SEMINAR REPORT

Exploring different models of democratic participation: fostering youth participation through the European Youth Card

17-18 Oct 2019 Strasbourg
Exploring different models of democratic participation: fostering youth participation through the European Youth Card

17-18 October 2019
European Youth Centre Strasbourg - France

Organised by the Council of Europe Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility Through the Youth Card and the European Youth Card Association (EYCA)

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USEFUL RESOURCES & PRESENTATIONS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
Welcome Session
The Seminar opened with representatives from the partner organisations and from the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe sharing some welcoming words with the group of participants.

Ms. Natalja Turenne, representative of the Council of Europe, underlined the importance of the Partial Agreement Seminars as spaces for mutual learning between institutions, governments, youth and civil society organisations and for giving visibility to what partners and member states from the Council of Europe are doing in their own contexts. She also mentioned the importance of the topic for the Seminar and how the European Youth Card itself is a tool to have direct and continuous contact with young people and their aspirations. Finally, Ms. Natalja Turenne highlighted the importance of the Partial Agreement Seminars for EYCA in collecting ideas from participants as elements that can enrich and improve the work of the Council of Europe and EYCA.

Mr. Dominik Scherrer, representative of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, expressed the relevance of the topic for the Seminar connecting it with the importance of having more opportunities to discuss youth and youth participation. He shared information about the decisive role of the Advisory Council on Youth as a progressive participatory space for young people in decision making processes where youth organisations and representatives of the member states sit together to decide on the priorities and the budget use for the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. Mr. Scherrer also referred to the results achieved in the last meeting of the Joint Council on Youth (October 2019) where young people and member states decided together on the next Strategy of the Council of Europe 2020-2030 in the Youth Sector and stressed that one of the priorities of this new Strategy is revitalising pluralistic democracy and strengthening youth and youth participation within our democratic systems, one of the most important challenges that democratic institutions in Europe are facing, highlighting the role that the Youth Card can actually play to build democratic societies.

Mr. Manel Sanchez, Director of the European Youth Card Association (EYCA), highlighted the relevance that the Seminars have for EYCA as learning moments where, by having various professional profiles (NGO, EYCA members, policy makers, researches and young people) in one room coming from various backgrounds, EYCA can actually collect many ideas to improve its work.

After the opening remarks, the facilitator was invited to recall the main objectives of the Seminar, to introduce the programme and to collect existing expectations amongst the participants.
The group was composed by 48 participants, including organisers. The existing diversity of professional profiles, nationalities, experiences and expectations was an absolute richness for the Seminar and for the exchange of practices and for the formulation of the key messages during the second day.

**NATIONALITIES**
- 27 nationalities: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Greece, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey.

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS**
- 3 Youth Experts/Researchers
- 8 Youth Workers/Trainers
- 6 Member/Participant of Grassroots Movement/Protest/Initiative
- 8 Policy Makers/Government Representatives
- 8 Engaged in a member organization of EYCA
- 2 active young people not part of any organization nor movement

**PARTICIPATION IN PREVIOUS SEMINARS**
- 10 people participated for the first time
- 9 people participated for the second time
- 6 people participated four or more times

**DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES PARTICIPANTS HAVE RECENTLY ENGAGED IN**
- protests
- Drafting legislation
- Civil actions / signing petitions
- Voted in last European elections
- Campaigning

**MAIN EXPECTATIONS SHARED BY THE PARTICIPANTS**
Key Note Speakers

ONDREJ BARTA
Pool of European Youth Researchers - PEYR

“Youth Participation & Youth Mobility in Europe”

Ondra Barta is a freelance youth researcher working both on international and national levels and within 3 main topics volunteering (research within the INSPIRIT project), youth mobility within the EU programmes (research and coordination in the RAY Network) and to youth participation (where we participated in the development of the methodological and analytical assistance to the Structured Dialogue and Youth Dialogue). He also conducts evaluation of youth policy programmes and of single projects. Finally, Mr. Barta, with his knowhow on youth-related research findings and practical hands on in some projects as an evaluator works also as a consultant on youth-related topics.

The focus of Mr. Barta was to analyse the relationship between youth participation and youth mobility by exploring how youth mobility impacts/shapes the participation of young people in society, notably in political life. He started by examining the main governmental institutions that are supporting youth mobility in Europe such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission along with the United Nations and its agencies and by scanning various formats of youth mobility that can be long or short term, European or global, Bilateral or Multilateral, One-off or Repeated, National or International and can take different forms of volunteering, youth exchanges, travelling, etc. Afterwards, Mr. Barta focused on sharing research on understanding the implications of youth mobility for youth participation, and gave special attention to:

i) the significant indirect effect of short- and long-term mobility in participating on EU issues, through European identification, in other words, the young people that have had an experience abroad are able to identify themselves as European hence they are more willing to take part in issues that are across boarders;

ii) young people develop key competences including participation-related areas;

iii) volunteering as a specific type of mobility leads to direct involvement of citizens in local development with very identifiable consequences in the fostering of civil society and democracy;

iv) in 2010 young people who took part in the Youth in Action programme have a significantly higher vote in the European Elections than their peers.

After the presentation, the group engaged in a dialogue with the speaker that allowed a deeper reflection on how to increase mobility opportunities for disadvantaged young people, possibilities of development of transgenerational mobility opportunities involving adults and young people and the importance of investing in quality research to understand the criteria, the impact and the actual quality of the current youth mobility opportunities.

2 The sources of the implications presented can be consulted on the presentation shared by Mr. Ondra Barta that you can find under the section Useful Resources and Presentations in this report.
JULIA FERNANDEZ
Rejuvenating politics of CoE initiative & EYCA Youth Panel representative

“A personal experience of youth engagement”

Julia Fernández is a Spanish student of the Dual BA in Law and Political Science in the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Since the past year Julia has been engaging in various spaces at local, national and European level. Currently, she is the Spanish Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe involved in one of the projects that she will speak about - Rejuvenating Politics. She is also one of the 10 members of the EYCA’s Youth Panel and through EYCA she is the representative to the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe. She also led various actions in Madrid with the organization Equipo Europa to raise awareness and promote the participation of young people in the last European elections.

In her presentation Julia Fernandez shared the way she got engaged and how fast she understood the difficulties of other young people, her peers, to engage and participate in various levels and/or in cooperation with institutions. Along with the fact that young people believe that the impact that they can have in society is very restricted and their perception of a clear mismatch between what they claim for and what decision makers are actually doing, she focused that there is a clear issue of outreach lived by institutions, in other words, there is a lack of visibility of the existing opportunities for young people to participate in interesting and decisive spaces of decision making.

She focused on the importance of mainstreaming youth participation at local level by recognising and giving more visibility to non-conventional forms of participation, by connecting local movements and initiatives with European ones and by reaching young people in places where young people are, for instance at schools and universities.

In the interaction with the audience the issues discussed were mainly around the importance of working in an integrated and articulated way amongst local, national and European levels of action, the importance of raising awareness on the existing rights and keeping young people active, involved, curious and proactive to stand for their rights and, finally, on the importance of having opportunities for competence development in topics related with democracy and youth participation.

European Youth Card and Youth Participation best practices

MRS. MIRIAM TEUMA
Aġenzija Żgħażagħ, Malta

“Fostering youth participation in democratic life”

Miriam Teuma brought the experience of Aġenzija Żgħażagħ in Malta and how they see the European Youth Card as a tool that goes beyond travel and discounts and has been actually used to foster youth participation. She shared some examples of projects that are put in place for young people notably through voting, volunteering, engaging young people in different structures and informing young people about civil and political rights. A common aspect between these projects are their youth-led dimension –

3 More details of the projects shared by Miriam Teuma can be found under the section Useful Resources and Presentations in this report.
from debates, trainings and workshops to the creation of the youth councils and the advocacy movements until approval to vote from the age of 16 in local and national elections.

Mrs Teuma stated that the core of the European Youth Card has become more participation and learning mobility than discounts, since mobility provides young people with the opportunity to be in contact, get informed and involved in democratic processes outside their own countries. She also referred the importance of youth work in this process, youth workers able to establish trust relations and support young people in their path of developing competences, running activities and being proactive.

The interaction between the group of participants and Mrs. Teuma allowed space to discuss the importance of direct and continuous communication with young people to get them involved in the campaign to vote from the age of 16 through newsletters, e-mails and social media and how it allows the organization to raise awareness and give visibility to young people’s voices.

MAITE HERNANDEZ
Comunidad de Madrid, Spain

“Youth information services and the EYCA”

She presented 5 practices implemented by the Comunidad Madrid that go under the priorities of the Directorate General for Youth of the region, namely: healthy leisure/healthy lifestyle, support of nonformal education and the recognition of young people’s talent. The practices presented were: 1) Summer swimming pools; 2) Thyssen Museum: visit + workshop; 3) Talks about youth-related subjects; 4) Free courses (nonformal education); 5) Music contest – New Talent.

The participation of young people within these projects occur in two main dimensions - either from a “beneficiary” point of view where young people are provided with a service or opportunity to enjoy/ to benefit from an opportunity, from a right (right to leisure, to culture, to information…) in a more passive way OR from a more active perspective when young people can actually share their experiences, try out and exchange perspectives, which happens mainly in the workshops and free courses. Finally, she mentioned the strong interest of young people for the project “Music contest – New Talent”, expressed through the high number of applications received.

4 More details of the projects shared by Maite Hernandez can be found under the section Useful Resources and Presentations in this report.
EXPERIENCES FROM PARTICIPANTS

“Which type of participation are we promoting? Challenges?”

Key Note Speakers

BRUNO ANTONIO
DYPALL NETWORK

“Youth Participation & Youth Mobility in Europe”

For the past 12 years, Bruno has been actively engaging in international youth work, working as an expert and external consultant for several institutions, such as the European Commission and the North South Centre of the Council of Europe. Currently is the coordinator of DYPALL Network, an European platform engaging over 50 members in 29 European countries, supporting youth policy development and youth participation at Municipality level. On the training field he has been engaged in the pool of trainers of the European Youth Forum and coordinated the pool of trainers of the Portuguese National Youth council and collaborates with SALTO Euromed and SALTO Participation on the development of several training programmes.

Bruno António looked at youth participation by focusing on challenges to reach young people that are not the “usual suspects”, notably by stressing that to foster meaningful youth participation is a matter of a political decision and a matter of political investment of our decision makers. Investment from decision makers is essential for the development of effective youth policies.

This investment doesn’t necessarily mean huge budgets but it does necessarily means political commitment and capacity building of organizations (public and private) and competence development plans from actors to be able to work together, to share decisions and/or to take decisions onboard.
Essential elements of this commitment are the following:

i) **quality and continuous training** for school boards, teachers, organizations and local authorities that are essential tools for enabling young people to participate in democratic societies and to enhance the quality of democracy in democratic institutions;

ii) the importance of **trying different ways of engaging young people**, allowing space for organizations, schools, local authorities to try approaches, models, to create spaces and structures (online and offline) that can somehow support young people in their paths of becoming active and responsible as citizens;

iii) **mapping** what is being tried and implemented with quality and giving visibility to it;

iv) provide **space for the actors to exchange knowledge and experiences** about what they are implementing and learn from each other, avoiding overlapping and valuing what has been achieved.

Working with young people in policy making also means that their demands are to be heard and matched with effective results of their participation and better accountability.

Bruno António also shared two projects ran by DYPALL Network - Regional Youth Policy of Madeira Region where non formal education methodologies were used to consult young people from vulnerable groups; Generation XXI that has a specific focus on young people with fewer opportunities and used mobility as a local youth engagement strategy.

After his presentation the interaction with the group allowed a deeper reflection on the challenges to train teachers to empower young people to participate and how to prepare people and institutions to share their power.

**ALEKSANDRA MANGUS**
**Expert on Media Information and Literacy**

“Youth participation & media and information literacy”

Aleksandra is a young Media and Information Literacy (MIL) expert with hands-on experience of working in startups, enterprises and public sector. Right now she is a member of UNESCO's GlobalMILWeek Organising and Steering Committee; Co-organiser and Moderator of the UNESCO’s Global Youth Agenda Forum at the University of Latvia in Riga in the framework of Global MIL Week 2018 (here is the Week’s full programme in PDF); Organiser of GlobalMILHack - the very first online global hackathon in MIL in close cooperation with UNESCO MIL Programme. It involved over 80 participants from 23 countries and lasted for 3 days. Aleksandra introduced the concept, built the programme, found international partners and implemented the whole cycle of the event which was a success, got extended and got some projects funded by the UNESCO’s Youth Spaces Initiative. She is the author of a Master thesis on the topic of Innovative MIL pedagogy through Maker Culture and Hackathons (Tampere University, Finland); MIL Researcher and Expert in SALTO Resource Hub (SALTO Participation and Information Centre, Tallinn, Estonia).

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5 More details of the projects shared by Bruno António can be found under the section Useful Resources and Presentations in this report.
Aleksandra Mangus mentioned some of the challenges that researchers on the field of MIL face when working on this topic and information about the trends in MIL Education that we can currently witness.

In her presentation Aleksandra Mangus stressed 3 main objectives that are mirrored in European strategies: Digital engagement, Youth Empowerment and Safer Internet. Understanding that we are digital citizens with rights by empowering young people to act and be part of building strategies to face some of the main challenges of Media and Information is essential for democratic societies. She made reference to those main challenges that need to be addressed in MIL, completing with some examples of projects that are tackling these problems:

- hate speech and cyberbullying
- disinformation, “fake news”
- sextortion
- data protection and privacy
- generation gap, participation

She highlighted that for engaging young people with their digital citizenship and their role as citizens with a voice and responsibility on shaping policies and strategies in MIL field is essential to ensure multi-stakeholder involvement and to share practices and tools used in youth work and MIL education. It is also essential to be able to relate what is missing in young people’s contexts with digital world and make it a cause for action and interest for other young people across the globe. Lastly, she shared information about the social relevance of hackathons as spaces for learning, engaging and acting.

The interaction with the audience was on discussing issues related with resources/funding of online and MIL activities ran by organisations and young people that are not conventionally part of formal groups.

**European Youth Card and Youth Participation best practices**

**WALTER GROENEN**  
CJP, The Netherlands

*“Celebrating youth participation – Young Impact Award”*

Mr. Walter Groenen shared the elements considered necessary for the project presented to have an impact in young people’s lives. Firstly, he referred to the importance of learning from other organizations and to understand what was suitable for the context of CJP. Secondly, he referred the need of having a focus not only on awarding but also on inspiring. Finally, a clear understanding that every young person can make a positive change in their societies if they can cooperate, when given chances to express what is important for them and support in creating opportunities with a long-lasting impact.

The project involves a free programme with schools to run workshops and to discuss young people’s interests. The project has a strong cultural dimension due to the nature of the organisation that is promoting. It and allows young people to connect with each other and feel capable in understanding their own strengths and talents in order to go through a process of self-development.

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6 More details of the projects shared by Aleksandra Mangus can be found under the section Useful Resources and Presentations in this report.
The dialogue with the audience allowed to explore more details about the programme with schools as well as the challenges with the financial sustainability of the project.

**MRS. MIA VELICKOVIC**
Hosteling International Croatia

“Mobilising and informing young voters, presentation of #GiveAVote local experiences”

Mia Velickovic shared with the audience the main important steps taken by the organization when implementing at the national level the youth-led campaign promoted by EYCA #GIVEAVOTE. The campaign comprised of 5 events, a series of workshops, media actions, direct collaborations with over 200 young people and numerous organizations and associations and over 500 free special edition European Youth Cards distributed in one day.

One of the most important activities of the campaign was the two-day youth exchange with students from Zagreb and Zadar organised in cooperation with the Office of the European Parliament in Zagreb with a focus on listening to the needs of young people. In this youth exchange they worked directly with first time voters and discussed relevant topics of their interests related to EU during interactive workshops.

Topics such as active citizenship, youth mobility and employability, protection of environment and the importance of EU membership for Croatia where discussed by young people during this specific activity.

Within the framework of this campaign Hostelling International Croatia has organised a MEP debate where 10 leading political party representatives joined the debate. By connecting young voters and candidates for European Parliament it was possible to raise awareness among young people about the importance of Croatia’s EU membership and contributing to build their European identity. During the debate, it was essential to encourage young people to have a healthy critical and independent opinion in order to approach the elections as objectively as possible and to choose their representative.

Finally, she called attention to the fact that the participation of Hostelling International Croatia in the #GIVEAVOTE campaign allowed cardholders and new cardholders to learn more about possibilities of organized volunteering, youth mobility and how to use of the European Youth Card as well as the importance of voting during the elections.

After the presentation of Mia Velickovic the group had the chance to discuss different reasons why, despite the increase turnout of young voters in the last European elections, youth participation it is still very low. In the case of Croatia it was mentioned the existing lack of information related with European political affairs and that young people feel disappointed and don’t think they are focal in policy making and don’t see themselves and their aspirations, concerns and priorities mirrored in policies and strategies. This first experience of EYCA in promoting and implementing a youth-led campaign deeply connected with voting allowed partner organizations to develop know-how on information, relationships with other stakeholders and to get to know more about young people’s perceptions in relation to these topics nowadays.

**Presentation of the Key Messages of the Working Groups and Plenary Discussion**
The session started with the facilitator launching some questions for the working groups to discuss and to present in plenary the main results of their discussions. The questions launched were the following:

i) What could be the role of European Youth Card in supporting democratic youth participation?

ii) What could be the role of the European Youth Card in strengthening/keeping the links between organizations, institutions and young people to support democratic participation of young people?

iii) What could be the role of the European Youth Card in supporting local youth participation, notably through supporting the development of competences of young people and organizations?

The main key messages presented by participants were the following:

1. **Promotion and Dissemination**
   
   a. EYCA should develop a **Youth Ambassadors Programme** in local communities that can disseminate the benefits of the European Youth Card;
   
   b. EYCA should **work closer with influencers, bloggers and famous people** to outreach its work to more young people;
   
   c. EYCA should **invest in having pop-ups on websites** that are most visited by young people;
   
   d. EYCA should organise a **European Youth Fair** targeting cardholders involving stakeholders that are also providing various opportunities to young people.

2. **Partnerships**

   a. EYCA should continue to foster **stronger and strategic agreements with stakeholders in the domain of youth participation**;
   
   b. EYCA should create **training opportunities for leadership skills and job shadowing opportunities** by establishing partnerships with companies and enterprises focusing on young people coming from rural areas;
   
   c. EYCA should promote the **reinforcement of networks among youth organisations** through initiatives such as trainings and conferences or through a **platform** to foster the link between cardholders, young leaders, youth organisations and institutions.

3. **Capacity building and competence development**

   a. EYCA should continue promoting **opportunities to exchange practices and initiatives** among member organisations, youth organisations and other stakeholders through **Partial Agreement Seminars** and other initiatives like **trainings and conferences**;
   
   b. EYCA should organise and implement **Deliberative Fora** promoting the space for young people to discuss among themselves and thereafter with policy makers;
   
   c. EYCA should promote free workshops for cardholders on democratic participation.

4. **Inspiring and Awarding**

   a. EYCA should create a **Prize** to reward young people that are engaged in their local communities;
   
   b. EYCA should **give away some travel passes** for the young to travel to their countries in order to vote.
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SEMINAR

About the organisers

The Seminar “Exploring different models of democratic participation: fostering youth participation through the European Youth Card” is organised to support the recognition of various forms of participation in community and democratic societies and to explore the different ways in which the EYC can be a tool for engagement of all young people.

The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card exists since 1991 and is a programme of the Council of Europe aimed at developing the youth card scheme, particularly at European level, in the best interests of young people with a view to facilitating their mobility as well as access to the various goods and services necessary for their personal and cultural development.

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) groups around 36 youth card organisations all over Europe and is the Partial Agreement’s statutory partner. EYCA’s vision is a Europe where all young people are mobile and active (socially, culturally, educationally and economically). EYCA’s mission to reach this objective consists in delivering quality youth card services and in contributing to a better policy on youth mobility and active citizenship. Today, over six million youth cardholders benefit from youth card opportunities.

About the Seminar

The Council of Europe is the leading Pan-European international organisation promoting inclusive, human rights-based youth policies. The Council of Europe highly values the active participation of young people in decision-making particularly through one of the most advanced models of youth participation world-wide – the co-management system (see https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/co-management).

The Seminar aimed to:

- offer the space for debate on and recognition of the variety of forms in which young people make their voices heard, including through digital means;
- explore the ways in which European Youth Card can be a tool to reach out to disengaged young people and encourage them to actively participate at all levels.

The Seminar brought together policy makers in the youth field, youth workers, youth activists and young people, both organised and non-organised, as well as from various structures of representation (ex: young people involved in the ‘Rejuvenating politics’ initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe).

Expected outcome:

The Seminar was expected to come up with a number of practical recommendations for the EYCA youth card organisations, and possibly for policy-makers (in order to help them to define the right policy response and use the opportunities offered by the European Youth Card).
General overview of the programme of the Seminar

The programme had a similar structure for the two days. We started by having the speeches with contributions from two experts and then we had the chance to get to know the work that two EYCA member organisations are doing. We closed the second day by developing some key messages for the improvement of the work of EYCA related with the topic of the seminar – Democratic Participation of Young People.

The first day we got to know a bit more about who was the room and what were participants’ expectations for the Seminar and then we moved to explore the links between youth mobility and youth participation and by getting to know a bit about the path of a young person, in this case, a cardholder and a member of the EYCA YOUTH PANEL, who is engaged in various spaces of participation at European and national level. In the afternoon we got to know more about the European Youth Card as tool for development and implementation of youth policy with Miriam Teuma and the challenges related to it as well as 5 projects from Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid to engage young people in civic life.

During the second day we will explore the local dimension of youth participation, the importance of skills as critical thinking and media literacy as core elements of youth engagement today and we had two more projects from EYCA Member organizations, Young Impact Award and the experience of Croatia engaging young voters through debates, youth exchanges and through the EYCA Campaign #GIVEAVOTE. The last session of our seminar was devoted to collect from the group some key messages that might be useful for EYCA to improve its work in the domain discussed here in this seminar.

USEFUL RESOURCES & PRESENTATIONS

Please have access to all the presentations of the seminar here: http://tiny.cc/1874gz
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