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YouthPartnership

REPORT

Follow – Up Seminar

of

European Symposium on Diversity and Participation
'Participation in all its forms'

Larochette (Luxembourg), 3-5 December 2007

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Introduction

The European Symposium on Diversity and Participation 'Participation in all its forms' took place in Schengen (Luxembourg) in April 2007. It was organized by the Benelux countries in co-operation with the Partnership Programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe and gathered more than 130 participants from 43 countries. The symposium was an integral part of the European Youth Campaign "All Different – All Equal" for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation and it addressed one of the three main themes of this Campaign – participation. . A report of this event is available at the download centre of the symposium <http://tdte.jeunesse.lu/> .

In December 2007 the Follow-Up Seminar was held aiming at analyzing the results of the Schengen Symposium and drawing conclusions with regard to future events related to youth participation. The Seminar gathered 15 representatives of different actors involved in the organization of the Symposium: the Benelux countries, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, trainers, researchers and youth organizations.

The methodology of the Seminar was based on the exchange of views, opinions and drawing reflections with regard to the following questions:

- a. How to organize international youth events addressing the topic of youth participation (with regard to conceptual, methodological and technical aspects)?
- b. What can be learnt from the Schengen Symposium experience?
- c. How to ensure that events similar to the Schengen Symposium have a real impact on the promotion of participation?
- d. What is the role of youth organizations in the field of youth participation?
- e. What are the roles and responsibilities of different actors working on youth participation?
- f. How to support participation of young people with fewer opportunities?
- g. How to address the issue of non traditional forms of participation?

In general the Schengen Symposium has been evaluated by the organizers and the participants very positively. Content wise, the event proposed an interesting combination of different formats of work – theoretical inputs/presentations and series of workshops addressing various aspects of participation. It also brought together different actors in this field and created space for exchange of opinions and experience. Moreover, the working conditions ensured by the Service National de la Jeunesse Luxembourg were excellent. All these positive results have been mentioned through the duration of the Follow-Up Seminar, but nevertheless, the aspects that could have been improved were discussed to a larger extent than the positive outcomes. This was a deliberate choice of the Seminar participants as they felt they could learn more for the future by applying a more critical approach to various aspects of the Schengen Symposium and youth participation in general.

This report aims at summarizing the discussions held and presenting conclusions drawn by the Seminar participants. The comments and arguments described in this report do not represent the official position of any of the partners involved, but are a collection of opinions shared by the individual participants of the Follow-Up Seminar. As it has been mentioned in the previous paragraph, a more critical approach to different aspects of the Schengen event was chosen at the Seminar in Larochette. This is also reflected in this report, but it should however not be interpreted as the messages that the Schengen Symposium was not successful. The partners involved in organizing the event see the positive results that have been generated and value their contribution to promote youth participation across Europe.

The content of the report has been structured around two main areas – comments related to various aspects of the Schengen Symposium (included in Part 1) and comments related to youth participation in a more general sense (Part 2).

Part 1

The Schengen Symposium was a unique international event gathering young people, youth workers, experts and policy makers to discuss and explore various issues related to youth participation. Its organization was based on a partnership between national (Benelux countries) and international partners (the Council of Europe and the European Union), contributing with their experience and know-how about running similar activities. The Follow-Up Seminar focused on discussing the Schengen experience from the organizational point of view in order to sum up the experience made and generate ideas for the future, if a similar activity would be held in Europe.

Below a summary of comments, opinions and ideas is presented in relation to five main organizational aspects: preparation process, format and the content of the activity, profile of participants, recommendations worked out by the Symposium participants and results of the event.

Preparation process

1. The Benelux partners were invited by the Council of Europe to organize the Schengen Symposium in frame of the 'All Different – All Equal' Campaign. Although the Benelux countries have a substantial experience in organizing youth events, it was felt that **more support and guidance from the Council of Europe could have been provided** as this was the first such symposium in Luxemburg. The **involvement of the Campaign Steering Group would have been also welcome** to clarify the links of the Schengen Symposium with the two other symposia (addressing human rights and diversity) and other activities organized in frame of the whole Campaign
2. One of the obstacles in the organizational process was a variety of existing definitions and concepts related to youth participation in general. The organizers felt confused when looking for an approach that would be the most relevant in the context of an international symposium (participation in democratic processes? learning for participation? participatory projects?). Therefore they have pointed out that there is **a need for a standard concept or approach** that could be used when organizing events similar to the Schengen Symposium
3. The main assumption at the preparation stage was that the Schengen Symposium would ensure some political visibility of the topic of participation as well as the visibility for the 'All Different – All Equal' Campaign. Nevertheless **the focus of the event should have been defined more in detail** in order to improve the planning process of the Symposium programme and thus the visibility
4. The organizational process of the event involved several international partners, which ensured that different perspectives and experience were represented. There was also a variety of needs and expectations present and it has been felt that a satisfying way of addressing them has not been found sufficiently in spite of the substantial amount of time spent on discussing expectations of the actors involved
5. One of the partners involved in the Schengen Symposium preparation were youth organizations represented by the European Youth Forum delegates. As

there were different persons representing the European Youth Forum involved at different stages of the preparation process, it was rather **difficult to ensure continuity from the side of youth organizations**. Moreover, the involvement of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe in the organization of the Schengen Symposium would have been welcome

6. As the Schengen Symposium was an event addressing the problems of participation, **different ways of involving young people with fewer opportunities** were discussed. Although the event was attended by a few young people from a disadvantaged background, it is felt that more efficient ways could have been identified to support their involvement
7. The issue of participants' preparation was tackled in the Symposium preparation process only to a limited extent and it focused mainly on ensuring that selected participants got relevant documents before the event. The organizers expected that sending institutions would take the responsibility for preparing their delegates, but few did. That is why **more attention should be paid to participants preparation before an event in the future**

Format and the content of the activity

1. The format of the symposium was proposed during an event called 'The Struggle Goes On' organized one year before the 'All Different – All Equal' Campaign started, where the concept and the methodology of the whole Campaign were planned. At that event it was decided that there would be three thematic symposia in frame of the All Different – All Equal Campaign: one on diversity, one on human rights and one on participation. Therefore there was not much choice for organizers of the Schengen Symposium to implement some other format than a symposium
2. There were some discussions to which extent a format of symposium was efficient in achieving some of the planned objectives. As a result a **contradiction has been pointed out in relation to the methodology of a project planning**. The most common approach suggests that the first step in planning any project is defining needs and objectives and only then deciding on the right method or format of the event. In the case of the symposium however it seemed that the format of the activity was decided first and the objectives were planned at a later stage. This implies that these objectives had to fit the opportunities and limitations offered by a symposium as a format of an activity
3. The term 'symposium' is rooted in the ancient Greece and it was used for aristocratic banquets during which philosophical and political problems were discussed. Currently this term is often used to describe a meeting or a conference, where discussions on certain topics are held. There is however no clear definition on what 'symposium' is, therefore it can be interpreted in various ways. Several participants interpreted it as yet another training activity, so their expectations were linked strictly to skill development. Neither the Council of Europe nor other organisations have a definition of the word 'symposium', although many activities run by them are named this way. Therefore it is suggested that **the future calls for participants contain more detailed description about methodology aspects and expectations** concerning the preparation
4. The Schengen Symposium addressed the topic of participation, so one can ask a valid question on **how participatory a format of a symposium is**. It was underlined that although the part of the programme with inputs and

presentations did not offer an opportunity to participate to a wider public, the workshops offered plenty of space for expressing ideas and contributions that ensured a necessary balance

5. One of the objectives of the Schengen event was to work out a set of recommendations to promote participation of young people. This creates a dilemma **if a symposium was the right type of activity to produce recommendations** as an outcome
6. **Alternative formats to symposium could have been considered** for the Schengen event, one of them being a festival of good practice opened to all the interested participants, accompanied by 2-3 workshops or seminars addressing specific problems related to participation and open to participants with necessary expertise or experience (therefore the geographical or sex balance would not be a criterion anymore, only competencies)
7. **The Schengen event comprised various elements: political interventions, training elements and exchange of good practice**, which insured that different needs of various partners were met. However for some participants and actors involved this was an unusual combination, so there remains a valid question: which methodology should have been used to ensure that all these elements complement each other and are coherent? The main challenge seems to be drawing political conclusions from exchange of experience and practices, therefore a right methodology would need to be found or special expertise involved
8. **Exchange of good practices and experience was an important part of the Schengen Symposium.** A special catalogue of projects was prepared by the organizers and the necessary time during plenary meetings and workshops was allocated. The time outside the programme was also used by the participants to discuss their experience and exchange ideas. All these elements contributed to a good quality exchange, nevertheless the following challenges were identified:
 - a. Not all the projects presented in the plenary were not comprised in the catalogue with good practices
 - b. High number of participants were not directly involved in projects, but in youth work in general, so they could not share experience from their projects
 - c. Exchange of experience related to the All Different – All Equal Campaign took place to a limited extent as the majority of the participants were not involved in the Campaign in their own countries
 - d. A methodology on how to exchange good practices was missing. It would be necessary to help the participants to focus on the questions like: What worked well in your project? How can your experience be transferred to other contexts or places?

Profile of participants

1. The final selection of participants was done by the Council of Europe, basing on a standard set of criteria: motivation, experience, geographical and sex balance
2. The question was raised **to which extent the profile of selected participants was relevant to the expected results of the Schengen Symposium** as several accepted applicants had no previous knowledge on

concepts related to participation, some other were not familiar with 'All Different – All Equal' Campaign (although they received necessary documents in advance), still the others seem to visit lots of seminars and courses, but without clear plan on how to bring the results back to their organizations or communities

3. It was noticed that there were **a number of important groups of participants missing at the Symposium**. First of all there were no researchers present (except from an expert giving a theoretical input), so the link between fieldwork and research could not have been established. Another underrepresented category were grass root activists involved in local projects on participation, who could share their experience from their local perspective
4. **Selection of participants** for events like the Schengen Symposium brings a **common dilemma**: should there be invited participants with more experience and these, who attended many similar activities before (stressing continuity) or should there be invited these, who had not taken part in many similar events before, but still have some experience in that field of youth work (stressing inclusion and openness). It is believed it is possible to achieve a balance and to be able to accommodate both groups if a necessary preparation is made and a relevant methodology used

Recommendations from the Symposium

Workshops organized during the Schengen Symposium focused, to a large extent, on elaborating recommendations related to youth participation. As a result recommendations were produced by all the working groups, which were presented at the closing session of the Symposium.

1. There is a dilemma how these recommendations can be used as:
 - a. There is a high number of recommendations. Was it possible to bring this number down in a participatory way?
 - b. Many of the recommendations are general and they do not indicate clearly what should be done and by whom
 - c. Recommendations relate to various actors and levels: local, national, international
 - d. The nature of recommendations is various: some are political, other economical, some relate to structures, legislation etc.
2. The organizers pointed out that there was **no clarity on what kind of recommendations were expected** from the participants, which could be the reason that the recommendations vary in nature to such a large extent
3. Although many recommendations were produced, **there should have been created space** either during workshops or in the plenary programme **to discuss the role of participants in bringing the recommendations to the relevant stakeholders** and monitoring the process of implementing them. Therefore an impression could have been made that the participants were invited to write recommendations for other actors, but without taking responsibility for following up these recommendations themselves
4. Writing recommendations requires from the participants some special knowledge and a set of necessary skills. The **selection process did not include criteria related to drawing up recommendations**, therefore it is not clear to which extent the Symposium participants were actually ready for a

task of preparing recommendations. Although the support of trainers and other experts was provided, the necessary skill development was not ensured at the Symposium, therefore the results achieved (the quality of recommendations) should not come as a surprise

5. Yet **another aspect of writing recommendations that need to be considered is the methodology** of doing it. It is a real challenge to produce a good set of recommendations with a large group of people in a short period of time, therefore a relevant way of working should have been set up. The Schengen event used workshops as the main space to write recommendations, but there was no common space to discuss the recommendations of specific groups with all the participants
6. Looking at the amount of recommendations or declarations produced by numerous events all over Europe, one can ask how efficient these are. It seems they have mainly a symbolic value and do not bring desired results, as there are no mechanisms established to follow up and monitor these recommendations or declarations. That is why organizers of events like the Schengen Symposium need to address the following questions:
 - a. Why do we think new recommendations / declaration are needed?
 - b. To whom shall these be addressed?
 - c. Who should be responsible for bringing these to the relevant actors?
 - d. Who and how should ensure the follow up and the monitoring?

Results of the symposium

1. The participants of the Follow-Up Workshop concluded that the Schengen Symposium has contributed to **raising awareness at national levels with regard to European youth policies** and it **created an opportunity for the participants to bring European issues to their local contexts**. Moreover, it **helped the participants to re-discover the value of their work** as well as reflect on their achievements in youth work
2. The dissemination of the Symposium results among various stakeholders should involve the participants of the event to a large extent. It is **participants' responsibility to ensure that these results reach their organizations and local realities** as the organizers have neither resources nor the capacity to monitor that
3. There remains a question however about what kind of **support or stimulation is needed so that the dissemination takes place** in the local contexts. It has been suggested for example:
 - a. to provide guidelines or ideas for dissemination of a symposium results
 - b. to publish on-line participants' dissemination plans. If these plans become quasi-public, it stimulates their owners to implement them and helps the organizers to monitor the dissemination process by contacting the participants and asking for updates
 - c. to contact the participants after the event and ask for an update on how the dissemination process is developing
 - d. to reimburse participation costs after the dissemination plan has been implemented could be considered

- e. to select participants on the basis of their plans for dissemination of results
- 4. A possible tool for dissemination of event results is writing reports. Each organization or institutions has their own demands and needs regarding these documents, so it is **not possible to propose a set of standard guidelines**. It is not clear however to which extent young persons coming from disadvantaged backgrounds have resources and skills to write reports or to plan some other ways of result dissemination
- 5. **Writing a report should not be considered a follow up of an event** if its provisions are not used or implemented by a relevant stakeholder. Many organizations report that it is a serious challenge to find ways of implementing results of various events, to which their representatives are sent as these are results are too numerous and in some cases contradictory or irrelevant
- 6. Some participants and institutions consider good practices easy to disseminate as some approaches or ideas can be simply used in different contexts. There is however **a risk related to copying these ideas – not all of them can be transferred to other contexts** or the transfer process need some special preparation

Part 2

Working on youth participation involves a variety of approaches, methodologies, actors, levels etc. The Schengen Symposium was just one of many initiatives in this area, that is why the Follow-Up Seminar participants addressed also more general problems related to participation of young people. They exchanged their opinions with regard to approaches to participation explored during the Symposium and the role of different stakeholders in fostering the involvement of young people at various levels. Moreover they shared the views on policy issues and research and generated ideas on how to support youth participation from different perspectives.

Symposium approaches to participation

1. Participation can be approached from different perspectives. The organizers of the Symposium see that the event has put the emphasis on the following approaches:
 - a. **Participation as an inclusion** in different processes in the society
 - b. **Participation as sharing power** between public authorities and young people
 - c. **Learning what is participation** (in opposition to learning how to participate – a concept proposed by Phillippe Neveu)
2. It has been felt that during the Symposium **a lot of attention was paid to youth participation in democratic processes**, although the preparatory documents addressed a variety of aspects related to youth participation. The reason for using this limited approach to such an extent could be the specific experience and the background of the participants and input persons (who work with participation in democratic or political processes). One could also conclude that this topic was the most relevant for the profile of selected participants, although there is a growing tendency to approach youth participation from a broader perspective (e.g. Commissions' Communication from September 2007)
3. One of the challenges related to youth participation is the **involvement of vulnerable groups** e.g. persons with disabilities or coming from economically disadvantaged background. This problem however was addressed to a very limited extent during the Symposium in spite of the fact that two workshops aimed at exploring this topic more in detail
4. The Symposium discourse showed clearly **a gap in relation to two pillars of participation: rights and obligations**. Many arguments were generated in favour of giving rights to young people, while the issue of obligations was neglected. Therefore there is a need of bridging this gap and addressing the concept of youth participation from both perspectives: rights and obligations and relating it to the concept of citizenship
5. There is a big **need for discussions on youth participation at a grass-root level** in relation to the role and responsibilities of specific actors, aims and methods, resources available. It is not sure to which extent these debates are held across Europe as there is no information available at an international level. Some youth workers consider this lack of information to be a barrier in exchanging good practices and ideas between different parts of Europe

6. There is some doubt with regard to **democratic legitimacy of youth representation towards public authorities** as it is based on young people being members of various organizations, institutions or bodies. Statistical data (e.g. collected by Eurobarometer) shows clearly that the majority of young people remain outside structures, which means that their interests and opinions are not represented by their colleagues coming from these structures. This problem must not be ignored by decision-makers looking for ways of involving young people
7. As the traditional forms of participation are in decline, a **new understanding of what participation is**, seems to be essential. Adults usually look at participation from a perspective of their own experience (which is often related to membership in some organizations or movements) and they often declare that it is a challenge to work with new forms of participation related to such new developments as the internet technology (e.g. chat rooms, discussion fora) or civic actions (boycotts, non-formal groups etc.)
8. The experience in promoting new forms of participation varies a lot among different groups, institutions or organizations. Some initiatives become a success (e.g. chat of an EU Commissioner Viviane Reding with young people in 2004, young people's sms-action in Poland before presidential elections in 2007 etc.), some other have very few results (e.g. on-line consultations with young people on specific policy issues). There is however very **little evidence available with regards to what works and what does not with regard to non traditional participation**
9. **Youth participation at an international level is limited by several obstacles** like language skills or insufficient level of knowledge about European structures and processes. This continues to be a dilemma, as there have not been identified efficient ways of addressing this issue
10. The experience of Symposium participants reaffirmed that **young people show more interest in participation in projects addressing specific themes** like environment, culture etc. than in holding theoretical discussions or being involved in managerial or political positions (sitting in the boards, councils etc.). This observation could help to identify effective ways of involving more young people in different activities. Their participation could start with a sport club or music club activity and then be stimulated to expand into other areas, e.g. voluntary work, community actions etc.
11. **The key to participation of young people is ownership.** Young people feel much more motivated to get involved in various activities if they feel they have a real say in relation to different aspects of these initiatives
12. For many young people a first participation experience is made in their local context (a community, school, youth club etc.), therefore **youth participation should be a primary concern of the local actors** like public authorities, youth workers and youth organizations
13. There are **different traditions of youth work across Europe and consequently different understanding what it involves** and what can be called youth participation. It has been found that for example sport activities are considered youth participation initiatives in some countries (e.g. Germany), while in some other they are not considered as typical youth participation projects (e.g. Luxembourg, Belgium). Therefore comparing statistical data coming from across Europe is not possible. Moreover, such a differentiation has an impact on which groups of young people have influence on the policy making processes in a country

Youth organizations and participation

1. Many international youth organization reach only a top layer of young people: well educated, speaking English, having many opportunities in life. This brings again a question of to which extent these organizations can be considered representative for the majority of young people living in Europe
2. Several critics point out that **youth organizations are not open to all young people**. However one may argue that organizations are established in order to achieve a specific aim or social change, therefore they target a very specific group, who shares organization's values and who can contribute to reaching the objectives. It is therefore not realistic to expect that an organization would be open to all young people as not all young people share the ideas and objectives of specific movements or organizations
3. Numerous organizations declare that they are open to young people or to vulnerable groups of youth. In practice however, one can observe that the conditions of involvement that they offer or demands that they have do not support youth participation. That is why the organizations express their **need to get advice and know-how on how to create better participation conditions and infrastructure** or more youth friendly structures so that they can foster meaningful participation within the organization
4. It is observed that youth coming from an immigrant background is involved in activities of youth organizations to a limited extent. This could be explained on one hand by cultural factors, but on the other one by limited support from families, schools and youth workers to participate. It is therefore proposed to **initiate an exchange of experience** between national and local organizations that have found **successful ways of involving immigrant young people** in projects and initiatives, especially organizations running their projects in frame of the All Different – All Equal Campaign
5. Youth organizations are often aware of the **new developments in the area of youth participation** (as the number of their members decreases) and they are actively looking for new ways of involving young people. Some of them have already found interesting ways of addressing this issue, so the **exchange of experience in this field** would be necessary so that other organizations could learn and get inspired
6. **Youth organizations remain one of the most important actors in the field of youth participation**. Their strength is generating and passing on knowledge and experience, they also provide necessary continuity in the process of co-operation with other actors, especially public authorities
7. There are **several barriers to participation within youth organizations**. Youth workers often point out that organizational structures are not flexible enough to respond to the needs of young people. Another obstacle is an inefficient flow of information failing to provide relevant information to the interested young people
8. **Tools like a youth card could be used to a larger extent**. These cards should not be limited to price reductions for cinema tickets, but should offer more opportunities. These cards could be distributed among young leaders and volunteers as a way of showing appreciation for their effort
9. **Youth organizations should be encouraged to initiate more discussions** about

- a. their role in promoting youth participation
- b. possible way of co-operation with non-formal groups or non-organised youth
- c. how open for meaningful participation they are

Public authorities and participation

1. There are many initiatives across Europe that foster youth participation among young people. There are however **not enough efforts done to promote youth participation among other stakeholders like public authorities**, for many of which it is a new approach, therefore they would need more support and introduction on what participation is and how to promote it
2. Public authorities can benefit greatly from an active involvement of young citizens, therefore these **authorities have an important role to play in a local and national context**. Their main responsibility is to support youth participation in different processes (by e.g. creating a framework for participation or providing resources) on one hand and to initiate and co-ordinate participatory youth projects together with young people on the other hand
3. If participatory projects are initiated and co-ordinated by public authorities together with young people, it is necessary to **insure that young people have an ownership of these projects** and a real influence on the planning, implementation, evaluation and follow up (no tokenistic participation)
4. Promoting youth participation in a local or a national context should be based on a **partnership between different actors** and there are many examples of interesting initiatives in this field. One of them is a co-operation between the Ministry of Youth (of the Flemish Community in Belgium) and youth organizations working on diversity and inclusion. The Ministry has set up a platform to discuss their experience and to initiate common projects. The Ministry provides support to the platform, but refrains from imposing ideas or solutions. As a result, many interesting projects have been implemented, e.g. a scout organization for migrant youth

Youth policy

1. **Youth policy making process needs to insure that the interests of all young people are represented** – organized and non organized youth. As the traditional structures become less and less popular among young people and the role of non traditional forms of participation is growing, finding a solution to the presented above challenge becomes a real concern
2. It is observed that a **limited number of local or grass-root organizations are interested in joining national fora dealing with policy issues**. In some cases the main reason for this could be simply lack of information about existing opportunities. But in some other cases it is a choice of these organizations to focus on project based work and not on policy issues due to shortage of resources, lack of know-how or just lack of interest
3. There are many policy documents at an international, national or regional level with regard to youth in general or youth participation. This abundance offers on one hand a variety of tools and ideas for policy makers and practitioners on how to deal with specific issues. On the other hand it can be

considered an obstacle, as it requires substantial amount of time and necessary level of knowledge to find the right document and to identify the ways in which it can be used in a local or national context. Therefore **a review of existing policy documents would be helpful**

4. Some projects or initiatives like symposia, seminars and training courses addressing the topic of participation aim at influencing policy makers and policy making processes in order to improve the situation of young people. It is however **not clear how the conclusions from concrete projects can be effectively integrated into youth policies at different levels**

Youth research

1. Youth researchers play an important role in promotion of youth participation, therefore **there need to be more opportunities created for exchange of opinions** and experience between researchers, young people, youth workers and public authorities. All of these stakeholders can benefit greatly from each others expertise and inspire each other to look for new solutions and approaches
2. The **results of youth research need to be widely available to all other stakeholders** and should be presented in a relevant form (with emphasis on findings that can be used in practice). Practitioners and public authorities representatives are interested in using these results in their every day work, they encounter however difficulties in understanding a scientific jargon used in various publications or difficulties in identifying how a specific conclusion can be implemented in their own context
3. It becomes a common practice to exchange good practices and experience between different partners. This exchange however remains at the level of an information exchange and very seldom transfers into knowledge. Therefore a bigger involvement of the scientific community is needed in the events where various experience is exchanged in order to:
 - a. **Look for ways to use this experience** in their research
 - b. Help the participants to **transfer the information into evidence based knowledge** that can be used in other contexts and by other actors (e.g. politicians)
 - c. Get involved in the **process of valorization** of results of activities
4. Youth research seems to get little recognition in the scientific community (in general) as there is very limited funding available for this area of research. Lack of funding however can be linked to the fact that policy makers responsible for allocating funds do not see the importance of the youth research and in consequence do not consider youth research as a priority area. This means that there is **more visibility needed for the youth research sector** and better communication of the results of their work with policy makers and other stakeholders

Other actors

1. **Youth participation begins in families, schools and in a local community.** Therefore the involvement of parents, teachers, youth workers, public officers and local politicians is essential

2. Schools reach the majority of young people in Europe. That is why **new ways of using this channel in a more efficient manner need to be identified**, especially that the level of youth participation varies among different schools. In some places students are involved in decision making processes (e.g. they decide on the school budget together with the school management, teachers and parents), in some other places student councils continue to be tokenistic bodies, contributing to a good image of the school to an outside world, but not giving a real chance for involvement
3. **International organizations** like the Council of Europe or the European Union have an important role to play in the field of promoting youth participation, especially by their involvement in **opinion making**. Moreover they should explore and propose different concepts and methods (like the All Different – All Equal Campaign) that can be used at different levels: international, national and local
4. The above mentioned institutions have an impressive record of producing knowledge in a form of training curricula, methodologies, methods, publications and other resources. At local levels however, these tools or resources are still not well known due to a language barrier or lack of awareness that these tools and resources exist. Therefore it is necessary that both: the Council of Europe and the European Union **revise the existing practices for dissemination of tools and resources** and try to identify more efficient measures in this respect

How to support youth participation - suggestions

1. Specific groups have different interest benefits in relation to youth participation. Therefore it is necessary to **generate relevant arguments for each of these groups** with regard to how they can benefit from youth participation
2. There needs to be a **shift in relations between young people and adults**. For this reason adults working with young people in different capacities (e.g. youth workers, teachers, administrators, co-ordinators and parents) should get an opportunity to get relevant empowerment, skill development and support in order to work on youth participation more efficiently (by participating in some training activities, networks, support groups, coaching etc)
3. Partnerships and close co-operation of various actors is necessary for fostering youth participation. That is why there should be **more initiatives taking place to bring these actors together** and to create space for discussions regarding common aims and concerns and possible co-operation
4. **Various initiatives and projects** relate to youth participation in different ways – some of them help developing necessary skills and competencies, others provide some knowledge, still others create participation conditions and infrastructure etc. All of them however contribute to the strengthening of youth participation, so all of them **should get relevant support** (also these, which seem not to have a direct impact on participation)
5. **Schools need to work on developing ‘a culture of participation’**. In practice this would mean that they include in their curricula not only learning about citizenship and participation, but also development of skills needed to get involved in decision making processes or projects. Moreover, the schools

should create a right environment to practice these skills so that 'learning about participation without participation' is prevented

6. **Institutions dealing with traditional forms of participation** (e.g. schools, youth clubs, after-school programmes, youth councils) **should be using non formal education to a larger extent** as this educational approach stimulates involvement and helps to acquire skills needed for a meaningful participation
7. There **should be created a portfolio on participation** (similar to the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers launched in Schengen by the Directorate of Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe. The main aim of the portfolio would be to help to understand the most important aspects of youth participation and to stimulate different actors to find most relevant ways of working in this field
8. There exists numerous resources, texts and analysis related to youth participation available at different levels, there is however no framework or structure that would help to find relevant materials, help to interpret them and use them in specific contexts. Some youth workers indicate that a **commented bibliography would provide some necessary guidance**
9. The Partnership programme **should develop a model training course on participation**, which would target two main stakeholders: youth and adults
10. **Provisions of Agenda 2020 should address the issue of youth participation** in Europe and should focus on the situation of young people coming from the migrant background as they have special needs with regard to their participation and integration

Conclusions

The discussions held at the Follow Up Seminar tackled a variety of issues, which have been summarised in the presented above report.

Main conclusions in relation to the organisational aspects of the Schengen Symposium can be formulated as follows:

- There is a need for more co-operation between the Council of Europe and organisers of events similar to the Schengen Symposium in order to pass necessary know-how, clarify links with related activities and help identifying most relevant concepts and approaches
- Events on participation should be promoting participation values in different dimensions (not only in its content, but also in methodology, participants selection etc.), so there needs to be made more effort to involve young people coming from background with fewer opportunities
- It is necessary to explore, which format of an activity would fit best the objectives, expected results and profile of participants of this activity. The organisers also need to reflect, to which extent the selected format promotes participation
- A preparation process of future symposia or similar activities should include planning about how the results of this event will be used, by whom and in which contexts. It should be also reflected upon, if these results can be achieved taking into account the format, methodology, resources and skills / expertise available

Main conclusions in relation to youth participation in general can be formulated as follows:

- There exist many different concepts, theories, approaches to youth participation. Youth organisations, public authorities and other stakeholders feel confused when trying to find the most relevant ones and are looking for some guidelines or frameworks that would help them to identify the most effective ways of work on participation in their own environment
- Although non traditional forms of youth participation seem to develop in a dynamic way, there is still much attention given to traditional forms like youth councils, political involvement, organisations etc. Therefore actors involved in promoting youth participation should focus more on new developments in order to stimulate the forms of participations that are the closest to young people
- Young people show a lot of interest in participating in projects and activities related to topics like sport, culture etc. Therefore there should be many opportunities created for these kind of involvement as it may stimulate further participation in other areas like decision making, community development etc.
- Actors involved in work on youth participation (e.g. young people, public authorities, organisations, educational institutions, youth policy makers, youth researchers etc.) have different expertise, experience and resources available. That is why partnerships, exchange of information and other forms of co-operation should be encouraged and supported, using the existing tools

like the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policies offering numerous opportunities for information, experience and knowledge exchange

- Young people should have an opportunity to participate not only in public or social life, but in all other domains like schools or family lives. Therefore it is necessary to promote a 'culture of participation' that would give a chance to young people not only to learn about participation, but also to practice it in various areas. There is a need to involve adults in this process by supporting them with empowerment and skill development

Annex 1

List of Participants

Follow – Up Seminar

of the European Symposium on Diversity and Participation
'Participation in all its forms'
Larochette (Luxembourg), 3-5 December 2007

	Name	Organisation / Institution
1	Berben, Meike	AEGEE (Netherlands)
2	Bodeving, Claude	Service National de la Jeunesse (Luxembourg)
3	Caluwaerts, Lieve	Youth Division of the Flemish Government (Belgium)
4	Dufour, Thierry	Cabinet of the Youth Minister of the French Speaking Community and Bureau International Jeunesse (Belgium)
5	Grette, Anne-Lise	Ministry of Children and Equality (Norway)
6	Meersschaert, Els	JINT (Belgium)
7	Meisch, Nico	Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration (Luxembourg)
8	Metz, Georges	Service National de la Jeunesse (Luxembourg)
9	Meys, Armand	Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (Belgium)
10	Schild, Hanjo	Council of Europe
11	Schroeder, Ralph	Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration (Luxembourg)
12	Suel, Sandrine	Salto Youth Participation
13	Vandekeere, Michel	Observatoire de l'enfance, de la jeunesse et de l'aide à la jeunesse (Belgium)
14	Vlandas, Sylvie	European Commission
15	Goździk-Ormel, Żaneta	rapporteur