

Editorial

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The *Perspectives on youth* series aims to function as a forum for information, discussion, reflection and dialogue on European developments in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work.

Following this principle, for the fourth issue of *Perspectives on youth*, we took a conscious decision to link the publication with the Symposium on Youth Participation in a Digitalised World, a major event of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, which took place at the European Youth Centre in Budapest from 14 to 16 September 2015. It was rather a deliberate choice to maximise the impact of the Symposium and the publication in order to give further life to discussions that started with the Symposium as a framework and to invite more people to reflect on the results.

The call for papers invited interested authors to submit proposals touching upon these axes and relate their arguments to one or more of the key messages of the Symposium. The questions we wanted to tackle were:

- ▶ What is the role and/or form of digital participation in the creation and implementation of a holistic participation agenda for active citizenship among youth?
- ▶ How can we work towards blended teaching and learning approaches based on participatory principles that incorporate new instruments and educational tools (for example digital tools)?
- ▶ How can the transition of young people to the labour market be supported for increased, better employment and democratic participation in the economy? What are the skills needed for future jobs? How can we support quality jobs and entrepreneurship initiatives in the digital era?
- ▶ What approaches, policy efforts or initiatives are taken or should be enhanced to empower and protect young people in the digital era?
- ▶ How can marginalised and excluded groups of young people be part of the digital era? How can digitalisation help societies become more inclusive regarding vulnerable groups? What challenges and barriers remain?
- ▶ What is the role of youth work and youth workers as “connectors” and mediators between digital resources, stakeholders and young people?

In attempting to answer the questions above, the authors of the following chapters contribute to building knowledge and/or raising further questions with regard to youth participation in a digitalised world. From different corners of Europe (and beyond) they share with us findings from research, practitioners’ experiences and policy recommendations.

mobilise, debate and advocate for change. The chapter also explores to what extent these initiatives have influenced policies and raises questions about the ethics of social media use and issues of trust.

For this issue, we invited two people who had a significant role in the Symposium to be part of the editorial team. Manfred Zentner and Adina Marina Călăfăteanu were part of the preparatory team and had written two of the analytical papers that provided knowledge of the Symposium's thematic areas. They reviewed some chapters and provided comments on how to improve them as well as how the conclusions of the Symposium resonated with them.

Adina Marina Călăfăteanu's contribution "Online communication tools leading to learning, identity and citizenship for digital natives" is based on the analytical paper she wrote for the Symposium's thematic area of communication. She approaches the topic by examining the role that identity, citizenship and learning play in shaping the preference of "digital natives" in using non-traditional communication tools and underlines that this needs to be taken into consideration when designing youth policies and engagement strategies for young people.

Going a step further in the discussion regarding education, learning and skills in a digitalised world, Nuala Connolly and Claire McGuinness, in their chapter "Towards digital literacy for the active participation and engagement of young people in a digitalised world", claim that the original digital divide of physical access to the internet has evolved into a skills divide. They describe the components of and need for meaningful digital literacy education and reflect on the situation around Europe in both formal and informal settings, while highlighting recommendations for policy and practice.

On the one hand, digital literacy allows one to express opinions, share ideas and quickly organise a large number of like-minded people. On the other hand, it carries the risk of online hate speech, bullying and other sorts of crime. We could not close this issue of *Perspectives on youth* without referring to the No Hate Speech Movement, a flagship campaign of the Council of Europe. Editorial team member Antonia Wulff reflects on the initial stages of the conception of the No Hate Speech Movement, which took place when she was still President of the Advisory Council for Youth (2009-11). The rise of the extreme right, hateful online spaces and discussions and the wish to challenge the view of young people as just victims while exploring new ways of working with and supporting them were the driving factors behind conceptualising the No Hate Speech Movement, endorsed by the Joint Council on Youth and officially launched by the Council of Europe in 2013. Menno Etemma, No Hate Speech Movement co-ordinator on behalf of the Council of Europe, provides a perspective on the campaign, how it relates to the core values and programmes of the Council of Europe, and how to get involved.

Besides Antonia's and Menno's perspectives, we wanted to see how the campaign has been experienced in different countries around Europe. Therefore we asked Manu Mainil from Belgium, Ivett Karvalits from Hungary, Anne Walsh from Ireland and Aleksandra Knežević from Serbia – all campaign co-ordinators in their respective countries – to answer questions on the campaign's importance, national outcomes and challenges in implementation.

All in all, the contributions in this issue of *Perspectives on youth* illustrate nicely how the digitalisation of contemporary European societies offers opportunities and poses considerable challenges. While, for example, digitalisation removes formal barriers in terms of time and space, it also increases the risk of self-exclusion and the further homogenisation of social networks. In this way digitalisation bears the potential to both reduce and reinforce existing social inequalities. Similarly, new media and digital techniques allow for different and more accessible forms of learning and participation and provide a stepping stone for those groups that have traditionally faced difficulties in finding opportunities to learn and participate. However, more pessimistic interpretations suggest that new media can contribute to personal isolation and prejudices, reinforcing disillusionment and culminating in a loss of social capital. More examples are offered in the following contributions, but the main message seems to be clear: technical innovations such as digitalisation trends are not intrinsically good or bad. It is what we do with them that really matters.

In conclusion, we want to recognise the important contribution of Hanjo Schild in the making of *Perspectives on youth*. Hanjo is leaving the Partnership as these words are being written. An enormous thank you goes to him for his engagement, dedication to youth causes, knowledge of the field and warm heart. Hanjo, you are one of a kind and will definitely be missed.