

Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT)

shadow report on the implementation of the common objectives on youth information and participation

The consultation process for the implementation

One of the main actions to identify the existing knowledge of young people and youth organisations about the youth information and participation was the research of the Lithuanian youth situation in 2004 ordered by the State Council for Youth Affairs. This research presented the youth situation and youth opinion about youth policy, youth participation in various organisations and non-formal groups, representing youth interests, point of view of the Lithuanian situation, labour etc. Besides, such research of the Lithuanian youth situation was made in 2005, where the main attention was paid to youth opinion about participating in different youth organisations, non-formal groups, leisure time, financing of youth programmes, citizenship, religion, values of youth and changes in overall Lithuanian situation during the year. According to these research results strategic action plans in the field of youth policy is prepared and submitted to responsible institutions.

Lithuanian youth council (LiJOT) together with the Ministry of social security and labour and the State Council for Youth Affairs organized a "National youth conference 2005" on the 3rd – 4th of November 2005. For the first time it gathered more than 200 young people coming from all over Lithuania representing not only youth organisations, but as individuals. As well mayors from all Lithuanian municipalities and municipality youth coordinators were invited. During the plenary sessions participants were presented the relevant information and documents concerning youth issues on national and European level. In order to receive youth

opinion, feedback, proposals, their needs and expectations efficiently working groups on participation, information, entrepreneurship, employment, volunteerism etc. were performed. Afterwards young people not only presented working groups' results with the proposals about the further development of the youth policy, but appealed with resolution asking for the national agreement on the development of the youth policy, that would allow long-term actions to improve youth situation in Lithuania. The event was also attended by the Minister of social security and labour, the Minister of the interior affairs and the Minister of education and science.

Municipality youth coordinators are responsible for the youth affairs and implementation of the regional youth policy in the municipal administrations. They perform the following functions:

- Compile, systemise, analyse and generalise information, prepare informational reports about the youth situation in the municipalities;
- Provide different information about youth rights protection and implementation of youth policy in the municipality to all persons interested;
- Inform local youth organisations about the programmes of the State council for youth affairs, European Union programme "Youth" and other programmes;
- Provide consultations to youth organisations, non-formal youth groups and single individuals about preparing programmes supported by State Council for Youth Affairs, Agency of International Youth Cooperation (National Agency), other foundations and municipalities.

Various ministries, their departments, other governmental institutions are implementing different programmes for youth and also apply methods to guarantee consultations for young people on the implementation of the common objectives on youth information and participation. They organise discussions, trainings, consultations, seminars, conferences with governmental, municipal institutions and representatives from youth sector; analyze youth situation, their needs as well as results of the programmes targeted for youth; order researches; provide different information for young people and those working with young people; spread good practise examples of the youth projects and ideas. Nevertheless all gathered and

analyzed data about young people from various institutions is not collected and kept in one place in order to ensure the whole overview of the youth situation.

Implementation of the common objectives

YOUTH INFORMATION

Major actors providing information to young people are non – governmental youth organizations and various institutions, while promoting certain values and services. Youth organizations are responsible in a way to organize and motivate young people for participation. Youth situation research made in 2004 showed that two fifths of young people are not aware of even a single youth organisation. Majority of such young people belong to the youth aged 25-29 living in rural areas or small towns. According to the youth situation research in 2005 almost 20% of young people aged 14-29 are not participating in youth activities, but would like to. There are municipality youth coordinators who are responsible for youth information and other issues in all municipalities. Their primary role is to involve young people and inform about various activities, projects, relevant documents on youth on regional, national and European level.

Eurodesk Lithuania is Eurodesk national partner. Eurodesk is a European network of information services in 27 countries providing a unique access to European information for young people and those who work with them. Eurodesk Lithuania is responsible for delivering a range of public European information services at national and local levels, which include:

- free enquiry answering - by phone, visit, e-mail, fax, etc;
- advice and help to enquirers;
- publications and resources;
- events, conferences, seminars etc.;
- internet access to European and national information;

- training and support services.

National partners of the Eurodesk cooperate with over 500 local information providers (local partners) aiming to increase the volume of information offered by the Eurodesk. Eurodesk activities in Lithuania are coordinated by the Lithuanian Youth Council (LIJOT).

There are four local partners in Lithuania, regional associations of youth organisations, the Round tables.

During the last years many governmental institutions applied modern systems of information and communication aiming to ensure equal opportunities for young people to access information without discrimination. In addition, nearly all municipalities have the space for the youth in their websites. There young people can find municipal normative legal acts related with the local youth and publishes other youth relevant information. Practically speaking their websites should provide constant updates of information for the youth, some has also developed space for discussions and for the exchange of information, however sometimes the websites are not user-friendly, usually information is not often updated. Starting from 2005 till 2007 the State Council for Youth Affairs implements the programme "Strengthening the potential of the Lithuanian youth organisations". This programme supports youth organisations, associations and regional youth organisations with technical office and organisational equipment (computers, printers, fax and copying machines). The aim of the programme is to increase the potential of the Lithuanian youth organisations in implementing the national youth policy.

There were some information materials published (Lithuanian youth situation research 2004, Guidelines for municipal youth policy, Informative – educational material for the youth in a digital format "Youth activities: from theory to practice" etc).

Representatives from the Ministry of social security and labour, the State

Council for Youth Affairs, Lithuanian Youth Council and other relevant youth organisations are working together in developing program for creating Youth information centres and their activity plan in Lithuania.

The State Council for Youth Affairs implements the programme for youth participation in creating knowledge society. Such kind of projects aims to implement innovative methods and ideas to solve youth related issues with the help of information technologies. However the number of appliers for this programme is almost the least comparing to other programmes.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth situation in Lithuania research in 2005 has shown that less than 30% of young people aged 14-29 are participating in the activities of different youth organizations or associations. Comparing to the youth situation research performed in 2004 the number of young people participating in youth organizations has slightly risen. The most active in various activities defined studying young people. Young people especially in regional level note that they don't receive enough information about possibilities to participate in work and various activities of youth organizations. They think that more active youth participation could be encouraged by special information campaigns for youth and people working with youth.

Young people become more and more active in political and social levels (though high voting age, age requirements for the elections into state institutions etc limit their possibilities).

Aiming to ensure active youth involvement into different structures in Lithuania exist co-management structure that function at the national level since 1996. State Council for Youth Affairs (VJRT) the co-management structure, consisting of equal number of people representing Lithuanian Youth Council (LIJOT) and different

Ministries official dealing with youth issues (Education, Culture, Social Security and Labor, Education and Science, Justice and Chancery of the Government of Lithuania). These structures were transferred afterwards to the regional level. Were in most of the cases they are present and functioning for the benefit of young people. Lithuanian youth organisations have co-operative approach to the state and the political system. Youth organisations and especially Lithuanian Youth Council (LIJOT) are working hard developing networks, building confidence and in this way representing youngsters. Various proposals, supports and programs are supervised and thoroughly analysed by the State Council for Youth Affairs, which then prepares and present proposals to the government. In this effectively working system and through the process of representation youth's ideas, projects, expectations and problems are placed for consideration. This structure gives a lot of benefits for the young people as they have the direct access to the decision-making processes, they are able to form and implement the priorities for the youth policy. Nevertheless, there are problems related even to this type of structure. These problems are related to the political weight given to the decision that structure takes, difficulty of ensuring real co-operation between various ministries, finally a lot depends on the funding annually given for youth organisations. These are the challenges that are constantly faced by the co-management bodies and surely this is the reality that we live in and we have to counteract to.

The Municipality councils for youth affairs work based on the Law youth policy framework, and also are formed on the principle of parity for the members of municipality council, administration servants, and youth (organisations) representatives. These councils are open for young people who do not necessarily need to be active in local youth organisation. The long term aim of such local council for youth affairs is to ensure youth participation in decision making processes. A special attention is paid to the regional council of youth organisations (Round tables) which unites several or more than ten local youth organisations. There should be around 40 such Municipality councils at present.

Municipality councils for youth affairs are responsible for:

- Preparing offers and general information regarding youth policy implementation to the mayor, council, municipality administration etc;
- Preparing municipality programmes targeted for youth, gives recommendations regarding financial support for the project activities;
- Analysing youth issues and demands;
- Analysing foreign experience on youth policy issues;
- Gathering information about activities of youth NGOs and municipality institutions targeted for youth;
- Initiating sociological and statistical researches in the municipality youth situations;
- Assisting youth NGOs in finding premises for their activities.

On the national and local levels State Council for Youth Affairs aims to strengthen youth organisations and implements nine programmes:

- Institutional support and potential development of youth organisations;
- Prevention of youth drug abuse and other forms of dependence, delinquency and psychological crises (suicides);
- Promotion of youth initiatives;
- Development of youth coordinative activities and youth policy;
- Improvement of quality of youth activities;
- Youth participation in development of knowledge society;
- Development of regional youth activities and amplification of potential of regional councils of youth organisations;
- Youth education by means of sports activities;
- Civic education of rural youth and the occupational programme "Youth for countryside".

Some educational materials prepared by Council of Europe for youth were translated into Lithuanian language. An issued CD "Youth activities: from theory to practice" includes important information about the implementation of youth activities in Lithuania:

- contacts of youth organisations;
- educational materials: techniques to moderate discussions, how to make most effective decisions, how to behave with the audience etc;
- NGO accountancy;
- NGO management: effective management, team work, communication of the organisation, project management, applications, fundraising, introduction methods, icebreaking methods, warming-up methods etc;
- all relevant information regarding youth policy and legal acts;
- research resume: graduates in the market, youth integration into the labour market.

The other important sphere – possibility for young people of school age to participate in students' self-government bodies. According to the law, each school should make facilities for students to have their self-government organ. School council or university self-government organ should involve an equal number of students/students' representatives, their parents and educators. The school council activities can also be attended by a representative of the local authorities. Each school should have these students' self-government organs operating: students' conference (which is summoned once a year and delegates representatives to the school and students' councils) and the students' council. The students' council is a continuously operating students' self-government organ of 5-15 members; its structure and work rules are defines by the students' conference.

A big attention to non-formal education was placed since 2004 while organising a conference "Do young people need non-formal education?" Unfortunately, in Lithuania there is no unanimous conception about the non-formal

education. During the conference the following issues were discussed: legal status of the non-formal education of the youth, problems and perspectives in youth policy, what link is with the business sector and the professional sphere, role of the non-formal and formal education in life of a young person. Lately some methods of the non-formal education are used in the formal education system. Lithuanian youth organisations and some governmental institutions while implementing various actions for youth, aim to ensure non-formal education processes in the leisure time of young people.

According to one of the principles of implementation of the Law on youth policy framework – inter-institutional coordination which binds over the state and municipality institutions and agencies discuss and cooperate in considering youth related issues - the dialogue between the structures on the national, regional and local levels is developed. Such cooperation encourages youth initiatives and common civil activities on national and especially local level. Some municipalities have foreseen money for running projects for youth and with youth. In 2005 53 municipalities allocated funding for youth initiatives

The efficient work, flow of information and active participation of youth can be ensured by:

- the youth coordinators working in every municipality;
- regional councils of youth organisations which unite youth organisations operating on municipal level and also represent their interests;
- Lithuanian Youth Council voluntary union of non-governmental youth organizations and regional unions of youth organizations.

The main obstacles met during the implementation of the common objectives on youth information and participation

Several obstacles were met during the implementation period, though the biggest obstacle appeared to be the existing communication, information and participation gap between the national level and local levels. The main reasons why the situation became so severe quite quickly were based on lack of particular programmes for the regions, information politics as well as absence of certain organisations and activities, because of the quick change of young people in the regions and that influenced the lack of required skills and competence required for running the organisations, activities and on the whole working in the regions. Such situation led to creating inappropriate environment in different regions for Round tables and sections of national youth organisations working on regional level.

The other followed reason is lack of communication, coordination and cooperation between the public institutions and organisations that are dealing with youth issues in the regions. Insufficient attention to the development of the integrated youth policy led to invisibility and misrecognition of main problems that youth and youth organisations face every day. It was of the main importance to distribute the model of integrated youth policy and to work on local recourses and potential governmental financing, foundations to support development of youth activities and as well as regional youth policy.

State Council for Youth Affairs in Lithuania (VJRT) was working to prepare, test and adjust the model of an integrated youth policy in various municipalities. During the 2003 and 2004 the pilot projects were launched in several municipalities (Kaunas, Šakiai, Utena). Nonetheless still some problems were existing and despite considerable progress the regions still lacked the common and basic understanding of the essential youth policy goals and tasks. One of the main reasons stated by the State Council for Youth Affairs of such stagnation is the absence of practical models of youth policy implementation in the local level.