

EU Youth Conference Luxembourg

Trio Presidency Italy-Latvia-Luxembourg

Final Joint Recommendations on “**Empowerment of young people for political participation in the democratic life in Europe**”

Luxembourg, 21 - 24 of September 2015

The structured dialogue is an instrument within the framework for European cooperation in the youth field to involve young people in the development of EU policies. The outcome of the fourth 18-month work cycle on the overall thematic priority “Empowerment of young people for political participation in the democratic life in Europe” is based on the results achieved by the consultations with young people before and during the Italian, Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies as well as the EU Youth Conferences in Rome in October 2014, Riga in March 2015 and Luxembourg in September 2015.

In the framework of the EU Youth Conference in Luxembourg, youth representatives, together with representatives from member states have gathered to adopt the Final Joint Recommendations on “Empowerment of young people for political participation in the democratic life in Europe”.

Create a culture of participation at school

- 1) Member states should introduce and support a framework in educational institutions, such as student councils and other student initiatives that enable and ensure the engagement of students to be one of the decision-makers in educational institutions.
- 2) Educational institutions should recognize different forms of civic engagement such as volunteering, in order to stimulate a culture of participation at school.
- 3) Member States should further develop or include citizenship education in the curricula at all levels of formal education, bringing a local, national, European and global perspective. Formal education providers must include non-formal learning methodologies to encourage critical thinking and enable young people from all backgrounds to develop attitudes and values to participate actively in the society. CULT committee is invited to advance the citizenship education discussion in the European Parliament.



Involving young people in political decision-making

- 4) In order to further involve young people in democratic life, Member States and local authorities are invited to implement pilot programmes starting at the local level, where voting age is lowered to 16, accompanied by an adequate preparation, including quality civic education.
- 5) By implementing transparent, sustainable and collaborative structures and providing financial support, authorities on the local, regional and national levels should ensure full participation of youth NGOs in decision making processes of policies that affect young people.

Enhancing policy makers' engagement and commitment with young people

- 6) European Commission and Member States should put in place a framework to enhance policy-makers' commitment to shared decision-making with young people by providing the policy makers with all the necessary tools in developing, implementing and evaluating policies.
- 7) Policy makers at all levels should continuously perform an open and inclusive political culture of communication using multiple youth targeted methods in order to ensure transparency and accountability of the policy-makers.

Strengthening the role of youth work for political empowerment of all young people

- 8) Youth work and its crucial role for fostering political participation, which is based on the values of diversity, human rights, democracy and critical thinking, should be strengthened. Therefore, the European Commission and the Member States should provide the youth sector with the necessary resources such as, operational and project funding; with the necessary support structures such as a legislative framework, networks and trainings; and with the formal, social and political recognition of youth work and non-formal learning.
- 9) European institutions and Member States are encouraged to establish cross-sectorial initiatives and long-term partnerships at all levels with youth workers and non-governmental organisations in order to transfer knowledge and develop political participation competencies of all young people.

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Developing youth friendly tools for political participation

- 10) Private and public organizations should involve young people from all backgrounds and identities in the development, implementation and monitoring of online tools for youth political participation. To ensure recognition of young people's participation and sustain their involvement in political processes, online tools should be combined with offline methods and have a follow-up phase in which decision-makers explain on how young people's contributions were taken into account.
- 11) To ensure access of young people to information and opportunities to experience tools for political participation, Member States should ensure that trainings on the existence and the use of such tools are provided to teachers and other people working with youth.

Developing local and direct democracy

- 12) Member States, local and regional authorities shall promote the establishment and the strengthening of democratic local and regional youth councils or other equivalent youth platforms that should be open, inclusive and sustainable in order to enable and support young people from all backgrounds and identities to participate and be involved in decision-making processes in accordance with the Revised European Charter on the Participation of young people in local and regional life (Congress of Local & Regional Authorities, Council of Europe).

Developing alternative forms of participation

- 13) Member states and youth organisations should recognise and make better use of alternative forms* of young people's political participation aiming to enrich the debate and decision-making processes.

*all political participation forms that take place outside of the institutionalised system

Increasing synergies and cooperation between different actors

- 14) The EU institutions and Member States should initiate or improve existing cross-sectorial policy cooperation and communication, affecting youth at all levels, and enable sustainable collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, while especially involving young people.
- 15) We call on the European Commission to set the ground for a progressive implementation of a youth impact assessment of all EU policies, involving young people and other relevant stakeholders, to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of policies affecting young people's lives, thus increasing the attractiveness of political participation for young people.

