape of their transitions to work. While the current policy debate is being focused on enabling young people to move into the labour market, other aspects of youth transitions to adulthood have been emphasized, as confirmed in the principles of the Youth Department Action plan (2014 -2015), stating that 'transition to adulthood encompasses more processes than just access to the labour market for young people'.

Along the same lines, the Report from the Consultative meeting '*Addressing challenges to transition to working life and autonomy of young people in Europe*' (held in February 2014), states that The Youth Department of the Council of Europe claims to strive to further strengthen the work of the member states governments, youth organizations, and youth workers in this area following guiding principles such as human rights based approach; addressing youth transition in the wider perspective and going beyond the focus on youth employment; undertaking constant needs assessment and fostering dialogue among stakeholders; putting special attention on the needs of vulnerable groups, and promoting a cross-sectorial approach. Having in mind that youth policy and youth work responses to youth transitions are contextual, the strength of community based solution and integrated approaches are also encouraged.

In addition, the Council of Europe's programme of international reviews of national youth policy represents a significant body of work in the analysis of youth employment and the related fields of education and training (Williamson 2002; 2006). These fields are addressed by the Treaty of the Council of Europe and the European Social Charter (1961, 1996), which guarantee fundamental social and economic rights for all citizens. These substantial and politically influential documents represent important reference points that go well beyond the borders of the European Union. Furthermore, key political documents of both European institutions address above mentioned challenges, in particular the European Youth Pact (2005), the Declaration adopted at the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, 'The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020', in October 2008; the 'Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2010-2018' of the European Union; and the 'EU 2020' new economic strategy with the 'Youth on the Move' flagship initiative.

The overall goal of Youth on the Move flagship is 'to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union' (EC, 2010). It promotes strategic initiatives in education and employment of young people, entrepreneurship through mobility programs for young professionals, recognition of non-formal and formal education, and development of new youth policies encouraging apprenticeships, internships and other types of work experience. In order to boost youth employment, the European Commission supports implementation of 4 measures:

- **youth guarantee schemes:** aiming to help ensure that all young people under 25 get a quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed;
- **youth employment Initiative:** referring to provision of EU funding to support young people in regions where youth unemployment rates are above 25%;
- **quality traineeships and apprenticeships:** striving to improve the transition from school to work;

- **labour mobility:** aiming to making it easier for young Europeans to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another EU country<sup>17</sup>.

Overall, the EU is working to reduce youth unemployment and to increase the youth employment rate in line with the wider EU target of achieving a 75% employment rate for the working-age population (20-64 years)<sup>18</sup>.

Recent reports inform that certain level of progress has been registered at the level of implementation of European Youth Strategy in area of Employment and Entrepreneurship. Namely, National Youth Reports (2012) inform us that several Member States have changed their labour laws or applied tax incentives to improve access to the labour market for young people. These are frequently combined with programmes to allow young people to gain work experience, including abroad. Many young people benefit from counselling, offered by education institutions, employment services or youth information services. Many countries offer targeted support, courses, counselling or work placements, to unemployed or vulnerable young people. Traineeships are frequently available as part of formal education and several countries have dual track education systems combining classroom teaching with apprenticeships (EC 2012).

Furthermore, addressing the issue of discrimination in the labour market, a number of national governments in the EU have recently developed new employment legislation specifically targeting youth, which deviate from universal labour laws and which demonstrate that the working rights of young people and the rights of young people to a decent and fair wage are not being respected.

The first cycle of Structured Dialogue has been also focused on youth employment. The reports show that young people recommended concrete actions, which fed into a Council Resolution highlighting the need for access to labour market information, non-formal learning, a quality framework for internships, focus on flexicurity and equal access to mobility. The recommendations and the best practices from Member States inspired subsequent Commission initiatives, such as the draft recommendation on non-formal and informal learning and in the wider context of the Youth Opportunities Initiative.

However, recent analysis of Eurofound (2014)<sup>19</sup> emphasizes that, when designing policies addressing youth economic participation, it is crucial to recognize that young people are a very diverse group with different characteristics and often multiple needs. Policies, while sharing the same aim, should have different approaches and be tailored to individual needs, with personalised support from personal advisers who seek.

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<sup>17</sup> For more information visit: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036>; European Council of the European Union <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/youth-employment/>

<sup>18</sup> Source: Factsheet: Addressing youth unemployment in the EU.

<sup>19</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions Eurofound (2014), Mapping youth transitions in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

## **Instead of conclusion**

It is important to stress in the end that throughout the financial crisis, the European Commission has been working with Member States to address the economic and social consequences of high and rising unemployment. Some of this work will take time to bear fruit: Europe needs deep structural reform to become more competitive and this cannot be delivered overnight. Essential reforms must therefore be flanked by fast-acting measures to boost growth and to help young people find jobs and acquire essential skills. These measures will boost confidence and show young people that they have a bright future. Still, the topic remains among highest priorities during the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2015), which strives to work with EU governments to 'improve the performance of their labour markets' by making it easier for young people to find jobs upon leaving school and university, especially by means of the youth guarantee.

Another encouraging initiative reflects in the fact that representatives from governments, industry, academia, NGOs, and other key stakeholders across Europe have joined forces with the European Commission to push for further action to stimulate investment, the acquisition of digital skills and the creation of jobs to kick start Europe's anaemic rate of economic growth. The task of equipping Europe's workforce and citizens with the relevant digital skills, has taken on an even greater urgency now that the creation of a digitally powered single European market has been pushed to the top of Europe's economic agenda. Launched in Riga by the European Commission and the Latvian Presidency of the EU, the "eSkills for Jobs" campaign (2015-2016) is designed to address the digital skills gap and will continue to build awareness of the problem in EU Member States. Importantly, striving to unlock the potential of digital technologies in order to fuel growth and jobs, one of the 10 essential principals of the campaign refers to 'Addressing youth unemployment in Europe through digital skills'. This initiative is based on assumption that youth unemployment will fall if young people are equipped with the digital skills needed for jobs, in turn enhancing the competitiveness of industries across the board, as well as on assumption that job creation can be stimulated through digital technology.

Although all above mentioned initiatives to tackle youth unemployment and social exclusion have been welcome, the evidence shows that much more needs to be done in terms of economic investment in young people and the protection of young people's labour and social rights. Europe needs to commit itself to raising employment levels, create quality employment opportunities among young people, and support measures that promote integration in the labour market and reduce poverty. A secure income must be assured within the framework of professional development. Any other approach risks further alienating young people that are furthest from the labour market, definitively excluding them from employment.

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## **Annex VI: Key messages resulting from the symposium**

Participants of the symposium “youth participation in a digitalised world” were invited in a final session to form four working groups with the aim of drawing up key messages concerning youth policy, youth research and youth work. The messages should come from the perspective of the four key topics that were discussed in depth during the symposium: communication, education, economic sphere and working life, and democracy and political participation. Each of the four groups came up with a number of messages including concrete ideas for existing instruments. A final panel with representatives from different stakeholders had the opportunity to react to these messages.

In a nutshell, the messages propose:

- promoting all forms of youth participation, on and offline, conventional and unconventional, new and old, in all spheres of life to foster democracy and active citizenship;
- providing blended learning approaches, including formal, non-formal and informal, as well as using a variety of digital and traditional tools and holistic education methods to improve innovation in our education systems;
- addressing all young people, including the marginalised and hard-to-reach, refugees and asylum seekers, to strengthen solidarity, anti-discrimination, social cohesion and inclusion;
- supporting mutual respect, understanding and learning between young people and their counterparts and enable young people to be formers of their lives as well as critical consumers;
- fostering democratic structures by preventing patronising approaches and establishing real partnerships and promoting flat hierarchies in education, training and working life, as well as in their local communities;
- exploring the future role of youth work, including the role of youth NGOs, youth workers and youth leaders in supporting young people to master the digital age, defining the competences of youth workers needed in this regard, identifying knowledge gaps and defining a respective research agenda, and envisaging a more systematic and coherent youth policy approach.

The messages in detail were as follows.

### **Towards a holistic participation agenda for active citizenship**

- Consider the balance between online and offline methods (blending together) to enhance coherent engagement and participation and create more projects in the youth sector.
- Consider on and offline participation as part of good governance in the 21st century leading to power sharing and focus governance strategies on youth participation.

- Analyse and recognise new forms and strategies of political activism, for example digital participation, and link it with different policies, not only with regard to the digital agenda.
- Accept digital participation as a useful tool but not as instrument for renewing democracy.
- Train, and provide support measures for administrative and policy staff to understand and better integrate digital participation and increase the accountability of politicians
- Include young people in policy making, including youth policies, even as legal obligation.

### **Towards blended teaching and learning approaches based on participatory principles**

- Reform education systems by developing a new pedagogy, introducing new instruments and educational tools (e.g. digital tools) for both learning and teaching, providing training accordingly and spaces for sharing experiences.
- Focus on holistic education to promote values for youth participation and reflect on the intersection of diverse areas in the digital world and their relevance for education.
- Empower young people through learning and provide education for young people on the risks and threats in the digital world, and promote personal responsibility.
- Train schoolteachers and youth workers in e-participation, promote and adopt cross-sectoral approaches.

### **Towards more and better employment and democratic participation in the economy**

- Support the transition of young people to the labour market by giving young people the skills needed for future jobs and exploring how current skills fit to those that will be needed in the future, for example through guidance activities in schools (and not just in employment offices), sufficient volunteering opportunities where young people can gain useful skills for the digitalised world, or providing ICT tools for career-management skills and self-empowerment.
- Provide incentives to create quality jobs and support young businesses/entrepreneurs, for example by making it easier to start enterprises under moderate conditions and regulations, providing online support, cultivating a culture of risk taking, accepting failure and problem-solving in traditional ways, for example by getting people back to work.
- Ensure that traditional approaches can co-exist with new paradigms, such as crowd-sourcing, crowd-investing, crowd-working, start-ups and promote social innovation by creating informal spaces to discuss innovations.
- Increasing the role of digital tools for accessing the labour market, and connecting success stories between games and real life while learning from the gaming industry.
- Tailor social entrepreneurship to local realities and develop tailor-made support to address the real situation of young people.
- Counter raising inequality, for example by increasing financial literacy based on values or better redistributing taxes; balance economic aspects better with other fields.

## **Towards a youth policy that empowers and protects young people and reaches out to marginalised and excluded groups of young people**

- Recognise the potential of young people and develop an understanding of their identity, thoughts and needs, and keep in mind the different realities of young people while implementing youth policy.
- Explore cross-sectoral co-operation with youth workers, researchers and policy makers, understand their needs and increase dialogue between academia and surrounding society at local, national and international levels; for example, participation in educational activities.
- Go from a policy point of view beyond the EU digital agenda and understand and apply principles of development and implementation of youth policy.
- Look at the less connected and disadvantaged youth and regions and make possible what technologically or economically seems to be impossible.
- Give more attention to marginalised/silenced voices (online and offline) and analyse how the Internet can be used for empowerment of particularly excluded young people.
- Remember the most disadvantaged by supporting access to the digital sphere.

## **Towards a new role of youth work and of youth workers**

- Recognise the important role of youth workers in educating young people, as “connectors” and mediators between digital resources, stakeholders and young people.
- Promote youth centres to become hubs for different stakeholders.
- Guide youth work by informing and easing access to information for active citizenship.
- Acknowledge the need for resources and specific support for young people (for example, access to the digital sphere and the important role of youth work herein).
- Support initiatives to equip young people for using digital tools; for example, offer free-WiFi open spaces for accessing the Internet and create a network (for example a virtual community) for sharing experiences and good practices using digital tools.

## **Towards a better knowledge of the digital world and youth**

- Define common ground of the concept of digital participation and describe the world in a new way, not divided online and offline, while using a new terminology related to digital youth participation.
- Provide research on misconceptions and miscommunication – for example, young people vs. politicians/policy makers or young people vs. youth workers – and create an open space for discussion and debate among young people, youth workers, researchers and policy makers.
- Provide more longitudinal qualitative research to understand the long-term effects and changes in time, attitudes and actions of youth political participation and youth policies.

- Explore new ways of doing research – for example ethnographic participation – use different kinds of visual data and research (online and offline), and collaborate as researchers/ethnographers with young people practising political art.
- Use the media as an instrument to fill gaps in young people’s knowledge of policies, involve journalists in qualitative research and produce more story-telling in favour of young people.
- Promote evidence-based policy and acknowledge the higher responsibility of researchers, not only for scientific reasons but for policy making as well.
- Examine through research the role of digital tools for a new education and their impact on learning, for example how to cope with students that are learning online.
- Look deeper at how digital tools are shaping and changing communication and engagement as well as the specifics of the digital environment.
- Connect existing data and surveys on how to better engage young people and “translate” existing knowledge to enable a better understanding.
- Support the dissemination of data, information and networking at the EU–Council of Europe level.

## Annex VII: Evaluation of the symposium

**Total answers = 34**

**Background of respondents:** Youth Researcher = 26.47% (9) / Policy-Maker = 5.88% (2) / Youth Worker = 26.47% (9) / NGO Representative = 41.18% (14)

**Role of attendance in symposium:** participant = 67.65% (23) / specific role (speaker, facilitator, rapporteur...) = 32.35% (11)

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

#### **1. In your opinion what worked well in this meeting? What is the best quote of the event, or the one that remained in your mind?**

Nice balance of policy makers, youth researchers and youth workers / interesting mixture of participants / good mix between roles / wide range of representatives / huge diversity / bringing together online and offline participants

Excellent idea to combine the concept of the digital world and the one of participation / youth participation has many forms, online and offline, gives meaning to life / good definition of youth participation in a digitalized world

Very well organised in terms of the content / well prepared set of workshops / different perspectives and opinions / getting some conclusions / share of knowledge / young people enthusiastic to present their projects / good way of exchanging opinion, good practices, make new contacts / having good practices shared / promoting the event well and permanently to the public / relaxed but focused atmosphere

The first opening speeches / Mr. Geronimos keynote speech / key-note from Geoffrey Pleyers

#### **2. What needs to be strengthened in the future concerning a) content and b) structure**

Content and structure quite well balanced / the combination of academic presentations on research findings and applied presentation of projects and good practices was just right

Better presentation of regional and local perspectives, such as Euromed or Eastern Europe / some local visits would have been interesting / input on consequences of overdigitalised world for young people / stress with regard to human rights and democracy what's going on in Hungary

Reduce the number of speeches and introductory sessions, add some capacity building elements / good sessions providing practical skills and information / research dimension to be improved, by including more experts in the field

One day longer / at least a half day longer to sum up with more focus and clarified views / one extra day to work on inputs needed / final discussions on recommendations too short / touching very fast quite complex issues / either a longer event with more time for discussions, or less presentations to allow more time for discussions / it was not enough time to profit from richness of the group

**3. What part of the meeting was the most useful for you? What would you like to see repeated in the future?**

Networking and discussing with different conference guests / networking, thinking future projects jointly (transnationally) / informal networking / all the meeting was useful to get inspired, to learn, to share ideas and to enlarge the network and create future contacts / motivated to make something more effective about youth participation / discussions, debates / working groups a good way of exchanging opinion, good practices, make some new contacts / shared sessions on Day 2 / learn about other tools in other contexts stimulating youth participation / diversity of participants / diversity and possibility to make a choice / possibility for exchange with a lot of experts

Great keynotes / Roman Gerodimos keynote speech / workshop education for participation in a digitalised world / workshop on digital tools in non-formal education of Karsten Lucke / education and communication sections

More cross-sectoral concepts and more people from different fields / need to create more spaces for people to meet and share prospects and ideas / more practical talk during the conference /

**4. What are two most important things you learnt from this meeting and that you might apply in your work?**

General overview of trends in youth participation and its diverse aspects / variety of approaches towards youth participation / the need to bring together the online and the offline world and the chance to see youth from other perspectives and through other eyes / new ways to approach young people / creating opportunities for young people to express their opinion and participate actively in decision making processes / seeing the digital world not only under a technical angle but to include political and social aspects / no need for creating tools where young people "play" with each other, but communicate with decision makers

See some research results and how to put research questions / the standard of dedicated research on digital activism appears to be poor / the use of storytelling in youth engagement

The way some workshops were constructed and the discussion led, some facilitation approaches / space where participants made a video together, showing their solidarity to the refugees

Look for a case study of online participation for current research projects / publish news from the meeting in Finnish Youth Work magazine / continue doing trainings on youth issues and look at the topic of youth participation from a new perspective

**5. What discussions would you suggest to be included in the next year's symposium Unequal Europe?**

Social rights: myths vs. reality / the role of youth work to contribute to a social and fair Europe / Inequalities in forms of mobility of young people from different parts of Europe and from different parts of the world / a more equal Europe through mobility programmes? / Young refugees and global responsibility of youth policy, research and practice / integration of migrants and refugees and the role of youth work / new challenges through terrorism / create conditions to establish gender equality in all spheres of society / equal access to employment, financial support, entrepreneurship / discuss empirical evidence of the digital divide and online youth participation / what are precise "demarcation lines", in terms of gender, class, geography, education, socio-economic status? /

Invite people from policy and research with expertise beyond existing networks

**6. Please rate:**

	5 (very good) –	4 (good) –	3 (neutral) –	2 (bad) –	1 (very bad)
Speakers/ Inputs	38.46%	53.85%	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%
Working methods	15.38%	76.92%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%
Organizers' preparation and communication in advance	61.54%	30.77%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%
Your own participation	7.69%	61.54%	30.77%	0.00%	0.00%
Project sharing and networking evening	23.08%	30.77%	30.77%	15.38%	0.00%
Communication and outreach on the symposium	30.77%	53.85%	7.69%	7.69%	0.00%

**7. Feel free to add any other comment you might consider useful for future meetings of this type**

The symposium was a first step, discussions shouldn't finish after the event / create a place such as an online platform or a forum for being aware of future developments and for sharing new ideas and discussions

Provide "speed-geeking" sessions as fast-paced presentations of labs by trainers to make a better choice of labs and presentations / participants should take more serious the opportunity to have their projects and organizations promoted / send information on the dates of future events and reminders to people who usually don't participate in these meetings / instruments used for the promotion of the event, like Twitter Wall was hard to follow

The SAHWA Project (2014-2016), Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: towards a New Social Contract (FP7, European Union) comes in 2016 in its the last project year; it would be beneficial to include some of the project results to one of the EU-CoE seminars in 2016. <http://www.sahwa.eu/>

I liked it very much and I am very grateful that I could be with you there. Thank you! / Many thanks to the organizers and facilitators, they did a great job on a difficult issue