

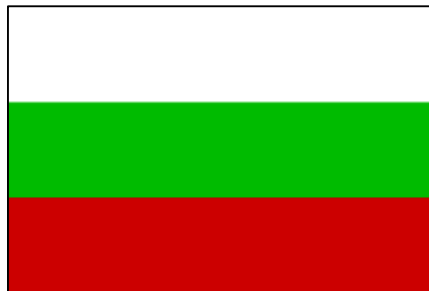


YouthPartnership

QUESTIONNAIRE

“PARTICIPATION”

BULGARIA



YouthPartnership
Council of Europe
European Commission



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1 Please explain the context of youth participation in your country

Inclusion

In 2007 the State Agency for Youth and Sports (SAYS) continued to implement the policy directed to the inclusion of greater number of young people in the life of civil society, and their participation in public life, carrying out a series of actions and initiatives countrywide. During the last year, the European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation “All different – All equal”, coordinated by the State Agency for Youth and Sports at national level, ended. 7 NGO projects for total amount of 29 833 BGN are implemented under the program.

The projects are funded under Subprogram IV “National Initiatives and Campaigns” of Youth Activities Program 2006-2007. The actions are implemented by young people in partnership with state institutions, local authorities, media, civil society, and are directed to respecting of human rights and development of democratic governance, tolerance, encouragement of policy “for” and “with” young people.

For a second year in a row the National Information Youth System (register of youth organisations) functions effectively, supporting the communication and interaction with nongovernmental organisations in the country, and facilitating the exchange among youth organisations. With the help of the register young people have the opportunity to search and receive information in real time, as well as to make the activities they carry out public domain. This service is already used by 820 users, registered in the system. 241 organisations are active. 137 of them are nongovernmental organisations, working with young people, 45 are youth organisations, and 28 are foundations. 4 more clubs, 8 community centres and 8 associations are registered in the system. In 2007, Chief Directorate “Youth Policy” at SAYS prepared and published Youth Guide with current reference information for the benefit of young people from the whole country. It represents the district towns of the country and the practical opportunities for use of leisure time of young people in the respective town. Another initiative of the State Agency for Youth and Sports is the establishment of National Centre for Youth Information at Chief Directorate “Youth Policy”, as an informal unit servicing young people from countrywide. The centre provides information and advice on drafting projects for youth programs, promotes initiatives and activities directed to young people in the country, disseminates information and advertising materials, etc. in 2007 the State Agency for Youth and Sports hosted the traditional III National Forum “Bulgarian Youth”, which was held on the 18-19th of October in Sofia. The young people, representatives of more than 150 NGOs in the country drafted special declaration inviting the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria to formulate long-term vision for the development of young people by developing and tabling to the National Assembly 2008-2013 National Strategy for the Development of Youth. The documents from

the largest youth forum in the country were handed to the Prime Minister, Sergey Stanishev, who was the patron of the initiative. Appeal for Encouraging Youth Volunteering in Bulgaria was adopted at the end of the Forum. The document was submitted to the State Agency for Youth and Sport, the Council of Ministers and other state institutions. Within the frameworks of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Central European Initiative, the State Agency for Youth and Sports hosted the Seventh CEI Youth Forum on “Formation and Implementation of Youth Policy at European, Regional, National and Local Level”. The conference gathered representatives from CEI member states, guests from EU member states, as well as representatives of youth organisations in the country. The participants in the forum adopted declaration inviting the heads of governments of the CEI member states to facilitate the development of local and regional strategies as part of the future implementation of the European Pact for Youth, to take youth problems at the foreground of the programs for national reforms and of the key policies affecting the quality of young people’s life.

Association and representation

One of the major steps State Agency for Youth and Sports (SAYS) made in relation to association and representation of youth nongovernmental organisations, is the draft Law for Development of Youth. In 2007, it was drafted in its final version and was subject to wide discussions with great number of NGOs in the country, state institutions, local government authorities, youth policy organisations, associations, etc. The bill, drafted by SAYS, was supported by the participants in the Third National Forum “Bulgarian Youth”. The bill is aimed at encouraging self-organisation of young people by regulating the mechanisms for establishment and structuring of youth representation. It stipulates the legal status of municipal youth councils, youth district councils and the national youth council. It defines the framework of relations thereof with state and municipal authorities, and establishes mechanisms for their public support, as well as normative restrictions as reliable guarantees for the public interest. Through the youth councils (occurring as a result of self government and state decentralisation) a connection between the civil society and sector youth self government is established. This will be the basis of civil society, as it not only assigns functions to non-governmental structure, but also provides rights for participation in governance and independent liability at local, district and national level. In this way, through the youth councils, the mobile youth community may join new social practices more easily, searching effective solutions for their problems. The draft law proposes a new model of funding for the national youth policy through the national budget, municipal budgets, national and international programs, donations, among others by the Fund for Development of Youth in Bulgaria. This fund will provide program funding of measures provided in the National Strategy for Youth and the National Plan for Youth.

Participation in decision making process

The full value participation in the life of the local community is a guarantee for effective social integration and personal realisation of young people. By means of discussing the problems and taking the appropriate actions together with young people, and not just for them, local authorities' representatives help them to become full value citizens of their municipalities. This helps for the formation of European decentralized model for participation of young people in local life. One of the steps in this process is the adoption of the [Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#). Until 2005 this document was adopted by the following municipalities: Gabrovo, Varna, Silistra, Tutrakan, Momchilgrad, Sofia, Burgas, Smolyan, etc. In 2006 the Revised Charter was adopted by 10 more municipalities in the country. The process of adoption continued in 2007 when about 12 other municipalities adopted the Revised Charter on Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

Based on the principles of the Revised Charter, the State Agency for Youth and Sports developed and realised "Youth Development 2007" Action, which was successfully realized in 2007 with the active support of the Bulgarian municipalities. The main purpose of Youth Development Action is the consolidation of youth community in the country. It is an expression of governmental policy for establishment and support of youth organisations capacity and supports the solution of young people's specific problems at local and regional level. The projects focus on collaboration and improvement of conditions for interaction with municipal or district administration. In 2007, 12 projects of youth organisations were funded under Youth Development action, to the amount of 33 578 BGN.

Youth Development 2007 action funds projects in three main directions: Young People and Local Authorities, Non-Formal Education of Youth Leaders, and Voluntary Initiatives of Social Benefit. The projects were examined in two stages – by the organisations themselves, at local level, and by the expert's commission of the State Agency for Youth and Sports. Such new approach supports the cooperation between the youth organisations themselves, on one hand, and unites young people for solving their problems and meeting the needs of the relevant settlement, on the other hand. The major part of applied projects is under Young People and Local Authorities. This shows the activeness and efforts of young people to defend their rights of active participants in the process of decision making, on one hand, and the readiness of local authorities to work with and for young people, on the other hand, which results in optimisation of the process of cooperation between them.

Within the period 28-29 November, the First National Meeting "Youth Development 2007" was held. The results of the action during the year were reported and good practices about funded projects were presented during the meeting. The cooperation between young people and local authorities is realised successfully and finds more practical decisions in a number of settlements in the country. As an example for good practice in this aspect we can

distinguish Varna Municipality and more specifically the established Youth Forum for partnership with local authority. The Forum functions as non-formal, voluntary association of youth, nongovernmental organisations, institutions and natural persons working on youth issues, on the basis of an agreement signed by the mayor of Varna Municipality. The representative body of the forum is the consultative youth council, which includes representatives of all organisation members of the forum by meeting the requirements for equality and scope. The consultative youth council is chaired by the Mayor of Varna Municipality. The activity of the consultative youth council is based on the principles of the Revised Charter as a confirmation of the young people's wish for bilateral dialogue and effective partnership with the local authorities.

For a second year in a row, the Youth Forum for Partnership with Local Authorities has fully realised its annual program, which includes lots of activities and initiatives aimed at organising leisure time of young people, non-formal education in relation to different opportunities for personal and professional realisation of young Varna citizens, as well as opportunities for funding and co-funding of partnership projects on different youth programs.

During the recent years, we may outline a trend for intensifying of municipal youth policies in the country. Part of the Bulgarian municipalities can be distinguished as good models for working with young people, as well as with differentiation of funds for youth activities in municipal plans and development strategies. As an example of good practices we can point out both large municipalities like Varna, Burgas, Sofia, Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Targovishte, etc. (with greater youth community), and smaller ones. To this end, we must point out that it is the interaction between young people and local authorities in smaller settlements that is the most important factor both for encouraging youth activeness, and for solving youth problems that are specific for the relevant region, and in particular – establishment of conditions for realisation of young people in their birth towns and countrywide. The number of young people elected for municipal councillors as well as the number of young people, members of different municipal commissions, increases in more and more municipalities. All this is of significant importance for implementing effective sectoral policies and for the participation of young people in decision making process.

The Republic of Bulgaria's state policy priority is the adoption of the draft Law for Development of Youth that will ensure long-term and consistent approach of youth policy. The adoption of such law is required with view of the low level of organisation of Bulgarian youth, which does not allow the implementation of self-governing and self-regulating mechanisms for problem solving. The idea is that the law will clearly define the young people as a subject of the state youth policy, the functions of youth organisations, their funding, the manner for establishment of partnerships with local and national authorities, as well as the place of youth community centres as units implementing on the spot youth policy. This will

provide basis for establishment of network of youth information centres in different municipalities and will regulate the rights and obligations of a National Youth Council, as there is no structured youth representation in the country.

The common state policy in the field of youth actions in the Republic of Bulgaria is implemented by the State Agency for Youth and Sport. It is the state authority that prepares national strategies, national and annual programs for development of youth policy. The Agency develops and delivers to the Council of Ministers, for approval, annual program for youth activities and Annual Report on Youth, organises the interaction and supports youth organisations within the country with view of the implementation of the state youth policy. A team of experienced experts gives proposals and opinions for the harmonisation of legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of youth with the international legal regulations. The Agency allocates the national budget subsidies and the other state funds for youth policy, finances different programs and projects of youth organisations, as well as projects related to the development of disabled young people and those with fewer opportunities.

At the beginning of 2006 specialised administrative structure – Chief Directorate “Youth Policy” is established in the State Agency for Youth and Sport. This step is a prerequisite for new level of governance in the field of youth.

In 2007, National Centre “European Youth Programs and Initiatives” is established, which promotes, advises, organizes and coordinates the participation of Bulgarian young people and sport organizations in the European and international programs and initiatives.

2 Structures of participation at the local regional or national level

2.1 Youth councils

2.1.1 National youth councils

There is no structured youth representation in Bulgaria.

At present, regional youth councils, municipal youth councils are registered as non-governmental organisations pursuant to the Law for Non-Profit Legal Entities, and the incorporation of National Youth Council lies ahead, that will function pursuant to the priorities of White Paper on Youth,. During the years of transitions, from 1989 to 2003, three nongovernmental organisations were established named “national youth council” or “Bulgarian youth council”, but as of today they do not function and do not carry out any activities. The young people in every school are non formally associated in school student’s councils, and there are similar associations in some municipalities – at local level municipal youth councils exist, and in relation to the higher education establishments, the academic youth often establish organisations, associations or foundations, named Student’s Council. Namely such formal or non formal associations are invited during consultations and inquiries

for drafting mechanisms, action plans to strategies, or as membership in national councils at state institutions with representative functions. There are different forms of youth councils or youth committees. Some of them simply are named “youth councils”; others are called “student’s councils” or “school student’s councils”.

2.1.2 Regional youth councils

At regional level, 2 regional youth councils are established as non-profit legal entities that unite youth and nongovernmental organisations from the districts of Varna and Plovdiv.

2.1.3 Local youth councils

There are established municipal youth councils in most of the municipalities, and the municipalities themselves have adopted the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. Until 2005 the document has been adopted by the following municipalities: Gabrovo, Varna, Silistra, Tutrakan, Momchilgrad, Sofia, Burgas, Smolyan, etc. In 2006, the Revised Charter has been adopted by most of the municipalities in the country.

2.2 Youth parliaments

National, regional and local youth parliaments

European Youth Parliament – Bulgaria (Evropeiski Mladejki Parlament – Bulgaria)

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In 2003 Bulgaria was welcomed to join the family of countries represented in the European Youth Parliament. The first Bulgarian delegation participated at the 45th International Session of the EYP in Durham/Newcastle, UK, 24th March - 4th April 2004.

The Bulgarian Committee of the European Youth Parliament was officially registered as a non-profit organisation in Bulgaria in 2004. All those who are involved in the running of the Bulgarian National Committee do so voluntarily, with the help of EYP alumni, teachers, and other interested people.

The aim is to promote the objectives and values of the European Youth Parliament in Bulgaria and to give the new generation the chance to discover what the EYP is all about. One of the main functions is to select student delegations which will represent Bulgaria at the International Sessions of the EYP.

A Bulgarian delegation usually consists of 6 student delegates and one accompanying teacher. All delegates are selected through a National Selection.

There are some local (municipal) youth parliaments

3 Participation in representative democracy

3.1 Number and percentage of young people who are members of a political party or political youth organisations, if possible by gender

There is a Law for Political Parties adopted in Bulgaria. Youth sections are established to these parties the members of which are young people at the age from 18 to 35. The parties represented in the Parliament may be found on the National Assembly's website – www.parliament.bg. No data available on affiliation of young people.

3.2 Number and percentage of young people who are members of a trade union

The State Agency for Youth and Sports has no information about the number of young people members of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (KNSB) and Podkrepa (the two trade union organisations)

3.3 Percentage of young people (in total and by gender) who are members of a youth non-governmental organisation, which are not trade unions, political parties or political youth organisations.

Since 2004, after the amendment of the Law for Physical Education and Sport, it stipulates the “youth” category – persons at the age of 18 and 36, and a definition for “youth organisation” – non profit legal entity with members at the age of 18 and 35. This is taken into account upon filing projects, proposals and ideas under the Program for Youth Activities administered by the State Agency for Youth and Sports. According to the information in the established National System for Youth Information (register of youth and nongovernmental organisations in the country), 820 youth organisations are registered in the system. Now information concerning percentage of young people active in youth NGO's.

4 Explain the existing support measures, of national, regional or local scope, to promote the participation of young people in local life and follow-up mechanisms

4.1 Financial actions to support the various structures for youth political and NGO participation

In general:

The State Agency for Youth and Sports provides opportunity to young people in Bulgaria to apply with projects under several programs. Chief Directorate “Policy for Youth” administers two of them – National Program “Youth Information and Consultancy Centre” and Program for Youth Activities 2008 – 2010. The purpose of the first program is related to the

development and the establishment of sustainable mechanism for provision of high quality and accessible services corresponding to the needs and interests of young people, on the basis of existing experience and practices. The Program for Youth Activities is an instrument for implementation of the priorities of the national youth policy. It is based on the reported young people's needs and is synchronized with the European policy in this field.

4.2 Which financial actions on national level aimed at certain specific groups of young people exist?

None.

5 The vote

5.1 Is voting obligatory?

The citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria at the age of 18 and older, excluding the persons under judicial disability and sentenced to imprisonment, have the right to vote for state and local authorities and to take part in referendums.

Voting is not obligatory.

5.2 Age of the right to vote

5.3 Please describe, who is entitled to vote in national, regional and local elections.

There is no difference in voting rights for different levels of elections.

5.4 Requirements for being entitled as a candidate in national, regional or local elections (age, nationality , etc.)

Each Bulgarian citizen, who has no other nationality, and is at the age of 21, not under judicial disability and has not been sentenced to imprisonment, has the right to be elected for Member of the Parliament.

Each Bulgarian born citizen, at the age of 40, being eligible to be elected for a Member of the Parliament, and who has lived in the country during the last five years, has the right to be elected as President of the Republic.

Each Bulgarian citizen who has no other nationality of a non-EU member state, at the age of 18 as at the date of the elections, who is not under judicial disability, and is not sentenced to imprisonment, and who has lived in the respective municipality prior the election date has been fixed, has the right to be elected for municipal councillors and mayors.

6 The elections

6.1 Indicators of participation related to the election of the European Parliament

6.1.1 In the election of the European Parliament, the number and percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote (in total and by gender)

No information

6.1.2 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population voting

No information

6.2 National indicators of participation in the polls

6.2.1 In national elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote (in total, by gender and by age groups)

No information

6.2.2 In national elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population who has voted.

No information

6.3 Regional and local indicators of participation in the polls

6.3.1 In regional and local elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote

No information

6.3.2 In regional and local elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population voting

No information

6.4 Number of young people elected at the national, regional and local level: overall and by gender (please specify the age range)

No information

7 List actions, programmes, and financial or social support that promote the participation in the system of representative democracy, in particular to young people under the age of 30?

There is no special support for young people who are candidates in elections in the form of programs. There is only social support, political support from the party, represented by the candidate. There are many people under the age of 30 who are Members of Parliament, others – elected during the last local elections in 2007, and at present, are mayors, deputy

mayors, chairs of municipal councils, and still others – who became Members of the European Parliament.

In relation to programs and actions financially supported by the State Agency for Youth and Sports, they do not support the establishment of political parties, religious organisations, as well as carrying out similar activities.

8 Learning to participate

8.1 Please list existing actions and mechanisms within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate

No information

8.2 In which fields, other than formal education, do actions and/or support - of national or regional scope- exist, which aim at promoting learning to participate amongst young people? What is the nature of these actions/this support?

Give examples of good practise.

No information

8.3 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at certain specific groups of young people?

- Youth leaders
- Young people with fewer opportunities
- Members of environment associations
- Young athletes with good performance

9. Describe other, informal ways young people choose to participate in your country.

Quite frequently young people participate via volunteering, for example supporting social services, child protection departments, specialized homes for elderly people.