

Y - S. R. N.



**Together for Social Rights! Youth workers
and local authorities promoting and
networking for access to social rights for
young people**

Report of the meeting held by the Youth Social Rights Network
in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
25 February – 2 March 2013



This report gives an account of various aspects of the meeting. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the meeting. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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Table of Contents

I. Executive summary	7
II. Introduction to the study session.....	9
Aim and objectives	9
Profile of participants	9
Preparatory process	10
Main issues and topics of discussion in the meeting.....	10
III Programme of the meeting – inputs and discussions	12
Introduction and background of the meeting	12
Getting to know each other and team building	12
Social rights and access to social rights of young people (particularly young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or the ones facing disadvantage).....	13
Young people and social rights in local realities	16
Advocacy	17
Tips and tricks for advocates.....	18
Youth participation.....	19
Cooperation between youth workers and local authorities.....	20
Y-SRN development.....	22
IV. Dissemination of educational tools and materials	23
V. Evaluation.....	23
VI. Outcomes	24
VII. Follow-up activities	25
Follow-up activities at local level	25
Follow-up activities of the Y-SRN network.....	25
VIII. Conclusion.....	26
Appendix I. Daily programme	27
Appendix II. Participants' list.....	29
Appendix III. References	33

I. Executive summary

“Social rights¹ are one of the foundations on which Europe was built over the course of the last century. And yet, despite the significant progress made in this sphere on our continent, social rights are far from being fully guaranteed in practice for all Europeans.”
(Mary Daly²)

Young people are considered to be the future of Europe, but still today’s societies are not quite prepared to challenge the lack of opportunities that they face in their everyday life, particularly to challenge the problems of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or the problems of young people who face disadvantage.

We, the Youth Social Rights Network (Y-SRN), as a network of individuals and public and private entities, are determined to use these terms – disadvantaged neighbourhoods and disadvantage, till the point when there is no such thing as: disadvantage.³

Using these terms, we don’t want to discriminate or put a label to any of the areas and/or people. We just want to stress the existence of such areas that require significant and specific joint efforts with multidisciplinary approaches, towards the elimination of the disadvantages, and towards providing access to housing, health, education, vocational training, decent employment, social protection and other basic rights for every young person in Europe.

Having this in mind, the Youth Social Rights Network (Y-SRN) in cooperation with the European Youth Centre (EYC) of the Council of Europe organised an international meeting, “Together for social rights - youth workers and local authorities promoting and networking for access to social rights for young people (particularly the ones from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or the ones facing disadvantage)”, that took place in Strasbourg, France from the 25th of February until the 2nd of March 2013.

The meeting brought together youth workers and local authorities, from the Council of Europe member states, working on access to social rights for young people and social/youth policy issues. It focused on raising awareness, at national and local level, on social rights issues affecting young people through exchange of information, practices, experiences and joint work between youth workers and local authorities.

The idea for this international meeting was born during the previous experience of the founders of the Y-SRN, most of whom have been participants in the Enter! long-term training course for youth workers working with young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods on the questions of discrimination, exclusion and violence. The course has been organised in 2009 – 2011 by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in the framework of the Enter! project on access to social rights for young people⁴. The founding members of the Y-SRN throughout the projects that they implemented in the framework of this training course identified the main obstacles on the way to improvement of the access to social rights for young people in disadvantaged

¹ Social rights are those provisions, expressed in legal and other forms, which are necessary for the fulfilment of people’s social needs and for the promotion of social cohesion and solidarity. In terms of specifying the content of social rights the Youth Social Rights Network follows the approach of the European Social Charter, in its original and revised versions.
<http://www.coe.int/T/DGHL/Monitoring/SocialCharter/>

² Mary Daly, (2002), Access to social rights in Europe report, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
http://book.coe.int/EN/ficheouvrage.php?PAGEID=36&lang=EN&produit_aliasid=1010

³ The term disadvantaged neighbourhood refers to areas deprived of some of the basic necessities, such as adequate housing, medical care, or educational facilities, employment, social security and a lack of opportunity.

⁴ More information: www.coe.int/enter

neighbourhoods. One of them was the lack of mutual work and cooperation between youth workers and local authorities in different local realities, lack of cooperation between the ones that are closest to the young people and that can help them in overcoming the everyday obstacles in variety of ways.

That challenged us, Y-SRN, to invite youth workers and local authorities at “the same table” to join efforts and establish partnerships needed for better access to social rights for young people in Europe, their inclusion in societies and active participation as responsible citizens, as well as to improve the capacities of our network by integrating new youth workers, youth organizations and local authorities in it, who will work in cooperation towards the improvement of the access to social rights for young people on local, national and international levels.

For 6 days, 20 youth workers (including the educational team) together with 16 local authority representatives and 3 local authorities who are youth works as well, were discovering, sharing, learning, and practising skills needed for improvement of the access to social rights for young people.

The journey started from getting to know the existing European social rights standards, policies and mechanisms and how they can apply locally to promote the access to social rights (particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods). We learned about:

- the situation of young people in different realities particularly in disadvantaged areas or the situation of young people that face disadvantage, and
- shared experience and good practices on access to social rights for young people,
- addressed their exclusion and marginalisation,
- promoted advocacy and youth participation, and
- equipped activists with knowledge and skills to advocate and to foster the participation of young people at local levels on the basis of the Council of Europe values and standards.

Furthermore we developed will, motivation and dedication to continue with our work on improvement of the access to social rights of young people, with joint efforts and counting on the support from each other. We developed clear ideas for future actions that can be done at local level in partnership between young people, youth workers and local authorities, as well as ideas for actions that can be done by the Y-SRN as a family of young people, youth workers, local authorities and other individuals and public and private entities to support local and national actions and to create and inspire international ones.

This activity used human rights based approaches by focusing on social rights and access to social rights of young people from disadvantaged neighborhoods, intercultural learning and non-formal education methodology (it was voluntary, accessible to everyone, participatory, learner-centered, based on involving both individual and group learning, with a collective approach, holistic and process-oriented, based on experience and action organized on the basis of the needs of the participants⁵) integrating methods as team-building exercises, organizational bazar, intercultural evening, lectures, group discussions, debates, presentations, videos, brainstorming, simulations, role-plays, individual work, work in groups, sharing practices and experience, group reflections.

⁵ Council of Europe, (2012), Compass Manual for human rights education with young people, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>

II. Introduction to the study session

Aim and objectives

The aim of the meeting was to promote the access to social rights for young people at local level (particularly young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or young people facing disadvantage) by training and networking among youth organisations, youth workers and local authorities.

Related to our aim we have defined the following objectives:

- To familiarise participants on the existing European social rights standards, policies and mechanisms and how they can apply locally to promote access to social rights (particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods);
- To share experiences, good practices, shortcomings and challenges in disadvantage neighborhoods regarding access to social rights for young people;
- To deepen the competences and the capacity of the participants to advocate for improving the access to social rights;
- To create a space of joint cooperation between youth workers and local authorities in improving the access of social rights;
- To create concrete local follow-up ideas on access to social rights in connection with the Council of Europe's work and support measures in social inclusion;
- To develop and discuss the future of the network.

Profile of participants

The meeting brought together 39 participants from Council of Europe member states, representing 2 types of stakeholders working on access to social rights for young people: youth workers and local authorities, coming together from same city or country

The profile of the youth worker required candidates to:

- be a member of an organisation working actively in the field of social rights for young people;
- be aged between 18 and 30 years;
- have organisational support for joining the meeting and its follow-up.

Youth workers were expected to:

- invite, apply and be able to come together with a local authority representative from their home country;
- be motivated to participate in the meeting towards realising the set aims and objectives;
- be able and motivated to continue the work on the meeting's follow-up in local realities;
- act like multipliers in their local realities;
- be able to work in English.

The profile of the local authorities required candidates to:

- be elected representatives or civil servants;
- work on access to social rights preferably on access to social rights for young people and/or work on social policy issues on local, regional or national levels.

Local authorities were expected to:

- invite, apply and be able to come together with a youth worker from their home country;
- be motivated to participate in the meeting towards realising the set aims and objectives;

- continue the work on the meeting's follow-up in local realities;
- act like multipliers in their local realities;
- be able to work in English.

Preparatory process

The educational team together with the educational advisor of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, met in the EYC Budapest from 29th October - 2nd November 2012 to set a clearer framework of the meeting and its elements:

- to review the current needs and issues related to the aims of the meeting;
- to take stock of already existing initiatives;
- to define the overall approach and develop an operational model for the planning implementation and evaluation and reporting;
- to handle logistic elements (to prepare criteria for selection of participants to prepare and send the call for participants to identify and invite experts and lecturers etc.);
- to organise the work between the two preparatory meetings and for the second meeting

Regular online (Skype, email) meetings and phone calls were conducted to coordinate the preparations in between preparatory meetings.

After the first preparatory meeting we sent the call for participants, the application form and the invitation for local authorities.⁶ We have received 129 applications and selected 39 participants, coming from 18 Council of Europe member states and representing youth organisations, foundations, youth councils, youth parliaments, city halls, municipalities, governmental intercultural centres, social service centres, house of nationalities, ministries and governments.

During the preparation of this meeting we asked the Youth Department of the Council of Europe to make an exception related to the age of the participants, since we had expected that the local authority representatives will be older than 30 and will not fit the target group of the youth sector (usually, 18 to 30 years), but most of the local authorities turned up quite younger than we expected them to be. That from one side may counteract our impression related to the age of the people working in the local authority bodies but from another side may lead to an assumption that younger local authorities are more interested in this type of meetings.

A lot of local authorities have shown individual interest in participating in this meeting, and in some situations they were the ones inviting youth workers to apply and come together in this meeting. This situation counteracts other existing beliefs among youth workers that the local authorities are not available and/or interested in cooperation and working together with youth workers and young people towards the improvement of access to social rights to young people.

The selected participants were constantly contacted and supported in the preparation of their participation in this meeting.

One day before the arrival of participants, the team had its second preparatory meeting to prepare for the start of the meeting and clarify details

Main issues and topics of discussion in the meeting

The meeting had several focus issues or topics of discussion:

⁶ See the list of links where information about the meeting was posted online to ensure visibility in Appendices, page 35.

- Existing European social rights standards, policies and mechanisms and how they can apply locally to promote the access to social rights (particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods);
- Young people and their access to social rights in different realities (particularly from disadvantaged areas or young people facing disadvantages);
- Advocacy;
- Youth participation;
- Networking for improvement of the access to social rights of young people;
- Follow-up activities.

III Programme of the meeting – inputs and discussions

The working days included a variety of sessions that were designed to address the aim and objectives of the meeting. We started with the introduction of the activity and its background, getting to know each other and team building, then continued with brainstorming, presenting, watching videos, discussing, debating, simulating, role playing, work individually, work in groups, sharing good practices and experiences on the main issues of the meeting, developing concrete follow up ideas on a local level in partnerships between youth workers and local authorities and developing the networking process in Y-SRN its basis and future activities and ended with mapping available support measures and resources from third parties and from ourselves.⁷

Introduction and background of the meeting

At the beginning, the educational team introduced the meeting and its aim, objectives and programme, in order to have a clear answer on the question: what are we here for? We tackled the participants' expectations and having them in mind we made an assessment of the capacities of the programme of the meeting to address those expectations⁸.

During the meeting, participants had more opportunities to hear and learn on the background of the meeting through inputs from the educational team and some of the participants of the Enter! long-term training course 2009 - 2011, where our work on access to social rights for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods gained more clear European dimension and where this concrete network on access to social rights started.

At the very start, Biljana Vasilevska Trajkoska welcomed the participants, introduced the meeting and its background. Mara Georgescu, our educational advisor, introduced the EYC and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, as well as their activities towards improvement of the access to social rights for young people, particularly the Enter! project in both its first phase (2009 – 2011) and its current phase. We continued with a round of introductions of the participants. After this, Mary Drosopoulos, David Aynsley and Dynka Amorim Dos Santos presented the work that they did on a local level towards improvement of the access to social rights for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods within the framework of the Enter! project.

This introduction gave the participants a chance to get to know some of the good practices for improvement of access to social rights for young people at the very start and provoked their appetite to get to know more on how they can do things that lead to access to social rights for young people in their local realities.

The need for sharing good practices was present during the whole meeting. An important amount of the time was spent to that purpose and that was highly evaluated by the participants, but still, at the end they said that would have liked to spend even more time on sharing good practices and experience.

Getting to know each other and team building

Using Compass⁹, SALTO toolbox¹⁰ and our experience and creativity as tools we have engaged ourselves in a variety of getting to know each other and team building exercises. Exercises like the

⁷ You can find the daily program at the end of this report, page 27.

⁸ More on the expectations of participants in the evaluation part of this report, page 22

⁹ Compass is the Council of Europe's manual on human rights education with young people, www.coe.int/compass

¹⁰ <http://www.salto-youth.net/about/>

rights bingo¹¹, the fast dating, the mission impossible¹², the organisational bazar, the intercultural evening, a series of ice breakers and energizers, the visit at the Council of Europe, the dinner out and different out-of-programme activities initiated by the participants themselves, created a space to get to know more about each other, the realities and organisations that we come from, to communicate, to create a positive working environment, to map potential partners, to provoke the will and motivation to join capacities and work together, to make friends, to develop the feeling of belonging in this group as well as to transform the group into a team.



Social rights and access to social rights of young people (particularly young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or the ones facing disadvantage)

Social Rights and access to social rights of young people (particularly young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or ones facing disadvantage) were one of the key points of the meeting. Some of the sessions in the meeting were entirely focused on learning on these topics.

The learning started with “Where do you stand”¹³ modified and adapted to the content of the meeting. Sharing attitudes and beliefs on social rights related statements, through vivid and passionate discussion, since we were exploring very difficult and challenging issues, encouraging participants to express their opinions and to think critically, we come up with an agreement on the following points that further helped in setting the attitude, basis and priorities of our network and our coalitions on local and national level:

- Social rights are not just nice aspirations; they are real human rights that require both active state and active right holders/claimers; in our case active, empowered, informed and active young people;
- Social rights are prioritized differently in different context and realities depending on the problems and the needs of the people living in those realities. That does not counteract their indivisibility but rather stress the need of pragmatic and strategic approach towards creating a situation where they are fully guaranteed and practiced by every young person;

¹¹ Compass, Council of Europe, (2012), Compass Manual for human rights education with young people, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>, page 260

¹² See <http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/mission-impossible.651/>

¹³ Compass, Council of Europe, (2012), Compass Manual for human rights education with young people, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>, page 329

- Social rights need to be strongly protected and guaranteed, but even in situation where that is not the case it does not mean that they do not exist or that we should not work towards their promotion and/or protection but quite the opposite. It means that we should all make joint efforts of changing the realities towards making social rights guaranteed and accessible to all especially to young people.

We continued with interactive input of our lecturer Iain Byrne from Amnesty International combined with discussions and followed by working in groups that further raised the knowledge on existing European social rights standards, policies and mechanisms and how they can apply locally to promote the access to social rights (particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods).

The input of Iain Byrne and the discussion that followed it focused on:

- What are social rights and why are they important?
- Where can we find them locally, nationally, regionally and internationally? (Referring to national laws and constitutions, regional treaties International treaties and declarations with accent on the European Social Rights Charter¹⁴);
- A case brought at the European Committee for Social Rights, namely the case INTERIGHTS vs. Croatia¹⁵;
- Activities that Amnesty International and its sectors do with and for young people, for example activities with Roma people and the Demand Dignity! campaign¹⁶.



The input was followed by working in groups on tools and activities that one can use to contribute to the improvement of access to social rights for young people in different realities. In the outcomes of the working groups we could see that participants make significant efforts to promote social rights of young people, provide access to information related to social rights, increase the knowledge of young people and other stakeholders working in this area, advocate and lobby for changes in order to improve access to social rights for young people on local, national and international levels. Some of the tools and activities that our participants use and do are the following:

- Information and campaigning through social media;
- Theatre, art and cultural activities;
- Non-formal and informal education activities;
- Human rights training courses for young people on social rights;

¹⁴ http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Presentation/PresentationIndex_en.asp

¹⁵ <http://www.interights.org/croatia-sex-ed/index.html>

¹⁶ <https://campaigns.amnesty.org/campaigns/demand-dignity>

- Seminars, conferences, workshops;
- Peer education;
- Youth camps and youth exchanges;
- Volunteering activities for social inclusion;
- Non-discrimination and anti-segregation campaigns.

Sharing and discussions in the groups and in the plenary equipped us with ideas on how can the access to social rights of young people be improved, what can we all do in local realities that we have not done it yet and how we can do it¹⁷. The discussions on this topic lasted even after the end of the programme sessions in the out of programme activities and further more stressed out the need of making partnerships and network and supporting each-other in order to use our different capacities in the best way.

The “Enter Dignityland!”¹⁸ game for learning about social rights with young people within the framework of human rights education made our participants more aware on social rights and reflect on the challenges young people face in access to social rights. Divided in 7 groups, guided by the rules of the game, but also taking into consideration the needs of young people in their own realities, participants have debated, negotiated and at the end managed to give priority to several policies.

The policies that were prioritised by all 7 groups are the following:

- Universal access to free primary and secondary education
- Universal health insurance for everyone

Comprehensive system of welfare benefits for everyone/guaranteed minimum income for all was prioritised by five groups.

- Special measures (tax reductions, quotas) for employing specific groups (disabled, long term unemployed) and
- Lowering the social security contributions for young entrepreneurs

were prioritised by four groups.

- Adequate shelter for homeless people (in cooperation with NGOs);
- Pension for everyone who has reached a certain age, irrespective of means and employment record and
- Provision of appropriate vocational guidance, training and rehabilitation

were prioritised by three groups

- Equal treatment of own national and foreign workers in respect to social security rights,
- Food and heating benefits for those with limited income,
- Social housing for everyone with low income elimination of obstacles for setting up civil society organisations (number of members, fees, age limits, complex procedures),
- Financial support to youth NGOs efficiently working on social rights,
- Excellence in higher education in partnership with the private sector (education)

were prioritized by two groups.

- Provision of education in one’s own mother tongue;
- Same salary for work of equal value, irrespective of age and gender;

¹⁷ More on the ideas in the follow up section of this report page 25

¹⁸ More information here: <http://enter.coe.int/eng/Enter-Dignityland!-A-game-on-social-rights>

- Full health insurance only for those unable to pay were prioritized by one group.

From the policies proposed in the game the groups did not prioritised the following

- Rental support for young people
- Monitoring of civil society organisations for ensuring state security)
- Full health insurance for everyone in employment
- Certain cash benefits, such as child welfare benefit, irrespective of means

In the debriefing after the game we have all defined how young people, youth workers and local authorities can contribute to the realisation of these priorities. The thing that was stressed by all the groups was the necessity of joining the efforts and working together as a team because if we do not do that nothing else can be done; there can be no sustainable actions without cooperation and at the end without cooperation and networking between young people, youth workers, authorities and other stakeholders who want to improve access to social rights for young people there can be no real improvement. We all have different approaches and different capacities to approach the problem, but if we do not transform ourselves in a complementary team, we cannot do anything that will last. This learning outcome was what all participants found important to work on¹⁹.



Young people and social rights in local realities

The most important thing that brought us all together – the young people and their situation in local realities were addressed in every session of the meeting but there were some sessions with a more precise focus on it. Some of them follow.

Working in groups participants discussed on the following topics:

- Who are the young people in our local realities (the ones that we work with)?
- What are their obstacles, challenges and needs on the way to access to social rights?

In the outcomes of this work we saw the diversity of the groups of young people that we work with, the diversity of the challenges but the equality of the needs. No matter how different young people across Europe are, they all need similar things.

The profile of young people that participants in the meeting work with are:

- poor young people who live in deprived areas without adequate and decent living conditions,
- young people from rural areas,

¹⁹ More on the follow up in the follow up section of this report, page 25

- ethnic minorities,
- refugees,
- migrants,
- disabled young people,
- victims of family violence,
- social entrepreneurs,
- young leaders,
- students,
- volunteers.

They face several obstacles towards access to social rights:

- Current economic and political situation
- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Bureaucracy
- Inadequate legislation (poor immigration laws)
- Immigration
- Poor education system
- Lack of social/youth services
- Low quality of the social/youth services
- Bad infrastructure
- Lack of cooperation
- Isolation and marginalisation
- Poor access to social services
- Conservative environment
- Stereotypes
- Discrimination
- No family support
- Lack of information
- No motivation
- Mentality and stereotypes
- Fear of change and fear to change
- Low level of development of life skills

Young people in our realities are challenged by their needs:

- To finish school
- To find a job
- To find adequate and affordable houses
- To stay healthy
- To integrate and participate in societies
- To be respected and protected
- To developing personal, social and cultural skills
- To be involved
- To be educated on human rights in non-formal but also formal education environment and activities

Advocacy

At one point of the meeting after discussing and agreeing with participants, we have divided in two groups. The purpose was to engage participants in parallel workshops focusing on advocacy and youth participation so they can all benefit from them in accordance to their needs. The youth

workers learned and shared on advocacy, focusing on understanding advocacy and developing advocacy skills.

The educational team gave interactive input on:

- What is advocacy?
- Why is advocacy effective?
- Which are the basic steps of the advocacy actions?
- What skills do we need to organise, implement and evaluate an advocacy action?

The input of the educational team was followed by working in groups on sharing concrete advocacy actions done in different realities by participants or someone else in their realities, with a purpose to defining the ways we can advocate, to define what can advocacy do and to make a list of some tips and tricks for advocates or the ones who want to be advocates for social rights for young people.

How can we advocate?

- Research the problem;
- Organise meetings between advocates and the local government;
- Organise media campaigns and activities (publish newspapers, show up on TV and radio shows, use the social media, blog and talk about the problems);
- Call on the legal documents and the recommendations addressed to our governments and local authorities;
- Complain and react to the institutional bodies in the system;
- Use art, theatre and culture to raise attention to a problem;
- Organise public events;
- Write youth manifesto addressing the issue concerned;
- Gather the support the wider public, collect signatures or integrating them in public events.

What can advocacy do?

- Change attitudes
- Change beliefs
- Change behaviours
- Change realities

Tips and tricks for advocates:

- Research and analyse the problem and the needs and benefits of its solution;
- Plan and strategically organise your actions;
- Use facts, statistics, other relevant information;
- Unite with other advocates and make partnerships;
- Remind people of rule of law. Use legal documents and recommendations addressed to governments and local authorities;
- Use media campaigns and the help of PR experts;
- Point out new aspects of the existing problems, find a new angle of approach if yours does not work;
- Find famous supporters;
- Write reports;
- Use face-to-face approach;
- Negotiate;

- Find ways to increase your number of supporters in order to increase the legitimacy of your cause, as well as its impact;
- Address young people in positions of authority in your local/national bodies;
- Be prepared to be let down and always have a “plan B”;
- Do not complain about being let down - move on;
- Continue talking about the problem;
- Make your issue their issue

Through this, participants presented, discussed, researched, learned, shared, combined and defined ways and advice to advocate better which is exactly practising skills needed for advocacy.

Youth participation

While youth workers were understanding advocacy, the local authorities were understanding youth participation and were developing positive attitude for youth participation, discussing current situations in different realities related to youth participation, defining challenges, needs and ways to address them as well as getting to know the different rungs for youth participation.

On this session we had a guest from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (the Congress), Joanne Hunting, who gave input on the work of the Congress related to youth participation, particularly the Revised European Charter for Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life²⁰ and the related manual “Have your say!”²¹.

The educational team used this manual and an adapted activity from Compass²². In order to create this session and to address:

- What is youth participation?
- What are the benefits form youth participation?
- Where can young people participate?
- What are the steps of participation of young people?

The authorities, who participated in this meeting, have shown interest not just in participating in the workshop but in the youth participation in practice. They have presented through role play the way they work with young people in their realities showing that:

- They are motivated and are trying to make young people participate but they face problems on how to motivate and attract young people and youth workers to work in cooperation;
- Not all of their colleagues across Europe have the same attitudes. Sometimes even if someone is willing and motivated to foster youth participation, still there are others who make decisions and they are not always with the same attitude or motivation;
- Some authorities manipulate young people which make difficulties for the ones that are willing to really work with young people to reach them and to gain their trust;
- Recommendations and other documents related to youth participation don’t always find their way into the systems – often there is an informational gap between local authorities and governments.

²⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Coe_youth/Participation/COE_charter_participation_en.pdf

²¹ http://book.coe.int/EN/ficheouvrage.php?PAGEID=36&produit_aliasid=2303lang=EN

²² Compass, Council of Europe, (2012), Compass Manual for human rights education with young people, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>, page 236



The discussion that followed just confirmed that local authorities are not always hard to reach and do want to cooperate with youth workers and young people as well as confirmed Charter on Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life:

“Young people have the right and should have the opportunity to have a real say when decisions affecting them are being made at local and regional level. They should also be supported and given the space to be involved in all kinds of activities and actions. Of course, having a right is no good, unless young people have the opportunity, support and knowledge to use it. Local and Regional Authorities should support young people. Through this experience young people will gain the knowledge and experience to use these rights and opportunities to the maximum. This is participation and is one of the keys on which our democratic society is based. Enabling young people to participate in their community is not only about helping young people to have a say now. It is also about supporting young people to experience the opportunities and challenges of participation and being involved in community life. Participation is also important for personal development. Children and young people do not develop by being passive. It is only through participation that they develop self-confidence and skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable resources. Young people are learning - through experience – to make informed decisions, to develop stable relationships and to take on the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. If the participation is to be real and meaningful for young people it not only requires their commitment, it also requires the strong and lasting commitment by everyone else, in particular the Local and Regional Authorities, as the authorities closest to young people. Anything done to promote youth participation should take into account the diverse needs, circumstances, dreams and hopes of young people. And it should also include some fun!”²³

Cooperation between youth workers and local authorities

The cooperation between youth workers and local authorities was fostered and supported even long before the beginning of the meeting. There were certain rules and expectations from the participants in this meeting noted in the beginning of this report. These rules required youth workers and local authorities to make contacts and connections on a local level before even applying to participate in this meeting, to get to know each other, to discuss about this meeting, to make decisions if they will apply or not, to apply together and if chosen to participate – to come together to this meeting.

This gave space for persons who are closest to the young people in local realities to join forces and to dedicate themselves on making this cooperation better. Some of the participants knew the

²³ Have your say! Manual on the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex <http://book.coe.int>

local reality representative before coming to the meeting but the majority of them were strangers to each other and at the end of the meeting they left as partners, supporters and even friends.

The sessions in the meeting were planned that way to give them even more space and opportunity to get to know each other, to share and learn from one another, to define challenges and needs for their cooperation as well as together to make concrete local follow-up ideas related to access to social rights for young people. The meeting gave an opportunity to find answers to the following questions:

- Why do we need to cooperate?
- How do we cooperate and how can we cooperate?
- What do we need from each other in order to make this cooperation work?

The first two questions are already answered in the previous pages of the report. The thing that we will focus on at this point is the last question. According to participants:

Youth workers need from local authorities to:

- Be more open for communication and cooperation;
- To provide institutional and financial support youth initiatives and youth projects;
- To form Youth Councils and Youth Parliaments from where young people can have their say;
- To foster youth participation in different ways;
- To develop better monitoring system for the projects they support;
- To be the initiators of projects for young people;
- To be more transparent in their work with young people;
- To provide free facilities for youth organisations and young people;
- To keep their promises.

Local authorities need from youth workers to:

- Provide real needs assessment;
- To create projects based on the real needs of the young people in local realities;
- To have links, and connections as well as to support youth participation in their organizations too – to be real youth organisations;
- To have better evaluation of their projects;
- To ask for other kind of support not only financial;
- To share ideas for concrete actions;
- To understand that not all authorities have the same attitude towards this cooperation and to give time for things to change in authority bodies themselves;
- To keep their promises.

Once the participants have made these things clear and once they made promises to each other local authorities and youth workers started with the creation of the follow up ideas on a local level that they can do together or at the same time in order to make this cooperation reality²⁴.

²⁴ Local follow up plans are presented further in this report.



Y-SRN development

The development of our Y-SRN was something that was constantly addressed during the meeting but the sessions focusing directly on that were left for the end of this meeting, Ms. Vasilevska Trajkoska Blljana as official representative and founder of the network presented its current state, form, structure, members and activities.

The participants have shown interest in being part of the network and were willing to contribute to its development so after this presentation, the educational team made four groups with different topics and asked the participants to make a choice in which group they want to work and gave input to the basis of the network. The topics of the work were:

- Mission and field of work of the network;
- Activities and methods of the network;
- PR and communication;
- Membership in the network.

After the presentations of the working groups' outcomes, we selected one group of 10 people who continued with the work on the development of the network, taking into consideration all outcomes of the previous sessions of the meeting, while the others were working on the local follow up ideas.

The main outcomes from this work were;

- Integrating new members in the network and deepening the capacities of the network
- Clearing up the field and ways to work
- Defining the follow up activities related to the development of the network and the achievement of its aim and objectives.

On this meeting the network set up its basis, defined its topics of work and activities, its structure, strengthened its capacity by integrating new people and organisations in it, created partnerships, made itself more visible and accessible, created a list of tools that will be used in the future working communication with young people and other individuals and organisations, and made very important decisions on its growth and functioning. All in all the meeting had very important long term impact on the organisational development and management, the management of human resources in the network (sharing responsibilities), team-building, capacity-building, strategic planning and transparency and visibility and promoted the core values of the network itself.

At the very end of the meeting we discussed what kind of support we will need for continuing with activities in the future and mapped some available support and resources that can be used in the implementation of our follow-up activities. We all have agreed that we need educational and

financial support as well as institutional support from local, national, regional governmental, nongovernmental, public and/or private entities interested in or active in the youth social rights field.

Mara Georgescu presented the European Youth Foundation (EYF) as well as other types of support provided by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and each of the participants shared how they can support the activities of the organisations in the network and the network itself for the achievement of the access to social rights for young people. It was obvious that the network has a variety of capacities and can provide educational and institutional support to all its members and help in finding financial support from other parties since we don't have financial capacity at the moment.

IV. Dissemination of educational tools and materials

Throughout the meeting we disseminated some educational tools and materials: Compass, Have your say, Enter Dignityland! game, Charter on youth participation in local and regional life, and the T-kit on Social Inclusion.

V. Evaluation

The meeting had an initial, ongoing and final evaluation. At start we defined the expectations of the participants and had a plenary discussion on how the programme can address those expectations that helped in primary evaluation of the content of the sessions in the meeting. During the meeting we had an ongoing evaluation by conducting reflection groups, we observed and had plenary debriefings and reflections after several sessions, and we had a final evaluation questionnaires, and game - "Describe what you feel in one word" as tools to evaluate different aspects of the meeting – the programme and its content, the working methods, organisation, work and group dynamic and atmosphere.

The main results of the evaluation of the meeting by the participants are the following:

- Related to aim and objectives: most participants said that we have managed to achieve all of the set aim and objectives of the meeting but yet some noted that this is just the 1st step and we can still develop because we need more time for sharing and networking
- Regarding expectations and needs of participants: most of the participants said that their expectations were completely fulfilled but there were some participants whose expectations were lower at the start and by participating in this meeting they received even more than expected, and one participant had higher expectations that we did not manage to fulfill. Here are the expectations of participants defined at the beginning:

Expectations:

- To learn new things related to social rights, standards and mechanisms
- To establish contacts, partnerships and future cooperation
- To share experience and good practices
- To get new ideas and project opportunities and share experience about youth programs
- To define the basis of the network and what we can do in the future
- To Improve the cooperation between local authorities and social/youth workers
- To learn new tools and methods
- To get to know - how can we cooperate in regional projects
- To get to know new people, to have party and rest
- To learn from others

Regarding the flow and content of the programme and working methods, most participants said that the flow, the content and the used methods in the programme were very satisfying, interactive with no possibility to get bored or disinterested and that they would not make any changes. Most of the participants found the following sessions very useful: sessions on young people and social rights in local realities, sharing experience and good practices, advocacy, youth participation, the session on cooperation among youth workers and local authorities and creating a local follow - up plan together, the input of the lecturer on social rights as well as the input of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities representative and the session on defining ways of support in our work. Few of them did not like the input of the lecturer. Most of the participants liked working in small groups, the snowball activity on development of the cooperation between youth workers and local authorities, the Dignity Land game, the organizational bazar, the intercultural evening and the reflection groups. There were some proposals on giving more time to see the city, more time for sharing good practices, for networking and cooperation as well as for other things out of programme activities.

Related to the group, participants said that the atmosphere was great, friendly, everyone was kind, motivating, open minded, they had great understanding and cooperation, there were some minor conflicts in discussions but they managed to transform them and to make them influencing positively on the improvement of their cooperation.

Related to the team, most participants said that they liked how the team functioned and how the team organised and led activities, they also liked the flexibility of the team members, and they appreciate the work and the changes that the team made during the meeting to address every need and expectation of the participants.

VI. Outcomes

The outcomes of this meeting are, in brief:

- We raised awareness of on the existing European social rights standards, policies and mechanisms and how they can apply locally to promote the access to social rights (particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods);
- We deepened the competences and the capacity of the participants to advocate for improving the access to social rights;
- We made local authorities aware of youth participation, ways and means;
- We provoked, inspired and motivated participants (youth workers and local authorities) to communicate and cooperate (establish partnerships) for improvement of the access of social rights in local realities (particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods);
- We provided and defined ways to help in overcoming some obstacles in cooperation on local level that can practically be used as a tool for their work on improvement of social rights for young people in local realities;
- We defined shortcomings, needs and challenges in disadvantaged neighbourhoods regarding access to social rights for young people that will be used in setting priorities in our work as a network for improvement of access to social rights for young people;
- We strengthened the motivation of the network members to work on improvement of access to social rights for young people by providing them mutual support for this process
- We developed the basis/foundation of the network: its aim and objectives, communication, membership rules and benefits, its structure, working methods and principles;
- We developed the network's capacities by integrating new people and organisations within it;
- We defined the future steps that we will undertake as a network;

- We created concrete local follow-up ideas on access to social rights and defined ways of support in their realisation;
- We made concrete proposals on how to connect with ongoing and future activities in the Enter! project.

The Y-SRN had valuable outcomes from this meeting. It set up its basis, defined its topics of work and activities, its structure, strengthened its capacity by integrating new people and organisations in it, created partnerships, made itself more visible and accessible, created a list of tools that will be used in the future working communication with young people and other individuals and organisations, and made very important decisions on its growth and functioning. All in all, the meeting had a very important long term impact on the organisational development and management, the management of human resources in the network (sharing responsibilities), team building, capacity building, strategic planning and transparency and visibility and promoted the core values of the network itself.

VII. Follow-up activities

Follow-up activities at local level

The work of the local authorities and youth workers on designing local follow up ideas that they can do together to improve the access to social rights for young people gave birth to the following activities.

- Meetings with young people in local areas and integrate them in the work of the youth organizations and municipalities as well as in Y-SRN;
- Development of national social rights networks of young people and private and public entities and then their integration in the Y-SRN;
- Trainings, campaigns, workshops, peer educations, art festivals and creating documentary movies for raising awareness of social rights among young people and youth participation;
- Creation of a youth centre;
- Intercultural learning activities;
- Activities for preventing health problems of young migrants;
- Youth camps and campaigns for integration of disabled young people into societies;
- Creation of career counselling and support centres;
- Organising volunteering activities for young people in social centres;
- Fundraising activities for the on-going activities in the organisations.

Follow-up activities of the Y-SRN network

- Creation of a statute, PR and promotion of the network, attracting new members;
- Training youth focal points in different realities (young people both members in the network and ones who are not members);
- Conduction of organised assessment of the needs of young people in different realities;
- Creation of the working plan for 2013 and 2014 based on the assessment of the needs of young people in different realities;
- Educational and institutional support in further development of the local follow-up ideas and support their implementation in local realities;

Most of the participants in this meeting now are active partners and members in the network and are expected to take active participation in shaping the next joint activities that we as network will undertake as well as to further develop and implement the follow - up in local realities, to support each other and work together.

Some of them are in the coordination body and committed themselves on further development of the network and its work in the future. The participants who are not yet members of the network from different reasons have a role of partners and supporters of the local follow-up ideas and expect and will receive any kind of support needed from the organisers of the meeting in the frame of their capacities in implementation of those ideas in their local realities.

We would like the Youth Department to support us in our next step – making the presence of the young people in the network more visible and integrating more youngsters in the decision making bodies of the network (even though majority of them are already young people but are youth workers or local authorities representatives) as well as in further assessment of their needs in different realities that will help us to focus on currently most important needs of young people and set priorities for the work in near future and to prepare the annual program of activities based on those needs.

Some of the follow up activities have already started.

VIII. Conclusion

The well-being of young people matters to anybody. Sometimes things which are considered as obstacle can be transformed in a powerful tool that can change the reality and make it better for us and for generations to come.



THANK YOU!

Appendix I. Daily programme

Sunday 24th February

- Arrival of participants
- Welcome evening

Monday 25th February

08:00 – 09:00	Breakfast, registration and filling reimbursement forms
09:30 – 11:00	Opening and Introduction
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00	Background of the activity
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Team building
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 17:30	Organisations' bazar
17:30 – 18:00	Reflection
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner

Tuesday 26th February

08:00 – 09:00	Breakfast
09:30 – 11:00	Introduction to social rights, standards and mechanisms
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00	Social rights in practice
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Young people and social rights in local realities
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 17:30	Young people and social rights in local realities
17:30 – 18:00	Reflection
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner
21:00	Intercultural Evening

Wednesday 27th February

08:00 – 09:00	Breakfast
09:30 – 11:00	Advocacy and Youth Participation (parallel sessions)
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00	Advocacy and Youth Participation (parallel sessions)
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Advocacy and Youth Participation (presentation of results)
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 18:30	Cooperation between youth worker & local authorities / challenges and needs
17:30 – 18:00	Reflection
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner

Thursday 28th February

08:00 – 09:00	Breakfast
09:30 – 11:00	Enter Dignityland!
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00	Enter Dignityland!
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 Free afternoon, (Council of Europe visit - optional)
20:00 Dinner in the city

Friday 1st March

08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast
09:30 – 11:00 Update & discussion on the Youth Social Rights Network (Y-SRN)
11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00 Update & discussion on the Y-SRN
13:00 – 14:00 Lunch / Reimbursement
14:30 – 16:00 Development of concrete follow-up ideas and joint cooperation
Update & discussion on the Y-SRN
16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break
16:30 – 18:00 Development of concrete follow-up ideas and joint cooperation
Update & discussion on the Y-SRN
19:00 – 20:00 Dinner

Saturday 2nd March

08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast
09:30 – 11:00 Presentation of follow-up ideas, feedback and support measures
11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00 Presentation of follow-up ideas, feedback and support measures
13:00 – 14:00 Lunch
14:30 – 16:00 Y-SRN - Future and Follow-Up
16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break
16:30 – 17:30 Evaluation
17:30 – 18:00 Closing
19:00 – 20:00 Dinner
21:00 Farewell Party

Sunday 3rd March

- Departure of participants

Appendix II. Participants' list

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Drâmbărean Tudor

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Oleksandra Bakun

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Oleksandr Doniy

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Preparatory team:

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Samiuela Elone

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Lecturer

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Council of Europe

Mara Georgescu

Educational advisor, Youth Department

Joanne Hunting

Co-Secretary of the Current Affairs
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Regional Authorities of the Council of
Europe

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