



YouthPartnership

QUESTIONNAIRE

“PARTICIPATION”

LATVIA



YouthPartnership
Council of Europe
European Commission



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1 Please explain the context of youth participation in your country

Youth participation in Latvia is defined by Youth Law; according to section 7 young people have the right to participate in the development and implementation of the youth policy:

- 1) by engaging in the acquisition and provision of non-formal education and carrying out voluntary work;
- 2) by performing activities in the self-governments of educational institutions;
- 3) by developing and implementing projects, as well as other initiatives;
- 4) by participating in the activities of youth organisations, as well as other associations and foundations;
- 5) by engaging in the process of the taking of State and local government decisions affecting the youth policy; and
- 6) by engaging in other activities, which are oriented towards the promotion of the youth participation in the development and implementation of the youth policy.

Additionally according to section 3 State administrative institutions in their activities shall provide youth organisations with an opportunity to engage in discussion of the decisions affecting the youth policy prior to the taking thereof. Furthermore Youth Law section 4 establish Youth Advisory Council which is an advisory institution established by the Cabinet, the objective of which is to promote the development and implementation of the co-ordinated youth policy, as well as the youth participation in decision-making and social life.

Cooperation and participation in implementing youth policy on national level is ensured by the Ministry of Education and Science by establishing consultative and coordinating institutions to ensure youth participation and cooperation among state administration, municipal institutions and nongovernmental organizations in youth policy. Presently, the Ministry ensures the work of the Youth Advisory Council and Youth Organizations Consultative Commission, and organizes participation activities and gives hearing to the views of the work group. The objective of Youth Advisory Council is to promote the development and implementation of youth policy in the country and youth involvement in the decision making process. The council is an open council, and its main function is to ensure coherent implementation of youth policy in the country, as youth policy is carried out by different organizations. It is chaired by the Ministry of Education and Science. As members there are seven representatives of youth organizations, representative of Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defence, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, The National Youth Council of Latvia, Latvian Student Association and five representatives of Youth organizations, which are chosen via the open competition.

Youth Organizations Consultative Commission is a consulting institution established to ensure the participation of youth organizations in the process of planning, implementing and evaluating State youth policy. The main task of commission is the analysis of current situation in youth policy, identification of problems and drafting of proposals for development for the Ministry of Education and Science. 12 leaders of youth organizations are members of the commission, which is chaired by the head of Youth Policy Unit of the Ministry.

2. Structures of participation at the local regional or national level

2.1 Youth councils

There is several form of ensuring youth participation in decision making process on national, regional and local levels; they are diverse by form and owners. Main state owned participation structures on national level are organized by Ministry of Education and Science (for more information see question 1.). Then there are organization based structures of youth participation and project based initiatives.

2.1.1 National youth councils

[The National Youth Council of Latvia](#) (LJP)

LJP was founded in 1992 as a children's and youth public organization whose members are youth organizations and youth organization associations. In year 2008 LJP had 45 member organizations. LJP's tasks: to gather the views of young people, explore their options, preferences in different regions of Latvia and to help them implement the various youth NGOs. LJP's main task is to represent the interests of young people in Latvia and in international institutions. The mission of LJP is to promote youth organizations, development and comprehensive cooperation, to motivate young people to get involved. LJP functions provide seven Board members (who are elected from member organizations) and the LJP permanent office people, which are overseen by the Executive Director. Every year, the Congress decides on admission of new member in next year's plans, as well as during the Congress is the president and the Board elected. LJP is a member organization of the European Youth Forum and organizations in Latvia such as the Civil Alliance Latvia and the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation.

Areas of LJP operation:

1. Defence of interests
2. Foreign affairs and development cooperation
3. Information and identification of youth organizations
4. LJP Development and Cooperation
5. The formation of new organizations

Web page: <http://www.ljp.lv>

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2.1.2 Regional youth councils

There are many regional and municipal youth councils established, especially in cities, which often functions in close cooperation with local municipality. The structure, members and tasks may differ case by case and are defined by local reality and needs. As example one of the biggest municipal youth council is Riga City School Council, which unites all Riga's city pupil's councils as members and involves youth organizations active in Riga city. Its main tasks are to work with pupil's councils in Riga, support young people and to participate in municipal youth work planning and implementation. As other example is city of Liepaja, where is youth organization network of 12 youth organizations. To contrary Rezeknes city youth council unites youth organizations and pupil's councils as its members. And different models are possible, as example, Kraslavas city youth council, which unites young people and youth organizations as members from all region.

Contact information of mentioned youth councils, other youth councils can be tracked via municipality web pages:

[Riga City School Council](mailto:rsd@riga.lv) - rsd@riga.lv

[Liepaja City youth organization network](mailto:ljc@jauns.lv) - ljc@jauns.lv

[Rezekne city youth council](mailto:dace.svilane@inbox.lv) - dace.svilane@inbox.lv

Kraslavas city youth council – kpjp@inbox.lv

2.1.3 Local youth councils

Pupil's councils can be established according to Law on Education in every overall education institution, they act as an independent pupil's institution which participates in the educational institutions work. Their aim is to lobby and unify interests of pupils and administration of educational institution in order to obtain active pupils participation in educational work. Main tasks are to:

- cooperate with the administration of education institutions and teachers;
- represent pupils interests in negotiations with the administration of education institutions and teachers;
- promote effectiveness of the learning process;
- engage in process of improving learning and living conditions in the educational institution;
- collect students' proposals and implement them to shape public life of educational institutions;
- collaborate with other education institutions in communities, municipalities, public institutions and public organizations.

But in practice their tasks and results differs according to local possibilities and might be other. No statistic data available on number of established and active pupils councils due to fact that they can be established in every educational institution as co-management body. Work of pupils councils are supported by municipal youth affairs coordinator (youth affairs specialist) and [State Youth Initiative Centre](#).

According to study done on 2007 ("Study on Youth Social and Political Activities in Latvia", Riga, 2007, p. 89, available online - <http://www.jaunatneslietas.lv/upload/dokumenti/petijums.doc>) around 13% of young people are involved in pupils council work.

2.2 Youth parliaments:

There are no other youth parliaments on local or national level in Latvia, basically there exist structures mentioned in section 2.1. There is youth organization [TELLUS](#) who coordinates National Committee of [European Youth Parliament](#) in Latvia and organize regional events in regions to select representation of Latvia in European Youth Parliament sessions. Coordinator of European Youth Parliament Latvian Committee is Katrina Suvajeva (katrina@tellus.lv) (Contact information - eyp@tellus.lv).

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 are altogether 50 registered political parties in Latvia, almost all political parties have their youth branch either as one of structural units or as other organization affiliated to party. However there is no information on actual number of young people being a member of political party or political youth organization. Approximate estimation can be made via participation research done previously – according to Flash Eurobarometer “Young Europeans” (2007) 8.5% are members of political parties, according to "Study on Youth Social and Political Activities in Latvia" (2007) 8.9% of young people (15% male and 6% female) are members of political parties or political youth organizations.

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

There are altogether 158 trade unions registered. [Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia](#) is the biggest trade union organisation in Latvia, which coordinates the cooperation between 21 independent Latvian trade unions, represents and protects the interests of its members in national and international institutions, implements a joint working programme. Due to the complex structure and lack of tradition there is no estimation of young people being members of trade unions. Approximate estimation can be

made via participation research done previously – according to Flash Eurobarometer “Young Europeans” (2007) 8.6% are members of trade unions.

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.

According to Youth Law youth organization in Latvia is an association registered in the Register of Associations and Foundations, which conforms to all of the following criteria:

- 1) one of the purposes of activity specified in the statutes of the association is youth work, the promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life;
- 2) at least two thirds of the members of the association are children and young people or also several associations, where in total at least two thirds of the members are children and young people; and
- 3) participation of young people is ensured in administrative institutions of the association, and the procedures for this participation are specified in the statutes of the respective association.

There is no information on actual number of young people being a member of youth organization. According to survey „Attitude towards participation in youth organizations” (2008) 10,5% of young people are participating actively in youth organizations (9,1% male and 12,0% female).

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

According to Youth Law section 12 youth organisations have the right to receive funding from the State budget, which is provided for projects with the objective to promote youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life, as well as projects for youth work. According to Youth policy state programme for year 2009 around 74499 LVL (aprox. 107969 euro) were planned to support youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life. Youth policy state programme is being carried out by Ministry Education and Science.

Other budget for youth participation support cannot be estimated because there is no estimation of municipal or regional support directly for youth participation or support via other state programmes beneficiaries of which are youth organizations.

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

According to Youth policy state programme for year 2009 around 29499 LVL (aprox. 42752 euro) were planned to support participation of young people with fewer opportunities that are under the risk of social exclusion – young drug addicts, young people in prisons, young people with disabilities, young people in country side, unemployed youngsters, etc. Additional funding is provided via other state programmes, as example through EU Social Foundation programmes.

5 The vote

5.1 Is voting obligatory?

No.

5.2 Age of the right to vote

People can vote when they has reached age of 18 years.

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

All citizens of Latvia aged 18 and over are entitled to vote in all types of elections (on national, regional and local level), except those who are certifiably insane.

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

To be elected in national parliament person must reach age of 21 and age of 18 to be elected in local government.

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 data available.

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

No data available.

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 data available.

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

No data available.

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 data available.

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

No data available.

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

On national level elections in year 2006 2 young men at age from 21 till 30 was elected.

On local government elections in year 2005 11% of all candidates were young people (18-30); altogether 219 young people were elected (5% of all members of local government). (No information in gender dimension available).

7. 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?

No specific state supported programmes of such kind exist. There are several individual programmes supported by political parties to support young politicians and growth of young leaders.

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 (citizens' education). Please also list related guidelines and teacher training programmes aiming at integrating citizens' education into the curriculum.

Within the formal education, curriculum in Civics includes understanding democratic participation. There are Social sciences in primary education and Politics and justice in secondary education putting attention towards issues of civic participation and democracy.

Education Development centre (EDU) represents Latvia in CIVITAS: International Civic Education Exchange Program. CIVITAS in Latvia disseminate the programs and teaching/learning materials developed by *US Department of Education Centre for Civic Education (CCE)* in civic education. This is a network program which involves countries throughout the world and provides leaders in civic education with the opportunities to learn from and assist each other in improving education for democracy in their countries. The program addresses full range of civic education activities from the development of educational policy, standards, curriculum frameworks and materials to teacher education, classroom implementation, research and evaluation.

CIVITAS project in 2007-8 is "Strengthening civic education and level of public participation in Latvia through the use of programs "Foundation of Democracy", Project 'Citizen' and "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution". The aim of the project is to promote professional awareness of the teachers and other civic educators about the importance of citizenship education and to develop their capacity to contribute to further development and strengthening of the democratic society and processes of integration in Latvia. Action project „Citizen”: The action project „Citizen” is a way of learning the world and a teaching/learning method with the help of which students of different age groups participate in researching and solving the problems of the local community. The EDC in cooperation with the International Civic Education Exchange program CIVITAS teaches the methods used in the project "Citizen" and provides consultations.

According to system of education schools themselves and teachers are responsible for further education and training, broadening knowledge in concrete spheres. There are several methodical associations and different teacher education structures where on project base knowledge in civic education is being increased. There are also private sector stakeholders providing training and seminars for teachers, as well as youth organizations working to foster non formal learning dimension in civic education process.

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.

There are several project based good initiatives to ensure youth participation on national or local level, therefore influencing policy processes. The National Youth Council of Latvia during year 2006 and 2007 carried out project called “TOP/ANTI Orator” during which 20 youngsters each year for two month were participating in Parliament and Cabinets meetings, listened speeches and observed news, blogged on e-diaries with their evaluation of what happens. Project received for two years high visibility in media and among politicians. Other example is Youth Cabinet of Ministers, project in year 2009 developed by the National Youth Council of Latvia, where each member of Cabinet of Ministers will have their youth minister, who will for 10 weeks act as ministers – meet with each minister, participate in Cabinets meetings, hold Youth Cabinet meetings, meet with responsible civil servants and participate in policy planning and development process.

Third good example is project called “Observed by Youth” organized by [NEXT](#), during year 2007 and 2008 in 26 municipalities young people participated in municipal policy making process, observing municipality and municipal institution work, youth dimension and EU dimension in municipal work. In year 2009 project continues with aim to promote participation of young people on local, national and European level. The project fosters young people’s and decision makers’ cooperation with each other and activities of the project aim to create a better understanding among youth about functions of municipalities and decision making process. During the project young people get to know their municipalities and its structures. Observers write their monthly reports, on-line blogs and explore decision making process of their municipalities. There are around 170 young people involved in the project from various municipalities of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

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

According to Youth policy guidelines for year 2009 – 2018 main tasks to support youth participation are:

- to ensure possibility for young people to participate in decision making process before decisions affecting young people life on national or municipal level are made, especially strengthening youth participation in the institutions;
- to promote youth organization development and youth participation in youth organizations;
- to support youth initiatives and social activities, pupils and students council work.

In each line of action according to guidelines there are particular priority groups, based on their specific needs and acknowledgment, that they will have to receive specifically tailored measures in order to succeed, therefore in context of Youth policy guidelines for years 2009 – 2018 priority groups of young people with fewer opportunities are:

- young people with disabilities and functional disorders;
- young people from disadvantageous and low income families;
- young people without basic education;
- young people from rural areas;
- young orphans or those without parental care;
- young parents and young families;
- unemployed young people;
- young people under policing and young criminals, young people in prisons and young people after imprisonment;
- young addicts;
- young people who suffered from violence;
- young people with chronic illness, including HIV/AIDS, C hepatitis and diabetes mellitus.

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

Participation in social and public activities as well as in political activities is on the one hand fragmented lacking structural system for participation on the other hand is quite developed in fields of social and public activities. According to "Study on Youth Social and Political Activities in Latvia" (2007) only 28% of young people don't participate in social and public activities, 36% are involved in improvement of surrounding environment, 21% involved in voluntary work, 20% are involved in youth advocacy activities, 15% in social activities for elder people, 13% helps young people and children in difficulties, 10% in integration activities. The same survey shows that young people participate less in political activities, accordingly 37% of young people don't participate in political activities. Main form of participation in political activities are discussions in close circle (35%), meetings with representatives of local government (17%), participation in elections (18%), participation in open discussions (10%) and participation in meetings and political demonstrations (7%).