

PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are very often excluded from the political decisions that affect their day-to-day lives. However, they have ideas and opinions that should be included in any decisions related to the environment in which they live. The following case study shows how an NGO, working with young people and local/regional authorities, can proactively improve the political participation of young people.



The involvement of young people in decision-making processes at the local and regional levels of government can improve the quality of that decision making. It also helps these young people to become active and more engaged citizens. The following measures are proposed:

- ▶ listen to and respond to young people by designing services and facilities around their needs;
- ▶ establish spaces, such as youth councils and youth parliaments open to all, for young people at local and regional levels;
- ▶ develop inclusive and transparent processes that allow young people and their representatives to participate in the planning of their living environment (at urban, community and neighbourhood levels) and in which the needs of young people, and access to essential public services and community amenities, are recognised as central to the planning process. In this context, examples of good practice include the establishment, at local and regional level, of youth consultative bodies, such as municipal youth councils and youth parliaments, that allow all young people, whether or not they belong to organisations or associations, to express their opinions and present their proposals on the formulation and implementation of planning and environmental policies affecting them, as well as the principles of co-management in place in the youth sector of the Council of Europe;
- ▶ use locations and media that are popular with young people (e.g. social media, youth organisations and centres, sports clubs, or public spaces they frequent) for the purpose of informing and consulting young people on planning processes relevant to them;
- ▶ provide youth organisations active in disadvantaged communities with sustainable support and resources for reaching out to the least enfranchised young people and for facilitating their participation in relevant debates.



Caucasian Institute for Peace Problems Research (CIPPR),¹⁴ Shirak region, Armenia

— CIPPR organises projects to promote the involvement of young Armenians in local and regional life, thus promoting the establishment of civil society, the protection of human rights and the dissemination of democratic values in the country. This project supported greater participation of young people in democratic structures and processes at local and regional level, based on the principles set out in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

— A selection of 25 young people, aged between 18 and 30, from the Shirak region in Northern Armenia participated in the training course. Among those selected, many of them had not had the opportunity to be active in civil society or youth activities at local and regional level and many of them were from minorities, were socially disadvantaged and came from peripheral, economically disadvantaged areas.

— Both the Shirak regional government and the Gyumri municipality youth department supported the project, and young staff from the governmental and local authority services, with responsibility for youth participation at local and/or regional levels, took part in the training course.

— In terms of social rights, the course focused on the right to education, the right to legal and social protection and the right to non-discrimination. The project raised the participants' awareness of the importance of their civic responsibility and their participation in decision-making processes at local and regional levels. It was hoped that they would share their new competences, experiences and training with other young people in their communities and act as "multipliers". As a follow-up, a new group of young people was set up to co-operate on developing and implementing further local and regional projects.

14. More information at www.cippr.org, accessed 10 June 2016.