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Debate: Quality of democratic participation at regional level

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

29 March 2017

Statement of Razwan Popai, Member of the youth council of the province of Frisia, Netherlands

During my work as Youth Commissioner of the King in the province of Fryslân, I got caught up in the world of politics.

In the province of Fryslân we hold an annual session of the provincial parliament, where young individuals can set their first steps in civil society. A lot of these youngsters have the potential for growth and to be selected for the Modal European Parliament, a simulation of a session of the European Parliament.

Since 2016 the province of Fryslân has initiated a youth commissioner.

This individual is chosen within the regional simulation sessions, on the basis of their debating, political and other skills.

Here I stand before you now. I was chosen.

As the Youth Commissioner of the King I enjoy the privilege to follow the Commissioner of the King and join him on a number of occasions. You've got to learn the daily routine of a commissioner and how to apply this knowledge to recruit other youngsters in the world of politics.

To me, the ideal society, is one, that used democracy to its full extent and when it upholds its true meaning: Demos Kratos (the people decide).

Thereby the tasks of the Youth Commissioner can be summarised with: to strive towards a civil society that uses democracy to its full potential, by recruiting young individuals to participate.

A Youth Commissionership brings with it, a great responsibility and, let us not forget, an example to others. You are the representative of the youth demographic.

This is the reason that you grab every chance, and every opportunity that arises.

With that, I have become a member of the organizational team for the Friesian Youth Parliament. I was chairman and organizer of the debate team at a community college. I'm was a participant and later on the chairman of the Model European Parliament, and furthermore, I am currently setting up a Friesian Youth Council in cooperation with the members of the Provincial Council.

This Frisian Youth Council is a politically independent organisation that will discuss provincial topics between two and four times a year.

Next to an advisory power it includes the right to an annual, training activity on democracy, meeting techniques and debating to be part of the setting of the Frisian Youth Council.

But how do we reach these youngsters?

E-democracy to date, is an answer to many questions. After these young individuals have participated in an activity where they have used their (many) capacities, we go into a recruitment mode. After an event, we will approach them through the social media and add them to an, Alumni group. There are many politically active youngsters in this group that can help newcomers achieve their potential and goals.

The group daily deliberate informally about current events. This will broaden their horizons. A lot of group members will decide on which political colour they themselves are and join the appropriate youth organization.

Representing the youth is crucial to politics. Not just because we are the future, but because we also are the present.

Thank you