

Youngsters' Proposals for a more participative EU

During the Youth exchange “DemocrActive” that was held in Athens from 8 to 15 May 2017 under Erasmus + program 50 young people reflected on a variety of issues related to EU, European citizenship and decision making. In one of the activities they were invited to discuss and propose ideas on how EU can become more participative and how an increase in young people’s participation in European affairs can be achieved. A lot of interesting ideas were expressed by the participants and are presented below in order to inspire policies and decisions closer to the needs and interests of young people.

Before we present their proposals its worth to mention that the youngsters have the general impression that the elderly do not trust them and they think they are not active enough in social and political field. They feel that they do not have enough chances to express their needs and abilities, though they want, and it is not fair to be perceived as irresponsible. They would welcome any chance of participation and they are willing to fight for improving social and political activity of young people in Europe. To this direction they suggested the following measures and they hoped to be heard and influence in any way the decision making in the specific field:

- They would welcome the establishment of an electronically voting system for the proposed remedies on problems concerning them and the new legislative proposals.
- A web platform were citizens could make policy proposals and other citizens could vote if the proposals should be forwarded to the decision making bodies would increase interest and participation of young people.
- A fixed representation in European parliament could be set. 30% of the representatives to be under the age 30. This measure could be adopted in National parliaments also.
- Visibility activities and lobbyism on the European institutions and their functions should be increased.

- National campaigns should be organized for popularizing the idea of participation and highlighting the importance of decisions taken for youngsters' daily lives. The message that politics is not loss of time should be promoted.
- High activity rate in social nets. EU should approach young people by means closer to them.
- A common obligatory subject could be introduced in secondary education of all the member states concerning political matters and awareness on European citizenship. The aim of this subject should be to cultivate critical thinking and students' interest on European affairs. Students should not take exams and grades but in the end of the subject they will receive a certificate issued by the EU. Trainings should be organized for the educational staff to be able to promote active citizenship.
- Increasing participation of young people in European projects such as youth exchanges could promote participation. More projects should be organized under the "Structured Dialogue: Meetings between young people and decision makers in the field of youth" and organizations should be motivated to organize more projects under this action. Moreover, special promotion activities should be made for this action as many young people are not aware of this opportunity.
- Short commercials could be produced about different fields of the EU and the opportunities of participation. EU could have its own internet channel or radio program and short videos can be presented in a comprehensible manner about the decision making processes.
- Simple simulation games could be designed for kids and introduced in primary school in order to have a first interaction with the topic and cultivate early enough a sense of responsibility.
- Public assemblies should be set and promoted as a way young people can communicate their opinion to EU. Youth parliaments could be also an effective measure.
- Big advertisements and banners with slogans could be set in central points of European cities in order to make the problem of apathy visible.
- Local Youth groups could be created focused on proposing solutions for specific contemporary problems. A good first step towards active participation could be the youngsters' involvement in finding solutions for problems in their close social context. They are more aware and concerned about them and their involvement will help them cultivate their social responsibility.