

Involving youth in the decision making processes



DAY 1

First project day was constituted of two segments: arrival of participants and official opening of the training course. On the official opening project coordinator addressed the participants same time introducing the project itself. Also the president of Youth Council Prilep and trainers of the event addressed the participants introducing the project, its methodology, content and purpose. At the end of the official opening review of the working agenda has made.



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Introduction

This publication has resulted from international training course "Involving youth in the decision making process", held from 27 June 2 July 2009 in Ohrid TFYROMacedonia. The project was

supported by the Council of Europe - European Youth Foundation (EYF), Agency for youth and sport and by the Municipality of Prilep. On the event 27 youth workers from 8 countries of the SEE region participated. One of the outcomes of the training is this publication. It is comprised of overview of hall work during the training and concrete recommendations from the workshops for enhancing youth participation on local and regional level.

Main aim of this six day event was to exchange knowledge, experience and good practices in order to create efficient models and recommendations that will motivate and strengthen youth participation in the decision making processes in particular and in the democratic and social life on local, regional and national life in the SEE countries in general.

The event tend to strengthen the capacities of the youth organizations acting on local and regional level and creation of sustainable partnerships on international level, exchange of good practices and knowledge, support of non-formal learning, creation of solid ground for follow up of the project and long term influence of the project results and outcomes.

Through this event especially in the part of non formal learning participants gained the opportunity to upgrade their personal and organizational capacities and act in future as multipliers of the knowledge and be also key players in the process of motivation and development of the youth participation in their countries.

Main themes during the training were: European charter and local youth policies; Models of cooperation; Advocacy, lobbying and networking and educational sessions from the manual "All different all equal". Participants using diverse methodologies identified the obstacles for effective youth participation and made recommendations in which way youth participation should be supported such as: constant and qualitative information for the opportunities for participation along with its benefits, qualitative formal and non-formal education, sustainable motivation and creation of appropriate legislative that will guarantee and regulate youth participation.

At the end of the training participants discussed about the possibilities to create follow up of the training in order to enable the possibility to treat the themes and problems of youth participation more essential.

We believe that this document will contribute towards implementation of youth policy processes using different models of youth participation in the decision making process.

The project team

Preparatory meeting

As important part of the project crucial for immaculate organization of the main event, preparatory meeting was organized in Skopje in the period 7-8 May 2009. On the meeting participated 7 representatives, leaders of partner organizations. Main aim of this meeting was to define training activity agenda, working materials, evaluation criteria, and to check accommodation, safety of participants and all technical aspects.

Main event

Youth Council Prilep in the period of 27 June - 02 July in Ohrid, implemented the international training course "Involving youth in the decision making processes". The project has received financial support by the Council of Europe European - Youth Foundation (EYF), Agency for youth and sport and by the Municipality of Prilep. On this event 27 youth workers from 8 countries of the SEE region participated.

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Beside the working part participants had Ohrid sightseeing where they had the possibility to met part of the culture and history, beautiful nature and they were also part of many different social events enabling them to get know to each other and share cultures and values.

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Aims and objectives

Project aim was to increase knowledge and skills of youth for their active participation in local and regional life in the SEE countries.

Objectives of the training were to:

- To strengthen the capacities of youth organizations at local and national level
- To enhance knowledge and skills of the participants for youth participation
- To enhance and encourage the non-formal learning
- To build partnerships between youth organization on international level
- To create ground for follow-up and long term influence of the impacts of the project

O B J E C T I V E S

Involving youth in the decision making processes

Implementation of the training course



DAY 2

Working groups 1

Definition of youth and Youth participation

After short presentation by the trainer about youth and youth participation, its identification as benefit for the community participants were divided to work in three working groups in order to define: how community identifies youth, who are the young people we work with and what do our organizations want to achieve in the area of youth participation and what are the benefits of the youth participation for the youth itself.

Findings How community defines youth

- Youth is category of people aged between 15-30 years old
- Youth is mostly recognized as a category of potential voters instead of important human resource full of creativity, ideas and energy that can provide certain services, enrich cultural life and bring social and economic benefits to the community

Who are the young people we work

- high school/ university students
- marginalized groups
- children with physical/mental disabilities
- minorities
- unemployed/employed youth

- minorities
- unemployed/employed youth
- children of the street and youth at risk

What do our organizations want to achieve in the area of youth

- involve and promote youth as equal partner in decision making processes
- improve social conditions for young people
- fight discrimination and encourage equality and human rights
- inform youth of the possibilities to be engaged in every day social and democratic life
- raise down prejudices' and barriers for youth

*Benefits
Being involved in social and democratic life, into decision making processes enable*

- intercultural dialogue and active citizenship
- be recognized as equal partner in the that can influence processes of decision making in particular and democratic and social life in general
- gain and improve social, communication and professional skills
- travel
- be informed

Conclusion

Youth is category of people aged 15-30 years old from different cultures, skin color, ethnicities, social backgrounds that need to be recognized as important human resource in the community that with its creativity, approach and capacity can be equal partner and contributor in the decision making processes in particular

and democratic and social life in general. Participation for youth is not just about voting or standing for elections. Participation and active citizenship for youth is having the right, the means, the space and opportunities to participate and influence decisions and be engaged in action and opportunities through whom youth will contribute in the process of building better society.

Working groups 2

How to support youth involvement?

Participants were divided in 3 working groups with task to define how community and non-governmental sector can support youth involvement.

Conclusion

In order to engage and support youth in the decision making processes and everyday life we must provide:

- quality on-time information through youth info points, youth media, public campaigns, publications about possibilities they can be involved
- quality formal and non-formal education in shape of camps for volunteers, trainings for trainers, seminars for youth and adults, creativity courses etc.
- create favorable legislative environment for active participation
- promote pro-active attitude and open dialogue between stakeholders
- raise self awareness and active person self initiative
- ensure sustainable motivation

DAY 3

Working groups

What I/my organization can do to involve Youth in the decision making processes?

This session was used to recognize and define best practices about how to involve youth in everyday life especially in decision making. Participants worked in 3 small groups in period of 30 min and after each of the groups resented and elaborate their recommendations.

Findings

Group 1

- meet with decision makers
- organize lobby campaigns
- create local councils
- create youth advisory boards
- involve youth in project management/building projects together

Group 2

- educate and inform (provide appropriate workshops, trainings, seminars, summer camps, festivals, happenings)
- lobby for the youth
- cooperate with the media

- encourage youth to get involved
- cooperate with relevant stakeholders (especially with authorities already involved in decision making)
- cooperate with educational institutions and work on personal and group self-development
- cooperate with parents

Group 3

- empower potential youth leaders/young people with visions and ideas
- counseling
- lobbying, making government sensitive for youth needs
- train NGO's how to involve youth on every possible level
- establish regular connection between NGO's and formal institutions
- internal definition of youth problems within NGO's (creation of strategic plans)

Conclusion

Main conclusion of this session is that not only authorities and government are responsible for youth involvement and engagement, but also NGO sector share the same responsibility being contributor in these processes. Instead of sharing critics to each other and transfer responsibilities, authorities and NGO sector should cooperate on every level and encourage youth to be more active. From NGO perspective we should educate and inform young people, lobby for their needs and requirements, create youth bodies that will represent the youth and especially work on youth personal and professional self-development.

Building young people capacities means they can be more easily recognized as important factor in the processes of decision making.

Ohrid sightseeing

After the session during work day 3, participants went to sightseeing around Ohrid. Lead by tourist guide the visited most important and beautiful monuments in Ohrid such as: Old part of Ohrid, Samoil fortress, Antic theater, Church St. Jovan Kaneo, Church St. Kliment Ohridski(Plaosnik), Ohrid old bazaar and many other interesting places.



DAY 4

Participants met the European Charter of youth participation on local and regional live, the charter in practice, its influence and they discussed about three models of participation: cooperation, co-management and committee model.

At the beginning participants meet the European Charter learning the basics and the influence it makes.

Working groups 4

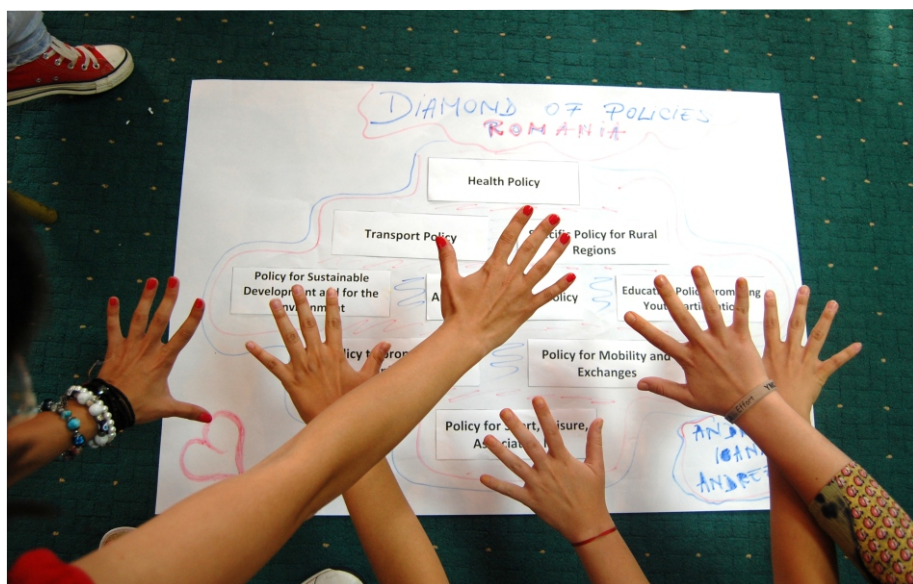
Participants were divided in teams by country with task to present current situation with the aforementioned models: cooperation, co management and committee mode.l. This was made to make a difference between current situations in the youth field in each of the countries and to show what are the best practices and best results. Each of the teams made presentation.



Presentation

*Local youth policy
strategic
communication and
identification of
current situation*

This presentation was used to give directions and recommendations about how to communicate with the authorities relevant for youth participation, how to approach and properly behave. In this manner after the presentation there was a simulation exercise where participants were divided into groups where half of the group have role to represent the youth and NGO's and the rest took the role of authorities or government. Main aim was to exercise the approach to the authorities and practice the best way "to sell our story".



DAY 5

Working groups 5

Obstacles for implementation of the Youth policies

Participants used this session to present what are the obstacles the youth policy and its implementation is facing in their countries. Obstacles were presented from 3 different angles of view:

- obstacles for youth
- obstacles for authorities
- obstacles for NGO's

After each country presented the current situation conclusion was made that most common and serious obstacles for implementation of the youth policies are:

Youth perspective:

lack of information, lack of appropriate training and education, lack of interest and motivation, afraid of social judgment, unknown principal of volunteering, bad standard of life, finance, lack of family support, commodity, indifference and not understanding the benefits.

Authorities:

lack of strategy on all levels, bad communication with other stakeholders, stereotypes/prejudices, bad law strategy, too small benefits, lack of specific structure for youth, lack of vision and openness, bureaucracy, no transparency, lack of trust in youth capacities.

NGO's:

lack of capacities, lack of support from the population and from the government, no funds for structure constant programmes, sometimes NGO's are not inclusive and open for young people who like be involved, bad internal policy, aggressive approach to youth and seeing youth as a resource.

Conclusion:

Best way to improve current situation of youth involvement is to develop constant and qualitative communication and dialogue between all relevant stakeholders, to build each personal and professional capacities that will provide youth to gain better and on-time information, necessary capacities that will be recognized and accepted by the society.

Evaluation of the event

At the end evaluation session was realized where all the participants filled in evaluation forms prepared by the organization team according to the requirements and standards of EYF and Youth Council Prilep.

Conclusion and closing session of the training course

At the end of the day last session was used for official closing of the event. During this session participants gave their point of view on the entire event, on its technical and organizational aspects and the entire atmosphere living and working in multicultural environment. At the end of the session president of YSP and project manager addressed the participants, thanking for their participation and involvement with sincere intentions to make more events like this one in order to upgrade personal and organizational capacities and act as successful multipliers of gained knowledge so far.

Next steps

Considering next steps, common conclusion is that only one event like this one is far from sufficient to treat this issues, because with this training e just scratch the surface of youth involvement. Common recommendation of the participants is to create follow up of this project in order to work on the subjects more systematically and in details, because success depends of our level of knowledge and our capacities to act as multipliers and co-creators of good youth policies. In accordance to aforementioned recommendations it is agreed to create and submit project proposal, follow up of this already implemented training course.



Agency for youth and sport

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The points of view contained in this publication are opinions of authors and do not necessary reflect the official opinion on the European Youth Foundation, Agency for youth and sport and by the Municipality of Prilep.