

GOOD PRACTICE IN THE YOUTH FIELD

Encouraging the participation of young people with fewer opportunities



Young people's participation in education, employment and society is affected by poverty, social marginalisation, discrimination and poor health. Europe has a genuine interest for both economic and social reasons to ensure that no child and young person is excluded.
Commission's Communication – 05/09/07

Overall, conditions for young people in the European Union today are good: freedom and security, prosperity, longer life expectancy. But regrettably, many inequalities still exist. Almost 20% of young people below 18 live below the poverty level. Due to insufficient qualifications, a quarter of all young people find only a tentative foothold in the labour market. Youth unemployment stands at 17.4%.

Unfortunately, disadvantages are also cumulative. With lower socio-economic status and levels of education come higher incidences of mental and physical health problems. Social exclusion of young people has to be tackled.

This is not to say that there are no solutions: the purpose of good practice exchanges is to bring some of these solutions to the fore.

In 2007-2008, a peer-learning exercise - the first experience of this kind in the youth field - has thus been dedicated to the participation in public life of young people with fewer opportunities. Governmental and non-governmental experts from the 27 Member States have presented pilot experiences or successful projects implemented on the topic in their countries. Conditions for good practices and political messages on the specific issue were identified.

On 3-4 March 2008, a conference targeted at civil society enriched the outcomes of the peer-learning exercise. Focusing on the most socio-economically deprived young people, this conference aimed at reflecting on how to encourage their participation.

On 18-19 April, the debate at the Youth Event convened by the Slovene Presidency also fuelled the results.

An overview of these good practices and of the discussions' conclusions is presented below.



Which messages to convey to project implementers?

1

Empowering by involving

To gain their trust and to really meet their needs, it is necessary to involve young people with fewer opportunities in the design, the implementation and the assessment of the action. Young people with fewer opportunities should be listened to, even if building up a close relationship with them can be challenging at times. A real partnership can be achieved through dialogue.

Tailored actions at local level, realised by and with the young people in their immediate surroundings and based on identified needs have very good chances of succeeding.

2

Mentoring rather than assisting

For young people with fewer opportunities participation is difficult. For that reason, they need the mentoring of trained youth workers who can help them to acquire the necessary skills to become autonomous.

Cross-sectoral coordination between all stakeholders to simplify administrative burdens is indispensable, when it comes to facilitating their participation.

To establish a connection with socio-economically deprived young people from ethnic minorities or with a migrant background, it is necessary to build trust-based relationships with members of their communities who can act as links.

Good practice in Slovenia

In Slovenia, tensions between Roma and non Roma communities are mostly based on preconceived ideas. With the support of the Slovenian Youth Ministry and of the Youth in Action programme, two NGOs, Society of Allies for Soft Landing-DZMP in Krsko (Slovenia) and Primi Piani, in Trieste (Italy) involved 6 Roma and 6 non-Roma youngsters in the design and the shooting of 15 short documentaries on the life of young people from the Roma minority. Through active participation, peer-education and with the help of skilled mentors, they had gained basic knowledge of video production. The films were broadcast on public TV channels in Slovenia and in other European countries.



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4 Inclusion instead of stigmatisation

Young people with fewer opportunities should be given a chance to participate in all programmes or actions for young people.

To this end, they need understandable information outlining what they can expect from their participation, training to acquire the necessary skills to participate, and ongoing support, for example through youth workers or specially trained staff members.

Specific financial and human resources should be made available to all programmes and projects for this purpose.

Good practice in Greece

The General Secretary for Youth, in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralisation, decided to create Local Youth Councils in order to enable all young people to become active citizens. To reach young people, a huge information campaign was organised by the General Secretary for Youth, involving information events at national level and meetings at local level throughout the country. Information brochures were printed and distributed in all municipalities. Media was also involved - articles were placed in newspapers, and local, regional and national TV and radio broadcast interviews and discussions on the new institution. In June 2007 local registers of young members between 15 and 28 years of age were set up. The first Local Youth Council elections will take place in 2008.

Good practice in France

The Seine-Saint-Denis area is a very difficult area with a high proportion of young people, many of whom are unemployed and/or living in poverty.

To have really representative Local and Departmental Youth Councils, it was decided to mobilize all young people for the Council elections. First of all, young people and local bodies dealing with youths actively participated in all steps of the process. Secondly, the representatives of the municipalities held meetings with young people in their local communities and engaged in a meaningful dialogue with them. To encourage participation and avoid stigmatisation, both the meetings, and the elections themselves, were often combined with music or sporting activities open to all young people, not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Good practice in Italy

Five municipalities have delegated youth policies to the youth policies service of the "Unione Terre di Castelli", which decided to involve youth, particularly those with fewer opportunities, as well as youth groups and NGOs, in the shaping of activities for young people. This resulted in the creation of a youth advisory body (Consulta Giovanile) to make the voices of young people heard by local decision makers. Consulta Giovanile continues to change the approach to the organisation of activities for young people and to fight against discrimination and exclusion.



3 Short-term projects in a long-term perspective

Short-term commitment is more suitable for young people living in precarious situations. This does not mean that projects can not be in keeping with a long-term perspective.

It should be accepted that a project may not always succeed and that lessons can be learnt from failure. Young people with fewer opportunities should be given other chances, because long-term effects are what really matters.

Sustainability and continuity in the efforts to integrate these young people is the key to success. For that reason, actions and projects should be supported by programmes.



? Which messages to convey to policy makers and public authorities?

For young people with fewer opportunities, participation is a step in successfully integrating them into society. To succeed, participation strategies should be tailored and shaped together with them.

Good practice in the United Kingdom

"Cutting the Cake" was the name of six dialogues, between 46 young people who experienced firsthand social exclusion and 10 officials from the Treasury and the Department of Children, Schools and Families. The content and questions for the consultations arose from a detailed study undertaken by the National Youth Agency and were prepared with the input of young people. The findings may have significant implications for decisions being made as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review regarding the support required by young people, such as things for them to do, places for them to go.

1 More specific programmes

Programmes guarantee financial support, sustainability and continuity for actions. They can be at local, regional, national or European level (EU programmes or EU Structural funds).

As regards young people with fewer opportunities, such programmes should allow more flexibility. The long-term social benefit of disadvantaged young peoples' participation is far more important than the short-term results and should be taken into account in the assessment of the projects.

Project implementers call also for counselling during the implementation of the projects and for an evaluation involving all stakeholders.

Good practice in Ireland

Set up in 1969 by the NGO Foróige, and with the support of the Department of Education and Science and corporate sponsors, the "Permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme" aims at assisting young people to develop the values and skills of good citizenship. Club members study their local area and take action to improve the community. The programme is open to all young people, with a focus on young people with fewer opportunities, including young offenders. It is based on:

- Awareness: young people identify the problem they want to solve and decide what to do
- Action: they organise and plan their actions themselves with help from a professional
- Evaluation: they discuss what they learned and what the community gained from the project

2 Better coordinated services

With closer cross-sectoral cooperation at higher levels of the administration, better use could be made of the existing human and financial resources. Coordination and exchange of information between services would be helpful.

A cross-sectoral coordination between policy makers would guarantee coherent policies concerning young people with fewer opportunities

Good practice in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, many actions are undertaken in favour of disadvantaged people and particularly young people from poor areas, with migrant background or from ethnic minorities. To make the actions more efficient, a new Agency has been created, which deals with all problems related to marginalisation. Its aim is to coordinate the research and the means to fight social exclusion. Its first action was a large-scale research project to identify inclusion obstacles. The second step is the collection of best practices and best policies in all fields and at all levels - local, regional, and national. The last step will be to identify the best answers to the issues. This process will go on until 2011.



3 Better recognised non-formal education

National policies should recognize the importance of non-formal education from an early age for the participation and integration of young people with fewer opportunities. The competencies and skills acquired should be certified. Common quality criteria for this recognition should be found at the national level.

Good practice in Sweden

The Blue Hill Youth Centre, a meeting place for 250 young people with foreign backgrounds, uses peer-education to make youngsters responsible for the others, by running and participating in several sports, music, and dance activities. The method is based on the participation, responsibility and unlimited capacity of individuals. This project is an example about how it is possible to work in a non-formal learning process with young people with fewer possibilities, reaching them at their levels and supporting them in developing their talents.

4 More evidence-based knowledge

Enhancing collection of data and research would allow a better knowledge of young people with fewer opportunities. In order for data to be comparable, common criteria should be found at the EU level.

5 More support for youth workers, youth leaders and youth organisations

Support from skilled youth workers is a key element for the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. Youth workers are also a link between these young people and society.

This necessitates sustainable funding of youth work projects as well as of quality youth work. Therefore, the continuous training of youth workers should be prioritised. Regional and national meetings and exchanges between social and youth workers should be encouraged.

The organisation of an annual European Congress of Youth Workers could be considered to allow them to meet at European level.

The importance of youth workers and youth leaders in non-formal education and the social benefit of their work should be better valued and recognized.

Youth organisations play a significant role in increasing participation of young people with fewer opportunities.

It is their responsibility to improve the involvement of these young people by providing them with the assistance they need and including them within their organisations. Youth organisations therefore have to be supported in order to be able to foster civic and political engagement of all young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities.

SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme. The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion Resource Centre develops inclusion training, publications, and resources for international youth work with young people with fewer opportunities. The SALTO-YOUTH Participation Resource Centre helps to promote political and social youth participation. It gathers and disseminates resources and information related to this priority.

6 Better dissemination

Dissemination of good practices should be considered as a priority: it allows learning from others and improving practices instead of “reinventing the wheel”.

Dissemination can be achieved through the media, Internet, brochures and through mobility of stakeholders or through meetings at local, regional, national and European levels.

Good practice in Estonia

The long-term training project “Youth Work in Prisons” is a training project for prison staff members on a voluntary basis carried out by the Estonian National Agency for Youth in Action programme from July 2005 to June 2006. Its goal was to create better opportunities for participation of young people in prisons.

Through non-formal education, the staff members acquired new professional competencies in working with youngsters and skills in project management. As a result of the training, 9 youth projects have been launched in 4 prisons in Estonia. The young people involved in those projects developed trustful relations with the staff supporting them and a willingness to search for possibilities to move on with their lives.

Through dissemination, the model applied in other areas and cooperation at the European level has been started in the form of an international project aiming at collecting good practices in various countries concerning the involvement of young people in penal institutions.



GOOD PRACTICE IN THE YOUTH FIELD

As presented in the peer-learning exercise between Member States in 2007-2008



Encouraging the participation of young people with fewer opportunities

1 Enhancing mobility of young people with fewer opportunities

Good practice in Spain:

IAMO is a project aimed at creating a network of European structures to facilitate mobility of young people with fewer opportunities. A pool of trained operators exchanged training experiences through discussions on websites and at seminars. The outcomes were 15 exchanges and 30 short term European Voluntary Services (EVS), a network, a pool of trained operators and training experiences.

Good practice of an umbrella NGO

The **Youth Empowerment Solution** project of the Y.E.S Forum involved practitioners and young people with fewer opportunities from 6 countries in a two year programme. The goal: to empower these young people through participation. The core theme of the project was European mobility. Opportunities were created through local projects for young people with fewer opportunities to travel abroad for the first time. Decision-making and evaluation were discussed with the young people. The conclusions were that working with marginalized young people in an international context requires more time and more human resources, because of their limited language skills and limited mobility experience.

2 Developing participation in disadvantaged areas

Good practice in Cyprus

With the objective to empower young rural women, workshops are organised to inform them about their rights to equality within family, about employment, political life, sexual health and sexual rights.

Good practice in Italy

In the Marches Region, young people live in disadvantaged rural areas. A project, **Re-searchers of sense, Tests of democracy** has been developed by the Councillor's office for Youth Policies of the region with the support of the Ministry of Youth Policies and Sport Activities. It aims at developing the participation of young people in political life by letting them contribute to the drafting of a new law and through decision-making activities. Democracy is experienced at school and young people are informed through a special website on politics and a newspaper which is available in universities, libraries and colleges.

Good practice in the Slovak Republic

The project **Young people too – from now** has been implemented by the municipality of Giraltovec, a small town in a disadvantaged area. It aims at involving young citizens in local youth policy. Selected young people are trained in local legislation, communication and negotiation. Then, they organise meetings between young people and candidates of several parties to create young people's candidate lists. The elected young delegates get involved in each council, commission and consultative body.

3 Empowering young people with a migrant background

Good practice in Bulgaria

The two year project **Empowering Young Immigrants (EYI)** aimed at enhancing the ability of youth organisations working with socio-economically disadvantaged young migrants through

- The development of a network of multicultural centres as meeting points for disadvantaged young people with migrant background and other young people with fewer opportunities.
- Seminars for managers of these multicultural centres and training courses for young people.
- A multimedia CD "On the job market" with theory, practice and resources and a web site for their professional guidance.

The project had a big impact: 100 youth leaders were trained, two guidance brochures were published in 12 partner countries and 30 organisations were involved.

Good practice in Germany

The project **Qualification of young leaders of migrant youth organisations** encourages young migrants to play an active part in society and in associations. Through various trainings, camps and projects on federal and regional level, and through seminars of 50-60 young people, or thematic workshops of 25 people, they receive non-formal education and training that is helpful to themselves as individuals and in their roles as leaders in youth organisations. The programme gives young migrants the theoretical and practical methods and knowledge necessary for their involvement not only as youth leaders but also as decision-makers and programme managers.

Good practice in Portugal

In the periphery of Lisbon many disadvantaged young people with a migrant background live in a difficult family context. The **Project Raízes (Roots)** aims at creating insertion paths to reduce their social exclusion and enhance social cohesion. Personal and social skills of the young people are developed through a wide range of extra-curricular activities like new technologies, sport, cultural activities and also health support. Intercultural dialogue is an important issue in this project.



4 Enhancing non-formal education

Good practice in Belgium – German-speaking community

www.streetwork.be is a homepage, created by young people with fewer opportunities, under the supervision of a youth worker, on which they can express their opinions. The homepage offers:

- Direct information for the young people on all topics which concern them.

- Peer education on these topics in “teenager slang”.

The young people do their own public relations work on the homepage and in a weekly newspaper.

Good practice in Latvia

The main idea of the project **Videre Audire** is to involve young people with fewer opportunities in challenging cultural or sports team activities, to show them different alternatives in life, to give them the opportunity to develop their talents and to spend their free time in a positive way.

Good practice in Malta

The **REACH** project is an alternative curriculum for potential early school-leavers. It consists of a 19-hour training and/or a 6-month programme in life skills, literacy, numerical and IT skills, and other skills according to the groups and their needs.

Good practice in Poland

This project **Big brothers, big sisters** is aimed at children between 7 and 13 in a difficult life situation. To help them tackle their difficulties at school and in peer groups, volunteers - the “big brothers or sisters” - meet them once a week for 2-3 hours. Once a month, the volunteers participate in meetings to exchange experiences and reflect on how to be more effective.

Good practices in Portugal

The project **E-Re@L**, implemented in the periphery of Lisbon, is a counselling and training initiative to insert excluded young people into the labour market. Paths are created: 3 months on-the-job training and 3 months classroom training. A web tool supports the networking of the social workers involved in the project.

5 Events aimed at the participation of young people with fewer opportunities

Good practice in France

Managed since 1999 by a network of NGOs and associations, **Place publique junior** is a 3-day annual event, where young people hold discussions in plenary sessions and workshops on topics they choose themselves.

In 8 years, 463 associations and 5,225 young people, mostly from disadvantaged urban and rural areas, participated in the event. The objective is to foster participation of young people in civic, cultural and political life by giving them the opportunity to express themselves in their own way (video, theatre, newspaper articles, radio, dance, song, music...) on all subjects they feel concerned by.

Good practice in Malta

The **National Sports Festival for Youths** promotes sport and health. The event does not solely involve secondary schools, universities and sport organizations. It is also promoted amongst young people with fewer opportunities who are not in formal education or associations, and is used as a mean to foster their social inclusion.

6 Developing participation of young people with special needs

Good practice in Denmark

In Denmark, disabled young people could not complete a traditional education like other young people, but had to follow adult specialized training or adult education programmes. A new national law for young people with special needs was adopted in 2007. This law gives young people with special needs the right to participate in a 3-year long education cycle for young people.

7 Dealing with violence

Good practice in Austria

To deal with violence at school, it was decided in 2001 to introduce a new concept in Austrian schools: **peer-mediation**. Young volunteers are trained to serve as an information point for their peers on various issues. They are also a contact point in conflicts, since peers can find more easily the underlying reason for a conflict and young people accept their peers better than adults. This project develops tolerance and acceptance of others. Schools can adapt the concept to their needs.

Good practice in Luxembourg

The purpose of the project “**Vandalism prevention**” was for young people living in a disadvantaged urban area to make a movie and a song on vandalism for other young people. 12 youngsters were involved: they chose the subject, designed the script, made the film and conducted the interviews. They learnt to respect others’ work through site visits, made contact with adults they would never have spoken to before, like bus drivers, policemen and managers and learnt to be regularly present and reliable. They also developed creative and technical skills.

GOOD PRACTICE IN THE YOUTH FIELD

As presented in the Conference on 3 and 4 March 2008

Encouraging the participation of young people with fewer opportunities



On 3 and 4 March 2008, a conference was organized in Brussels by the Directorate General for Education and Culture, in cooperation with the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on The participation of young people with fewer opportunities. This conference focused on the socio-economically most deprived young people. Four workshops were organized dealing with different aspects of work with young people with fewer opportunities. In these workshops, NGOs presented their experiences, good practices were exchanged, which are presented below and as a result of the exchanges some common messages were drawn up, which can be found in the first part of the brochure.

1 Study on homeless young people

Study by the Radboud University Medical Centre on homeless youth in Zeeland (NL)

There are around 6,000 homeless adolescents in the Netherlands (Netherlands Court of Audit, 2007).

But there are many different definitions of homelessness. To be able to make well-founded policy decisions about accommodation for the homeless in Zeeland, a local municipality and the Province asked for a study. The research goals were a population estimate of homeless adolescents, their profile and the ways to attune provided and necessary care. 44 adolescents were interviewed on their background, homelessness, substance use, physical and mental health, quality of life, family and social relations, care needs, care contacts and wishes for housing.

The study showed that boys and girls are equally represented in this population. The mean age is 20 years, 14% have children, and 54% have only primary education. The mean time of homelessness is 1.3 years; they rarely sleep in the street but find temporary arrangements. Their wishes are to live independently, in safety, quietness and privacy.

The challenges are multidisciplinary help and cooperation, the spread of services in the province and the focus on homeless girls.

The conclusions of the study are that to be efficient, help should be easily accessible, the interventions should be integral and based on responsibility, relatedness, continuity and flexibility.

2 Social benefits of youth work

A street-work methodology was presented by the umbrella NGO Dynamo International and illustrated by a concrete example. When their intervention is required, the street-workers begin by the collection of data, for a better knowledge of the whole situation. They also make a list of related associations, institutions, public authorities and individuals, with whom they will work. Their task will be to involve all stakeholders and to be the link between them.

For example, in a district of a town in Belgium, there was an increasing problem with young people, some of them spending most of their time in the street. To solve the problem, the municipality contacted the NGO. During one year, youth workers were present in the district and visited all people, explaining the purpose of their presence and trying to clearly identify the issues. People complained about the mess, the dogs, drug abuse, syringes on the floor; racism was also flourishing. A dialogue commenced between the young people, the people living in the district and the public authorities, to change the image of the young people, but also the image of the district. Trust and intergenerational solidarity could be built. Individuals were supported, the district was made more attractive, a mobile office was settled in the middle of the district, and community projects were initiated.

The “Petit Parc” project, presented by the asbl **Dynamo (BE)**, is an illustration of the important role youth workers can play in the participation of young people with fewer opportunities.

For many years, a waste ground in a popular district of Brussels, where the majority of inhabitants are from migrant backgrounds, was used as playground by children and young people. The young people wanted to change it into a real sport's place, but they didn't know how to proceed. Therefore, they asked the youth workers of the district what could be done.

With the support of the youth workers, the young people learnt what is meant by democracy: they contacted neighbours, other communities, made their own opinion poll, designed a project, and met public authorities. Funds were raised and the young people were involved in the implementation process. They met the architect and discussed the plans. The waste ground is now a sport centre, which is opened night and day, where they can play football and basketball and for which they are responsible.

3 Fostering empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities from ethnic minorities or with migrant background

The objective of the **Roma participation programme (RPP)** implemented by the **Open Society Institute (HU)** is to empower Roma to participate in decisions, which affect them. In the framework of **RPP**, many projects are being developed:

- To foster the creation of a pool of Roma experts, internships are provided to young Roma graduates in the European Commission in Brussels, in international organisations and in national public institutions.
- A Political Academy will open in **Serbia** in 2008, to train the new elite of young Roma leaders.
- In **Bulgaria**, debates will run in 2008 with Roma moderators, topics and attendees. Roma young people will be trained through the debates to become advocates of the Roma cause. This could lead to the creation of the first debate house in Bulgaria, where the youth of Roma could gather, discuss and exchange ideas on different issues.

Zeit!Raum, a community-oriented NGO in **Vienna (AT)**, fosters independent acting of young people from ethnic minorities or with migrant background. The NGO developed:

- Accommodation and support for unaccompanied minors, refugees and asylum seekers
- Research-projects focusing on labour market inclusion concerning these young people
- Antidiscrimination and political awareness raising projects, like **My RadionetArt**, a media-education project fighting discrimination, with radio spots, posters and websites prepared by the young people themselves.

In **Roubaix**, a town in the North of **France**, the rate of unemployment is quite high, especially for young people with foreign origins. The **Association for the Development of Citizen and European Initiatives (ADICE)** decided to fight discrimination and favour social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities by supporting their participation in mobility programmes, in order to develop social, professional and intercultural skills.

The mobility programmes are: short term and long term European Voluntary Service (EVS) or Voluntary Civic Service in France and abroad. A professional training is organised for the young people in cooperation with the French unemployment office.

The method is based on a local network of social workers, who help the young people to define, implement, evaluate and valorise their projects.

4 Increasing the efficiency of the exchange of good practices

The NGO **Caritas** in **Germany (DE)** has chosen as a goal for 2006-2008 to enhance the life conditions of young people with fewer opportunities by evaluating previous actions and improving them.

To this purpose, hundreds of successful projects, which had been run before, were collected in a data bank. The organisation reflected on how the target group could be reached, what could be done better and how public awareness could be increased on that issue. The successful projects will be disseminated and transferred. A broad range of actions have been developed to foster the skills of children from an early age, to help students through tutoring, to improve the German language skills of young people from migrant backgrounds and to support young people through the transition period from school to the labour market.

5 Including young people with fewer opportunities in projects for all young people

In order to foster information and participation of young people with fewer opportunities and fight stigmatisation, a network of voluntary groups of young people was created in the framework of the **Youth Information Centre of Komotini (GR)**.

The young volunteers make contact with young people with fewer opportunities, meet with them, inform them and encourage them to participate in projects and activities for all young people. They also try to find topics, which can meet the interests of these young people. They bring young people with fewer opportunities the necessary support to foster their participation.

6 Support through a European programme

Youth in Action is the EU Programme for young people aged 15-28 (in some cases 13-30). It aims at inspiring a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and at involving them in shaping the Union's future. Youth in Action is a programme for all. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. With a total budget of 885 million euros for seven years (2007-2013), the Programme supports a large variety of activities for young people and youth workers.

RESULTS OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY YOUTH EVENT

18th-21st of April 2008, Ljubljana and Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia

Encouraging the participation of young people with fewer opportunities



The Ministry for Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia and its Office for Youth invited more than 150 young people from all European Union and EFTA Member States, EU Candidate Countries and the Western Balkan Countries (38 countries altogether) to attend the Presidency Youth Event “Promoting the Participation of Young People with Fewer Opportunities in Society” in Ljubljana and Brdo pri Kranju, from 18 to 21 April 2008.

The event, gave the participants an opportunity to discuss this issue and reflect upon ways to achieve active participation of young people with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes, debates and in society.

Organised in five working groups, the participants discussed the following topics in detail:

- 1. Improving the mobility of young people with fewer opportunities**
- 2. More and better employment for young people with fewer opportunities**
- 3. Non-formal education and competence building with young people with fewer opportunities**
- 4. Integration of young people with fewer opportunities in society and their political participation**
- 5. Role of young people in intercultural dialogue**

The conclusions of each of these working groups are the following:

1 Improving the mobility of young people with fewer opportunities

Mobility is one of the crucial tools for empowering young people with fewer opportunities and for fostering their social integration. Despite of this fact, young people still face numerous administrative, socio-cultural, educational, informational and financial obstacles in exercising their right to mobility.

The visa system remains a serious obstacle to mobility of young people. It should be reformed in line with the demands of the European Youth Forum’s campaign Get VISABLE (www.getvisable.org). We reiterate our demand of a standardized, transparent and respectful visa application procedure.

Furthermore, we request that visa cost for young people in education and training and volunteers is abolished, and that inviting organisations are allowed to cover social and medical security costs.

We demand that educational institutions cooperate with youth NGOs and provide means to facilitate information and promote mobility to young people with fewer opportunities, though their surroundings, e.g. families and peers, starting from an early age. Successful practices in some Member States have shown that appointing young people a mentor to provide personal support, encouragement, information has positive effects on increasing the mobility of young people with fewer opportunities.

New methodologies and strategies are necessary in order to increase mobility of young people with fewer opportunities. We believe that EU policies and programmes on mobility must be specifically adapted to them, e.g. user-friendly application forms and guides, more short-term EVS projects, etc.

Lack of accessibility to and usability of various facilities and public transport is discriminatory. This is why the aforementioned must be an integral part of grant requests and a basic standard for projects which include persons with disabilities.



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Education systems must foster motivation of young people with fewer opportunities, involving them actively in mobility programmes and projects, e.g. providing grants – not based on academic performance – to students who want to study abroad but do not have the economic means to do so.

We demand that EU mobility programme grants are paid punctually and that 90% of the full amount is paid to organisers of activities upon approval of projects.

2 More and better employment for young people with fewer opportunities

4.7 million young people in the EU are unemployed. This represents a staggering 38.5% of the entire unemployed population. Young people in the EU, especially those with fewer opportunities, are facing difficulties in entering the labour market. Once in the labour market precarious working conditions become the unfortunate reality for the Youth of Europe.

It is therefore high time that policies are developed and strategies are implemented in a close co-operation between EU Institutions, National Governments, National Youth Councils and Youth NGOs to combat this unacceptable situation for young people. This should be done coherently at the EU, national, regional and local levels.

Integrating professional guidance in the educational systems is a crucial element in the process on eliminating social exclusion. The EU Member States have to take the responsibility to make the information accessible for all young people with a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities.

The value of vocational training has to be emphasized because the EU needs highly qualified young people in the labour market. The appreciation of highly qualified young professionals leads to a positive economical development in the EU.

The EU must provide the framework for internships in order to give the possibility to all young European people to have a practical formation connected with their vocational and academic formation in order to guarantee that internship do not substitute a regular contract.

The labour market has to recognise the competences gained through non-formal education.

Every young person in the EU must have the possibility for full participation and emancipation in society. Therefore we want the European Council to set European wide standards for working conditions which ensure employment in dignity.

In view of meeting the Lisbon strategy commitments for young People, we call upon the European Institutions to make sure that the ongoing implementation of the European Youth Pact is done in a close cooperation between policy makers and other relevant stakeholders such as National Youth Councils and Youth NGOs.

Young People require that youth concerns are taken on board by policy makers when defining flexicurity strategies at the National level. This should be done through a dialogue between National Governments and National Youth Councils.

Young People call upon the European Institutions to fully integrate the concerns of young people in the active Inclusion of people furthest from the labour market process.

3 Non formal education and competence building with young people with fewer opportunities

One of the main aims of non-formal education is to create competence based environment and to promote active social participation of all young people, including those with fewer opportunities. Even if often used to describe the situation of, the term fewer opportunities, does not only refer to young people with disabilities. It is a broader concept including young people with poorer, ethnic minority or migrant background. It also refers to young people facing health problems, young people dropping from schools or living them early, young people residents of rural areas and many more .

Decision-makers should take into consideration the importance to act not only for but also with young people with fewer opportunities, i.e. to empower them and make sure that their representatives take active part in all stages of the processes. In terms of non-formal education, it is vital that key decision-makers provide space for permanent structured dialogue.

This should provide young people with fewer opportunities opportunity to raise their concerns, express their approval or discontent with existing policies and tools and build-up their competences and skills .

This must be applied through regular meetings and subsequent follow-up events where the existing policies can be reviewed based on the grassroots level feedback and amended accordingly. Furthermore, national youth ministries and agencies have to provide opportunities and sources for active interaction, information campaigns and peer-to-peer learning events.

Young people with fewer opportunities should benefit from the provision of non-formal education and in that regard a safe environment must be created through a specific legal framework, i.e. national directives and regulations dealing with, for instance, issues related to status and skills necessary for youth workers and certified recognition of acquired competences.

In addition, there must be a European database of NGOs that will include information on results of exchange of best practice and methods so to improve the knowledge of youth workers dealing with similar issues. This tool would positively influence the structured dialogue between the national bodies, service-providers and beneficiaries.

Last but not least, National Youth Ministries and Agencies must put efforts to simplifying the administrative burdens and obstacles when applying for funding in the youth field by for example adopting the existing Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci approach of initial approval of an organisation and subsequent funding based on this evaluation.

4 Integration of young people with fewer opportunities in society and their political participation

Integration of young people with fewer opportunities in society and their political participation firstly requires their primary needs being met. Poverty strikes young people hardest, therefore the EU and the Member States must stick to and fulfill their commitments of eradicating poverty in the EU by 2010.

There is a strong need for political and human rights education from an early age. In this context, non-formal education is as important as formal education. In order to make politics accessible to and comprehensible for young people we urge politicians to build relationships with those with fewer opportunities on the grass-root level so as to crush the notion of politics as a sector only for the privileged in society.

We urge structured dialogue with disadvantaged young people in order to build bridges and find solutions with them and not only for them. Therefore already existing participation structures should be strengthened.

Youth organisations play a significant role in increasing participation of young people with fewer opportunities. We demand sustainable and sufficient resources for youth organisations to develop and implement youth projects based on the needs of young people with fewer opportunities in order to give them platforms to make their voices heard. Making the Youth in Action program accessible for everyone is important aspect in this regard.

Public political debate is often difficult to understand for everyone. Therefore we insist that all political issues are publicised in an accessible and easily understandable format. Further we request lowering the voting age to 16 and more direct democracy initiatives on the local level.

In order for all young people to realize and exercise their ideas and potentials we must combat problems concerning citizenship laws and discrimination in each country.

5 Role of young people in intercultural dialogue

Human rights are universal and as that they belong to young people with fewer opportunities while they are not always able to receive the full benefit of them. Therefore in engaging with intercultural dialogue it is important to keep this aspect in mind. We are diverse in our opportunities and background and we believe that this diversity amongst young people can be one of our greatest strengths. As it creates an opportunity to work collectively to meet the challenges faced in many different contexts within Europe.

It is our belief that the empowerment of young people requires an open attitude. To effectively make an impact to the lives of young people we must be recognised not as a reference group but rather as equal partners in the work of intercultural dialogue. It is important to remember that we talk about actual people, individuals, affected by structures and values of society in which they are disenfranchised. It is the nature of intercultural dialogue that it can take on a non-formal aspect.

It is not only with legislation or regulation that barriers are broken, but this is done as much within our communities and through our day-to-day interactions. It is the individuals who want to create change that will create understanding, which will find similarities and use it to help promote respect and thereby remove cultural barriers in society. Creating spaces where one can openly talk about their prejudices and work to overcome this can be done in such spaces as youth centers, the media, the internet, the workplace and schools.

We must accept ourselves for who we are to be prepared to accept others. We must understand that it is ok to be different from the norm, and we see intercultural dialogue as a tool to emphasize this aspect. The methods developed in the creation of the “All different-All equal” campaign is a perfect example of this especially in schools and through youth organisations.

We see formal and non-formal education as a structured way of reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities. Working together on a local level, through education and youth organizations reduces tension and creates social cohesion.

Reaching out to people at an early age prevents the fostering of intolerance throughout our development at a time where we are creating our own identity and where it is common to try and conform to the norms of society.

Youth led voluntary projects in Europe show the importance of the joint action of individuals and how those give young people the chance to get involved thus developing skills and taking on responsibility. It is important that the resources exist and are accessible at the national level for local projects aiming to include more young people with fewer opportunities.

It is also important to recognize there are funds but we believe that the creation of a specific EU-wide fund aiming to benefit and bring new options to young people who have fewer opportunities in life is vital. These funds should be used to facilitate the development of youth led local projects to ensure a greater fostering of understanding and equality amongst the participating young people.

Our goal is an equal society where there are greater changes for young people with fewer opportunities within society and culture, where discrimination in any form is rejected.