
REPORT FORM

Trio Presidency: Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg Consultation on youth empowerment for political participation

DEADLINE: Sunday March 1st 2015

Please find below the form allowing your National Working Group or International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation, to carry out and communication the results of the consultation to the European Steering Committee. The input you will provide through this form will serve as a common base for the discussions at EU level.

We want to remind you that NWGs are encouraged to use the Online Participation Platform (OPP) to carry out the consultation, with wider access to young people. The questions are being inserted in the platform. If you wish to use the OPP, please contact Graeme Robertson (Graeme.ROBERTSON@ec.europa.eu)

In order to allow the European Steering Committee to integrate the results of the consultations in preparation for the EU Youth Conference in Latvia, we kindly ask you to please send this report form filled in to the European Steering Committee (**mail to:** lucille.rieux@youthforum.org) **and to your national government by Sunday 1st of March 2015**

The European Steering Committee kindly asks you to **fill out this form in English and return it in typed format (not as a PDF file, please).**

Technical details of the consultation:

Please provide the requested information on your National Working Group or INGYO:

Details of the contact persons:	
Name	Aur�lie Vanossel
E-mail address	Aurelie.vanossel@cfwb.be
Institution	Belgian French speaking Youth Council
Position	International officer
EU Member State (if appropriate)	Belgium
Members of the National Working Group (number and names)	

Youth Organisations	Youth Council : Aurélie Vanossel	
National Authorities (please specify if Ministry for Youth and/or representatives from other Ministries)	Youth administration : Isabelle Devriendt	
National Agencies	Bureau de la Jeunesse: Stéphanie Novakowski	
Others (please specify)		
Level of the consultation (international, national, regional, local). Please, describe briefly for each level, how the consultations were carried out and which methodologies were used.		
Local	We did face to face consultation in the 5 regions of our federation in order to meet young people where they are, on their daily realities	
Regional	Idem	
National	We conduct a broad online consultation through a survey monkey that we spread by e-mail to our contacts and through social medias	
International (for international youth NGOs)	/	
Target group consulted	Specify the methodology of the consultation	Number of people
Young people (non associated)	Online consultation + face to face trough a debates conducted by young ambassadors based on the online consultation	84 + 20
Young people represented by youth organisations	Online consultation + face to face trough a debates	61+26
Experts (e.g. NWG, youth researches, youth workers, employment agencies, social services, etc.). Please specify.	youth workers were presented during the NWG preparation to support our activities	5

Public authorities in the field of youth or in social affairs and welfare or others. Please specify.	Youth administration Will be done during the 3 rd phase	1
Good practices from the consultation	Debates- face to face consultation lead by young people, represented by the team of young ambassadors Good vulgarization of the 5 guiding questions for the online consultation by the young ambassadors in order to make it more genuine to Belgian youth realities	
Do you have any suggestions / comments on the current process?	Difficulties to engage into the process young people who are not into an associations and not at school Difficulties to bridge the gap between EU and local policies sometimes, especially regarding the broad concept of “youth empowerment and political participation”	
How would you improve the working methods and decision-making process in the EU Youth Conference ¹	For the 3 rd phase, have a public debate with policy makers, Evaluation the low rate of participation for non organized youth, develop attractive methods and increase the communication	

¹ The ESC is gathering input on this issue, as mentioned in the [Council Resolution on the overview of the structured dialogue process including social inclusion of young people](#), of April 30th 2014

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Structured Dialogue on Youth Youth Empowerment for political participation

The Trio Presidency – Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg – together with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum have agreed on “youth empowerment for political participation” as the overarching theme for the 18 months from July 2014 to December 2015.

Building on the Council Resolution of 20 May 2014, on the overview of the structured dialogue process including the social inclusion of young people, that endorsed a simplified architecture for the conduct of the structured dialogue, youth representatives and representatives of national authorities have worked together in Rome, for the elaboration of a guiding framework. The latter sets the basis for common understanding on the overall theme.

The questions below are based on the challenges outlined in the Guiding Framework and aim to find solutions, good practices, preventative measures, and innovative ideas on empowering young people for political participation.

Genuine youth political participation exists when young people form an integral part of political decision-making processes at all levels as equal stakeholders. As few participatory structures are available at the local level, that is closest to young people, this does not facilitate their involvement in bottom-up approaches.

There are formal barriers to youth political participation at all levels, such as the lack of transparency, age-related limitations and eligibility criteria to stand for election. Other barriers derive from a lack of citizenship education, low levels of confidence in the democratic process, and a lack of young people's priorities being reflected in mainstream politics. In addition, politicians and political institutions often lack the capability and willingness to engage with young people in political processes.

In the absence of legal frameworks, youth engagement often occurs through consultations, where young people are rarely an equal partner in the process and often do not see the impact of their inputs reflected in the outcomes of the political process. This is reflected in a growing lack of trust and interest in politics, including traditional means of participation, as illustrated by the low turn-out of young people in the electoral process and the lack of young candidates for political office.

When formulating policies affecting the lives of young people, many political actors, including institutions, decision and policy makers, do not consider young people nor youth organisations as relevant contributors, thus denying their ability to have an impact. Traditional means of political participation often lack transparency and the accountability of decision makers to young people. Such means also lack the flexibility and modern tools and techniques to meet the needs of young people.

The opportunity to experience political participation and be decision makers in their own environment from an early age is crucial for young people to become active citizens.

Comprehensive formal education towards political participation does not exist in all Member States and barriers to full accessibility and participation of all young people in non-formal education persist. Citizenship education often does not combine formal and non-formal education and thus the methodology is not always adapted to the needs of young people.

A perceived lack of motivation of educators and students/pupils along with a lack of participatory culture within educational establishments results in less political participation. Insufficient involvement and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders is a further challenge.

Informing and engaging with all young people is important to ensure and strengthen democratic processes, and to bridge the gap between young people and decision-makers. Young people are not a homogenous group, which leads to challenges for youth organisations, educators, media, political bodies and other stakeholders to inform and engage individual young people in a meaningful way, and avoid accusations of “tokenism”. Involving and representing young people with fewer opportunities in political processes remains a problem, including for youth organisations.

Financial and other resources are often insufficient to enable the effective empowerment in political participation of young people from all parts of society.

Based on this framework, these are the guiding questions:

1. **What should be done to stimulate a culture of political participation in all aspects of education? (max 500 words)**

Young people acknowledge the fact that news methods more attractive should be developed to enhance youth participation. The main one is through meetings and discussions between young people and politicians, following by more actions at a school; but also to develop local consultations on precise issues.

In order for young people to be more included in all decisions and foster a general perspective in the society that youth matter, a certain number of seats could be reserved on local level for young people, or a certain amount of young people should be found on election list.

Youth are in favor of a formation to citizenship on a practical actions combine with civic education at school, mainly directed to information where action should be done on another scheme that at school.

A lot of youth think that it will be necessary to establish a civic education class. Nevertheless, some young people consider that it is not the role of the UE to legislate on the content of this type of class. This competence belongs to each member state. The main goal of this class is to inform young people on the politics of their proper country. By the way, school plays a huge role to instill critical mind of the young people.

According to young people, the European Union and the member states are complementary. They must collaborate. The European Union communicates in global terms instead of young people who need fast and tangible results. They need to feel the impact of their participation. The advantage of the local associations is that they touch every kind of public, with a specific attention for vulnerable youth and youth with a handicap.

In addition, more tools have to be developed to engage young people to act at all the stages of

education. But it is not only from young people to participate more, but from the all society to recognize the importance and the added value to have more young people on board when taking decisions.

2. What should be done to increase trust and understanding between young people and decision-makers, empowering both to better work with each other? (max 500 words)

The results of the online survey showed that young people seems to trust in the politicians but argue for more dialogue and not only during election times.

Through the face to face consultations with young people, the principal proposition was to establish a better dialogue between decision-makers and youth. However, some principles should be respected.

First, young people ideas and politicians opinions should be treated as equal. It is not because they are younger that they cannot have good advice and ideas. Young people should have more self confidence and assume their choices and opinions to adults.

Second, young people need tools to be more competent and pertinent. The solutions proposed by young people are mainly to develop citizenship education lessons. It can be a good way to be more informed and responsabilized. Moreover, school is the place where we stay a long time of our lives. During twelve years, pupils have much time to follow a long process of learning. Nevertheless, we have to be vigilant to create neutral lessons. Teachers should be chosen carefully to not influence young people on a specific way. The purpose is developing critical mind of young people, not to form robots.

Third and finally, the listening of young people should be real. Some youngsters we have interviewed criticize the clientelism approach. Approaching elections, some politicians make promises they never keep. Youth need real help, real listening, real promises... It should not be a simple consultation never heard but a real dialogue where youth's ideas are taken into account!

School is a good place to develop this dialogue. It can be a good medium to make meetings between young people and politicians or between young people only. Indeed, young people can discuss together to think better and wiser. Thereby, they will be prepared to make a better dialogue with institutions. Institutions? A second idea is to create specific institutions, as Parliament, but where only young people can sit. By this way, we remove intermediates: young people and adults are equal, and their opinions count as much as the other. In this measure Youth councils play a big role and need more support.

In conclusion, we can see that the dialogue between politicians and young people need more respect. Young people should sometimes put more trust in politicians, and decision-makers should believe in the capability of youth. The ways we can establish good conversations and joint politics are multiple and numerous. Politicians and young people should choose it together.

3. How should young people and youth organisations be fully involved in shaping policies together with decision-makers? (max 500 words)

Only 45% of the youth consulted answered that their engagement into their Youth Organizations (YO) leads them to be often or very often be interested to other YO. For some, it is not the role of a YO to develop youth political participation.

Young people have also to mobilize to raise their opportunities in term of cultural and sports offer. Youth organization allows young people to be more autonomous and creative; this can have a real good impact of shaping new policies. Through youth organizations, youth learn to act and not only to act the decisions taken by others.

Despite of the number of youth organizations, political information goes rarely to them and they are rarely consulted. The current structures make young people too passive, it would be necessary to give more responsibilities to them.

Media have an important role in giving to young people the opportunity to be more active and more participative. Youth organization allows young people to be heard, be part of a group and act together.

It is necessary to bridge the principles of responsibility and solidarity which are too often in opposition in the political discourses. In youth organizations, those two principles are often in the center of the activities, and should therefore be more recognized.

4. How can **youth work** empower young people for political participation? (max 500 words)

According to our online consultation, youth are usually in favor of either informative session or debates into youth organization, but also by developing projects where youth are in the center. For them, school should prioritize on giving information, where citizenship can be lived outside the school. Therefore, Youth work plays an important role on youth participation.

Nevertheless, for some youth, youth work should not have the vocation to only focus on political participation. On the Belgian French community most of youth organizations are entitled by decree to develop young people active, responsible, critic, with a sense of solidarity.

Nevertheless, some youth react that some the convivial aspect of youth work may overshadow the seriousness devoted to political participation. Some organisations devoted to political participation are then more useful for youth taking into account, even if some political games are made.

Even though, the values learn in youth work environment are very useful, being "resourceful". They also allow young people to integrate themselves more easily. In those associations, we can also speak on a more relax way (and then true) some topics, where they can be more sensitive at school or at a political level.

In addition, the youth underlined the fact that the cultural and social mix found in youth work can really be fruitful to all the exchanges done in that context. Nevertheless, they said that they cannot do the job of representatives or political youth organisations neither can influence as those nor develop the same political dialogue. But both can be complementary.

Youth involved in Youth Work stressed the intergenerational approach as an added value to be empowered.

5. How should young people from all backgrounds be **informed, empowered, and engaged** to take part in political and democratic processes, and how should new **and alternative technologies** and tools be used for this? (max 500 words)

We should develop formation mainly through *formal education* (from the earliest age) and the role of the parents. The key message regarding information and fostering participation is: information at school

and active citizenship with various organisations. Young people feel that at school that are taught to be sitting on a chair not to be active or critical citizens. Too often they only know what they know thanks to the school or the family. Even though the school carries a heavy burden; the awakening critic should be at the centre.

Solutions could be found thanks to the formal education, where *all* young people will attend. They also insisted that therefore a strong refinancing of the education should be made. Usually young people that do not understand will not participate.

Regarding the education, a solution can also be to facilitate the access to information's, not only through newspaper but all the Medias. Television should be more informative and less leisure oriented. The Medias should also help young people to broaden their scope of information, not always in the same line.

Another solution could be to strengthen youth organizations and the civil society in general. But it is usually already well aware young people that will be more. What about other youths or NEET'S?

In addition, the culture is also a key of citizen actions.

The level of engagement can also be a factor, acting locally but think globally.

Regarding the new technologies, Internet is definitely a source of information and the best tools (according to our online survey) to participate or to give their opinions. But for some young people it depends how they are use and by whom. Some young people use it more for leisure time rather than to participate. Once again vulnerability or education can come on the line and can exclude those who do not participate. Therefore education through the school or the parents is important to give more information about how to use those tools. Consequently, internet is a great tool to get information's but they are sometimes wrong. The amount of information on internet and on social networks can also be a barrier to participate properly. Regarding this amount of information, it is hard to feel concerned and therefore participate. You can reach more young people on line but not really engaged them.

When it comes to debating on internet, some ideologies can be spread to easily on the web when on the real life you can more confront and argue. Good debates are hard to find on the web, face to face debates remain a must to be heard. Indeed it is difficult to express yourself correctly on Twitter or Facebook. It's also too volatile; you might lose the all pictures or some background information.

Nevertheless, you can also find a lot of exchanges on the web but the limits and weaknesses remain, especially to influence the political decisions. The solution should be to enhance the critical mind regarding this tool.