New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes

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AUTHORS

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Dan Moxon is an expert in youth participation with over 18 years' experience working with children, young people and families in the voluntary, public, for-profit and academic sectors. He is an experienced researcher, evaluator and writer with a research focus on children's and young people's participation, and in using participatory research techniques to enable young people to influence policy and strategy. He is an Associate Director at the University of Central Lancashire's Centre for Children and Young People's Participation, the only research centre in the world focused exclusively on participation. He has led work on behalf of the UK Youth Parliament, British Youth Council, Department of Health, England, NHS-NW, Government Office for the North West of England, The Railway Children, as well as a variety of local authorities, voluntary organisations and research institutions in the UK, Finland, Iceland and Italy.

Contents

Chapter 1
Executive Summary

Background

This study of new and innovative forms of youth participation was commissioned by the Council of Europe's Youth Department. The study focuses on young people's participation in decision-making processes at national, regional and local levels. The findings and recommendations in the study are intended to inform the Council of Europe youth sector's future work in this field and its strategic objectives to support young people's (positive) attitude to influence decisions in democratic processes and increase their involvement in the development of inclusive and peaceful societies.

The backdrop to this work is increasing concern at political level and evidence to indicate that young people have been turning away from established forms of democratic participation. This is represented, amongst other things, by a decline in voter turn-out amongst young people, and their decreasing membership of political parties. It is argued by some commentators that, as young people disengage from these 'traditional' forms of participation, they are finding 'alternative' or 'innovative' forms of participation to replace them. Parallel to this social shift amongst young people is an increasing emphasis in the development of public policy across all sectors on 'innovation' and the political desire for public authorities to be 'innovative'. This study set out to explore and identify 'innovative' forms of youth participation and to understand the role of innovation within the context of youth participation in decision making.

The study comprised a documentary analysis of existing research; an e-survey of policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders; and a review of examples of innovative practice from a range of different contexts. The report includes:

► an overview of the current debates and developments on youth involvement in decision making at European, national, regional and municipal levels and an exploration of the concept of 'new and innovative' participation;

► an analysis of the results of a survey of 356 stakeholders;

► a review of examples of successful initiatives and practices;

► a thematic analysis of the issues arising with regard to new and innovative forms of youth participation.

Research findings

Defining the concept of innovative forms of youth participation has proved to be a challenge. The review of literature in this report identifies a general consensus of concern for the shift in young people's methods of political expression away from voting and engagement with political parties into other forms of participation. However, defining what young people have moved to does not have the same consensus, and concepts of innovative forms of participation are poorly defined. The literature also identified the concept of policy innovation within other sectors as a method used to drive improvement in public services.

The survey explored perceptions, amongst stakeholders, of different forms of participation in decision making. The key findings are that:

► co-management, co-production, digital participation, deliberative participation and for some, the concept of 'participatory spaces' are seen as the more innovative forms of participation;

► youth councils and similar bodies, and youth activism or popular protest are seen as the less innovative forms of participation;

► in general, the 'more innovative forms' are not more or less effective than the 'less innovative forms';

► these more innovative forms are facing similar barriers to those faced by youth councils and forums in terms of young people's views being taken into account by public bodies. Barriers include:

– lack of funds and resources;

– lack of political support;

– lack of understanding by public authorities.

The case studies provide examples of these various forms. However, they also serve to highlight the different understandings of the concept of 'innovation' and how innovation, by its very nature, is strongly context specific. What is innovative in one reality is likely to be less so in another depending on historical legacies, tradition and a myriad of cultural considerations. Importantly, this indicates that forms that are currently considered more innovative will change over time as they become accepted or embedded in practice. The case studies also highlight a number of other key messages:

► innovative approaches can come from both young people and adults/professionals;

► innovation is often linked to a desire to solve a specific issue;

► innovative methods evolve as a project is established through experimentation and trial;

► demonstrating impact is challenging, but necessary to assess the success of a new method;

► successful methods and forms developed through innovation need to be replicated;

► many opportunities for the development of new methods of participation are currently provided by the online world which has implications for education curricula and for how we build digital literacy and media competency amongst Europe's citizens.

Conclusions

To further the discussion, the authors distinguish between alternative forms of participation and approaches to innovating youth participation. It is of course important to maintain concern for the decline in voter turnouts in general and amongst young people in particular and the associated decline of trust and confidence in political institutions, as well as trying to understand new shifts and trends in the way young people express themselves politically. However, the proposition that the alternative ways in which young people are choosing to express themselves politically signifies 'innovation' within youth participation in decision making seems doubtful. The authors argue that, rather than focusing on a shift in social attitudes and behaviour amongst young people, innovation is better understood as a process of experimentation through which new and more effective approaches can be found. Through this lens, an approach to innovation in youth participation in decision making can be defined as:

Any policy, programme, initiative or project, which seeks to find more effective ways for young people to influence decision making within public bodies, or for public bodies to listen and take into account

young people's views when they are making decisions by developing and testing new methods, forms or concepts.

In the context of youth participation in decision making, innovation is therefore conceptualised as part of the quest for the most effective ways to involve young people in the development of policy and service provision and a wide variety of other decision-making processes. However, the end goal of innovation is not simply to create a new way of doing things but to establish better ways in terms of achieving stated objectives. Support for innovation by public bodies means that new approaches must have clear objectives, be systematically evaluated, and that those approaches that are found to be most effective should be replicated. Public bodies must be encouraged to see innovation as a continual process for driving improvement – it is not the case that the innovative forms of participation can be permanently identified and agreed, after which point there will be no more need for innovation.

To a certain extent, this particular framing means that innovation is something that public bodies and policymakers 'do', rather than something that young people initiate. That is not to say that young people are not capable of generating innovative and new ideas – the case studies illustrate how both adults and young people are initiating innovative practice, and we would argue innovation is neither the preserve of the young nor the old. However, supporting innovation as a method of public-policy experimentation by definition becomes something that public institutions undertake, ideally **with** their citizens, rather than something individuals can do alone.

Recommendations

The findings of the study were shared with the Reflection Group at a workshop where two sets of recommendations were developed – one focused on public authorities at the national, regional and local levels, and one on the Council of Europe's youth sector. These recommendations are set out in Chapter 8 of the report and address the following questions:

► How can public authorities and other bodies be encouraged to be more open to new forms, modes and tools for democratic decision making?

► How can public authorities facilitate access for all cohorts of young people, including the most disadvantaged, to decision-making processes?

► What direction can the Council of Europe youth sector's future work on participation take, and how can the youth sector integrate the understanding of new and innovative forms of participation into its policies and programmes?

Chapter 2
Introduction

This study of new and innovative forms of youth participation was commissioned by the Council of Europe's Youth Department. The study focuses on young people's participation in decision-making processes at national, regional and local levels of governance. Young people in this study are defined as young people aged between 16-30 years of age.

Over recent years, young people have been accused of disengaging from society. Much of the available research indeed indicates that young people have been turning away from what is called more 'traditional' participation mechanisms such as voting in elections and membership of political parties and trade unions. Some commentators insist that young people are not disengaging, they have just found different – new and innovative – ways to make their voices heard and that sometimes these methods are less visible to decision makers. This study set out to explore these alternative, new and innovative forms of youth participation.

To respond to the strategic objective of the Council of Europe's youth sector to support young people's (positive) attitude to influence decisions in democratic processes and increase their involvement in the development of inclusive and peaceful societies, the intention is that this study will inform the Council of Europe youth sector's future work in this field.

The report sets out the findings of the research incorporating:

► An overview of the current debates and developments on youth involvement in decision making at European, national, regional and municipal levels and an exploration of the concept of new and innovative participation (Chapter 4).

► An analysis of the results of a survey of practitioners, policymakers and stakeholders (Chapter 5).

► A review of examples of successful initiatives and practices (Chapter 6).

► A thematic analysis of the issues arising with regard to new and innovative forms of youth participation (Chapter 7).

► Two sets of recommendations in the final chapter, one targeted at public organisations and bodies on how they can be encouraged to be open to contemporary forms of youth participation and to facilitate access for all young people, including the most disadvantaged. The other is directed to the Council of Europe's youth sector on the direction of its future work on participation, specifically how to integrate the understanding of new and innovative forms of participation into its policy and programmes (Chapter 8).

Chapter 3
Methodology

At the outset it was recognised that 'innovative practice' in youth participation is poorly defined, and likely to be context specific. As a result, it was decided not to impose a working definition of innovation on research participants, and instead allow them to identify their own conception and examples of innovation.

A Reflection Group was convened by the Council of Europe's Youth Department to help guide and steer the research process and subsequently shape the recommendations.[1] The inputs from the Reflection Group were especially valuable in advising on the selection of case studies and the design of the survey questionnaire. They actively supported the dissemination of the survey to ensure a wide reach and led on developing the recommendations. To facilitate the development of recommendations, the Reflection Group participated in a workshop where they were able to consider the findings and explore the most appropriate recommendations for both public bodies and the Council of Europe's Youth Department.

The research design was determined by the Council of Europe with the study compromising three main elements: a documentary analysis of existing research; an e-survey of stakeholders, including policymakers and practitioners; and a review of examples of innovative practice from a range of different contexts.

Documentary analysis

A review of relevant existing research, academic articles, policy documents, legal standards and instruments, recommendations and guidelines was undertaken. This focused on:

► exploring the concept of youth participation in decision making and how it has evolved over time;

► current debates and developments including: the paradox of youth participation; diversity and social inclusion; the growing importance of self-expression; how young people learn about participation; understanding of the concept of new and innovative forms of participation; the context and drivers for current concern with "innovative" forms.

Online survey of stakeholders

The Youth Department and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe distributed an online survey open to any individual with an interest in youth participation. Some national and regional bodies redistributed the survey to their contact lists. Prior to use, the survey was reviewed with members of the Council of Europe's Joint Council on Youth and with the Reflection Group. It was made available in both English and French.

The survey comprised three sections:

► **Section 1** – Participant/organisational identifier questions – these identified the individual's role in relation to youth participation and asked for details of the organisation they represented (if any).

► **Section 2** – This section profiled a number of different forms of youth participation in decision making. Questions focused on the extent participants considered each form of participation innovative, effective, and commonly implemented, and their views on the barriers and enablers associated with each form. A final set of questions enabled participants to identify and comment on any other forms of youth participation that were not covered by any of the prescribed categories.

► **Section 3** – This was a call for examples of innovative practice, to inform the selection of case studies.

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1. Members of the group were: Charlotte Romlund Hansen – European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ); Christel de Lange – Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ); Biljana Vasilevska Trajkoska – Council of Europe Enter! Project; Mariam Inayat Waseem – former youth delegate of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; Lilla Nedeczky – online activist; Alessandra Coppola – online activist; Liisa Ansala – Spokesperson on Youth, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; Manfred Zentner – member of the Pool of European Youth Researchers; Davide Cappechi – Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth Secretariat.

Survey respondents

356 individuals responded of whom:

▶ 30.9% (110) identified as a young person;

▶ 16.9% (60) identified as a policymaker or civil servant;

▶ 59.6% (212) identified as a youth worker or other professional working with young people;

▶ 10.1% (36) identified as an elected politician;

▶ 8.7 % (31) identified as research or academic;

▶ 7.3% (26) identified as other, but comments in most cases indicate respondents could have been classified under one of the roles above.

94.1% (335) of respondents indicated they were responding on behalf of an organisation which was best described as:

▶ Youth-led NGO, youth association, youth council or similar 39.3% (140);

▶ Public authority such as local or national government 27.2% (97);

▶ Adult-led NGO, civil society organisation or similar body 18% (64);

▶ Political party or political organisation 4.5% (16);

▶ School, university or other body delivering formal education 2.8 % (10);

▶ Research institute 2.2% (8).

In addition:

▶ 86.2% (275) of those representing organisations indicated their organisation worked directly with young people (n=319). The average lower age limit of the young people they worked with was 13 (n=307) and the upper limit was 31 (n=306).

When those representing organisations were asked how much their organisations focused on youth participation, responses were (n=304):

▶ Our main purpose is youth participation – 20.7% (63);

▶ Youth participation is a major part of our work but we also do other activities – 52.3% (159);

▶ We mainly focus on other activities but youth participation is part of what we do – 27% (82).

Of the survey respondents who were representing organisations active in youth participation:

▶ 60.9% (204) were active at local level;

▶ 40.9% (137) were active at regional level;

▶ 41.2% (138) were active at national level;

▶ 32.5% (109) were active at European level.

Responses by country of main activity

Participants representing organisations were asked to indicate in which countries their organisation was **mainly** active. Those who listed multiple European countries or identified regions have been classified as Europe-wide, those who listed multiple countries which included those outside of Europe have been listed as Global. Some countries have notably larger response rates than others; we believe this has occurred when a national body has promoted the survey extensively. Response number by country is listed in the table below.

Table 1: Number of survey responses by country

Country	No.	Country	No.	Country	No.
Albania	3	Georgia	1	Norway	1
Armenia	3	Germany	41	Poland	1
Austria	9	Global	4	Portugal	1
Azerbaijan	2	Greece	2	Romania	4
Belarus	1	Hungary	2	Russian Federation	1
Belgium	7	Iceland	3	Serbia	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	Ireland	3	Slovakia	2
Bulgaria	11	Italy	11	Slovenia	20
Croatia	4	Latvia	1	Spain	8
Cyprus	1	Lithuania	1	Sweden	2
Czech Republic	1	Luxembourg	1	Switzerland	6
Denmark	1	Malta	13	"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	6
Estonia	1	Republic of Moldova	1	Turkey	4
Europe-wide	51	Monaco	1	Ukraine	4
Finland	21	Montenegro	4	United Kingdom	18
France	14	Netherlands	2		

Our analysis of the results of the survey was not weighted by country. With such an uneven spread of responses, there is inevitably an over-representation of views from some member States, for example Finland, Germany and Slovenia, and an under-representation of the views from many others. However, it cannot be assumed that survey respondents within the same country have a consistent perspective on innovation which would skew responses in a particular direction.

Review of case studies

Based on nominations from the survey and other examples identified by the research team or Reflection Group, ten case studies of innovative practice were selected for detailed examination. Recognising the

ongoing challenge of defining innovation within this study, the Reflection Group played a key role in the selection of case studies, drawing on their own understanding of innovation.

The criteria for selection were:

 ► use of self-identified 'innovative' models of practice;

 ► demonstration of promising practice and an impact on decision making in public authorities or other bodies;

 ► addressing common barriers to participation;

 ► effectiveness at working with groups of young people who are not normally represented in youth participation.

Alongside this, attention was paid to the overall selection of case studies to ensure inclusion of examples from across Europe. The case study reports were compiled from material supplied directly by the projects and a telephone or Skype interview with a person nominated by the project. The person interviewed was also given the opportunity to review a draft of the case study report to check it for accuracy.

Analysis and recommendations

The findings from the survey, the review of practice examples and the literature review were analysed thematically with a view to developing an understanding of the characteristics of new and innovative forms of youth participation; the impact such forms are achieving; and how best they might be encouraged and supported by public bodies.

This discussion was then considered by the Reflection Group at a workshop during which two sets of recommendations were developed. The first set is targeted at public bodies and aims to encourage public authorities to be more open to contemporary forms of democratic decision making. The second set is targeted at the Council of Europe youth sector and focuses on the direction its future work on youth participation should take.

Chapter 4

Youth participation in decision making

This chapter presents a review of the evolution and development of youth participation in decision making in Europe with special reference to new and innovative forms. First we briefly discuss a basic definition of what we mean by youth participation in decision making before looking at the policy framework at the European level and an overview of current developments and debates. The final section examines what the literature has to say about new and innovative forms of youth participation.

What do we mean by youth participation?

Participation is a difficult concept to define. Most commentators agree that participation is a process rather than a one-off event.[2] This study focuses on exploring the participation of young people aged 16-30 in decision making about the social, economic, cultural, ecological and political environment that impacts on their lives.

Participation is an essential element of citizenship in a democratic society and a democratic Europe. European institutions and organisations repeatedly emphasise the importance of youth participation to *"foster young people's active citizenship, enhance their integration and inclusion and strengthen their contribution to the development of democracy."*[3] It follows that the active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local, regional and national levels is essential in order to build more democratic, more inclusive and more prosperous societies. The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe states:

> "Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society."[4]

The Council of Europe recommends that member States facilitate and encourage youth participation in politics and civil societies at both local community and national levels and to make youth participation a priority in public policies.[5]

Inherent in all definitions of youth participation are young people who have agency, form opinions, take action and exert influence. The right of a young person to express their views in all matters affecting them is enshrined in a fundamental right – not only at the European level but also, for those aged under 18, in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international treaty in history. Youth participation involves both 'spaces' where young people can express their views and opinions but also opportunities for decision makers to listen to those views and opinions and to take them into account. Youth participation is relevant to individual young people when decisions are being made about an aspect of a young person's life – for example, their health, their education. It is relevant to young people collectively when decisions impact on many young people, for example, when a municipality is designing a housing project.

2. EU-CoE Youth Partnership Reflection Group on Youth Participation (2014) Revising youth participation: current challenges, priorities and recommendations.
3. Lihong Huang (2015) EU-CoE Youth Partnership policy sheet: Citizenship, participation and information, European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.
4. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (2003) Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.
5. Ibid.

The European policy framework for youth participation

Over the last four decades, the participation of young people in social, political and civic decision making has become increasingly important. Youth participation is a key topic for youth policy within the European Union, the Council of Europe and with many other stakeholders in youth work practice and research. Youth participation is a priority in the European Union Youth Strategy (2010-2018),[6] and features in the priorities for co-operation between the European Commission and the Member States. In 2011 and 2012 respectively, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe[7] and the Committee of Ministers[8] adopted recommendations on this topic which called for using new tools and methods to enter into dialogue with young people and to reach out to more and different groups of young people. In 2013, the European Commission presented a study on the situation and trends in youth participation among different groups of young people, exploring the merits of various aspects of participation.[9]

In the Council of Europe, youth participation has been a central issue for more than 40 years. It finds a formal dimension in the principle of co-management with decision making shared equally between government officials and representatives of youth organisations. Thus participation is at the same time a goal, a principle and a practice in the work and philosophy of the Organisation. The Declaration 'The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020' regards *"young people's active participation in democratic processes and structures and equal opportunities for the participation of all young people in all aspects of their everyday lives'"* a key priority.[10] An overview illustrating how the Council of Europe's standards have changed over time is informative.

An overview of the policy instruments of the Council of Europe

A review of the policy instruments produced by the Council of Europe relevant to youth participation in the last 25 years identifies a number of documents from the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The chronology of these documents reveals a trend in the development of thinking about young people's participation in decision making and young people's relationship to the state and to society.

Despite a focus on co-management at the first Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1985[11] and the Youth Department's own co-management structure, ministerial recommendations produced in the early 1990s contain limited reference to young people influencing decision making. Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth mobility,[12] social and vocational integration of young people[13] and youth information[14] focus primarily on how member States might provide support to young people. However, there is some recognition that it is valuable for member States to obtain information **from** young people through youth research.[15]

By the late 1990s, there is increased emphasis on young people influencing decision making, as illustrated by the Committee of Ministers' (1997) recommendation on youth participation and the future of civil society[16] and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003).[17] These instruments mark the start of a much stronger emphasis by the Council of Europe that young people should be actively involved in decision making within public bodies, and that it is desirable for member States to promote this. These instruments also frame the particular approach to youth participation that will resonate within the Organisation until around 2010, which is a focus on formal structures.

The Congress' Charter calls for 'representative and permanent structures' to enable young people to take part in debates on matters that are relevant to them. This refers to youth councils, youth parliaments and similar structures – whose role in contributing to the development of policy is repeatedly reaffirmed in subsequent documents, often being the only form

6. European Union Youth Strategy (2010-2018).
7. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Recommendation 1978 (2011) Towards a European framework convention on youth rights.
8. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.
9. London School of Economics and Political Science (2013), Youth Participation in Democratic Life. LSE Enterprise: London.
10. Adopted by the 8th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, Ukraine (2008) Council of Europe.

11. Council of Europe Conferences of Ministers responsible for Youth: Overview of Conferences organised since 1995. (c 2011).
12. Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (95)18 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth mobility.
13. Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (92)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on social and vocational integration of young people.
14. Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (90)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe.
15. Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (92)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning communication and co-operation in the field of youth research in Europe.
16. Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (97)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth participation and the future of civil society.
17. Op.cit.

of participation specifically referenced in ministerial recommendations.[18] [19] [20]

In addition, these documents describe the role of young people's involvement as members of youth organisations or NGOs. There is recognition that they provide a 'voice' for young people in the form of dialogue between the state and civil society – but also an acknowledgement that young people who are not members of youth organisations are excluded from the dialogue.[21]

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life is something of a landmark and there is considerable investment in promoting its messages and supporting member States to enact its resolutions. In 2012, the youth sector collaborated with the Children's Rights Division to develop a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on children and young people's participation.[22] This instrument reflects provisions in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the (then just published) General Comment on the Child's Right to be Heard. The Recommendation encourages public authorities to enact measures to protect and promote children's and young people's right to participate, and to create a variety of different opportunities and spaces for them to participate in decision making. As a follow-up to this Recommendation, the Children's Rights Division developed a tool for member States to use to assess their progress in implementing its provisions. The Child Participation Assessment Tool was piloted in 2015 and the final version published in 2016 along with a guide to implementation.[23]

Against the backdrop of increasing references to the potential of digital media to enhance democracy,[24] and concern expressed by the Parliamentary Assembly about youth protest movements arising from the political 'disengagement' of young people linked to the economic crisis,[25] [26] in recent years the Council of Europe's instruments have emphasised more the need for a plurality of approaches to engaging young people in democratic decision making rather than just relying on the more formal structures of youth councils or parliaments. However, there is no attempt made to prescribe the range of different methods that member States should support, outside of highlighting the potential of digital media. This narrative is reflected in the report on barriers to youth participation discussed at the 29th Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in 2015.[27] The report highlights increasing concerns over the 'paradox of youth participation', a concept which underpins the commissioning of this new study on current and innovative forms of youth participation.

Despite this obvious shift towards a preference for a plurality of approaches and a concern with understanding how youth participation links with the realities of young people in Europe, there is, as yet, no clear articulation of the goals of public participation within a human rights framework.[28] Across many of the standards, youth participation in decision making is discussed alongside the concepts of active citizenship, human rights and citizenship education, participation in community life and social inclusion. Though the concept of human rights underpins them all, the bringing together of all of these ideas can make it difficult to determine the actual purpose and desired outcome of youth participation and therefore how we might evaluate and ultimately judge the effectiveness of different approaches. This remains a gap in the policy framework of the Council of Europe.

A final word on the work of the EU-CoE Youth Partnership which has produced several excellent analytic reports on youth participation in recent years. This review draws in particular on the papers: 'Why participation?', 'What is participation?' and 'How is participation learned?' which were discussed in a meeting with experts from policy, practice and research in July 2014.

The paradox of youth participation

One of the key drivers for these policy developments at both a European and a national level has been concerns about young people's apparent declining interest in politics. A number of recent studies have highlighted the decline in voter turnout, membership of political parties, interest in politics and trust in

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18. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2004)13 to member States on the participation of young people in local and regional life.
19. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2006)14 to member States on citizenship and participation of young people in public life.
20. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Rec (2006)1 to member States on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development.
21. *Ibid.*
22. See n° 8 above.
23. Council of Europe (2016) Child Participation Assessment Tool and Council of Europe (2016) Child Participation Assessment Tool Implementation Guide.
24. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2009)1 on electronic democracy (e-democracy).
25. See n° 7 above.
26. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 1885 (2012) The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis.

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27. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, CG/2015(29)7FINAL 23 October 2015 Bringing down barriers to youth participation: adopting a lingua franca for local and regional authorities and young people.
28. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2009)2 on the evaluation, auditing and monitoring of participation and participation policies at local and regional level.

political institutions amongst young people.[29] Youth's distrust of institutional politics has been seen as a widespread problem within Europe.[30]

However, under what has been termed the 'paradox of youth participation', alongside the decrease in formal (or conventional) forms of participation – such as voting and membership of political parties – in recent years there has been an increase in informal (or unconventional) forms of participation. Unconventional forms of political participation might include activities such as signing petitions or participating in political demonstrations, which are outside the electoral process or formal political institutions. It seems that young people's distrust of political processes has often found alternative forms of expression. There is no major disenchantment with politics on the part of young people, only a clear and growing disenchantment with politicians and political elites.[31] Research evidence indicates that young people are far from apathetic but they are participating more in non-conventional ways. The problem, therefore, is with an over-simplified conception of political participation – one that focuses exclusively on conventional politics and does not see the many other ways in which young people engage with, and participate in, the world around them.

Unconventional participation in both political and civic affairs in various new forms such as discussing politics, signing petitions, posting political comments[32] is much enhanced by information and communication technology (ICT). The so-called 'European spring' of youth civic and political engagement, where large numbers of young people were mobilised in a very short time to occupy central public spaces, was facilitated by mobile phones and social media.[33]

The main issue arising from recent research when considering youth participation in Europe today is to acknowledge the breadth of practices and to extend the scope of what is seen as youth participation to include multiple forms.

Diversity and social inclusion

A perennial problem for young people as well as adults are the obstacles to participation that some people face because of their age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, abilities, geographic location and their socio-economic status. Young people are not a homogeneous group. They are as diverse as adults and have variable access to decision-making processes as well as competing political interests.[34] For young people, the risks of exclusion are particularly pronounced as they are in a transitional period in their lives: to adulthood, to autonomy and to independence.[35] Young people who face these different and often more difficult obstacles because of their background (for example, their socio-economic status, educational possibilities) have fewer opportunities to participate in decision making.

Associative memberships tend to be linked with higher education levels.[36] Representative politics is predominantly made up of elites, and even youth councils are often comprised of exceptional young people with the talent, time, and social capital to attain such positions.[37] Moreover, issues that may affect minorities or limited numbers of people may be overshadowed in formal participation processes. Even 'alternative' forms of participation are more difficult for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, access to the Internet and social media becomes problematic for young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).[38] Dominant forms of communication and expression, such as through the Internet, exclude young people with learning or cognitive disabilities.

Cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity have always been important principles for (European) youth policies. Young people in Europe are now far more diverse. The Council of Europe and the European Union have completed several rounds of enlargement, vastly expanding their borders and (young) population. Globalisation and an ever-expanding virtual world are generating further diversity. With this increasing diversity, it is even more necessary to expand the concepts of participation and democratic citizenship beyond conventional forms of representative democracy. There is more to democracy than formal institutions and there is more to political participation than voting and supporting parties.

The growing importance of self-expression

Linking back to the so-called paradox of youth participation, a feature of the descriptions of new

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29. See, for example, data from the European Social Survey and OECD reports cited in: Willems, H., Heinen, A. and Meyers, C. (2012) Between endangered integration and political disillusion: the situation of young people in Europe. Report for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
30. *Ibid.*
31. London School of Economics and Political Science (2013) *op.cit.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. Shihade, M., Flesher Fominaya, C.M. & Cox, L. (2012). 'The season of revolution: the Arab Spring and European mobilizations'. Interface: A Journal For and About Social Movements, 4 (1), pp. 1-16.
34. London School of Economics (2013) *op.cit.*
35. SALTO – Youth Inclusion Resource Centre & Erasmus+ (2014) Inclusion Z-A: A compass to international inclusion projects.
36. Anderson, B. et al., (2016) Formal, non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities, Partispace: Spaces and Styles of Participation, WP2 – National Contexts Comparative Report.
37. *Ibid.*
38. London School of Economics (2013) *op.cit.*

unconventional forms of youth participation is the growing importance of self-expression. Thus, Willems et al. (2012) highlight research which suggests one of the differentiating characteristics of new forms of participation is a growing preoccupation amongst young people with expressions of their values, identities and lifestyles.[39] Various phenomena such as migration and mobility, consumerism and individualisation, as well as economic crises are introducing new challenges.

As young people define themselves by increasingly diverse lifestyles, identities and values – their civil and political engagement tends to be more issue-based, more personal and informal. Willems et al. (2012) suggest that in this context, young people may prefer what they term 'horizontal' forms of participation, many of which are available online. Examples of these forms include signing petitions or joining networks or spontaneously attending demonstrations or engaging in consumer activism. Participation often then serves as a means for self-expression, and conscious consuming, expressing opinions with T-shirts, badges or bags, and methods made visible in social (online) networks gain popularity. Some argue that the rise of individualisation in consumer societies can give rise to an exaggerated emphasis on the self and the loosening of community ties.

While some authors argue that the trend for self-expression is another motivation for new and innovative forms of youth participation, it is not always clear who exactly young people are directing their activism and expressions towards and where and how they are seeking to influence decision making and help to bring about a change in public policy. The question arises whether the new (or renewed) interest in self-expression amongst the youth of Europe should be equated with more innovative forms of youth participation in decision making about public policy?

Spannring suggests that more individualised, horizontal forms of participation are attractive for young people because "*they do not demand long term commitment and do not endanger the integrity of the individual by imposing ideologies or demanding loyalty to an organisation's aims and methods*".[40] Young people do know that these forms of engagement are not always effective in influencing decision making or changing things; nevertheless they are seen by many young people as important statements of their own political positioning that reflect their ideals, values and interests.

The use of the Internet and new communication technologies

Often linked to this discussion on the growing importance of self-expression is the rise in the use of the Internet and new communication technologies to support young people's civic and political engagement. The increasing use of ICT in young people's lives has undoubtedly created new ways to communicate, share experiences and to amplify the voices of young people. For many young people in Europe, consuming digital media and engaging in social networks are a common part of their daily lives and the expanding technology does provide new opportunities for engaging in public decision making.

Some authors, highlighted by Willems (2012), see this trend as a distinct feature of the new forms of youth participation. Others argue that while expanding the means by which young people can participate should always be welcomed, online participation is not a panacea. The most successful strategies for influencing decision making at local, regional, national and European levels actively link up offline and online participation. Web-based participation instruments are usually targeted or picked up by young people who are already politically engaged. Milner (2009) points out that the digital technologies can have a positive influence on political knowledge and activity if young people have the skills to use them. But they can also widen the gap between different social classes.[41]

These points are picked up in the growing number of guidelines or standards on e-participation which seek to ensure the effectiveness of online participation tools. For example, the guidelines for e-participation developed in a multilateral co-operation project of IJAB-International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2014 set out a list of principles and recommended stages for e-participation. They emphasise the importance of linking any proposed online activity structurally to a public decision-making process *"that is defined prior to the actual participation process"* and is transparent in terms of the degree of young people's participation, that is whether the decision making is planned to be consultative, collaborative or young people-led. The IJAB guidelines distinguish between two dimensions: **direct**, or transitive e-participation online whereby political decisions are influenced directly and structural links to political decision-making processes are enabled; and a second dimension of **indirect**, or intransitive forms of e-participation which reaches out to Internet users and encourages them to support certain issues and positions and thus contribute to the development of political opinion.

39. Willems, H., Heinen, A. and Meyers, C. (2012) Between endangered integration and political disillusion: the situation of young people in Europe. Report for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
40. Spannring, R. (2008). Understanding (non-)participation: meanings, forms and reasons. In R. Spannring, G. Ogris, & W. Gaiser (Eds.), Youth and political participation in Europe: results of the comparative study EUYOPART (pp. 55–85). Opladen: Budrich. (cited in Willeims et al. (2012)).

41. Milner, H. (2009) The Internet: Friend or Foe of Youth Political Participation. 5th biennial conference of the ECPR, Potsdam. (cited in Willems et al. (2012).

Learning about youth participation

Research suggests that young people learn about participation by doing it. They learn through formal education such as schools and through non-formal education such as youth clubs and civic organisations and through local and regional youth councils and parliaments.[42] Learning opportunities to participate have to be available to young people with barriers reduced and support provided to develop skills. Educators (both in formal and non-formal settings) need to be equipped with the capacities for developing and implementing processes that encourage the learner's ability to develop motivation and competences for participation.

What seems to be clear from the research is that education is key to participation. Schools and other educational institutions play an important part in the development of democratic identities and it has long been recognised that citizenship education in these institutions, as well as in youth clubs and civil society organisations, strengthens a culture of, and the ongoing practice of democratic participation. Willems concludes that schools and educational institutions are the places:

> "….where young people get to know what participation in democracy means: through electing class representatives, meeting with local politicians and engaged local citizens, working in community oriented service projects or setting up a youth parliament in the local community."[43]

The Youth Partnership's reflection group calls for such education to be mandatory and not 'boring'. It should not be based on books alone but also on debates and on contact with serving politicians and decision makers at all levels, also including shadowing, mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities.[44] However, what is clear from the review of the literature on new and innovative forms of youth participation is that, as well as 'teaching' young people about democracy and participation and equipping educators to do so, the institutions of democracy – our parliaments and many of our politicians – also have to learn much, much more about youth participation and what it actually means to listen and take account of young people's views, opinions and ideas.

New and innovative youth participation

Notwithstanding the apparent consensus around the concept of the 'paradox of youth participation' and the increasing popularity of new and innovative forms of youth participation, the use of the terms 'new' and 'innovative' youth participation is difficult to pin down. More often the adjectives are used to describe participation that is **not** something (traditional or conventional) rather than to describe the actual characteristics that define the newness or the innovation. In reality, the terms are used in a very subjective way and are likely to mean different things to different people in different places (as they do in the selection of case studies featured in this report).

The term 'innovation' is defined (in the Encarta Concise Dictionary) as "*the act or process of inventing or introducing something new"*. To be innovative is to be *"new and original"* or *"to take a new and original approach"*. The dictionary definition serves to persuade that there is little to discern between the concepts of 'newness' and 'innovation'. Previous research describes the divide in a number of ways including conventional and non-conventional or traditional and alternative forms of youth participation where conventional is defined as well-established methods or styles or socially accepted ways of behaving.[45]

Bacalso (2016) argues that traditional forms of youth participation are concerned with "*formal politics, broader policy goals, typically hierarchical institutions, and long-term engagement".*[46] Such forms are likely to employ the 'youth development model' where youth is seen as a transitional stage – with participation mainly about young people learning to become active citizens rather than being seen as actors in the here and now. Within this paradigm, young people are conceived as subjects that need to be guided, monitored and controlled.[47] Traditional participation is thus associated with political, formal, and public settings.[48] The nature of these spaces is typically 'invited', that is, established by adults with young people invited to join within already established, normative rules of engagement.[49] Some other commentators list a much more narrow range of activities to characterise traditional or conventional youth participation, that is, voting in elections and joining a political party or trade union.[50]

42. EU-CoE Youth Partnership, Reflection Group on Youth Participation (2014) Revising youth participation: current challenges, priorities and recommendations. EU-CoE Youth Partnership.
43. Willems, H., Heinen, A. and Meyers, C. (2012) *op. cit.* Page 20.
44. *Ibid.*

45. See for example, London School of Economics (2013) Youth Participation in Democratic Life.
46. Bacalso, C. (2016) How to Ignite the Spark? Understanding alternative and diverse forms of participation in democratic life and empowering multipliers to support them. Participation Lab 1: how to give young people with fewer opportunities a voice? SALTO-Youth Partnership (page 4).
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. Cornwall, A. (2008) Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices, *Community Development Journal,* 43(3) Pages 269-283.
50. EU-CoE Youth Partnership, Reflection Group on Youth Participation (2014). *op. cit.*

Bacalso (2016) describes new or alternative forms of participation as characterised by *"informality, issue-based goals, horizontal organisation, and intermittent and micro-level engagement"*. The 'spaces' in these new forms of youth participation are typically more 'popular' (as opposed to 'invited'). They are more likely to be informal, associated with the social and the civic, blurring the line between public and private space, and often claimed or created by young people themselves (Bacalso 2016). Within the often overlapping and sometimes fuzzy definitions, it is not really clear where, for example, active membership of a national youth parliament or a school or college council might fit into the divide.

As we have previously noted, there seems to be common agreement that whilst new or alternative forms of participation are often linked to social media and the use of social network structures and ICT more generally, the use of ICT is not in itself a reliable, defining characteristic as not all forms of 'new' participation exist exclusively online.[51] A dependence on being connected in this way can still work as a barrier to young people from more disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds who may have more limited access.

As we have seen, opportunities for self-expression feature as a popularly understood characteristic of 'new' forms of youth participation as do collective identity processes which are seen as crucial in maintaining the internal coherence of movements or campaigns.[52] This manifests itself in, for example, the wearing of T-shirts that communicate a political idea or statement, buying fair-trade products, eating vegan as an environmental stance, sharing political views on social media, and volunteering (Bacalso 2016). We see a re-emergence of a key tenet of the woman's movement of the 1970s and 1980s that 'the personal is political', that in order to affect social change it is necessary to transform a whole way of life (Fominaya 2015).

The drivers for the current concerns with innovative forms of youth participation

Notwithstanding the difficulties of defining new and innovative youth participation (a discussion to which we shall return), the literature on the drivers for the new forms of participation makes for disturbing reading. Using compelling data from a wide range of sources, the 2012 report of Willems et al. (2012) for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities outlines graphically the deteriorating circumstances of young

people in many parts of Europe. Evidence relating to the huge increases in youth unemployment in some European countries, the changing nature of transitions from school to work, and the associated insecurities and precariousness of the labour market that young people are trying to navigate, illustrate that it is the youth of Europe who are most adversely affected by the current economic and social changes.

High-level concerns about social and political issues inflamed by these high levels of youth unemployment and the increasing precarity of youth transitions to autonomy are some of the reasons cited for young people in Europe turning against traditional forms of participation to new or at least 'alternative' forms. Other drivers touched on earlier in this review include:

► disaffection with established political institutions (and elite politicians) which seem disconnected from the realities of everyday life;

► a sense of greater self-efficacy felt by young people by expressing their political views through everyday actions ('the personal is political');

► a concern amongst young people with self-expression and individualisation (as a response to the neo-liberalism of the last two decades);

► less time and less commitment are required by alternative forms, they are therefore more amenable to a young person's busy schedule and changing tastes.

The London School of Economics and Political Science research commissioned by the European Commission explored the motivations young people have for participating – through focus groups and interviews with young people from six European countries and expert stakeholders. They found that young people's motivation to participate comes from:

► Proximity to an event or value or idea – many younger teenagers may find it easier to get motivated regarding concerns that are real, material and immediate while some older teenagers from more educated or more engaged backgrounds may find it easier to relate to issues that are abstract or global. It is therefore easier to support youth democratic participation when both types of issues are addressed in political debates.

► Having decision makers listen to and act on young people's concerns and opinions and from seeing the positive outcomes of these actions on local, social and individual contexts over a period of time. Again, the study finds that many young people feel insufficiently listened to by political elites.

► Acting together with others and realising that one has efficacy to change local things (building skate parks, preventing demolition of a youth club).

51. Markovic, J., Lopez, M.& Dzigurski, S. (2015) Finding a place in modern Europe: Mapping of barriers to social inclusion of young people in vulnerable situations. EU-CoE Youth Partnership.
52. Fominaya, C.F. (2015) Youth Participation in contemporary European Social Movements. EU-CoE Youth Partnership

A major finding of their research suggested collective action is the key to forming strong and lasting political identities amongst young people.[53]

It is important to try and improve understanding of the reasons why young people in Europe are turning to different or alternative methods of youth participation and indeed to continue to work out what we actually mean by 'new' and innovative forms of participation. However, binary distinctions are often unhelpful; the most important issue is to ensure a more inclusive approach where all effective forms of youth participation are supported. Plurality is essential, acknowledging that young people are not a homogenous group and that different styles or forms of participation can work for different young people (and different institutional, decision-making practices) in different circumstances.

The study conducted by the London School of Economics and Political Science in co-operation with the European Commission argues against binary distinctions: the alternative versus the original; the conventional versus the unconventional; the traditional versus the modern. The researchers prefer to describe the different forms of youth participation as a:

> "…continuum of democratic participation fraught with **practical** and **normative** tensions and moving along a spectrum, from the traditional or conventional to the innovative and creative."[54] (authors' emphasis).

They continue:

> "In some contexts a particular form of participation may be innovative because a group of young people who would previously not have become involved in civic life have now done so. In other contexts young people's participation may be viewed as civil disobedience by the local, national or transnational authorities and the innovation or the civic-ness denied. In yet other cases, new digital media tools or old media may play a part in challenging political policy or political governance. Or some groups of young people may sidestep formal democratic life and participate in parallel."[55]

Towards a working definition of new and innovative forms of youth participation

Our exploration of what previous research is telling us about what is meant by 'new and innovative' forms of youth participation has so far emphasized the new or alternate ways that young people are choosing to express themselves using new technologies and different spaces. We have said little about any new or innovative mechanisms or structures for how these expressions by young people might be taken

into account in public decision making. That is, the actual changes or innovations that public institutions have brought about to support and facilitate young people's participation in decision-making processes. This aspect can perhaps be better understand as 'policy innovation' – an approach which is more about developing new ideas, services, models to address long-standing challenges. The concept of policy innovation has been used most notably by the European Commission where the Social Investment Package (SIP) programme provides targeted support to test the design and potential for scaling up structural reforms in welfare and social protection systems.[56]

Social policy innovation is defined by the European Union as meaning **"developing new ideas, services and models to better address social issues. It invites input from public and private actors, including civil society, to improve social services".[57]** It is thus based on promoting broader partnerships and evidence-based policies looking at their impact on policy innovation. There is an emphasis on testing, on outcomes, on evaluations and on fostering knowledge transfers in order to apply the range of lessons learned in practice more widely. Innovation in public policy is a method of social policy experimentation whereby new solutions to social issues are tried, evaluated and, if successful, scaled.[58]

We do need to recognise that even though young people may be expressing themselves in new and different ways, this does not necessarily mean that the mechanisms by which young people are influencing political institutions and decision-making processes have changed or become innovative. Arguably, innovation in developing these mechanisms is what is needed most in order to ensure that young people's views are taken into account in policymaking.

Notwithstanding this important distinction between alternative, new forms of expression that young people are choosing to engage with politically and innovative approaches to youth participation in policy making, a working definition of 'new and innovative' forms of youth participation for this study was required. The typology used in the study of good practices in youth participation commissioned by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the EU-CoE partnership in the field of youth and undertaken by the Finnish Youth Research Network incorporates a broad and nuanced understanding of participation and of democratic engagement.[59] The

53. London School of Economics and Political Science (2013) *op.cit.*
54. London School of Economics (2013) *op.cit*. Page 86.
55. *Ibid.*

56. European Commission Social Innovation.
57. *Ibid.*
58. European Commission Social Policy Innovation: meeting the social needs of citizens.
59. Gretschel A., Levamo T.M., Kiilakoski T., Laine S., Mäntylä N. Pleyers G. Raisio H. (2014) Youth Participation Good Practices in Different Forms of Regional and Local Democracy. Finnish Youth Research Network.

typology includes: representative democracy, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, counter-democracy and progressive activism, whereby:

▶ *Representative* democracy can be seen as voting in elections and membership of political parties, the traditional or conventional forms of youth participation;

▶ *Participatory* democracy involves direct influence on various processes. In a more limited sense, it can offer 'organised citizens' groups and non-governmental organisations the opportunity to challenge and deliver information, views and suggestions;

▶ *Deliberative* democracy allows for a genuine collaboration between citizens and decision makers;

▶ *Counter-democracy*, involves diverse forms of monitoring, protest and non-conventional practices.

The concepts of participatory, deliberative and counter-democracy can be understood as alternative forms of participation (by virtue of the fact that they are different from representative democracy which defines traditional or 'original' democracy in our current systems). This typology has informed the categories used in our survey of stakeholders on new and innovative forms of youth participation.

While the question of what constitutes new and innovative forms of youth participation remains poorly defined, there is broad agreement emerging from recent research that current developments require a re-framing of what is understood as participation practice. Four interconnected ways are proposed to improve our understanding of youth participation and responding to the paradoxes in the field:

1. Expand the concept of participation and democracy beyond conventional forms of participation and representative democracy to multiple forms of participation.

2. Improve mutual understanding of institutions and youth on participation, where a major challenge lies in the wide gap between what institutions and what most young people mean by participation.

3. Connect participation to empowerment and agency.

4. Include consideration of different approaches for different groups or categories of young people in strategies to promote youth participation in order to make them more effective as no 'one-size-fits-all'.[60]

This review raises more questions than answers about what is meant by new and innovative forms of youth participation. Thus the debate continues. For the purposes of this study, the operational concept we use excludes the most traditional and conventional forms of participation, that is voting in elections and membership of political parties, but otherwise includes all forms of youth participation in decision making at a local, regional or national level that contain some kind of innovation or change in practice in response to an identified problem or trend. The study is particularly concerned with forms of youth participation that are having an impact, that include both spaces for a diverse array of voices but also opportunities for those voices to be heard and taken into account by those making decisions.

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60. Analytical paper on Youth Participation Young people's political participation in Europe: What do we mean by participation? Youth Partnership (2014) EU-CoE Youth Partnership.

Chapter 5
Stakeholder views on innovative forms

This chapter presents the findings of the stakeholder survey, exploring stakeholder views on different forms of youth participation in decision making, their relationship to innovation, and whether particular forms or types of youth participation are considered more innovative than others. In addition, it explores stakeholder views on the relationship between innovation and effectiveness, as well as the barriers and enablers associated with various forms of youth participation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the concept of innovation in relation to youth participation in decision making is not clearly defined, and there is no accepted definition of innovative practice or what innovative forms of participation might be. However, Gretschel et al. (2014) provide a useful typology of different forms of youth participation that informed the conceptualisation used in the survey.

The definition of stakeholder used was broadly interpreted and the survey was open to anyone with an interest in youth participation. However, the methods of distribution targeted individuals already engaged in youth work and youth participation. So whilst a relatively high proportion of the 356 respondents identified as young people (30.9%, n=110), these are likely to be those who are well engaged in youth organisations and other formal structures.

Defining the forms of youth participation in decision making

The survey sought to gather views on five different forms of youth participation in decision making: youth councils and other formal structures; co-management and co-production; deliberative participation; activism and protest; and digital participation. Survey participants were given the descriptions of each form, along with examples of projects to illustrate the essential features.

Youth participation includes a wide variety of practices such as civic education of young people, volunteering and community activism. The survey sought to focus only on forms of participation which aim to support and enable young people to influence political or public body decision making; there are many other forms of participation which exist outside of this. To develop the descriptions for each form, we drew on the work of Gretschel et al. (2014) who, as noted in Chapter 4, propose five broad forms of participation in regional and local democracy, with various subcategories. We followed their categorisation system closely but sought to exclude participation through voting, as this fell outside the scope of this study, and placed a greater emphasis on co-management and co-production, which was regarded by the Reflection Group as an area that should be of specific interest to this study.

The five forms of youth participation used in the survey are:

1. **Youth councils, youth parliaments, youth boards and other formal structures**: these are bodies whose role is to represent the views of young people to decision makers. Young people usually become members or representatives of the body and participate in the group on an ongoing basis. They are sometimes elected by other young people or nominated by youth organisations. Youth councils or parliaments can represent a geographic area, such as a city or a country, when engaging with public authorities within that area. Youth boards can be linked to a single organisation such as a school or an NGO and focus on the work of that organisation.

2. **Co-management and co-production**: these are forms where young people and adults jointly take decisions about the running of a public organisation or project. Co-management is when a group of young people and adults work collaboratively, sharing power to manage and run an institution or organisation on an ongoing basis. An example of this is the Council of Europe's Joint Council on Youth where young people and government representatives jointly decide the Council of Europe youth sector's priorities, objectives and budget envelopes. Co-production is when a group of young people and adults work collaboratively, sharing power to undertake a task until that task is complete. Examples of such tasks could be writing a strategy, conducting research, evaluating a public service, or running a project.

3. **Deliberative youth participation**: this form aims to include young people from all backgrounds in public debate and dialogue about a decision or group of decisions, to influence the way they are taken. This often takes place as a one-off event or series of events. A young person may participate in all or part of the discussions. There is a clear end to the process where a position on the decision or topic is reached, and the outcome of the discussion is agreed. Emphasis is placed on detailed discussion so that the young people who take part can thoroughly consider the topic. It is desirable that the young people who take part should be from diverse backgrounds and from all social groups of the population. The outcomes of the dialogue are often directly fed to a public authority or other body with responsibility for the decision being discussed. Good quality deliberative youth participation should influence the decision being debated.

4. **Youth activism and protest**: this form is related to young people's involvement in campaigning groups and democratic protest as a means of influencing public decision making. Campaigning groups and protest groups are often focused on a single issue or cause and will seek to campaign for political change around that cause. They are independent from public authorities and the state and may not be only for young people. Young people's involvement can be linked to organisations, for instance political parties, trade unions and NGOs, who may seek to mobilise young people as activists for their cause. In other cases, loose associations of activists may self-mobilise non-formally around a common cause and identity such as the Occupy Movement or the Arab Spring.

5. **Young people's digital participation**: digital participation can take many forms. In this study we use the term to mean the use of the Internet, social media and mobile technology to connect young people to decision makers with the aim of influencing the decisions in public authorities and other bodies. Digital participation can exist alongside other forms of participation in the same project or just in the online realm. Digital participation can be initiated by institutions seeking to reach out to young people, for example through the use of opinion polls, consultations or crowdsourcing ideas. Digital participation can also be initiated by young people, where online tools are used to gather support for campaigns, or information from young people, which is then presented to decision makers, for example through the use of online petitions.

To identify previously undocumented forms of participation, there were opportunities in the survey for participants to describe any other forms of youth participation that did not fit within the typology. In nearly all cases, the suggestions put forward were forms of participation that fell outside of the scope of youth participation **in decision making**, such as civic education or volunteering programmes, or they were fitted as sub-divisions of the five main forms in the typology. However, in survey responses and in our follow-up interviews with stakeholders, the concept of 'participatory spaces' stood out as not captured by the typology of the five forms described. Whereas other forms of participation focus on the process, structure or method through which young people participate, the creation of a participatory 'space' focuses more on creating an environment and setting which will encourage participation in the longer term. It proved difficult to locate case studies that reflected this form and also included evidence of young people participating and influencing decision making.

A final caveat is around the contextual nature of the term innovative. The study confirms the importance of recognising that the nature of innovation is a relative, context-specific term. So whilst a local youth council may be relatively commonplace and considered non-innovative in a country where there is a long tradition of local youth councils, it may very well be seen as a new and innovative form of practice in another country where the historical legacy is different.

Survey results

Which forms of participation are seen as the most innovative?

For each of the five forms of participation, survey participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statement: '*This form of participation would be considered innovative in the geographic area I work in'*. A scale of 0-10 was used for answers where 0 equals low and 10 equals high.

Responses to this question were tested for statistically significant differences. This showed a significant difference between the way stakeholders viewed 'digital participation', 'deliberative participation' and 'co-management and co-production' when compared to either 'youth councils and similar structures' or 'youth activism and protest'.

'Digital participation', 'deliberative participation' and 'co-management and co-production' are the three forms of participation that stakeholders see as more innovative. 'Youth councils and similar structures' or 'youth activism and protest' are seen as less innovative forms of participation by stakeholders who took part in the survey.

Are more innovative forms less common?

Using the same rating scale survey, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements about how common each form of participation was at local, regional and national level. Average (mean) ratings are shown in the graph below.

How common are the different forms of participation?
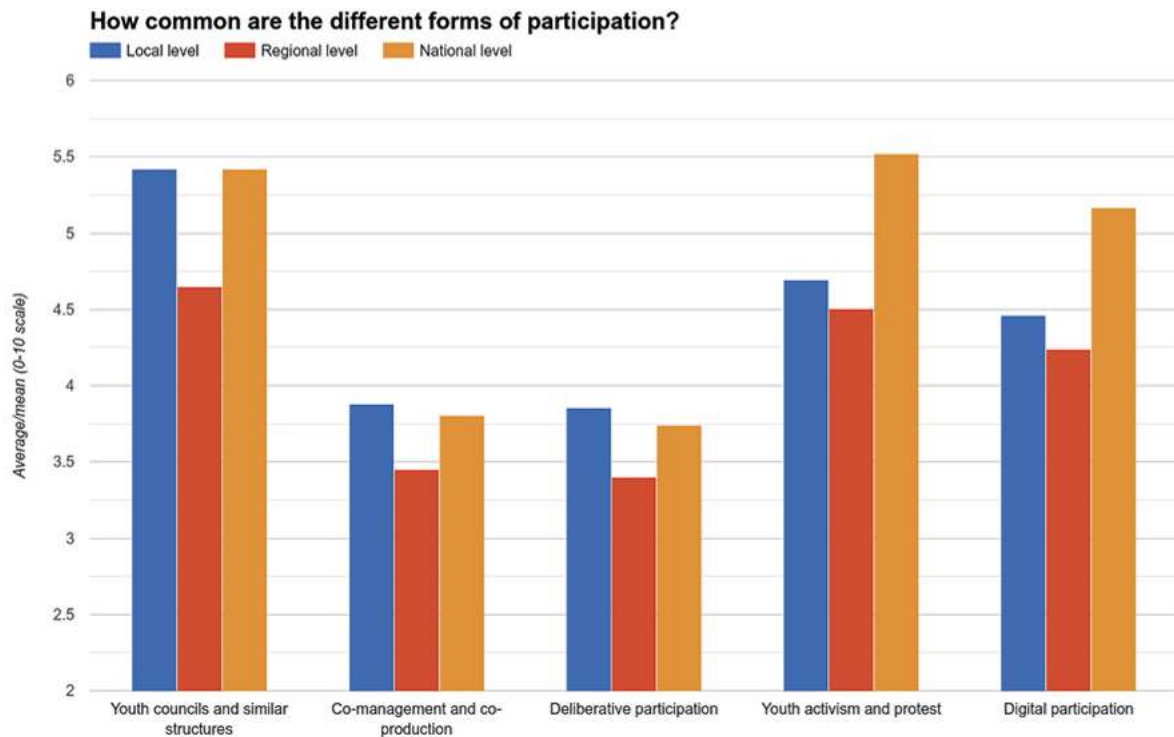
These results indicate that 'co-management and co-production' and 'deliberative participation' are noticeably less common at all levels than the other forms of participation. 'Youth councils and similar structures' are generally seen as the most common form of participation at a local level. At national and regional levels, the distributions of 'youth activism and protest', 'youth councils and similar structures' and 'digital participation' are all broadly similar.

If innovation is connected to the idea of a new form of practice, we should expect that the most innovative forms are the least commonplace. Broadly speaking, stakeholder views support this idea. The two more innovative forms of youth participation, 'co-management and co-production' and 'deliberative participation' were seen as the least common. However, in contrast, the third more innovative form 'digital participation', is seen as relatively common. This may relate to the capability of digital platforms to engage large numbers of young people.

Barriers and enablers to public authorities being open to innovative forms of participation

Survey participants were asked about factors which work as barriers or enablers for public authorities and other bodies being more open to engage with different forms of participation. They were asked to rate a series of nine barriers and eight enablers for each form using a five-point scale. An average (mean) rating was calculated, and the highest ranked enablers and barriers were identified for each form.

Highest rated barriers

The three most highly rated barriers for 'youth councils and similar structures' and 'co-management and co-production' are identified as:

▶ *'Lack of funds and resources'*;

▶ *'Lack of political support'*;

▶ *'This form is not properly understood by public authorities'.*

'Deliberative participation' shared the same top three barriers, but 'public authorities do not see this form as an effective way to influence decisions' was tied for third place.

'Digital participation's' top three barriers were similar again, though interestingly 'lack of funds and resources' was ranked much lower. Overall the top three barriers to digital participation are identified as:

▶ *'Lack of political support'*;

▶ *'This form is not properly understood by public authorities'*;

▶ *'Public authorities do not see this form as an effective way to influence decisions'.*

In contrast, the top three barriers to 'youth activism and protest' were different from all other forms:

▶ *'Public authorities do not see this form of participation as legitimate'*;

▶ *'Public authorities see this form of participation as threatening'*;

▶ *'Public authorities prefer other, more traditional forms of youth participation'.*

Highest rated enablers

As with the barriers, the enablers were almost consistent across the forms with the exception of 'youth activism and protest'.

The top three factors that were thought to enable public authorities to be open to 'youth council and similar structures', 'co-management and co-production' and 'deliberative participation' were the same, that is:

► *'Increased political support for this form of participation';*
► *'Increased awareness of this form by public authorities and other bodies';*
► *'Increased acceptance of this form by public authorities and other bodies'.*

'Digital participation' elicited a similar response but 'a greater understanding of how this form can be used to influence decision making in public authorities' displaced 'increased awareness of this form by public authorities and other bodies'.

As with the barriers, the enablers for 'youth activism and protest' followed a different pattern to other forms. However, there was some overlap. The top three barriers to this form were:

► *'Increased desire to listen to young people from decision makers in general';*
► *'Increased acceptance of this form of participation by public authorities and other bodies';*
► *'Greater understanding of how this form can be used to influence'* decision making in public authorities'.

Are the barriers to more innovative forms of participation different from traditional approaches?

Overall, with the exception of 'youth activism and protest', we can see the main barriers and enablers for public authorities being open to each form of participation were extremely similar. The three forms identified as more innovative experience broadly the same barriers as the traditional form of 'youth councils and similar structures'. The same things that would enable public authorities to be more open to innovative forms would also enable them to be open to 'youth councils and similar structures'. Barriers affecting 'youth activism and protest' (a less innovative form) seem to be linked to the idea that it represents social

unrest and it is unsurprising that this stands out as different. However, this does not seem to connect to the idea of innovation.

## Are more innovative forms seen as more effective?

The concept of effectiveness is another contested term. In discussions with the Reflection Group, for the purposes of the survey, we agreed three measures to guide participants' assessments of the effectiveness of each form. These measures were:

► Effectiveness at influencing decision making in public authorities or other bodies;
► Effectiveness at including young people with fewer opportunities/disadvantaged groups;
► Ability to be replicated on a large scale or in other places.

Survey participants were asked their views on the effectiveness of each form using these measures. Based on responses we can see in the views of stakeholders: more innovative forms of participation are not automatically more or less effective than less innovative forms of participation. It cannot be said that, in general, the more innovative forms were seen as: more or less able to influence decision making; to include young people from a wide variety of backgrounds; or be replicated at scale, than less innovative forms. The responses to each measure are described in more detail in the following sections.

Do innovative forms influence decision making more than other forms?

Using the same rating scale as questions on innovation and commonality, participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with a statement on each form's effectiveness at influencing decision making. Responses were tested for statistically significant differences.

How effective are the different forms at influencing the decisions of public authorities?
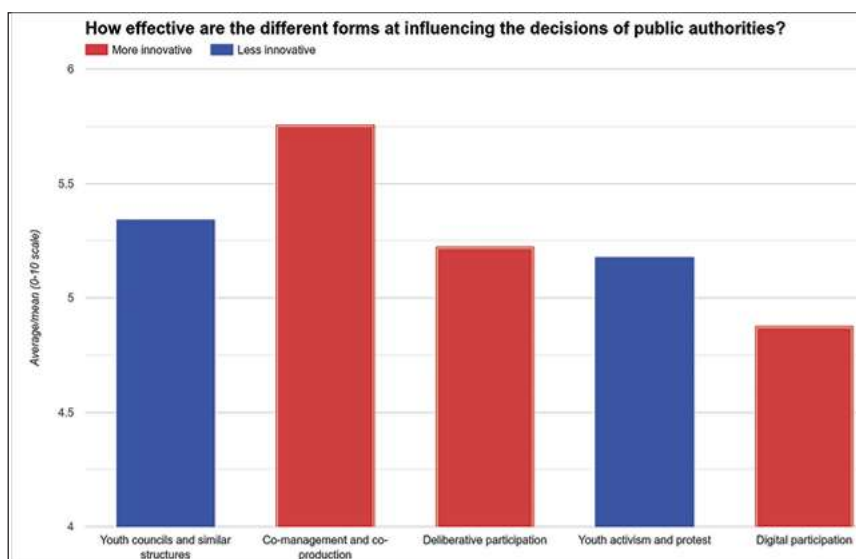
The results show that the effectiveness of all forms at influencing decision making is generally seen as very similar. The only statistically significant difference is between highest and lowest ranked forms 'co-management and co-production' and 'digital participation'. This indicates that stakeholders do see clear differences between how effective these forms are at influencing decision making. Overall though, we cannot say that the three forms identified as more innovative (shown in red) are consistently seen as more or less effective at influencing decisions than the less innovative forms.

Are innovative forms more effective at including young people with fewer opportunities?

Using the same scale as above, participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with a statement on each form's effectiveness at including young people with fewer opportunities. The analysis of responses identified substantial variation in responses to this question. There was no real consensus from stakeholders about how effective each form is at the practice of inclusion. This suggests that the ability of a participation project or programme to include young people from a range of backgrounds and circumstances is not seen as connected to the particular form of participation used. This finding supports the idea that any form of participation could be made to be either more inclusive or exclusive depending on how it is implemented. This is an interesting finding given that it is sometimes argued that formalised structures such as youth councils can be exclusive. Similarly it is sometimes argued that digital participation has the potential to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities. Stakeholder views seem to support neither of these positions.

Can innovative forms be replicated more easily?

Using the same rating scale as above, participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with a statement on how difficult it is to replicate each form in multiple areas or on a large scale. Responses were tested for statistically significant differences.

There was a significant difference between the way stakeholders saw 'Digital youth participation' and all other forms – they clearly viewed it as easier to replicate than all other forms. Whilst 'Youth activism and protest' was rated on average as easier to replicate than the other three forms, the difference in rating was not statistically significant. Overall, we cannot say that the three forms identified as more innovative (shown in red) are consistently seen as easier or harder to replicate than the less innovative forms.

Summary

Stakeholders clearly identified youth councils, youth forums, youth parliaments and similar structures along with 'youth activism and protest' as the less innovative forms of youth participation. Co-management, co-production, deliberative participation, digital participation and potentially the use of participatory 'spaces' represent the innovative, cutting edge of the sector.

How easily can the different forms be replicated?

Legend: More innovative (red), Less innovative (blue)
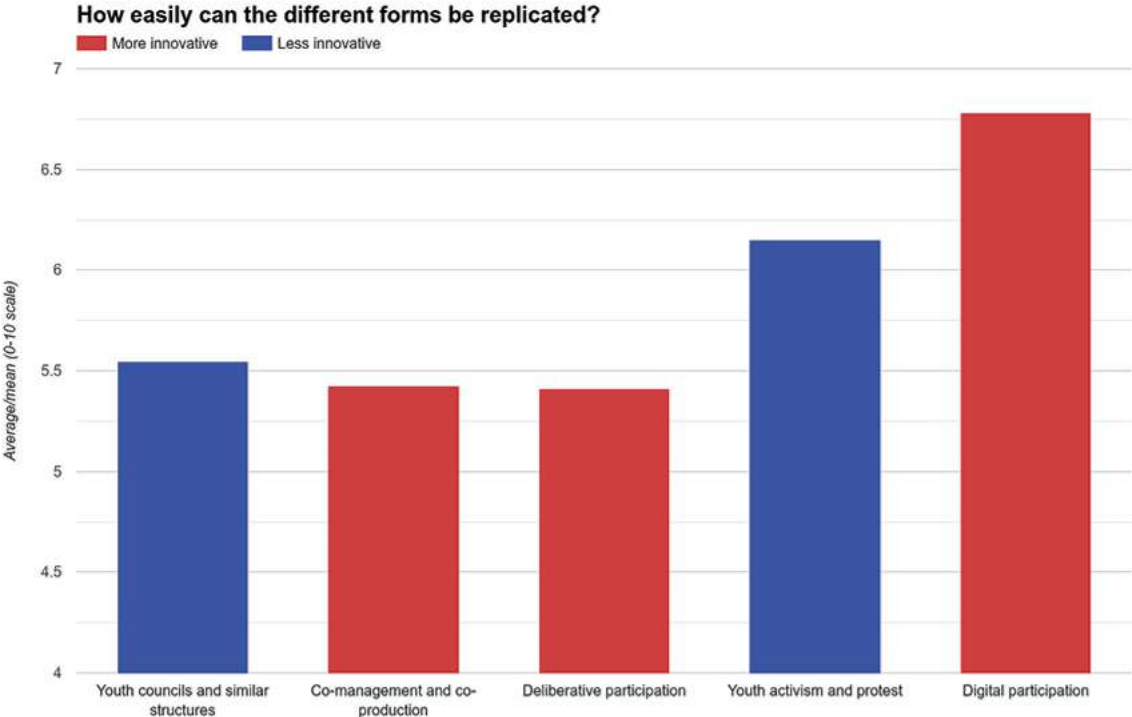
Stakeholders tell us that some of the things inhibiting the development of innovative forms of youth participation are the lack of political support and a lack of understanding and awareness of them and their potential to shape decisions by public bodies. It is interesting that *'funds and resources'* are identified as a barrier to their development but not necessarily as an enabler. This could be interpreted as meaning that although the amount of resource allocated might limit the number of projects, innovating youth participation is about encouraging public bodies and decision makers to embrace and understand its role rather than just resourcing it. However, these barriers are not seen by stakeholders as specific to innovation. Instead they apply to youth participation in decision making more generally. The enablers and barriers to innovative forms identified by stakeholders were almost the same as for youth councils and other similar structures.

It should not be assumed that innovative forms of practice are any better than less innovative ones. In the view of stakeholders, they are no more or less effective than the traditional approaches to supporting youth participation. This is a key finding from the survey. This means innovation should not be seen as the end goal for youth participation; rather as a means to an end. Doing something new or differently does not necessarily mean that it will be done better. To be useful to youth participation, innovation must be linked to the concept of improvement. New ideas and methodologies need to be tested to see if they improve on previous methods.

Chapter 6

Examples of innovative participation projects

This chapter provides descriptions of a number of projects and initiatives considered to be innovative in the ways they set out to enable and support young people to influence public decision making. As referenced throughout this report, the extent to which something is considered innovative is very subjective, and is influenced strongly by the context in which the initiative is taking place. Survey respondents were asked to nominate examples of innovative practice for further exploration and our original intention was to select examples of the five categories used in the survey: youth councils; co-management and co-production, deliberative youth participation; youth activism and digital participation as well as an example of the 'participatory spaces' identified by a number of stakeholders.

Other criteria used to inform the selection process included: demonstrating an obvious connection to public decision making; addressing common barriers; and evidence of effectiveness in terms of impact and inclusion. In addition to all of the above, there was a commitment to including practice examples from across the breadth of experiences within the member

States of the Council of Europe and a recognition that projects needed to be able to commit to working with the authors within a tight time frame. The challenges of this meant that some compromises had to be made on geography and that some projects had to decline our invitation to take part in the review.

With nominations from stakeholders via the survey and further advice from members of the Reflection Group, we were able to identify a variety of examples of deliberative and digital participation. However it was more challenging to identify examples of co-management and, with the exception of the Council of Europe's own youth sector, only one (Youth Focus North West) was located. In practice, we also found that co-production was sometimes difficult to distinguish from deliberative participation. The KAOOS project in Finland illustrates both. It proved challenging to identify projects or initiatives utilising the concept of participatory spaces. Two candidate projects were found however, one was unable to commit to the study in the time frame and the other was not sufficiently focused on participation in decision making.

Context

Bienvenue dans ma tribu is an online project established in 2015 by the government of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, which represents the French-speaking Community of Belgium. The project aims to facilitate dialogue between young people and the government on a citizen's charter. The purpose of the charter is to strengthen citizenship within intercultural society; reiterating the rights and the principles of the rule of law, human rights and citizenship and democracy. The charter was created through a series of discussions between the government and civil society. At the time, it was recognised that young people were under-represented in this process.

Within the region, the relationship between civil society and the government is highly organised, with law and policies in place governing how the State consults with citizens. *Bienvenue dans ma tribu* was designed as a new way for the government to reach out beyond these formal interactions directly to young people, as well as promoting the role of youth organisations.

Methods

The project provides a platform for the government to consult with young people aged 10 to 25 on the charter and also educates them about it. No specific disadvantaged or minority groups of young people are targeted, however the project is designed to reach young people who are not engaged with youth organisations. Young people were consulted on the development of *Bienvenue dans ma tribu* through a series of focus groups. These aimed to develop a version of the charter text that was accessible to young people, and on the design and layout of the website.

At the project's core is a website themed around ten different tribes of creatures. Each tribe is depicted by an animated character and represents one of the ten articles in the charter. For example, the tribe "SÉKOUL-DÉTLIBRE" (*c'est cool d'être libre* – it's cool to be free) is represented by a striped, square looking creature who believes Belgium is a democratic state that respects its citizens' human rights. Young people who visit the site are invited to explore information about each tribe and its beliefs, and to share their opinions on it through comments boards, videos

and text. As well as exploring the existing tribes, young people can create a new tribe by designing its animated character, naming it and writing about the article of the charter that it represents. Tribes created are displayed on the site and can be shared using social media buttons.

The website also features a section for professionals to access and upload resources which support youth participation. This raises the profile of youth organisations and provides an opportunity to share tools.

To encourage young people to access the site, promotion was initially through youth organisations and schools but, to widen the reach, co-ordinators additionally target young people directly with a marketing and publicity campaign delivered via social media.

The civil servants engage in dialogue with the young people directly through the messages and comments that come in on the platform. The new tribes created and comments on existing tribes are used to inform the work of the Ministry. This direct, informal and fluid dialogue with young people is a new approach for the government representing a fundamental shift away from consulting with young people through intermediary institutions and organisations.

Impact

As this project is educating and informing young people about an already existing charter, its biggest impact is likely to be on the young people directly. Website usage is high with a large number of young people accessing it. Some schools are also including the site directly in the curriculum for their citizenship lessons.

The project's impact on future decisions about the charter, or new developments in the area of citizenship, will depend on how much the government listens to and acts upon messages coming out of the information gathered on the website. The project team reports that strong ideas from the project have been added to the charter, such as a new article on environmental rights and responsibilities. This tension between the impact on young people and the impact on policy making is common to many projects which combine educational and consultation approaches, particularly where there is a focus on creating dialogue.

Lessons learned

Early feedback on the project from young people indicates that the themed website is more popular with the younger end of the target age range. The use of animated characters has appealed to young people under 15 years but has been seen as childish by some of the older ones. The project team stated that the concept was initially seen by the youth sector as challenging. Extensive work has been required to explain the project, and gain the support of youth organisations.

Now the development of the website is complete, the project team is focused on promotion and publicity to increase the number of young people using the platform. The project team believes that the approach could be used across other areas of government or policy, though this has not yet been attempted.

Reflections on innovation

For the project's creators, the innovation in this project is about being able to reach beyond the restrictions of more formalised interaction and traditional structures for civil society consultation. These more traditional methods are seen to institutionalise participation and exclude young people not involved with youth organisations. The innovation within this project is motivated by a desire to find ways of consulting with a wider range of young people.

It is interesting to note that it is this new style of dialogue rather than the use of an online approach that was seen as innovative by the project co-ordinators. An online approach was a means of achieving this innovation, not an innovation in itself. However, the use of an online approach to achieve this places the project clearly in the category of a newer form of participation.

Sources of further information

Project lead: Sandrine Debunne - sandrine.debunne@ gov.cfwb.be

Project website: www.bienvenuedansmatribu.be

| **Name**: #ИЗБОРИСЕ |
| **Location**: "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" |
| **Form**: Deliberative |

Context

In the period before a national election, the National Democracy Institute (NDI) approached the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM) and together they planned campaign #ИЗБОРИСЕ[61] to encourage:

► political parties to take account of young people's issues as they develop their policies;

► young people to get involved in politics and to vote;

► the young people of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and their politicians and policymakers to engage in an ongoing dialogue.

This was the first project of its kind in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", providing spaces where young people (aged 16-32) can meet and talk about issues with representatives of the youth wings of political parties and future policymakers. Hitherto, the youth council had reported an absence of dialogue with young people, and it was felt that the members of the youth wings of political parties had little knowledge of the issues of concern to young people or about youth policy development.

Since the country declared independence in 1991, a parliamentary democracy has been established; citizens are able to vote when they are 18 years of age. The NYCM was formed in 2013. It is the representative body of youth organisations in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", with the role to advocate youth rights.

Methods

A series of workshops was organised by the NYCM with the aim of building the capacities of members of the youth wings of political parties to develop progressive youth policies and programmes that respond to the issues of concern for young people. Training on advocacy and lobbying skills was also included. The workshops concluded with a set of recommended measures in respect of the existing programmes of the political parties.

Consultations with the youth wings of the political parties also took place in all eight regions of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" with events being organised in 10 cities. Subsequent meetings of representatives from the political parties co-ordinated action to take forward the recommended measures.

Eight policy areas were prioritised in the recommended measures including the recognition of non-formal education, sex education in schools, and improving the quality of life of young people with fewer opportunities. After the national elections, the political parties were reminded of the eight priorities and asked to include them in their manifestos and programmes of government and to make efforts to implement them.

Phase II of the project has included eight local youth discussions, engaging young people in mapping local problems and potential solutions to the problems. In local forums, these area profiles are presented to the politicians and the candidates for the upcoming local elections with the intention of getting these problems onto the agendas of future local decision makers. At the same time, the NYCM is building the capacities of its regional co-ordinators for lobbying and constructively co-operating with public authorities and with youth wings of political parties in the different parts of the country.

Impact

The campaign #ИЗБОРИСЕ is seen as a big success. It created a space for young people to come together and articulate their concerns and develop their ideas for addressing the problems they are facing. The dialogue established between young people and political parties has been welcomed and is further developing in preparation for local elections. Political parties remain engaged in the implementation of the recommendations from the campaign. Additionally, a comprehensive analysis of the programmes of all of the political parties was undertaken to explore how well youth policies are represented.[62]

An evaluation of #ИЗБОРИСЕ indicates that the campaign has been very effective in starting a positive and useful debate on youth-oriented policies between young people and the future political leaders of the country. The campaign is seen as strengthening the capacities of the members of youth wings of political

61. The name of the campaign is difficult to translate directly into English. It has a number of meanings including 'fight for yourself', 'say everything' and 'there are elections'.

62. The analysis is available here: www.nms.org.mk/mk/dokumenti/analiza-na-zastapenosta-na-mladinskite-politiki-vo-programite-na-politichkite-partii-za-vreme-na-parlamentarnite-izbori-2014-godina/.

parties and also of agreeing a number of priority advocacy 'requests' of political parties and public authorities. The NYCM reports that young people involved in the campaign have found the experience positive; they feel motivated and have welcomed the opportunity to share their views and opinions with the politicians.

The NYCM reports that the majority, but not all of the 500-600 young people who took part in the workshops and consultation events held around the country were already linked with youth organisations. Adverts were placed in the media which did attract other young people.

Lessons learned

While the campaign is seen as very successful, the NYCM is planning steps to widen its outreach. For example, they acknowledge that they have found it particularly difficult to engage young people from the rural areas of the country.

The NYCM has reviewed the use of national and local media and are planning to use these more effectively as they go forward with the campaign. They think the language needs adjusting and the platforms and methods they use for making contact with young people need to be improved. The team are also working on a plan to live-stream the meetings and events on their website so those young people who are unable to get there in person can watch the sessions and interact. The campaign communications material and branding is being strengthened so young people can recognise the campaign wherever it comes up.

One lesson learned is that the debate between young people and the political parties has to be a continuous process – sufficient capacity cannot be built and positive dialogue concluded in just a few months. The campaign is continuing with training and the drafting of measures and proposals for change.

Reflections on innovation

What makes this practice innovative is that it has established an ongoing structured dialogue between young people and future policymakers and political leaders where previously it did not exist. The NYCM believes that there is no reason why the model for this campaign could not be replicated elsewhere. It would be especially pertinent, they suggest, in countries with similar historical legacies.

Sources of further information

Project Co-ordinator/Research Co-ordinator: Martin Aleksoski

National Youth Council of Macedonia website: www.nms.org.mk/mk

| **Name**: Dive Maky – Wild Poppies (Young Roma Leaders) |
| **Location**: Bratislava, Slovakia |
| **Form**: Inclusion |

Context

The project, Young Roma Leaders, focuses on supporting young Roma aged 15-22 years to be activists and advocates and promoting dialogue between policymakers, practitioners and young Roma. The aim of the project is to train, mentor, coach and support young Roma to advocate the inclusion of Roma children and young people in society and to reduce the victimisation of Roma in primary schools in the least developed regions in Slovakia.

The main objective of the project is to effect change with local, regional and national authorities responsible for the preparation and implementation of programmes and strategies to improve living conditions, opportunities and to fully integrate young people at risk. The project addresses a very real need as the authorities responsible do not have enough relevant and current information directly from young people about their realities and what should be changed or improved to enable them to lead more fulfilling lives and not to live on the margins of society.

The project is very much youth-led, the idea for the project having come from young Roma students on the scholarship scheme that is supported by the Divé Maky programme (which has been running for many years). The young people were motivated by the desire to give support and help to Roma children and young people.

Methods

Training young leaders and working with Roma children and young people in schools

The first phase of the project has been to train young leaders from Roma communities. Thirteen young leaders were trained in leadership, communication and advocacy skills as well as skills in work with children and youth in primary schools. The project also selected and trained a group which mentors and coaches the young Roma leaders as they work in their own communities. Every three months, the young leaders are brought together for a coaching and mentoring programme led by a coach who herself is from a Roma community. The coach is accountable to the young people who plan these regular mentoring sessions with support from staff.

Back in their communities, the young leaders work with disadvantaged children and young people in primary schools using art and creative activities to motivate and activate them. The young leaders provide positive role models for the younger children and aim to inspire children to feel that they can overcome difficult conditions and realise their aspirations. The Roma children often face prejudice and bullying from other children.

The young leaders also undertake research with disadvantaged children and young people in their communities (including Roma) in schools and community centres: running focus groups; undertaking surveys; and moderating discussions on social media and online platforms to collect information on the children's circumstances, the difficulties they experience and the children's ideas for overcoming the obstacles to full integration that they face. The information is analysed and presented in reports and materials that communicate the key messages to decision makers, the media and the general public at local, regional, national and international levels. The aim is to make people aware of the difficulties and the changes that are required in designing and implementing programmes and strategies aimed at children and young people.

Advocacy activities

The project is now supporting the young leaders in a programme of advocacy activities. Young Roma leaders spoke on a popular TV show about the problems that Roma children and young people face on a daily basis and about a new generation of young educated Roma who want to have equal opportunties in Slovakian society. Subsequently, the young leaders met with the Ministry of Education and presented information on the main obstacles that Roma children and young people face in schools and education more generally. They put forward a number of measures to remedy these problems. Meetings with the Slovakian Commissioner of Roma Minorities, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the President of the Slovak Republic are planned. The co-operation with the Ministry of Education continues. The young leaders are also planning further activities for challenging the prejudices against Roma. The advocacy programme is devised by the young people with advice from the mentors, coaches and the project staff.

There are plans to advocate and network at a European level. Funding applications have been submitted to enable the provision of training and skills development in international collaboration and advocacy as well as opportunities for the young people to improve their language skills.

Impact

Advocacy activities are in an early phase after an intense period of capacity building and research with Roma children and young people on the pertinent issues and problems, as well as suggestions for how things could be changed. The project reports that, so far, the government ministries have been very receptive to the young Roma leaders. For example, the Ministry of Education is seeking their help to implement a new education programme and is keen to address the victimisation of Roma children and to improve the integration of young Roma into schools. The young people have given positive feedback about the meetings and sense that the government is keen to listen to them:

> "The young leaders say about the government, 'they not only want to meet us and drink our coffee and eat our cakes, but also they want to co-operate and to listen to young people.'"

> Barbora Kohutikova (Project Director)

Lessons learned

The Project Director reports that one lesson learned is that it is the young Roma who know the most about the problems and difficulties faced by their peers and the most promising solutions. At the beginning of the project, there was a need to help the young leaders to design and implement the activities but very quickly, with encouragement from the project and their coaches and mentors, the young people themselves took the lead. An example cited is the young people's own Facebook page which enables them to communicate and network with other Roma young people.

The relationships between the project staff, coaches and mentors and the young leaders (and their families and communities) are strong and have been built up over many years since the young people were children. The project reports that this trust is very important when working with Roma communities or other communities that feel excluded and it cannot, the Project Director reports, be "*conjured up overnight*".

The combination of coaching (for all the young people at their quarterly meetings) and the mentoring they receive back in their distant communities works very well. As a Roma herself, the main coach is seen as a great role model for the young people.

Reflections on innovation

The Project Director reports that this is the first project of its kind in Slovakia. Building on the relationships developed with children and Roma communities over a long period of time, the project is achieving the aim of engaging young Roma themselves in improving their integration and the quality of the education they receive. The young Roma leaders are able to motivate other children and young people from Roma communities whilst, at the same time, working to influence governments at a number of levels.

The innovation of the project is around the work of Roma youth using their unique understanding of the problems in their communities to advise authorities (decision makers), on what needs to be done to address the social exclusion of disadvantaged communities and to integrate young Roma. The Director reports that the outcomes of the project to date challenge the conception of Roma communities as passive and waiting for others to help. Here is a project that is successfully supporting young Roma to help themselves and their communities, a model that is eminently suitable for replication.

Sources of further information

Project Director: Barbora Kohutikova, bkohutikova@divemaky.sk

Project website: http://divemaky.sk

| Name: Ichmache>Politik |
| Location: Berlin, Germany |
| Form: Digital |

Context

Ichmache>Politik is a project of the German Federal Youth Council (Deutscher Bundesjugendring – DBJR) which uses digital methods (ePartool) to support young people's participation in policy making at a national level. DBJR is the umbrella of nation-wide youth organisations and regional youth umbrellas based in Berlin. This example of digital participation has evolved over time based on DBJR's guidelines for digital participation.[63]

Methods

Consultation with young people via the ePartool is structured in 'participation rounds' which lay out the different phases, from an introductory information phase right through to the follow-up stages which outline the (re)actions from policymakers to the contributions. A participation round on the ePartool consists of the following elements:

- ► INFORMATION: Young people deal with a certain topic locally and in their own way. The ePartool offers background information and methodical help.
- ► QUESTIONS AND INPUTS: All text, image, audio and video inputs will be gathered online on the ePartool.
- ► VOTE: On the ePartool, participants vote on the inputs they consider most relevant.
- ► IMPACT: The voting results are included in the process.
- ► FEEDBACK: Political stakeholders take the results into consideration and give feedback. On the ePartool, the feedback and concrete measures are directly linked with the inputs.

Everyone living in Germany aged 12-27 is able to use the online tool as an individual, as part of a self-organised group, or for example in a class in school. There is a distinction between single individuals and groups of contributors (like organisations or project groups). Groups receive greater 'voting weight' based on their size.

63. DBJR (2011) Eparticipation-Participation in and with the Internet a position paper of the German Federal Youth Council regarding eParticipation lays the ground principles for the development of ePartool. The principles on e-participation include: clarity of purpose for the youth participation, adequate time and resources, a transparent process and sustainability.

The project does not maintain records on the numbers and backgrounds of the young people who are engaged in the consultations. It is openly acknowledged that the results arising from the consultation rounds are not representative and may at times be contradictory as they are gathered from young people with a number of different approaches. What is more, the goal is not to be representative but to collect the insights and ideas of young people from a range of different backgrounds and circumstances, and to bring them into the decision-making process.

As well as gathering the views and opinions of young people and young people's groups and organisations, the ePartool has a module that allows the prioritisation of the received inputs, based on a voting system. Once young people have contributed their views, they can vote on the issue or topic using a scale ranging from 'very important' to 'not important'. The outcome of the votes is a ranking which allows DBJR to select the most important issues and to forward them to the decision makers on the national and European levels.

The ePartool thereby links young people's contributions with:

- ► how those views and contributions were linked with similar points raised by other young people;
- ► how the topics and issues were then voted on by other young people (in terms of level of importance);
- ► and ultimately how they were presented to the policymakers and what were the response and outcome.

In order to make it transparent, follow-up reactions, feedback and responses to the original inputs are presented in the format of an interactive timeline. The contributors are automatically informed but other young people can also subscribe to certain topics or items.

Impact

Ichmache>Politik is very concerned with ensuring that the youth participation they support is effective, that young people's views and ideas are listened to and taken into account by decision makers, and that young people who take part in consultations on government policy can discern the influence of their views, ideas and opinions. Follow-up activities are commonplace. In general, within Ichmache>Politik,

the policy development processes are still ongoing with regard to the demographic strategy so it is difficult to accurately estimate the impact on policymaking. However, there is evidence that young people's views have shaped the selection of topics and themes the government will include in the demographic strategy. The project advises that, usually, the political stakeholders deal seriously with the young people's inputs and provide feedback. It was also acknowledged that some policymakers need to be encouraged to do more to recognise and take into account young people's inputs.

The project reports that they regularly ask young people for feedback on the ePartool and the digital participation process. Young people appreciate the use of a system for prioritising inputs (based on young people's contributions) and are pleased that the reactions (from decision makers) and the impacts are now very visible within the software. Participants also value all the information that is provided on the website on the policy topic which, they say, helps them in making informed judgements and opinions. The project claims that this digital approach has a number of further benefits as a method of engagement, including:

► Young people are free to determine the time, extent and method of their input;

► The ePartool can document the feedback and impacts of youth participation. Starting from one's own input, it is possible to trace what impact participation may have had;

► As well as individuals, groups may participate through the ePartool. Thus it offers the opportunity to reflect the positions of youth organisations, associations and other civil society structures.

Lessons learned

The ePartool is ever evolving and has been subject to over five years of refinement. The technology for providing the linking functions (between the young person's contribution, through the voting and onto action and outcomes) has been purposefully developed. One of the main challenges identified by the project is having sufficient time allocated within the policymaking process to support young people's meaningful participation. That is, sufficient time for young people to access information, develop their understanding of the proposals and give their considered views, ideas and opinions.

In addition, the abstract nature of many of the policies decided at a federal level in Germany creates difficulties in seeing where, exactly, the impact of young people's participation has been. That said, the project tries to ensure consistent follow-up and monitoring work and views participation as a process

not a one-off event. Participating in decision making is not always possible within the expected timeframe and the project attempts to have some space to be flexible and also to 'stay for the long course'.

A final lesson learned is that different young people like to be able to participate in a variety of different ways, at different times, in different contexts. Any one young person's preferences may well change over time and indeed, in relation to mood and circumstance. The project claims that the variety of methods used to consult helps to build up the diversity and variety of young people who participate. It is suggested that it is important to play to this strength in any strategy to engage young people, especially those from a range of backgrounds and experiences. The project receives positive feedback from young people on the ePartool but there is also a strong interest in participating in face-to-face workshops run by Ichmache>Politik at summer camps or at youth organisation events or in other ways that are convenient to their particular situation.

Young people value transparency and Ichmache>Politik places a lot of emphasis on this, explaining to young people what it is they are being invited to shape or participate in, why and what might be the outcomes over what timeframe. At the same time, in the view of the project staff, some policymakers need more encouragement to be sensitive to listening and taking into account the views, ideas and opinions of young people.

Reflections on innovation

The innovative or new aspect of the ePartool can perhaps be best understood as the way in which the software has a range of functions that both engage young people and help them to navigate the participation process. Also, the way the ePartool can work in a variety of circumstances, be it engaging an individual young person, a group or a school class and how other offline and online activities complement the tool.

Young people can trace their contributions and see how they are presented and how they impact on decisions. The ePartool has been developed over a number of years with inputs from young people – it started life as an online questionnaire and is now so much more. The project is now exploring (in consultation with young people) how to make best use of the database (of the views and opinions and ideas of young people from across Germany) that has been created over the years. They are already able to build on the statements of youth organisations to inform their positions on certain topics and issues.

The Ichmarche project has now come to an end but the German Federal Youth Council continues its work in the field of participation under the department

of Youth Participation "Werkstatt MitWirkung". The ePartool is now available for others to use as a free Open Source tool for online participation processes. The user can install the software, and adapt the tool for their own purposes. For example, they can create their own groups, ask their own questions. The tool has been translated into English and is being translated into Arabic, Czech, French, Polish, Russian, Spanish and other languages.

Sources of further information

Workers: IchMache>Politik; kasia.siemasz@dbjr.de ePartool, tim.schrock@dbjr.de

Websites:

► The ePartool website through which young people can contribute to the consultation rounds. www.tool.ichmache-politik.de.

► Website/Blog of the project ww.ichmache-politik.de.

► The German Federal Youth Council (DBJR) – the project manager and executive body: www.dbjr.de/service/english.html.

► The development blog for the ePartool; the open source software may be downloaded from there, so that it can be used in other contexts www. tooldoku.dbjr.de.

Context

The city of Oulu is a remote city in Northern Finland with a population of 200 000. This project is funded by the European Social Fund as a 'Community-Led Local Development' (CLLD) project. The project team consists of three people employed by the municipal authority. The project was initiated to create new approaches for the participation and inclusion of young people (particularly above the age of 18) and to look for different ways of developing public services within the city. The project leader reports that the objectives of the project are evolving as the project develops.

The project team emphasises that although they are employed by the municipality, they are not typical of other local authority workers or youth workers. They are regarded as an 'add-on' to city services and seen as quite radical by some. The team has strong connections to the youth arts scene in the city, having previously been involved in running music events. The project is branded KAAOS (meaning Chaos).

Methods

The target group for the project is young people aged 15-29 from Oulu. However, within the project design, local third sector organisations are also regarded as a target group, as are municipal services and decision makers. The project works with and seeks to influence all of these groups.

The project aims to enable young people in the city to identify new ideas about the delivery of services that can be rapidly developed and piloted by local third sector organisations. Following this, the goal is to measure the success of these projects and use the results to influence the delivery of mainstream municipal services. The team refers to this model as 'collaborative design research'.

The methodology follows several principles:

► The call for proposals for new projects is always open;

► A light touch approach is taken to commissioning projects to enable them to be implemented quickly;

► Experimental, untested projects are encouraged; as are

► Projects which place a strong emphasis on new developments or new approaches.

Generally the projects selected for support must promote social inclusion, but this is defined broadly. The project team controls the budget and the commissioning of projects though in practical terms, all project ideas which are fully developed are resourced as long as there is a way to assess their success.

> "It's not our jurisdiction to decide for the people what will work….if we can measure it, we can do it."
>
> Jaakko Jokipii, Project Co-ordinator

The methodology has three distinct phases, as follows:

KAAOS workshops

Workshops open to any young people are held in different locations throughout the city on a regular basis. Workshops are facilitated by the project team and focus on generating project ideas. Third sector organisations are sometimes included to enable collaborative dialogue between young people and project deliverers.

Commissioning third sector organisations

The project team procures local third sector organisations to deliver the projects developed in the KAAOS workshops. Small local organisations are commissioned to ensure that the capacity of local actors is also built. This stage can involve further dialogue between young people and the third sector to refine the project ideas. The emphasis is on initiating and testing an idea quickly even if it is not perfect. Commissioning itself, rather than grant giving, is a new concept for many of the organisations involved so support is given in this area.

Dissemination and influence of public services

The intention is that the outcomes and learning of each of the projects are measured, documented and disseminated. Senior officials within the municipality are then invited to visit the projects. The goal is that approaches which demonstrate success are adopted by the municipality's core services, and that local government officials are encouraged to think about different ways of doing things.

Assessing the level of youth participation within this project is complex and it varies depending on the project phases. The methodology does allow projects which are youth initiated to be delivered and potentially replicated across the city. The KAOOS workshops stage of the project could be seen as deliberative youth participation with adults and young people working in co-operation to develop ideas. However, overall the project is led by the project team, and the second and third phases see them acting on behalf of young people to implement the ideas created. The team aims to work collaboratively with young people in these phases; however, this is not always achieved.

Impact

The model ensures that ideas generated by young people are nearly always implemented on some level. The Project Co-ordinator reports that initially the young people were pleasantly surprised and their feedback has been positive. The KAAOS workshops have identified a variety of themes for local projects including changes to the use of urban space, cultural activities, grassroots events and programmes to enable open political debates. Projects within these themes are currently being finalised and implemented by the project team and third sector organisations. At the time of writing, the work to influence public services is just beginning, so the impact of the case study in this area is not yet known.

Lessons learned

The project team highlights the value of 'acting rather than talking'. They report that the process of moving participants and third sector organisations to quickly creating and 'doing' projects (rather than having extensive discussion on issues) is highly valued by young people and generates action and change. The team concludes that one of the most significant challenges has been encouraging third sector organisation to work at this pace.

Reflections on innovation

The innovation within this project is that it considers *"what alternative approaches could be used to design public services"*, rather than *"what approaches could be used to listen to young people"*. As a result, the activities delivered by the project are as heavily focused on engaging with local services (including the third sector) as on engaging with young people.

Many other municipality-based youth participation projects might aim to deliver something similar to KAOOS workshops through which young people's ideas for change, new projects or policy ideas can be identified. Then they may also either support young people to implement small scale projects independently of public bodies, or to direct advocacy and campaign work at public bodies with the hope that the ideas are taken up. The difference with the KAOOS model is that the project itself assumes responsibility for implementing the ideas generated by young people. The project thus acts to create services based on a mandate from citizens rather than a political strategy or agenda. The Project Co-ordinator claims that, whilst youth work might argue that it acts on behalf of young people, unlike KAOOS it rarely also has the capacity and political mandate to create and design new forms of public services.

The team sees innovation as either the creation of something new or the re-combining of older ideas into a new invention. They indicated that many of the ideas they are developing are common across other CLLD projects, but it is the youth participation context that is innovative. They view this combination of ideas as something they hope can drive a paradigm shift in the way public services are conceived and understood.

Sources of further information

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www.storify.com/KAAOS/vuosikertomus

Context

Idrija is a small city in the west of Slovenia, a UNESCO World Heritage site with a population of under 6 000. Historically, the city was a mercury mining centre and it is has been in the process of regeneration since the decline of this industry. Within the city there are a number of youth organisations which collaborate on the topics of heritage, future development and community participation. There are no formal youth council or forum structures within the city, although the Youth Centre Idrija acts as a focal point for youth participation.

TBI is a brand which applies to a number of different projects for young people. TBI stands for 'Idrija To-Be'. The use of a brand rather than a dedicated structure enables different youth organisations to collaborate. A project known as Idrija 2020 started publishing a magazine on youth issues a few years ago. The young people involved became interested in influencing change rather than just reporting on issues and the project 'TBI: Youth, City and The Heritage' was created. This is the young people's response to the challenges of the local environment and the lack of employment opportunities. The project supports young people to create development ideas for three areas of industrial heritage in Idrija. The project combines ideas from architecture and urban planning with youth participation. The two project initiators and current co-ordinators grew up as young people active in youth organisations in the city and then studied Architecture and Urban Studies respectively. The project represents just one part of a series of ongoing collaboration initiatives spanning nearly a decade, between a variety of youth organisations and young people.

Methods

Thirty young people, mostly university students, have been involved in the project. Approximately half of the young people are from Slovenia and half are from other countries; all have an interest in urban design, architecture or similar topics. The students are all recruited through the organiser's own connections with higher education institutions. The inclusion of young people from outside of the city is seen as highly beneficial as it brings different perspectives and encourages everyone to look afresh at the city.

The participants from other countries asked questions that had not been thought of by the local participants. The project initiators lead, design and co-ordinate the project while local youth organisations provide resources and undertook the background research for the project.

No specific minority groups were targeted for inclusion as participants; Idrijia's diversity is generally limited. However part of the programme includes working with a local association for blind and partially-sighted people to explore the city from a blind person's perspective. The programme also includes aspects of public engagement, which reach out beyond the student participants to local residents.

Broadly speaking, this project can be considered a form of deliberative participation. Following an intensive preparation and research phase, the project was launched in a warehouse in the city at an open meeting attended by decision makers and local residents. At this event, co-ordinators facilitated a workshop to identify the issues in the three locations and suggestions for development. The findings were used to inform the next stage – a two-day event with the international and local participants which included lectures on heritage, group work, a tour of the three locations and interviews with local residents.

Subsequently, the international and local young people worked in virtual teams to develop concrete proposals for each of the locations. They conducted social, cultural and spatial analyses of the location and were supported by mentors from the local university. The group met again in Idrija around three months later to combine the results of their work into a singular vision of how the three locations could be developed as new spaces which took into account the city's mercury mining heritage. Within this conceptual vision for development, 60 concrete proposals were drawn up.

To disseminate the findings a number of activities took place including a conference with decision makers, a pop-up exhibition in an abandoned mine shaft, a national museum exhibition, a round-table discussion between youth organisations and architectural associations, and a number of small meetings with decision makers, as well as articles in a number of magazines and online. Further activities are planned.

Impact

The co-ordinator reports that the project has made a significant contribution to influencing the ongoing development and regeneration of the city. Decision makers have been engaged in the project from its inception and the political narrative on city development now includes many of the ideas developed through the project. One of the co-ordinators is now employed to help develop the municipality's urban strategy. As well as this, there is notably greater public awareness of the issues raised through the project. A number of the concrete proposals have been put into place including an open-air cinema, an open-air kitchen and the development of affordable housing for post graduates (to help retain young people within the city).

Lessons learned

The significant challenge, but also success of this project, was to develop a methodology that combined architectural and urban planning approaches with participatory approaches. The project co-ordinators believe this has not been done elsewhere so they had no methodology on which to build.

> "Architectural workshops are something common for architecture students, but we took this form and made it interdisciplinary and for people who are not architects. We made it a long term process….. but we weren't just asking people what they wanted to change, we wanted to educate them how to come up with the ideas…. the education was not focused on rights or democracy, it was trying to understand the local environment, how it really works, what are the relationships between actors, groups of people, different spaces within the city, and what would change this constellation of actors"
>
> Matevz Straus, Project Co-ordinator

The co-ordinators highlight that this approach requires significant research into, and planning for, the local area prior to working with young people and also requires long-term work on the topic by the participants. They conclude that to be successful, these forms of youth participation need to involve young people who have both some knowledge of urban planning and a strong connection with the local area.

Reflections on innovation

Undoubtedly the most innovative area of this project is seen as the use of architectural and urban planning perspectives and the focus on spatial analysis and engaging young people in thinking about the environment of the city. As the Project Co-ordinator explains:

> "We tried to see everything through space – you should be critical of looking at things without looking at the space – even in youth sphere and youth participation, because whatever you want to change by changing the space you can change how people react or how people interact."
>
> Matevz Straus, Project Co-ordinator

Linked to this, the educational approach is also seen as innovative as participation projects with a pedagogic dimension usually focus on the context of rights or citizenship, these were not mentioned at all within this project. Instead co-ordinators focused on using education to enable young people to develop the quality of their proposals through a better understanding of the local environment. This was said to have generated a strikingly increased depth and quality of ideas in policy terms than many other approaches to youth participation.

There are other aspects of innovation in this project as well. For example, the use of young people from outside of an area to examine issues with young people who live in the city is markedly different to just focusing on local young people. The approach has not yet been replicated elsewhere, however the co-ordinators have engaged in discussion about the possibility of doing so and believe it would be possible.

Sources of further information

Project Co-ordinator: Matevz Straus matevz@idrija2020.si

TBI home page: www.tbi.si/en/home_en/

Description of methods:
http://futurearchitectureplatform.org/projects/0095d845-44ab-4b21-a335-24ab5b230bf3/

| **Name**: Travelling Ahead |
| **Location**: Wales, United Kingdom |
| **Form**: Co-production |

Context

Travelling Ahead is hosted by Save the Children in Cardiff. The project aims to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people[64] from across Wales to effect change and positively influence policy and service development and practice at a community, local authority and national level. Wales is a country of three million with small populations of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers scattered across a number of different communities in both cities and in rural areas.

Traditionally in the UK, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are not engaged in representative politics or even any of the soft mechanisms that exist for young people to influence policymaking or public service design and delivery (for example, youth forums and school councils). Travelling Ahead is funded by the Welsh Government and Save the Children to: bring young people together on a regular basis; to raise awareness of their rights and develop capacity for self and peer advocacy; to create opportunities for policymakers (both politicians and civil servants) and other decision makers to hear and take into account the opinions, views and experiences of young people; to provide training for decision makers and raise awareness of the issues facing young Gypsies, Roma and Travellers – particularly around education, health, accommodation and tackling hate crime.

The project targets young people up to the age of 18 years of age although a number of older young people work as peer volunteers. The majority of the young people involved in the project are aged 11 and over. The project has recently sent up a Youth Advisory Group with young people from its three regional forums. Twelve young people aged 14-18 are members of this group. The group provides a mechanism for young people to give feedback and advice on what the project should be doing as well as how well it is doing. The group meets three or four times a year.

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64. The United Kingdom uses the term Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT). In the Council of Europe, the term "Roma and Travellers" is used to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

Methods

The project works with locally-based partners supporting a number of local forums for Gypsy and Traveller young people, organising regular regional and national forum meetings. Partners include specialist education services run by local authorities, as well as youth services and youth organisations. The three regional forums feed into a national forum and are all supported to engage in local and national government consultations, and other public planning and decision-making processes according to the young people's priorities. For example, a number of the regional forums are working on influencing the provision and/or refurbishment of accommodation sites for Gypsies and Travellers. With the aid of a cartoonist they are producing large-scale visual maps of the types of provision they want to see on the new sites and engaging with local authorities to realise these ambitions. One local authority has engaged a landscape architect to develop the young people's ideas.

Through these regional networks, Travelling Ahead works on a small number of different projects throughout the year depending on young people's priorities and the public policy influencing opportunities that present themselves. One of the practice initiatives recently selected was a peer-education project whereby young people consulted their peers about the barriers they face with regard to education. The report identified a range of issues and concluded with a number of recommendations to improve the education of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. For example, "*Teachers in school need to try and understand our culture. They should have training on understanding Gypsies, Roma and Travellers to help us achieve our best*". Advocacy work continues with the aim of getting these recommendations accepted and implemented by schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government.

Travelling Ahead recently became a practice partner in a European Commission-funded programme working across eight European countries. The PEER programme[65] is focused on developing good practice around the participation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people. Stage 1 was

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65. Participation, Experiences and Empowerment for Roma Youth Funded by Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, European Commission.

training workers and young people in participatory techniques, Stage 2 involved young people applying these techniques to their own projects.
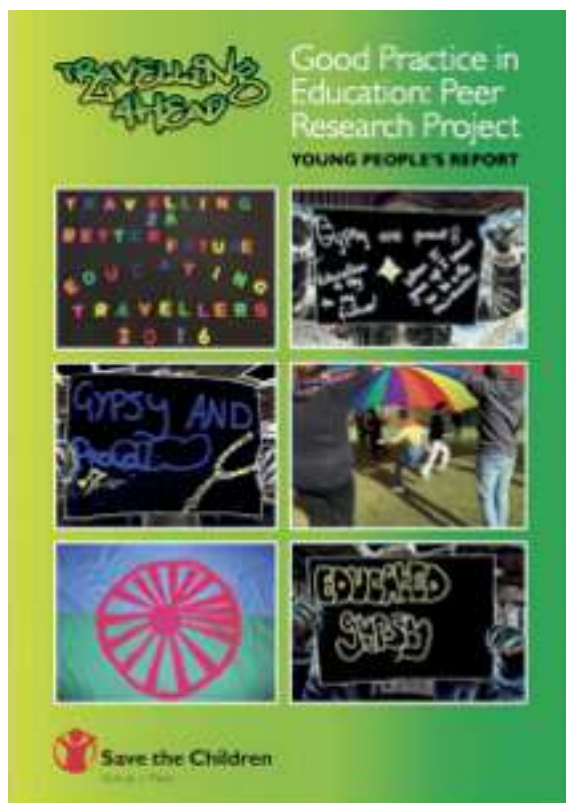
Picture courtesy of Travelling Ahead

Travelling Ahead has also worked on a number of all-Wales initiatives including the production of a toolkit designed to raise awareness of young people's rights and entitlements and to develop capacity for self and peer advocacy. The project has also worked with advice and advocacy services to develop their capability to support young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to take up their issues and complaints with the agencies responsible and decision makers.

The project has also been working to address the hate crime and bullying experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people by increasing awareness and confidence in reporting such crimes and improving the response from those with responsibilities to address this invidious problem. Work has included developing a young-people-friendly hate crime reporting mechanism and establishing effective partnerships and protocols with relevant agencies such as the police and victim support agencies. A number of films, training modules and other outputs have been produced and disseminated by young people in their regional forums with a view to raising awareness of hate crime with young people, their peers and professionals who can support young people to tackle bullying and victimisation.

Impact

The feedback the project receives indicates that a range of professionals and policymakers at all levels of government across Wales are more aware of the particular issues facing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people as a result of the work of Travelling Ahead, including, for example, the challenges young people face in school with high levels of discrimination, bullying and victimisation. Young people who are involved with the project are now more confident in sharing their experiences with decision makers and putting forward their own solutions.

There are a number of examples of young people engaging in national policy discussions, for example around the inclusion of Roma young people recently arrived from other European Union Member States. There are also other examples of impact where young people supported by Travelling Ahead have influenced strategies designed to tackle racism and hate crime as they share and ably communicate information on their own realities. The Children's Commissioner in Wales was persuaded to run a campaign to tackle the use of negative images of young Gypsies and Travellers making a film 'Let us Be' which has been disseminated widely around the world.

The regional forums provide an opportunity for decision makers to meet with Gypsy and Traveller young people, which has really helped to break down barriers and create positive dialogue.

Lessons learned

Working with young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities requires full engagement with the parent communities. Many of the communities (who are very diverse and not homogenous in themselves) have faced huge barriers for many years and they can understandably be suspicious of outsiders and mistrustful of attempts at engagement. Successful engagement requires the Travelling Ahead staff to regularly demonstrate their commitment and allegiance to the wider needs of young people's families. It takes time to build trust and it has proved to be most important to really listen and try to understand the world from the perspective of those communities.

It is also important to be flexible and responsive to what is happening in the communities on a day-to-day basis. The regional forums are all slightly different responding to local needs and circumstances. Young people have a real say in what is prioritised, so for example when planning activities to raise awareness of hate crime, one forum made a film, another developed a presentation and training for the local police force. One size will not necessarily fit all and it should not be assumed that a particular approach will work or not. The project co-ordinator argued that working

Picture courtesy of Travelling Ahead

with local partners has been found to be particularly important in maintaining successful engagement with excluded communities. She added that in the current era of public sector budget reductions there are new challenges whereby many of these local partners are struggling to sustain their funding base.

A final lesson learned is that there needs to be balance between bringing young people together to have fun and positive experiences alongside working on consultations and advocacy activities. Young people say that they really enjoy learning about their rights, coming together with their peers as well as other young people from different backgrounds. The regional forums have developed a real identity which the young people value.

Reflections on innovation

The project is innovative in the way it works so successfully to engage groups of young people who are traditionally so excluded. Many young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK do not attend school regularly and/or are withdrawn from school at an early age, often in response to parental concerns about bullying. In Wales, this is the only initiative of its kind working exclusively with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people. As well as working to support and develop young people's skills and capacity to advocate for themselves and their peers, the project also works to raise awareness amongst decision makers and creates real and varied opportunities to bring in the voice of young people affected by the developments under consideration.

The approach used by Travelling Ahead could be replicated elsewhere. The structure of having a number of regional forums feeding into a national forum works well in a country the size of Wales (population of three million) but it may be more challenging to implement in a country with a more sizeable and wide-spread minority population.

Source of further information

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Context

Iceland began revising its national constitution in 2010. The intention was that this would be a participatory process into which all citizens could input. However it became clear that the mainstream participation process was not accessible to young people. The Icelandic Children's Ombudsman, UNICEF Iceland, and the City of Reykjavik responded to this situation by creating a deliberative participation mechanism to specifically enable young people to input their ideas into the creation of the new constitution.

The work had to be developed quickly, in order that young people still had time to feed directly into the main constitution writing process. Those involved in the project see it as a fast response to an identified issue, rather than a deliberate attempt to develop or change well established participation practices, or to find new methods of listening to young people. Youth participation in Iceland is generally well developed – with active youth councils supporting young people up to around 18, or sometimes 20 in line with the school system. However, prior to this project there had been little opportunity for youth councils to come together around specific issues.

Overall, the work with young people lasted roughly a year and a half finishing shortly before the Constitutional Council, a group of adult citizens responsible for drafting the charter, completed the first draft. Iceland has yet to formally adopt the constitution as it has not yet been fully agreed by the national Parliament.

Methods

The project targeted young people of school age which is up to 20 years in Iceland. It was predominantly adult-initiated and led, though young people, who worked directly with the Children's Ombudsman and UNICEF Iceland, did advise on the process. Young people were recruited to participate in the process through youth councils and schools. Specific attempts were made to contact groups supporting young people who had emigrated to Iceland. The methodology used had three distinct phases:

Education: six short animated films about the main parts of the constitution were produced, explaining the subject with a voice-over and cartoon drawings. The videos were specifically designed for local youth councils. However it was also intended that they could be used within schools so they were accompanied by guidelines for teachers. Postcards advertising the project's website were sent to school students, encouraging them to access the site and to air their opinions on the constitution.

Participation: representatives from almost all active youth councils in Iceland were brought together to watch the videos and discuss the themes presented. Towards the end of the day, members of the Constitutional Council were invited to hear a round-up of the young people's conclusions – over a third of the members of the Constitutional council attended.

Processing: the final report on the project was presented to the Constitutional Council and the Icelandic Parliament. The report included the conclusions of the event as well as a selection of suggestions from children and young people which had been uploaded to the project's website.

Impact

The project organisers report on how surprised the adults involved in drafting the constitution were about the value of the feedback from young people. Many of the ideas they generated were similar to those raised by adults and they were of a high quality. Perceptions of the inherent value of youth participation were duly enhanced.

The outcomes of the project influenced the draft constitution. The Constitutional Council included an article in support of children and young people's participation based on article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the time of writing, the draft charter has yet to be adopted by Iceland. Following a change in government, there have been disagreements over some of the articles proposed. However no political parties have formally objected to the article on child and youth participation; this is the only article that is uncontested. The videos produced by the project are also still used as educational tools within Icelandic schools, and participation within the process is believed to have boosted the role of youth councils.

Lessons learned

One of the key strengths of the methodology is seen as the use of films to educate and inform young people prior to engaging in face-to-face discussions with young people. This meant that young people

were generally very well informed about the debates and could input in a meaningful manner. The project organisers believe this was a significant contributor to the quality of the young people's comments and outputs. A key factor in producing such good and accessible educational materials is seen as the combination of skills and experiences within the team designing the videos. The team included a lawyer, a cartoonist, a storyteller, youth workers and young people.

Reflecting back, the project organisers report some disappointment in the numbers of recent immigrants they were able to include. Attempts were not very successful. A lesson learned is that time is required to undertake the level of outreach work required. This was a challenge in this project given that a quick turnaround was necessary to meet the deadlines of the Constitutional Council.

Reflections on innovation

The organisers report that they did not have time to consider if this was an innovative approach or a different approach, it was simply necessary to respond quickly to an identified need. Only after the project concluded were the organisers able to reflect on the success of it and identify the innovative elements. These are seen as the opportunity for youth councils to come together and examine a single issue and the use of accessible materials to inform and educate young people of the issues prior to face-to-face meetings and thereby promote a certain quality of debate. Project organisers believe the methodology could be replicated and used to engage young people if a similar issue of national importance arose.

Sources of further information

Project Website: stjornlogungafolksins.is

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Context

Youth Focus North West (YFNW) is a charity located in the North West of England. It was set up by local public authorities in the region to support youth work and public youth services. It delivers youth participation programmes directly with young people and offers networking and support services for organisations working with young people.

Legislation in the United Kingdom requires charities to be governed by a board of trustees who must usually be over 18 and undertake the role on a voluntary basis. Trustees hold ultimate legal responsibility for the organisation. When YFNW was created in 1992 its board was composed entirely of professionals working in the youth sector. In 2012, the organisation began involving both young people and youth professionals as board members in a co-management model.

Supporting young people to be involved in board-level governance is not uncommon in the United Kingdom. However, typically, organisations require board members to be over 18 years of age. As youth work in the UK usually focuses on the 13 to 19 age range, this means many young people involved in youth organisations are not old enough to join their governance boards. As a result, some organisations adopt the practice of young people attending board meetings without being actual **members** of the board. Other models include 'shadow' boards where young people meet independently in an informal group and report and advise the main board of trustees whose members are all adults over the age of 18. Examples of boards that are composed of equal numbers of young people and adults where everyone is a full member are rare.

YFNW began involving young people in its board after its work in the area of youth participation grew and young people involved in their youth forum became more aware of the organisation's governance. YFNW was keen to provide progression and development routes for young people leaving the youth forum as they grew out of its 13-19 core age range. The Chief Executive reports that the model of having young people as full and equal board members was developed because it was felt practices where young people were not full members of the board were tokenistic.

Methods

YFNW currently has three young trustees aged 18-21 and six adult trustees who are senior professionals working with young people. An additional two young people also aged 18-21 attend the board meetings but are not currently trustees. The numbers of trustees can vary; the constitution specifies only that there is a minimum of three trustees, which includes a chair and a treasurer. The board aims to maintain a close to equal proportion of young people and adults attending the meetings but the priority is recruiting trustees who can make a meaningful contribution rather than meeting a quota. The trustees hold ultimate legal responsibility for the organisation and the board meetings operate in a manner typical to other governance boards. Decisions are usually taken via discussion and consensus with all members working in collaboration.

To identify young people to participate in board meetings, YFNW's youth forum nominates two young people each year from its steering committee. The youth forum's steering committee has a term of office of one year and the two young people attend the board meetings for that year. Following this, if both the young person and the existing YFNW trustees feel it is valuable, the young person is invited to stand for election as a trustee. Adults become trustees in a similar way; the board and Chief Executive identify new adults who attend board meetings for a period of time before standing for election. Trustees are then elected annually by YFNW's membership who are local authority youth services. Elections are not competitive and although it would be possible to object, the membership has always elected all of the proposed trustees. Although trustees must be formally re-elected each year, this can be done indefinitely, and in practice trustees remain in the role until they choose to leave. This kind of election process is common for small UK charities.

As a result, young trustees are not required to leave when they reach 21, they can continue as adult board members. However, in practice, most young people remain involved with the board for around two years, and some young people nominated by the youth forum choose not to become full trustees after their first year. The decision to leave is usually linked to growing up and life changes, for instance taking a full-time job or starting university. This means there is a regular flow of young board members. Trustees who join as adults tend to stay involved much longer.

There is no specific approach to targeting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds for involvement in the board. However, YFNW is strongly committed to inclusion, and much work is done to ensure its youth forum has a diverse membership. The impact of this is reflected in the backgrounds of the young people who are nominated to the board, nearly all of whom could be considered as being from a disadvantaged background in some way.

Impact

This model of co-management means that young people have jointly made all major strategic decisions about the organisation with adults so the impact on decision making is undeniable. However, it is hard to identify what influence young people have on specific decisions. It is not the case that young people are pushing for one outcome and adults for another, decisions are taken by consensus and discussion so there is no clear 'youth voice' that is distinct from the voice of the others or indeed the whole board. Despite this, the Chief Executive describes that, overall, involving young people in the board has aided a gradual shift in the strategic priorities of the organisation to focus more on youth participation:

> 'We used to be a networking organisation with a bit of youth participation. Now we are a participating organisation with a bit of networking….that's the sort of influence young people have had on the board's decisions'

> Liz Harding, Chief Executive, YFNW

The inclusion of young people is also judged to have contributed to the board functioning more efficiently as a group. Young people, staff and trustees all identify situations where young people have challenged the organisational culture for the better.

As the board is only concerned with the running of the organisation, its impact is generally limited to the organisation itself; there is no mechanism by which the board seeks to influence decisions made by other bodies. However, the staff report that they now have increased credibility in the field of youth participation, and find it easier to persuade partners to support youth participation because they are doing so themselves.

Lessons learned

Involving young people in the board has been a relatively smooth process and staff do not report any major challenges. That fact that membership of the board follows a progression route from being a youth forum member is seen to be vital to the process. This pathway means that young people have opportunities to develop the skills required to participate in the board during their time in the youth forum and it also ensures they fully understand the work of the YFNW before they join the board. In a similar way, it has become easier for the organisation to identify new board members over time because existing young trustees share their experiences with other youth forum members.

Reflection on innovative participation

YFNW believes that the innovation in its work is in applying youth work practice and values to the board-level governance of the organisation. They say this means the focus is on collaboration, dialogue and consensus rather than structure, voting and procedure. Part of the approach is about the removal of divides between young people and adults and the belief that collaboration is possible without a formalised approach to power sharing. There are no designated roles for 'youth' and 'adult' representatives – the board is seen simply as a group of people working together. Another key aspect that YFNW believe is innovative is the emphasis on the trustee role being a progression route for young people engaged with the youth forum. However, in general YFNW do not see their co-management model as an attempt to be innovative or to do something radically different. For them it is simply part of the gradual development of the sort of participatory practice they are engaged with.

There have been no attempts to formally replicate or scale the work as YFNW has only one board. However, they have provided training and advice to other organisations looking at similar models.

Sources of further information

Project website: www.youthfocusnw.org.uk

Chief Executive: Liz Harding, e.harding@youthfocusnw.org.uk

Context

YouthMetre is a 'Forward Looking' youth project funded by the European Commission.[66] It is co-ordinated by the European Association of Geographers, an international non-governmental organisation (NGO), based in Belgium, with five partners located in different European Union (EU) Member States. The partners involved are the University of Zaragoza, and four other non-governmental organisations, the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), European Youth Press, ARS for Progress of People and the Centro Studie Iniziative Europeo (CESIE).

The YouthMetre initiative targets young people (aged 18-30) living in the European Union. The short-term aim of the project is to *"identify, test, develop and assess an innovative approach"* which connects young people to EU policy. It is a three-year project which seeks to prove the concept of creating an open data platform that provides young people with information and the necessary skills and knowledge for evidence-based policy advocacy. The goal of YouthMetre is to provide accessible information and to empower young people living in the European Union with tools so they are able to interact with policy actors and, using these connections, to bring about changes to policies at European, national, regional and local levels. The rationale is that by providing access to open information, generated by the EU, the gap between youth and the institutions that decide on public policy affecting young people will be closed.

The purpose of YouthMetre is to support young people who wish to bring about changes in public policy, whether this is about housing, education or employment. The approach recognises that training is needed to make best use of the YouthMetre tool and to help with creating direct dialogue and exchanges between young people and policymakers.

Methods

Central to the project is the YouthMetre tool, which provides information in a visually accessible manner. This online tool presents open data and information on public policy and its outcomes in a way that enables visual comparisons between different countries and different regions of the EU, see for example this screenshot of a map of the data on employment and entrepreneurship.

The YouthMetre tool also presents data on the perceived needs of young people in key policy areas. Through crowd-mapping, the platform helps young people to put forward their own ideas for their communities and to connect with other young people and youth groups. Thus YouthMetre is not only about providing information but also about connecting young people with each other, with youth organisations and with policy actors.

In its first year of operation, the project undertook a review of policy and research. The team identified 20 key outcomes concerning EU policy. They documented examples of good practices and pulled together available, relevant and robust data. From this research and the development of available tools and platforms for the presentation of information, an open 'data dashboard' was created that presents visualisations of European Union policy achievements across Europe, at national and regional levels. Using these tools, the implementation of policy can be evaluated and compared. The information is presented as a series of maps, graphs and data sets. The data used is based on open information produced by the European Union and includes statistics from Eurostat and the Eurobarometer. With the additional mapping of good practice examples, the project hopes to connect young people and youth organisations with their peers who may be working on similar projects and/or have similar interests or concerns.

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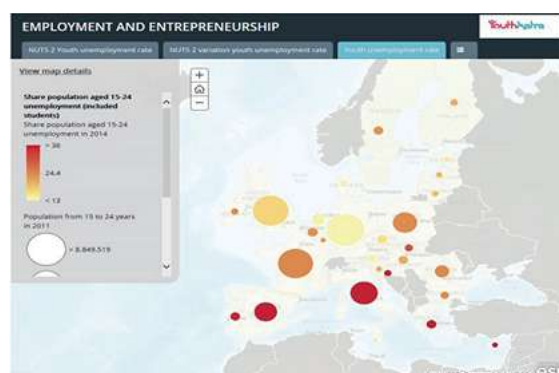
66. Forward-Looking Co-operation Projects European Commission.
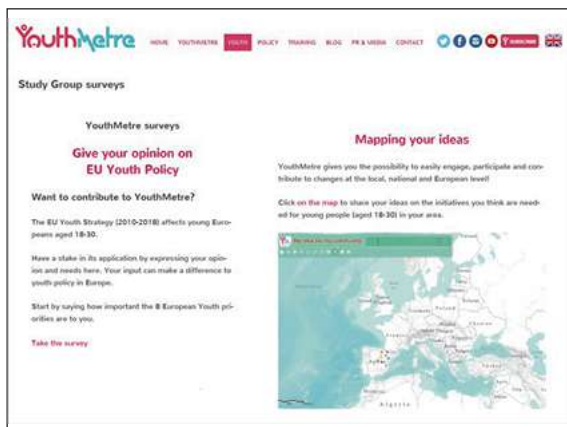
Alongside the technical developments, the project has been engaging with study groups of young people across Europe to find out more about young people's views and ideas to validate the YouthMetre tool and help identify key data. In order to make use of the YouthMetre tool and support the advocacy process, training resources for young people and for multipliers (youth workers, NGOs, and other organisations working with young people) are being developed and tested. The training is designed to support young people to make use of the information in the YouthMetre tool and to help them with creating direct dialogue and evidence-based exchanges with policymakers.

Policymakers have also been invited to review the YouthMetre and assess the potential of the information it contains. The work on the ground is also about building the capacity of youth organisations, youth workers and young people to make good use of the information, to connect with other young people and to engage in advocacy activities to push for change.

Impact

The YouthMetre project had been funded for only 14 months at the time of writing. The tool was launched in February 2017, so in many ways it is too early to report on concrete outcomes. The technology works well and the visualisation of the data is online and available through the cloud on a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Seventeen study group sessions have been held to test the process. Feedback from the young people involved has been very positive with the young people especially liking the open nature of the data, the networking and the advocacy opportunities.

Lessons learned

The use of mapping and open data technology and the design of the online platforms to provide access to information are working successfully. Presenting the data in a visually accessible manner (including maps) is very well received by young people. NGOs and other partners have been keen to get engaged

in the project and have been responsive and supportive. The project partners recognise there are some challenges ahead, not least how to track the impact of the YouthMetre on young people and on decision making.

Another challenge is getting policymakers on board, using YouthMetre tools and resources and wanting to listen and take account of young people's views and ideas. This, it is acknowledged, is proving to be easier in countries where there is a longer tradition of youth participation. The study groups have demonstrated that there are significant cultural differences in different Member States of the EU to the perceived expectations of young people making a contribution to advancing public policy. The project now acknowledges that, in working with its multiplier organisations, it has to do more to arrange support and encouragement for young people to express themselves in certain policy contexts. Reflecting on developments to date, the designers are implementing a number of new tools to further help young people to express themselves in whatever medium they want. One of these is a 'story-mapping tool' which young people can use to publish and share on social media.

Reflections on innovation

The project brings together geographers, information technologists, youth workers, advocates, researchers, policy analysts and EU institutions to synthesise and present information online in a format that is accessible to young people, whilst also working with multiplier organisations on the ground to build capacity for young people to make use of this information, to network with each other and to effect change. The development team is systematically engaging with groups of young people across the European Union as they develop the methods and the tools, recognising that the project outputs have to reflect young people's needs and interests.

The designers report that in recent years there has been a huge shift in the extent to which data is open and made available resulting in increased transparency about the outcomes of particular policies. The trick that this project is seeking to pull off is to present information in new and innovative ways that mean that it is accessible and understandable to the people that are most affected. Innovation here is helping to connect young people with this information and this is seen by the project originators as an important component of the new 'open data' paradigm. However, this project cannot achieve its objectives on its own. YouthMetre highlights the need, within both formal and non-formal education, to develop information and data literacy so that all citizens – including young people – can engage and make sense of the information on and about policy

and its outcomes. Improving access to information is part of the answer, curricula have been developed to help young people critically evaluate information and help them to recognise how the mass media can manipulate information and put a particular spin on facts.

The project designers hope that by having a platform that supports young people to network with others on their key policy concerns, isolation will be reduced and social action encouraged. They note the huge potential, with this model, to support young people to engage with and participate in evidence-based public decision making and thereby to strengthen the accountability of local, regional and national governments. The concept could also be developed to address other issues where data and good practices are available, such as migration, environmental issues and climate change.

Sources of further information

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Website: http://www.youthmetre.eu/

What do the case studies tell us about innovation?

A number of themes can be drawn out from the case studies to inform our understanding of innovation in the youth participation context. These themes do not apply to all of the examples, and indeed may not necessarily apply to all examples of innovation. With that in mind, they can be seen as themes or ideas, which may be common to innovative practice, but not necessarily universal.

Innovation in youth participation can be initiated and led by young people, adults or both working together

Innovative participation is neither the preserve of the young people nor of the adults working in the field of participation. Our case studies include examples of both parties initiating and leading or, in the case of Campaign #ИЗБОРИСЕ, DiveMaky and Travelling Ahead, a jointly lead approach.

Innovation often starts with individuals or small groups seeking solutions to particular problems

Some of the practice examples, such as KAAOS and TBI: Youth, City and The Heritage, are driven and created by individuals or small groups of individuals with a clear desire to do things differently, or to resolve a certain issue. Having individuals with this desire for different methods and the ability to lead and initiate projects can lead to innovative youth participation.

Innovation often comes from a desire to solve a particular issue

Many of the case studies illustrated involve governments and/or youth organisations trying to address a particular issue in a new and different way. The project *Bienvenue dans ma tribu* was developed when a government recognised that they had to find better and more inclusive ways (outside of the traditional structures) for engaging young people in a particular policy discussion. Campaign #ИЗБОРИСЕ was developed when the national youth council determined that it was time for a new kind of structured dialogue with the youth wings of the political parties. The Dive Maky and Travelling Ahead examples illustrate innovation in engaging young people who are typically outside of the mainstream decision-making forums. Both projects show considerable promise in supporting young Roma to successfully influence decision makers through programmes of capacity building and by working directly with young people to raise awareness and understanding amongst the policymakers, not only of the difficulties they are facing but also of the potential solutions.

Innovative methods evolve

Whilst a desire to resolve a particular issue can suggest clear project goals, actually how these goals are progressed and the methods used may well be something which changes and evolves over time. Many of our interviewees reported being unclear on their exact methods when the project started, or reported that they needed to adapt them as it became clear which elements were successful and which were not in a process of experimentation at the project start. This characteristic underlines the importance of finding time to evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of the methods and approaches employed in any new project or initiative and the importance of involving young people as users in that reflective process.

The example of the ePartool in Germany illustrates the potential of digital tools but also shows how such tools can develop over time, building on the experiences of users, to fulfil a number of different but related functions. What started off as an online questionnaire is now a sophisticated tool that enables young people to express views and navigate the whole participation process. While innovative approaches are seen to evolve in many of the case studies there is also a sense in some of the examples that innovation includes an aspect of timeliness, of doing things quickly, of being nimble and responsive. This is illustrated in the KAOOS practice example as a distinct and deliberate feature of the approach. It is also referenced in the Icelandic example where speed was necessary because of externally determined deadlines.

Achieving an impact of influencing decision making takes time, evidencing impact remains a challenge

Innovative projects by their very nature are likely to be newly established and many (but not all) of the examples reviewed are still in the early stages of their development, so respondents were not always able to identify clear impacts. Gathering evidence of impact and the ways in which young people have actually influenced decision making is fraught with challenges and requires clarity on the objectives of the participation and a degree of patience.[67] Public policymaking processes often take a long time to conclude (as the practice examples from Iceland and Germany illustrate).

Furthermore, some of the case studies illustrate that the actual process of evolution and experimentation, as previously described, may also delay impact. It may well take time to find the correct 'way in' to

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67. Crowley, A. (2015) Is anyone listening? The impact of children's participation on public policy. *International Journal of Children's Rights 23 (3) 602-621.*

influencing decision makers. This was clearly the case with the KAOOS project where they had only come to define and name their method after a number of years in progress. Similarly, both YouthMetre and *Bienvenue dans ma tribu* have clear ideas about the sort of impact they hope the projects can achieve in relation to influencing policymaking, but they have yet to reach a point where they can begin to evidence this.

Some of the case studies also illustrate the challenges of documenting both impact and reach. Ichmache>Politik are very clear that they do not attempt to record the characteristics of the young people they engage. This would be too intrusive and would not succeed. Similarly, YouthMetre has not yet set out how it will track progress in achieving its objectives whereby young people will be better engaged in public decision making at national and European levels using the YouthMetre tools. As was the case in the review of good practices by Gretschel et al. (2014) (Finnish Youth Research Network), while we reviewed definite examples of good practice in youth participation, there was very limited evidence of the impact of these practices on policy making or on young people.

Innovation is context specific

This has been identified earlier in the report and two practice examples illustrate this very well. Campaign #ИЗБОРИСЕ's dialogue between young people and political parties may reflect practice which is more common in countries with a longer tradition of democracy. However, in the context of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", with a democracy less than three decades old, it is genuinely new. In almost the reverse of this, Youth Focus North West co-management was not identified by staff as an attempt to be innovative. For them it was a progressive development of the ideas that were common in their region, arising from the UK conception of youth as being those people aged 13-19 years old. However, viewed from a broader European context where the conceptualisation of the term 'youth' often includes people aged up to the age of 30 and where it is common for young people in their 20s to lead on the governance of youth organisations, YFNW is markedly different.[68]

Ideas and new developments in different fields stimulate innovation

TBI: Youth, City and The Heritage and YouthMetre are both examples of projects using concepts from fields that have, in recent years, fallen outside of what

might be considered as mainstream youth participation. In these projects, Urban Design (TBI Youth) and Geography (YouthMetre) are disciplines that have heavily informed the conceptual thinking and the design of the models adopted. These examples illustrate that if innovation is about the creation of new approaches, one way of fostering innovation might be to look to other disciplines and the alternative or complementary lenses they provide.

The YouthMetre example also illustrates that innovation in youth participation can be stimulated by external developments making a new approach possible when technicians collaborate with youth work practitioners and youth organisations. The designers of the YouthMetre concept see the work as part of a paradigm shift whereby the availability and use of open data have increased the transparency of the outcomes of particular social policies. They note the huge potential in connecting young people with this information and with each other, as part of an approach which can serve to strengthen the accountability of local, regional and national governments.

Innovation can complement more established forms of participation

The case studies selected illustrate examples of practice that are described as innovative in their context. It is new, it is different but in most of the examples, these new approaches are developed to complement existing methods or respond to a particular issue or problem. For example, the ePartool developed by Ichmache>Politik is seen as complementing face-to-face meetings with young people rather than replacing them. The project emphasises the strengths of a mixed-methods approach which allows young people to participate in different ways, at different times and for different reasons or just because of the particular mood or 'space' they are in.

Digital offers many new possibilities… (for now)

The digital realm is still relatively new for most practitioners in youth participation, and thus offers much potential for the development of new methodologies. It was not hard to find examples of work in this category. It is likely that the current zeitgeist for digital participation will lead to a number of established and accepted methods of youth participation as digital methods move from being innovative to being established.

Lessons learned and the implications for how we organise learning for youth participation

The people involved in designing and delivering the practice examples above have identified a number of valuable lessons that they have learned. A few of

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68. The European Youth Forum has nearly one hundred members, all of whom have a decision-making body controlled by young people. See: www.youthforum.org/about/member-organisations.

these lessons can be seen as new but most are very familiar. For example, the benefits of investing in the creation of good quality, well-targeted, visual products to raise awareness and inform young people of the main elements of the debate; the challenges of designing communication products that are suitable for a wide-ranging audience, for example for young people aged from 14 to 30; the importance of trust and ongoing relationships when engaging with excluded communities and the capabilities of young people to overcome challenges and to share their stories and inspirational ideas; the challenges of having enough time to support young people's participation in policymaking processes in a meaningful way and of identifying just where and how young people's contributions have been taken into account by decision makers; the value young people place on transparency and the encouragement that some decision makers need to listen properly and take into account the views of young people. These lessons will all be familiar to those working in youth participation.

Additionally, more contemporary lessons identified from the practice examples can be seen as chiming with more recent research. The importance of having a number of different forms to engage young people and support their participation, and how employing a variety of methods to consult with young people can help organisations build up the diversity of the young people who participate are also highlighted in the primary research conducted by the London School of Economics and Political Science.[69] The importance of involving young people themselves in shaping

the methods used, especially when trying to engage young people who are not already participating in the mainstream structures, and the importance of systematic evaluations of different practices of youth participation more broadly are highlighted in other research, notably Gretschel, A. et al (2014).

The digital examples Ichmache>Politik and YouthMetre highlight the specific need to develop information, data literacy and media competencies with citizens from a young age so that young people can engage and make sense of the information and develop the necessary skills for critical engagement in online democratic activities. Improving access to information is important but curricula in formal and non-formal settings have to be developed and embedded to help children and young people critically evaluate information, and all the different types of media with which they engage – online and offline.

Finally, a lesson not learned from this review of practice or gleaned from the documentary analysis is how the active replication of successful forms of youth participation within countries and across Europe can best be supported. The review of 10 practice examples, all of which are seen as innovative and successful, has not identified one example of replication. Only one of the case studies, Ichmache>Politik, described activities and outputs designed to support replication. Further research on the barriers to, and opportunities for, the active replication of successful youth participation practices and the optimum conditions required, is long overdue.

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69. London School of Economics (2013) *op.cit.*

Chapter 7
Discussion

Throughout this study, defining the concept of innovative forms of youth participation in decision making has been a challenge. In the documentary analysis, we identified a general consensus in previous work of a concern with the shift in young people's methods of political expression away from voting and engagement with political parties towards other forms of participation. However, defining what type(s) of participation young people have moved onto does not have the same consensus, and concepts of alternative, unconventional, or innovative forms of participation are poorly defined. The literature also identified the concept of policy innovation within other fields as a method of experimentation used to drive improvement in public services.

The survey explored perceptions of different forms of participation amongst stakeholders and revealed that co-management, co-production, digital participation, deliberative participation and the concept of participatory 'spaces', are seen as more innovative forms of participation than youth councils and similar bodies, and youth activism and popular protest. The survey also indicates that these more innovative forms are generally seen as no more nor less effective than the less innovative forms, and that broadly they face similar barriers to youth councils and forums in terms of young people's views being taken into account by public bodies.

The case studies provide examples of these various forms, however they also serve to highlight the different understandings of the concept of 'innovation' and how innovation, by its very nature, is strongly context specific. What is innovative in one reality is likely to be less so in another, depending on history, tradition and a myriad of cultural considerations.

To further the discussion, the authors argue that there is a need to distinguish between **alternative forms of participation** and **approaches to innovating youth participation.** Though these two concepts have been present in previous work, they have not been properly differentiated which is creating some confusion. Within this chapter we will attempt to distinguish between these two concepts, and explore how youth participation might engage with them both.

Alternative forms of participation and their relationship to innovation

As we identified in Chapter 4, the concept of alternative forms of youth participation is rooted in a variety of academic and grey literature concerned with what is seen as 'the paradox of youth participation'. Young people are increasingly expressing themselves politically in a range of different ways, volunteering for causes through informally organised campaigning groups, popular protest and a variety of other means but not through the traditional methods of voting and of political party and trade union membership.[70] A major finding of the research is that for young people, collective action is important in forming strong and lasting political identities.[71] If the traditional form is represented as voting, membership of a political party or engagement with a formal political process or institutions, an alternative form is simply anything other than this. We might define alternative forms of participation as:

> Any method of political activity or expression by young people which is not based on voting in elections, or membership of political organisations such as parties or trade unions.

Alternative forms of participation represent a shift in the way young people express themselves politically, rather than something which public bodies or institutions deliver, adopt or establish (Willems et al. (2012)). Alternative forms are not defined by methodologies but by their positioning in relation to the establishment. They may potentially seek to have influence on the decisions made by public bodies, for example through campaigning or lobbying. Equally however, they may also bypass mainstream political processes entirely and seek to directly influence the community.

70. London School of Economics (2013) *op.cit.*
71. *Ibid.*

Alternative forms are sometimes described as new forms of participation, however this is not entirely accurate. Whilst the shift away from the traditional forms may be a new phenomenon, it includes forms of participation, such as volunteering, popular protest and community activism, which are not new. Alternative forms might also refer to forms of participation that **are** entirely new such as online activism. As innovation is inherently linked to the idea of 'newness', we cannot think of alternative forms as being synonymous with innovative forms of participation. This is supported by one of the messages from the survey where youth activism and protest – clearly an alternative form of participation – were identified by stakeholders as one of the least new and innovative forms of youth participation. It is important to acknowledge that alternative forms of participation can include participation that is both innovative and non-innovative. Equally, it may be possible to take an innovative approach within the more traditional forms of representative participation, as illustrated in the practice example from "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" which serves to facilitate links between young people and members of the political parties. We turn now to consider how the concept of innovation might be best applied to youth participation.

Defining innovation within youth participation

As noted in Chapter 4, the idea of innovation in popular language simply refers to something that is new, but as a public policy concept, innovation is understood as a specific process through which new methods of service delivery or ways of resolving public policy issues are developed and tested.[72] Stakeholders in the survey clearly indicated that the more innovative forms of participation were generally seen as neither better nor worse, in terms of effectiveness, than less innovative forms. It is important then for youth participation that **innovative forms** are not set up as the goal; instead innovation is seen as a process through which more effective approaches (to youth participation, in this case) might be discovered.

Under this rubric, innovation programmes or projects should start with a very clearly identified problem or need and a desire to find a new way of resolving the problem or fulfilling the need. This is common within public policy innovation on, for example welfare reforms, but this approach is also evident in all of the case studies described in this report. For example, the Young Roma Leaders initiative aimed to enable young Roma to influence the way in which public authorities prepare and implement programmes for young people at risk. Considering this, we might define an approach to innovating youth participation as:

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72. European Commission Social Innovation.

Any policy, programme, initiative or project, which seeks to find more effective ways for young people to influence decision making within public bodies, or for public bodies to listen and take into account young people's views when they are making decisions by developing and testing new methods, forms or concepts.

In contrast to alternative forms of participation, approaches to innovation are often strongly linked to public bodies. That is not to say that young people are not capable of creating and stimulating innovation themselves, the TBI: Youth City and The Heritage case study clearly demonstrates this, but that innovation can also be initiated and led predominantly by adults within public bodies as in *Bienvenue dans ma tribu*.

The strong connection between seeing something as new and the concept of innovation means that innovative approaches will always be context specific and to some extent subjectively defined. For example, the project where young people meet politicians in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" was a new and therefore innovative approach within the local context. The case study of co-management was identified as one of the most innovative forms of participation in the survey, but the practitioners involved with co-management at Youth Focus North West did not strongly identify with the concept of innovation in their work. So, whilst our survey results in Chapter 5 tell us that co-production, co-management, deliberative participation, and digital participation are generally seen as more innovative than youth protest and activism and youth councils and similar structures, this is only a snapshot of current pan-European trends. Local realities are various and these findings will no doubt change over time as new ideas are adopted and spread. In addition, the case studies highlight that developments are often more nuanced, with an innovative project blending a variety of new and old traditions or methods that do not sit neatly as a single form. For example, the Ichmache>Politik case study is an example of digital participation (new) run by a national youth council (established).

How might public authorities engage with the concept of innovation?

Because of the context-specific and subjective nature of innovation highlighted above, the authors conclude that it would not be useful for public bodies to focus exclusively on exploring 'what are innovative forms of participation and how can they best be promoted?' Innovative forms are not a permanently fixed set of methods or models. This narrative is of course useful in respect of intercultural learning and sharing good practice. However, we propose that when looking at innovative forms of youth participation, it is better to ask: How might innovation be created and nurtured within youth participation

programmes and practice? What approach might public bodies take to this? How can this be used to make youth participation programmes and practice more effective? Addressing these questions is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Understanding clearly the distinction between 'innovating youth participation' and 'alternative forms of participation' is important if public bodies are to engage in either effectively. Such a distinction allows a clear conceptual divide between a societal shift in the way young people express themselves politically and an approach to creating improvements in youth participation mechanisms and strategies. The concept of 'alternative forms of participation' may be useful to highlight that young people's move away from traditional, representative politics is not indicative of a lack of interest in political issues – as in the so-called 'paradox of youth participation'.[73] However, it is important to be clear that young people's engagement in 'alternative' forms does not necessarily mean that youth participation programmes and initiatives are innovative, or utilise innovation as a concept that is characterised by experimentation and the formal testing of new approaches against clearly stated goals.

That said, these concepts are not exclusive. It is of course possible for something to be alternative and innovative or alternative and not innovative. In addition to this, innovation is not a binary concept, different forms of participation can have different degrees and levels of innovation. The figure below sets out the suggested relationship between innovation, traditional and alternative forms of youth participation.

Innovative, traditional and alternative forms of youth participation in decision making

	Alternative forms	Traditional forms
Innovative forms	▶ Digital participation ▶ Co-management ▶ Co-production ▶ Deliberative participation ▶ Participation spaces	▶ Use of new methodologies to encourage traditional participation
Non-innovative forms	▶ Youth councils and similar structures ▶ Youth activism and protest	▶ Voting ▶ Membership of political parties ▶ Trade union membership

73. See for example: London School of Economics (2013) *op.cit.*

What encourages innovation at project level?

The results of our survey indicate that the barriers to more innovative forms of participation are generally very similar to the barriers facing what many parts of Europe would understand as the more conventional forms of youth participation such as municipal youth councils and similar structures. The failure of public bodies and decision makers to understand and accept young people's inputs and the inadequate funds and resources deployed were the main things that stakeholders thought prevented youth participation from growing. Enabling youth participation in decision making to grow was seen as requiring increased political support and raised awareness and understanding within public authorities and other bodies. It is not the case then that there are specific structural factors which prevent an individual from initiating an innovative project rather than one based on more commonplace, conventional approaches.

The case studies illustrate a number of commonalities that can be seen to encourage innovation, and may encourage people to develop innovative projects, but they do not universally apply to all case studies. Firstly, there is a desire to solve a particular problem, or address a key issue, and a belief amongst those involved in the project that this is not effectively being solved with existing methods. This gives projects clear goals, but some of the case studies reflected a degree of flexibility and continuing experimentation within their approaches. In some cases, people leading the project had a strong personal desire to want to do things differently. Sometimes this arose from dissatisfaction with current methods, but also it came from people with experiences of methodologies from outside of youth participation who could see opportunities for development. Secondly then, we can understand the actors leading these projects as **innovators** and it is important to recognise that they can be both young people and adults.

It is useful then to ask how public bodies could best support innovators, rather than innovative forms of participation. Here we might draw on the idea of participatory 'spaces' that came out of the survey and were suggested by members of our Reflection Group – that is to say the provision of an environment or space which is supportive to and encouraging of participation, within which individuals are free to act and develop initiatives as they see fit. A comparable idea might be that of a 'maker lab' or 'hack space' within tech research and design – where individuals can access a laboratory style workshop to develop new forms of technology and tech businesses.

It is important to note, however, that developing innovative individual projects alone is not enough. Few of our case studies had specific plans in place to

actively replicate elsewhere the ideas or the model they had developed. Without such plans, successful new approaches remain within the project. Linking innovation to effectiveness requires a strategic response.

What strategic and policy responses could encourage innovation in youth participation?

Larger public bodies wishing to encourage innovation in youth participation practice may be able to develop funding streams, policies or programmes which support the development of new and untested approaches and methods. Equally as important, public bodies can play a role in encouraging the replication of projects where innovative approaches have delivered more effective youth participation. All too often, the launch of supposedly 'new' or 'innovative' approaches to youth participation by public bodies serves primarily to support political imperatives when actually 'more of the same' may lead to better outcomes.

Drawing on established ideas from other sectors of innovation as a policy response we can see that strategic approaches to innovation in youth participation are likely to have three stages as set out below.[74]

Stage 1: Identify a specific policy goal

If innovation programmes or policies are about creating effectiveness through testing new methods, they must have clear criteria to decide what being more effective means. However, youth participation is comprised of a variety of different competing goals and rationales, ranging from the education of young people, to influencing of policy making, to the promotion of human rights. This can make it hard to evaluate which projects are more effective than others. For example the case study from Youth Focus North West is more effective at enabling young people to influence the running of an organisation, but compared to Travelling Ahead it makes little impact on promoting the voices of the seldom heard.

As a result, any innovation programme or policy within youth participation is likely to find it challenging to judge the effectiveness of projects if it assumes only the very general goal of 'improving youth participation in decision making'. Instead, innovation programmes should identify, in advance, smaller, well-defined goals and objectives that address specific aspects of the participation process. These should be chosen based on identified needs or shortcomings within current practice.

Examples of specific goals or objectives relevant to youth participation might be:

► Increasing the influence young people have on decision making in a public body;

► Increasing the voter turnout amongst young people;

► Enabling public bodies to consult with young people through new media;

► Encouraging decision makers to be more receptive to youth participation.

Stage 2: Develop pilot projects which test new ways of achieving that goal

Once a goal is identified, one or more pilot projects should be funded or developed which focus on achieving that goal. The emphasis would need to be on testing new ideas and methods rather than continuing existing programmes. Methods seen as substantially different to current practice and even high risk should be encouraged.

Stage 3: Replication of successful projects and methods

Projects should be extensively evaluated against the goal. If a pilot project demonstrates success at achieving its goal, the role of an innovation programme is then to support the replication of this model in other areas. This could mean support for the dissemination of learning, or directly resourcing and commissioning new projects based on the proven model.

Projects which do not demonstrate success should not be automatically re-funded, but it should be accepted that risk of failure is always high, and it should not necessarily be negatively regarded. Indeed, disseminating the learning from failed projects will also be valuable.

Summary

In conclusion, the confusion between the changes in the way young people are choosing to express themselves politically and the concept of innovation is not helpful. It is right to be concerned about the decline in voter turnouts, and the fall in the level of trust in political institutions amongst young people, and the corresponding evidence that this is not because of apathy amongst young people. However, the proposition that the alternative ways in which young people are choosing to express themselves politically signifies 'innovation' within youth participation in decision making seems doubtful. Indeed, young people's disengagement from political institutions identifies the need for those bodies to adopt more innovative approaches to involving young people in their decision making.

That is not to say that innovating youth participation in decision making is not a useful concept for

74. J-Pal Europe (2011) SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION: A methodological guide for policymakers for Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

public bodies to engage with. Innovation should be understood as a process of experimentation through which new and more effective approaches can be identified. In the context of youth participation in decision making, this means public bodies seeking new (and innovative) ways to involve young people in the development of policy and service provision and a wide variety of other decision-making processes. However, the end goal of innovation is not simply to create a new way of doing things but to establish a more **effective** way (in this case, of enabling young people to influence decision making).

Support for innovation by public bodies means that new approaches must have clear objectives, be systematically evaluated, and that those approaches that are found to be most effective should be replicated. Public bodies must be encouraged to see innovation as a continual process for driving improvement – it is not the case that the innovative forms of participation can be permanently identified and agreed, after which point there will be no more need for innovation. It should also be recognised that describing an approach as innovative is fundamentally relative and context specific.

To a certain extent, this particular framing means that innovation is something that public bodies and policymakers 'do', rather than something that young people initiate. That is not to say that young people are not capable of generating innovative and new ideas – the case studies illustrate how both adults and young people are initiating innovative practice, and we would argue innovation is neither the preserve of the young nor the old. However, supporting innovation as a method of public policy experimentation by definition becomes something that public institutions undertake, ideally **with** their citizens, rather than something individuals can do alone.

Chapter 8
Recommendations

The main findings from the analysis of the review of previous research, the survey and the review of practice examples were shared with the Reflection Group at a workshop where two sets of recommendations were developed – one focused on public authorities and one on the Council of Europe's youth sector. These recommendations are set out below with some brief commentary on the rationale for selecting these particular recommendations. The authors and the Reflection Group have endeavoured to select a small number of purposive and realistic recommendations and points of guidance rather than produce a long, aspirational 'shopping list'. The recommendations are the responsibility of the Reflection Group and the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe, its member States or the organisations co-operating with the institution.

Public authorities

How can public authorities be encouraged to be more open to new forms, modes and tools for democratic decision making?

The following recommendations are targeted at public authorities working at the national, regional and local levels. The recommendations encourage public authorities to be more open to supporting a range of methods for engaging and facilitating youth participation in democratic decision making. The term effective is used here to describe practice that is seen as achieving its objectives. For youth participation, the objectives are likely to include that:

> ► young people's views and opinions are taken into account by decision makers;

> ► young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with a range of life experiences and characteristics are engaged; and

> ► the results have a beneficial impact on young people themselves.

To be most effective, strategies to promote youth participation need to include consideration of different approaches for different groups or categories of young people. The need for a whole range of methods and forms of youth participation is a powerful message from the most recent research on youth participation and is illustrated in the practice examples reviewed in this study.[75] Plurality is essential, acknowledging that different styles or forms of participation can work for different young people (and different institutional, decision-making practices) in different circumstances and at different times, no one size will fit all. The aim of public authorities and other bodies working in partnership must be to sustain a range of forms and methods for engaging young people in democratic decision making (online and offline), recognising there is no one correct way of 'doing' youth participation.

Public authorities should:

1. Establish a strategic approach to promoting youth participation practice. Strategies should be developed with all young people, including those from minority and disadvantaged groups, and encompass a broad definition of what constitutes youth participation in decision making. The definition should encompass a myriad of forms for involving young people in decisions about all matters that affect them.

2. Take action to encourage innovative approaches to tackling existing and future challenges. Be open to developing new ideas, experimental methods and pursue solutions with young people, as needs arise. The necessary skills could be facilitated using a number of different approaches, for example having some dedicated funding available to support the gestation of ideas and the development of concrete proposals, perhaps with the award of a prize or other widely publicised incentive, and allowing sufficient resources to support an evaluated experiment.

3. Consider the creation of 'participatory spaces' as places where young people can come together to explore and develop their own ideas and go on to meet with decision makers. These should be spaces for dialogue and reflection where young people can get to know the decision makers and vice versa, where barriers can be broken down and issues discussed.

4. Be prepared to routinely evaluate and document practice and then share good examples in relevant databases such as the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) and the SALTO-YOUTH Good Practice Project Database.

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75. See for example, London School of Economics and Political Science (2013) *op.cit.*

5. Acknowledge that new forms of youth participation are not necessarily better than more traditional ways – it should not be seen as an 'either/or' situation. If the methods or forms are working, that is more important than whether they are innovative or more conventional in the particular context. Some of the best examples reviewed in this study have used a combination of 'old' and 'new' methods to good effect.

6. Educate the educators in formal, non-formal and other settings on the wide range of approaches to youth participation emphasising the importance of children and young people having an opportunity to engage and learn about democratic decision making from an early age.

The Council of Europe and the EU-CoE partnership in the youth field have a range of material and resources that can be used to support public authorities to develop diverse approaches to youth participation. The second set of recommendations (see below under "Council of Europe") proposes a number of new outputs that the Council of Europe youth sector could consider developing to specifically encourage public authorities to be open to alternative and innovative forms, as well as support for continuing their many programmes, designed to facilitate peer learning.

How can public authorities facilitate access for all cohorts of young people, including the most disadvantaged, to decision-making processes?

The recommendations above note the need for a strategic approach to developing youth participation in decision making by public authorities. As set out in the first recommendation, the strategy needs to include consideration of how best to engage young people from the relevant minority groups and young people with fewer opportunities. The following additional recommendations propose ways in which public authorities should go about developing these targeted approaches.

Public authorities should:

1. Undertake a mapping exercise to ensure that their youth participation strategy is able to meet the needs of its population. Firstly, available data should be analysed to determine who exactly makes up the youth population of the public authority. For example, how many young women, young men are there in the area, of what age, and from which ethnic groups, and from which locations. This analysis of the youth population should then be set against information about the characteristics of the actual population who are engaged in the youth participation structures and mechanisms. For example, the youth parliament or forum, the pupil councils, online networks, etc. Any gaps should be highlighted and

plans put in place to reach out to young people and to communities who are not yet engaged.

2. Monitor progress and keep this map (of these two populations) consistently under review. Opportunities for reflection and evaluation will assist in building an evidence base of what approaches work best with particular populations in particular contexts. It is likely that public authorities will need to experiment with a range of methods. In this context outreach youth work can be a valuable method for keeping in touch or in making initial contact with the target young people. Consideration should be given to the option of establishing some quotas. That is, setting specific targets for a certain percentage of young people from a particular cohort. However, public authorities should avoid using such a system as an inflexible tick-box exercise.

3. Involve young people in determining the best methods for engaging other young people from particular communities or groups who are not, as yet, sufficiently represented, as well as explore examples of good practice from elsewhere. The examples of activities included in this study of engaging with excluded groups or reaching out to young people in more inaccessible locations suggest that a long-term approach will be required. The learning from the case studies also suggests that young people themselves are a valuable resource in terms of both advising public authorities on what is required and on bridging introductions and the juxtaposition of different realities.

4. Use clear and accessible language that young people can understand and a range of communication methods that young people use and can relate to. Publicise the ways that young people can get engaged, including in places that young people frequent (online and offline).

5. Explore how they can best deploy capacity-building programmes to enhance the ways they engage with young people from under-represented groups. For example, training for staff and volunteers working with young people; training for young people (in formal and non-formal education); establishing quality mentoring programmes. Work with young people should be delivered in spaces that young people find safe and accessible (as reflected in some of the case studies) with the longer-term aim of establishing an integrated approach.

6. Audit their participation activities to ensure they are accessible to young people from a range of different circumstances. For example, whether transport costs can be reimbursed promptly, whether buildings are physically accessible to wheelchairs, whether interpreters are available to support young people who are newly arrived in the country, etc.

Council of Europe

Recommendations and guidance to the Council of Europe's youth sector on the direction future work on participation could take, including how to integrate the understanding of new and innovative forms of participation into its policies and programmes

Essentially, the recommendations and guidance to the Council of Europe's youth sector on the direction its future work on participation should take are in support of the recommendations outlined above for public authorities. The activities the Council of Europe undertakes to support youth participation should encourage plurality, innovation, experimentation and ultimately, improve the performance of public bodies in supporting young people's engagement in democratic decision making. The Reflection Group advises that the Council of Europe should prioritise support for and encouragement of forms of participation (structures, mechanisms, activities) that work in enabling young people to have a voice in public decision making, moving away from any preoccupation with innovative forms as such.

The Council of Europe youth sector should:

1. Encourage political support for a strategic, evidence-based approach to facilitating youth participation whilst sustaining a plurality of approaches to engaging young people in democratic decision making. Offer reassurance and inspire decision makers to look favourably on a wide variety of different forms of youth participation. One option the youth sector may wish to consider is to propose a new recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to foster such an outlook, inviting member States to establish clear goals and objectives and to favour youth participation practice that works in supporting young people to influence public policy.

2. Take steps to support and encourage innovative approaches to policymaking and experimentation to determine the most effective ways for public bodies to support and facilitate young people's involvement in public decision making. For example, by producing a toolkit to support stakeholders in reviewing the outcomes of youth participation; by setting up an annual award to support experimental proposals; by continuing to encourage peer learning and the sharing of practice examples; by funding collaborative research to investigate and assess different models and approaches to engaging young people with fewer opportunities.

3. Review its programme of peer learning, dissemination and practice exchange to ensure the integration of a wide range of forms and styles of youth participation, particularly successful examples of engaging young people with fewer opportunities

in democratic decision making. This could include the provision of more opportunities to showcase a wider range of methods at European events; more proactive documentation of good practice, stored in an accessible and better publicised database. The youth sector may wish to investigate further what it can do to support and encourage the active replication of proven examples of good practice. This study highlights a lack of obvious replication and the need for research into the optimum conditions required, the barriers to replication and how best to overcome them.

4. Encourage the EU-CoE partnership in the youth field to raise awareness of the need for many different forms of participation and promote the importance of a pluralist approach. The Partnership may wish to consider the development of training resources for public authorities setting out the benefits of youth participation for all the different stakeholders and the importance of reflection, evaluation and experimentation.

5. Take steps to support its partners to encourage a more pluralist approach to youth participation. The Council of Europe may wish to consider commissioning study sessions that provide opportunities to explore different forms of youth participation and their potential contribution, and spread the message that there are many different, legitimate forms of youth participation that public authorities and youth organisations need to consider and be open to. Different forms also bring implications for different kinds of support, reinforcing for example the importance of embedding digital literacy and media competency in education curricula.

6. Consider the development of tools and levers that can support and shape the use of new technology in youth participation, to maximise its potential for supporting quality youth participation practice as part of a pluralist approach. For example: endorsing quality standards on e-participation and supporting the development of media competences within education curricula.

7. Further strengthen youth participation in the Council of Europe. In line with the findings of this study, consideration should be given to reviewing current practice (for example the youth sessions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities), making improvements and establishing a wider variety of different but effective ways for engaging young people in decision making within and across all of the Council of Europe's functions.

8. Continue its support for education and the teaching of democratic values and citizenship, human rights and intercultural learning. This needs to start early in life and the youth sector is encouraged to work on this programme of work in collaboration with the Children's Rights Division.

Growing concern at political level and evidence to indicate that young people have been turning away from established forms of democratic participation, for example increased abstention from voting and decreasing membership in political parties, have led some commentators to argue that young people are disengaging from "traditional" forms of participation and finding "alternative" or "innovative" forms of participation to replace them.

The participation of young people in decision-making processes – be they political, civic, civil society or other – fosters their active citizenship, enhances their inclusion, and strengthens their contribution to the advancement of democracy. It is essential, therefore, to foster this participation and one of the Council of Europe youth sector's strategic objectives is to support young people's (positive) attitude to influence decisions in democratic processes – be that at national, regional or local levels – and to increase their involvement in the development of inclusive and peaceful societies.

This study of new and innovative forms of youth participation was commissioned by the Council of Europe Youth Department to investigate how young people are choosing to participate, whether these methods enable them to be represented in decision-making processes and to identify practices which promote and help to consolidate democracy. It analyses the concepts of "new and innovative" participation in an attempt to define them. The study's findings and recommendations are intended to inform the Youth Department's future work in this field.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

Youth – Jeunesse

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE