

FEEDBACK REGARDING EUYC RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a Culture of Participation At School

1) Member States should introduce and support a framework in educational institutions, such as students councils or other student initiatives that enable and ensure the engagement of students to take part in the decision-making of the school system. Other forms of civic engagements such as volunteering should also be recognised by the educational institutions in order to stimulate a culture of participation.

- There is an existing framework in Latvia for student councils in educational institutions that provide possibilities for young people (students) to get involved in social and cultural life as well as decision making of the educational institutions. Countries that have not yet established such frameworks are invited to do so.
- Existing student councils in education institutions should focus more towards political participation representing young people's *voice* in decision-making structures of educational institutions.
- In order to make existing framework more effective in terms of political participation, there should be support measures implemented - information and trainings for students, teachers and heads / management of educational institutions in order to raise awareness and create understanding about student councils as important tool for political participation. There are such measures implemented in Latvia and should be better coordinated and more intense.
- Existing legal framework in Latvia defines youth voluntary activities in "Youth Law" and voluntary activities in NGO sector in "Associations and Foundations Law". Since existing definitions are not fully corresponding to the needs of society and all involved actors common legal framework (law) for voluntary activities in Latvia has been drafted in order to promote voluntary activities and participation of the society.
- Voluntary activities generally are not recognised by educational institutions therefore often considered as disturbing element regarding study process.

2) Member States should further develop or include civic education in the curricula at all levels of formal education, bringing a local, national and European perspective. Formal education providers must include non-formal learning methodologies to encourage critical thinking and enable young people from all backgrounds to develop attitudes and values to participate actively in the society. CULT Committee is invited to advance the civic education discussion in the European Parliament.

- Students' results in field of the civic education in Latvia are reported to be under EU average and have decreased during the last decade, therefore civic education of young people is considered as an important issue.
- Understanding and knowledge about non-formal education and its methods among teachers in formal education system should be considered as the main key for successful implementation of the recommendation. Also students of pedagogy should be introduced with non-formal education and its methods during their studies.

- Ministry of Education and Science is currently working on developing legal framework of non-formal education in the youth field as well as rising understanding about non-formal education among different stakeholders and actors.
- Ministry of Education and Science is considered the main actor to integrate non-formal education methodologies in school programmes and provide support system for teachers to develop understanding and knowledge of non-formal education and its methods.

Involving young people in political decision-making

1) In order to further involve young people in democratic life, Member States and local authorities are invited to implement pilot programmes starting at local level, where voting age is lowered to 16, accompanied by the adequate preparation, including quality civic education.

- Provision of quality civic education for young people is considered a base for further discussions regarding lowering the voting age. School teachers should additional training and support for implementing quality civic education in schools.
- There should be surveys on national level carried out before considering lowering of the voting age. The experience from countries that have lowered voting age to 16 years already also should be analysed in details in order to consider implementation of such pilot programmes on municipal level.

2) By implementing transparent, sustainable and collaborative structures and providing financial support, authorities on the local, regional and national levels should ensure full participation of youth NGOs in decision making processes of the policies that affect young people.

- Local municipalities point out that there is very little number and sometimes even none youth NGOs to involve in decision making on local level. Challenge is also communication and coordination with youth NGOs.
- Youth NGOs on national level has a possibility to join the process of cooperation memorandum between Latvian government and NGO sector. The memorandum sets the frame and formats for political participation of NGOs.
- “Policies that affect young people” should be defined in order to specify in which cases youth NGOs should be involved in the decision making process.
- Decision makers invite to avoid creation of new structures; implementation of this recommendation should be carried out in exiting structural framework.

Enhancing policy makers’ engagement and commitment with young people

1) European Commission and Member States should put in place a framework to engage policy makers, providing them with all the necessary tools to involve young people and youth organizations in developing, implementing and evaluating the policies that affect them through shared decision-making.

- Decision makers point out that there are existing frameworks for decision-making institutions to consult society (including young people and youth NGOs). These frameworks can be used to

involve young people and youth NGOs in decision making (e.g. public hearings, working groups, advisory councils etc.).

- It is crucial to develop cooperation between schools, youth centres and youth NGOs for successful implementation of the recommendation.
- Quality civic education and understanding of importance of political participation of young people mentioned in previous recommendations is seen as one of the key elements for getting youth and youth NGOs involved in decision making.
- “Policies that affect young people” should be defined in order to specify in which cases young people should be involved.

2) Policy makers on all levels, should continuously perform an open political culture of communication using multiple youth targeted methods in order to increase transparency and accountability of the policymaking process.

- Decision makers should be informed, educated and motivated to use “youth friendly” methods of communication in order to compliment their existing knowledge and use of traditional methods. Understanding of decision makers of youth field and youth work should be raised as well.
- Communication in both directions, feedback and “face to face” communication is considered as important elements regarding this recommendation.

Strengthening the role of youth work for political empowerment of all young people

1) The crucial role of youth work for fostering a political participation which is based on the values of diversity, human rights, democracy and on critical thinking, should be strengthened and socially and politically recognized by the European Commission and Member States. Therefore, youth work should be provided with the necessary resources, support structures and formal recognition.

- Youth policy and youth work should be promoted in wider society in order to raise understanding, awareness and recognition. All involved actors and stakeholders are responsible for this process.
- More efforts should be made to get from discussions to implementation and reality. Youth work often lacks necessary equipment on to fulfil its tasks local level.

2) EU institutions and Member States are encouraged to put up cross-sectorial initiatives and long-term partnerships at all levels with youth workers and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of transferring knowledge and developing political participation competencies of all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

- Establishment and / or strengthen advisory councils on youth issues on municipal level is seen as one of the tools to implement this recommendation.
- Implementation of “Youth guarantee” scheme on municipal level in Latvia involving variety of actors from different sectors is considered to be good practice that should be applied in other fields.

Developing youth friendly tools for political participation



1) To ensure access of young people to information and opportunities to experience online tools for political participation, Member States should ensure that trainings on the existence of such tools are provided for teachers and other professionals working with young people.

- Teachers and other professionals (youth workers, municipal civil servants etc.) should be also provided with necessary technical equipment. Also the understanding and knowledge of political participation should be promoted among teachers and other professionals.

2) Private and public organisations should involve young people in the development, implementation and monitoring of online tools for youth political participation. To ensure recognition of young people's participation and sustain their involvement in political processes, online tools should be complemented by offline methods and have a follow-up phase in which decision-makers reflect on how young people's contributions were taken into account.

- There is a need of creating new online tools (especially for municipal level) with full involvement and participation of young people. These new tools should be synchronised and support existing offline methods for youth political participation.
- Existing online tools should be efficiently promoted since the knowledge of such tools among young people and policy makers is low.

Developing local and direct democracy

1) Member States and youth organisations should acknowledge and make better use of alternative forms of young people's political engagement (e.g. arts, sports) aiming to enrich the debate and decision-making processes.

- Difference in forms of young peoples' political participation is seen as a great way to involve larger number and wider variety of young people with different backgrounds. Forms should be "youth friendly" and should be promoted in the right way in order to achieve young peoples' involvement. It is important to provide necessary financial resources for implementation of this recommendation.

2) Member States, local or regional authorities should encourage the establishment and the strengthening of local and regional youth councils or other equivalent youth platforms that should be open, inclusive and sustainable in order to enable young people from all backgrounds to participate and be involved in decision-making processes in accordance with the Revised European Charter on the Participation of young people in local and regional life (Congress of Local & Regional Authorities, Council of Europe).

- There should be support system including methodological and financial support for creation / strengthen youth councils on regional or local level. Although youth council exist in many municipalities, the main challenge is ensuring quality and impact of political participation.

Increasing synergies and cooperation between different actors

1) In order to involve young people in political processes and to enable easy and sustainable collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, the EU institutions and Member States should develop or improve coordinated cross-sectorial communication at all levels.

- There is no clear answer regarding responsible coordinating body on national and local level for cross-sectorial cooperation in the youth field as well as provision of necessary resources for this coordination functions.

- Involved stakeholders should be provided with information and knowledge about existence and functions of other stakeholders. Communication and information exchange is crucial for successful cross-sectorial cooperation. Existing communication between stakeholders is not sufficient.

2) We call on the European Commission to set the ground for a progressive implementation of a youth impact assessment of all EU policies. This should involve all relevant stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of policies affecting young people's lives, thus increasing the attractiveness of political participation for young people.

- Youth impact assessment on policies should be done also on local level in order to improve implementation of youth policy.