



Maison de l'Europe de Paris

Stiftung **C**enshagen

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS FROM THE MAJOR CITIES

**The participation of young people: analysis and
perspectives in European cities**

Preparatory Seminar

22nd-23rd of February 2008,

Genshagen / Berlin

Programme and report

Programme

Friday 22nd of February 2008

- 1:00 pm Arrival of the participants / buffet
- 1:45 pm **Reception / introduction**
- 2:00 pm **Municipal and regional youth policies: what provisions are made to facilitate the lives of young people, to make use of their abilities and to encourage their participation in public life? What concrete results have been achieved?**
- 4:00 pm Coffee break
- 4:30 pm **The activity of young people in European cities: what are the existing structures and mechanisms? What objectives are being pursued? Who is involved? Are there phenomena of marginalisation and segregation?**
- 6:30 pm Dinner
- 8:00 pm **The engagement of young people on the local and European levels: how are these two spheres of activity to be linked up?**

Saturday 23rd of February 2008

- 9:00 am **The participation of young people: what are the themes and forms of engagement? (Environment, sustainable development in cities, cyber democracy, etc.)**
- 11:00 am Coffee break
- 11:30 am **Summary of the discussions, formulation of proposals**
- 13:00 am Lunch
- 13:45 am Departure

Report on subject 1: Municipal and regional youth policies: what provisions are made to facilitate the lives of young people, to make use of their abilities and to encourage their participation in public life? What concrete results have been achieved?

The seminar was opened by Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes, head of the programme: "Culture and Politics" at the Maison de l'Europe de Paris. She gave a short summary about the seminars that took place and will take place in the framework of the European Conference of Citizens and City-dwellers. Since November 2007, there have been several other preparatory seminars on topics related to the central issues of the symposium, including the connection between local democracy and citizenship in Europe. The objective is to bring together members of the civil society who are involved in local democracy as well as representatives of the major European cities in a process of reflection on the concepts of democratic participation and "residence citizenship". During the final meeting in Paris in June 2008, the results will be compiled and evaluated, and then published.

UK: Joseph Bell, a member of the UK youth parliament and **Umar Kankiya**, coordinator of the region London for the UK youth parliament, started to give a very positive report about their youth parliament. Founded eight years ago, the UK youth parliament, a non-party organisation, has now representatives of the nine English regions, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Any young person between 11 and 18 can vote for or be elected for one year in the UKYP. More than 50% of the members of the youth parliament are feminine. Ethnic minorities are also well represented.

The UKYP is currently engaged in issues like the gun and knife crime scene, sex and relationship education, public transport for young people, child poverty, global warming. It also works towards more facilities for young people and voting at 16.

The UKYP is governed by members of the parliament who are elected within the UKYP. They decide about Audits, Finances, Property, Corporate Development and Human Resources. The UKYP is "organised" or overseen by young full-time adult workers.

The UKYP is financed publicly and privately and has about 510 000 £ (2006) of yearly incoming resources. It sees itself as independent from the government and other financiers. The UKYP is a very influential institution and is even consulted by politicians concerning a variety of issues. The two British participants did not name any problems the UKYP is facing, besides its current issues.

NETHERLANDS: Christel Lange, the youth representative of European affairs of the Dutch National Youth Council, explained that the participating youth is not as influential as the UKYP. Reasons therefore are that the youth parliament is ignored, that local youth councils are only acting on a local scale and that they have only little influence on politics. The problem according to Christel Lange is that youth councils are decentralised and that the ministry of youth does not want a central youth council organ, whose aim would be to link local and EU policies. Members of the Dutch National Youth Council are between 12 and 25 years old.

FRANCE: Adrian Sella, speaking for the French youth council of the region Ile-de-France, explained that the members of the youth council – 15 to 33 years old – are not democratically elected, but elected by the government through a lottery system. The youth council members can be up to 33 years old, since young members are sometimes less motivated. The youth council is a representative council and was created by the government (regional council) in 2004. Telling that the youth council is divided into different “sectors” like environment, education, transport ..., he criticised at the same time the fact that it has no real structure.

The regional youth council is completely financed by the regional council. The council can make propositions and start projects that have to be approved in a slow and long process. The influence of the youth council is mostly restricted to cultural events. The youth council seems to have little to no influence on politics.

Ghislaine Glasson-Deschaumes remarked that the youth council members can not be contacted directly, but only through local public officials.

SLOVENIA: Andrej Pavlišič, a member of the programme board of the Workers' Punks University, explained that the Slovene government does not provide or finances any youth parliament or youth councils. The young people, mostly students, organise themselves and start their own projects and movements. They are not elected, but they take the initiative and involve themselves in politics. Structures of youth participation often develop themselves out of a spontaneous involvement. In some cases successful youth organisations even arose out of illegal activities. Youth participation in Slovenia, as stated Andrej Pavlišič, is certainly mostly connected to political participation.

BULGARIA: Ana Vaseva, a drama student, explained that neither youth parliaments nor youth councils exist in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, there is a national agency for youth and sport. According to Ana Vaseva, a political representation of young people is not possible since there is no “real established democracy” in Bulgaria. Participation of youth in politics is often spontaneously organised. Consequently, the groups of young people involved are independent in their organisation and their goals. Most of the actions take place on a non-political level. In a conclusion, Ana Vaseva said that participation in the Eastern countries mostly meant resistance.

WARSAW: In Poland, youth participation aims more at organising cultural events, but does not influence the government, explained **Anna Samel**, coordinator of the project “Youth vote” of

the Centre For Citizenship Education. There are youth councils in Poland, but their members are not elected in a democratic way, rather just motivated young people. The missing cooperation between the youth councils in Poland is a big problem. For instance, none of the four youth councils in Warsaw is cooperating or has any influence on politics, stated Anna Vaseva.

BERLIN: Gregor Ziese-Henatsch, a PhD student of the Freie Universität Berlin, writing his dissertation about children and youth participation concerning public affairs in Berlin, explained that Germany, as a federal nation, has no central institution that coordinates the youth parliaments. Youth participation in Germany is based on five pillars. The first is composed of youth associations, mostly belonging to umbrella associations. The second pillar is based upon youth representatives organised on a regional and national level. The third is the youth press that is organised on a regional, national and EU level. The fourth pillar corresponds to the locally-organized youth information centres. The fifth pillar is represented by the youth parliaments, which are organised only on a local and regional level. According to Gregor Ziese-Henatsch, the youth parliaments have very little influence on politics in most states, because they are given very little power. **Maximilian Kall** of the youth press Germany criticized the fact that most of the youth participation in Germany is top down structured: young people projects are financially supported only if they fit into the structure of the state. **Sarah Ciaglia** of the Young European Movement added that many young people are participating in youth organisations without the necessary financial support and political influence. One reason for this might be the lack of a mediator between youth and politics.

Report on subject 2: The activity of young people in European cities: what are the existing structures and mechanisms? What objectives are being pursued? Who is involved? Are there phenomena of marginalisation and segregation?

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) sees itself as an institution that can be consulted by young people that are yet not allowed to vote. Furthermore, these young people can get involved in the activities of the institution, said **Umar Kankiya**. In the youth parliament, girls are well represented – with more than 50 % of the members - the same is for marginal groups. These marginal peoples, as the British government describes them, are as motivated as others and participate at the same level as every other member. “There are no young people that don’t want to be reached”, said Joseph Bell. The way how and where one tries to reach these marginalised groups is important. Youth workers have to find new ways and new platforms to engage with the young people, in places where they feel comfortable to talk about their problems.

Andrej Pavlišič from Slovenia argued that there is no such thing as young people but groups with different interests. He gave an example, i.e. students in Ljubljana who got involved in politics because they did not want to be charged University fees. Their goal was to provoke, start a discussion and influence the politicians.

Maximilian Kall from the Youth Press Berlin explained that the goal of the Youth Press is to support young journalists. The Youth Press organises workshops and meetings to teach young journalistic techniques, to finance projects and to help them in realising their projects. In general, the Youth Press has no political mandate but to report about politics and culture. As an example, he mentioned the magazine “Politik Orange” which tries to translate politics to young people. All projects are open to every young people. The Youth Press is more a network than an organisation. Although they have no problems to reach young people, they find it more difficult to reach young people with high education.

The Youth Press is privately and publicly financed, but free in its decisions. Most of the financial aid is topic-related. It belongs to the NECE (Networking European citizenship education).

Karsten Marhold from the Café Babel described this organisation as being a network of about thousand young journalists reporting on national issues from an EU perspective. This means that they share their experiences on similar issues or problems all over Europe to analyse them from different perspectives in order to find solutions. An example would be to report on students fees in Berlin and to compare this situation to other European cities that have dealt with similar situations. Concerning the question of **Boyan Manchev**, how the young media reports about alternative cultures developing in EU metropolis, Karsten replied that Café Babel is not focusing on one special issue but reports on a variety of subjects.

Christel Lange indicated that the Dutch National Youth Council, similar to the UKYP, has no problems to encourage marginalised young people into participating in their projects. No young people is difficult to reach; the only need is to find different ways and different projects to reach different young people, explained Christel Lange.

Robert Pietsch of the Service Centre for youth participation explained that the project “youth bank” is a good example of how to reach all young groups and to motivate them into participating. The youth bank gives money to young people for their projects by a very simple procedure. The youth bankers, situated on a local basis, help and consult the youth on how to formulate their financial requests and how to realise their projects. This “micro” subsidies of 400 € can be obtained on a very simple way, so that every group of young people can benefit from it.

Introducing her project “Youth vote”, **Anna Samel** explained its goal, that is that young people, not allowed to vote yet, can participate in the elections. Even though these young people don’t have the right to vote, they can vote in their school before elections. This way, young people learn how to vote and the society gets to know their opinion as the results of the vote are published.

Last year, 30% of Poland’s students participated.

Report on subject 3: The engagement of young people on the local and European levels: how are these two spheres of activity to be linked up?

Karsten Marhold of café Babel said that the key to link the two spheres was to get people of the local level involved on a European level. Not only matters what is happening in Brussels, but also what is going on in other European cities. Projects should not just always be organized bottom-up: one can start directly on an EU level (top-down approach). Café Babel has his centre in Paris. The central office is coordinating, organising and (financially) supporting the local teams for local activities. As an example he mentioned the project “Europe Underground”, a meeting to which local members and five (non-local) journalists are invited to report about the local city. Karsten concluded that disposing of a coordinating centre on the EU level was very helpful in the organization and support of local events.

Jonathan Berchner of the Protestant youth Berlin-Brandenburg-Schlesische Oberlausitz pointed out that most of the young participating people are neither informed about nor involved in a project through flyers or any other advertisement, but through friends who are already participating in the project. According to Jonathan Berchner, it is easier to organise youth groups on a local level first and then to shift to a EU level.

Umar Kankiya of the UKYP told that most young people in the UK are more concerned about local and national issues than EU issues. Young people are more familiar with problems they face in their surroundings on a day-to-day basis. The most important, according to Joseph Bell, is first to organise oneself and then set out on the EU-level. The reason why the UKYP has only very few projects on the EU-level is because of the absence of a direct link between Europe and the local organisation. Moreover, the UKYP has no great experience and cannot relate to European issues.

Joseph Bell added that young people were interested about laws and politics that influence them on a day-to-day basis and that the EU was still unreachable for them. Moreover, he underlined that the main thing was to get the dialogue started and to go on with the integration process.

Maximilian Kall of the Youth Press Berlin explained that regional participants were younger than nationally or on a EU-level. A gap still exists between the EU and the youth, mostly for reasons of political miscommunication. This distance towards the EU does not exist in sports or towards companies like Easyjet or EU-programs like ERASMUS. Many people forget that the EU is far more than a parliament or a council.

The successful projects of the EU should be a basis to overcome the gap between the local and the EU-level, which is smaller than most people assume.

Sarah Ciaglia of the JEB also agreed that it was important to discover the different sides of the EU, its importance and presence. Furthermore, the EU should more inform the youth about its

politics, structure, organisation and possibilities to participate. At the same time, local organisations should encourage young people to be more open to and interested in the EU.

Andrej Pavlišič of the Workers' Punks University criticised the fact that experiencing the EU was not only about Easyjet or ERASMUS, but also the unnatural borders, Schengen. Citizens of from the neighbourstates of the new EU-members that could freely move across the borders before are not allowed to enter the territory of their EU-neighbours anymore.

Another problem discussed by **Gregor Ziese-Henatsch** is the inclusive or exclusive EU problematic. How can the German government integrate Turkish people in Berlin, if they don't want of Turkey in the EU?

Pierre Barge of the European Association for the defense of Human Rights (AEDH) explained that there were four controversies in the EU: the first concerns the widespread problem of accepting that most of the issues of everyday life are decided at the European level and that the EU is not only about the freedom of travelling. Everybody thinks that the solutions for local problems is at home, but the local situation is influenced by exterior. The second controversy is about the language; most people in the EU speak only one language, it is only the elite that speaks more than one. The third is that many governments in the EU blame Brussels for unpopular laws or decisions, even though they decided on these laws themselves. The last controversy is that the EU wants to build the zone of a democratic EU where the human rights are respected, but to build and maintain this zone, they disrespect the human rights at the EU borders. EU is not a value at all.

Report on subject 4: The participation of young people: what are the issues and forms of engagement? (Environment, sustainable development in cities, cyber democracy, etc.)

The Protestant youth in Germany offers a very large variety of activities to participate for young people, explained **Jonathan Berchner**. Traditional issues of engagement are the peace work, children rights and the right to vote for minors. The Protestant youth has an influence on the issues of discussion of the church staff and consequently somehow on politics. But the church also has a large influence on the Protestant youth, as they are financed by them and by the government.

The influence of the young Protestants is limited. Although they have the right to make proposals for projects or discussions, they lack the ability to enforce them.

The Protestant youth sees no need of application concerning quota regulations as a means of increasing female and minorities' representation and participation. They want to lay the emphasis of young people participation on their motivation rather than on their gender and as a matter of fact, more girls attend the Protestant youth than boys.

The Youth council Ile-de-France has a relatively small influence on local politics, admitted **Adrian Sella**. Even though the Youth council is consolidated by the politics and they can make propositions, the politics do not believe in them. The Youth council is divided into many commissions, due to that the process of communication is very slow and long.

According to Adrian, the problem is not the lack of good ideas, but the bureaucracy and a lack of support from the government. The Youth council is mostly involved in cultural projects like cheaper prices for museum tickets.

The UKYP had similar problems in 2000, explained **Umar Kankiya**. To reach independence and influence, private funding, cooperations and partnerships are highly important, according to Umar Kankiya. However, one should only accept financial supports that fit in the organisation. For example, the UKYP denied a sponsorship by Mc Donald's and Coca Cola for political reasons; it is important to have liberty. The UKYP supports any kind of projects as the UKYP is a nonpolitical organisation. Young people can ask for money, but they have to fit certain criteria. Since young people are not only concerned about democracy, the UKYP also supports projects around daily problems.

As youth participation is becoming more important again, the government consults and works together with the young people on a variety of issues. One goal of the UKYP is to show that they can help and improve the situation together with the politicians.

Concerning quota regulations, the UKYP sees no need of application, as there are more girls than boys in the youth parliament, and marginalised groups integrated themselves quite naturally.

Christel Lange stated that her youth council is not supported financially enough by the government. The financial income of the council barely covers the administrative cost; projects

have to be financed separately. The council can only realise its projects with the help of young people.

The council gets a lot of communication support by the government, but only if the project is accepted. If the government does not agree on a project and consequently is not willing to support it, the youth council tries to finance the project through private organisations, explained Christel Lange. The government has very precise ideas about the projects they want to finance. Even though this limits their independence, they accept the offers to stay in the best terms with the government.

Despite the problem that migrants are more difficult to reach, the youth council does not want to introduce quota restrictions.

Ana Vaseva, a drama student, explained that a great part of the ecologist movement in Bulgaria is organised by concerts organizations, as they have a structure, forums, internet websites and as they are free and report about all issues.

Kristin Dethloff of the German Youth press said that many young people do not continue their projects as they don't know how to go on with them. On the other side, great consideration on the national level is given to the interests of the youth. Regional politics ask to be counseled by the youth, for example.

According to Kristin, things are changing in Germany; girls are now more involved than boys, as they have a better education and are more mobile.

Andrej Pavlišič underlined that it was important to have a public space for the youth. Many young people do not need any money or support for their projects, but they start initiatives on their own, to gain more space for the youth.

In Slovenia many projects didn't start through negotiations with the government but through actions and developed later to a dialogue with the government. It is important for the youth to engage in occupying space, to have place for expression and talk about their ideas. This space is necessary for a better youth participation in a city, as a base where young people and minorities can speak about their problem, organise and assemble to act.

Report on subject 5: A summary of the discussions, and the formulation of proposals

Proposals for further discussions:

1. A youth parliament should be established in every bigger city in the EU, with a right to be heard by politicians and the possibility to have an exchange between the different youth parliaments.
2. The participants should have more time to get to know each other better and to have the possibility to talk in an informal way, in order to create a network.
3. There should be more discussions about the EU experience, to get out of the local context and to work on an EU level.
4. One should talk about possibilities to enlarge the political influence, the way how to effectively affect the politics and how it can be achieved to influence politics.
5. One should talk about the visibility of youth participation, because it increases its effectiveness.
6. One should talk about the Bologna process, the bachelor and master setup, because students have no time for participation anymore. Furthermore, one should talk about a reduction of the school time and the pressure that lies on the students, as they have less time for participation.
7. The systematic of the youth bank should be introduced to youth parliaments to give more responsibility, to increase the freedom of the youth parliament and to increase the attention of young people.
8. Discuss possibilities to engage youth more in local democratic ways
9. Can young participating people work together better?
10. Discuss strategies to integrate minorities in participation and how to reach marginalised groups.
11. Discuss how other countries organise their youth parliaments, since there are very few information about these structures.
12. Discuss more about the possibilities to realise a EU project.
13. Discussion about an internet platform providing information about the organisation of projects and their forms, a possibility to exchange experiences, and translate these into all European languages. (Example: Wikipedia)
14. Talk about the demand of effectiveness; how to make one's own agenda and how it can become effective.
15. Talk about how to support more interaction and discussion between the European youth.
16. Discuss to install an exchange on an official level for youth workers.

Things we like and don't like about our cities:

Things I like:

- Berlin: cheap, good public transport system, marginalized parts are within the city, dynamic and international
- Amsterdam: good possibilities to participate

- London: intercultural
- Sofia: the green spaces
- Ljubljana: many possibilities to make/play politics

Things I would like to change:

- Berlin: social commitment is not appreciated, sad that Berlin has as many poor people, arrogance of the people living in Berlin, xenophobia, bad access to public places for handicapped people, bring the international people together for more dialogue, more places to meet for international people, not enough emphasis for youth but too much from the government, improvement of the interaction between people
- Amsterdam: the architecture (there are only new buildings in A.)
- Warsaw: People in Poland think negative about Warsaw, the anonymity in Warsaw
- Paris: The public transport system is expensive and does not work all night long, bridge the gap between the suburbs and the city, less homeless people, bridge the gap between rich and poor
- London: the safety problems in London, walk in the streets, without fearing to be attacked
- Sofia: no more privatisation of public spaces (green spaces are lost, traffic gets worse), struggle in administration
- Ljubljana: not very international, expensive housing, no connection flights