Narrative report on the national legislations related to young people, youth organizations and youth work

On behalf of European Youth Forum

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1. Objectives

In 2013, the European Youth Forum initiated a recollection of the national legislations related to young people, youth organizations and youth work in order to start developing a database of youth laws in Europe. The rationale was (i) to provide an easy-to-use and comprehensive catalogue of youth related legislations in different European countries; (ii) to enable a comparative understanding of the issues that enter such binding documents in Europe; (iii) to support EYF members in advocating for better youth policy, legislations for young people. An external consultant was contracted for assisting with the creation of the database and for developing a narrative report. The database allows interested readers to retrieve the information of interest for a European country and to compare legal developments on a certain topic, in several countries. It also provides a brief description of the law content and links to the entire documents. This report accompanies the database of youth laws and summarizes its main content. It aims to provide a neutral description and to avoid value-driven interpretations.

2. Methodology and limitations

Following an EYF call to its members, various legal documents have been secured (for a list of the countries and the specific documents, see Appendix 1). A large part of the documents was obtained with the support of the EYF Secretariat. A valuable source was the overview of national youth policies made publicly available by Youth Policy Press through *youthpolicy.org*[1]. The review (and the database) includes a number of **32 legal documents** (largely Youth Laws) from **22 countries**. The database is conceived as a *work in progress*, as it allows further inclusion of legal documents.

The review included **only the binding documents**. Youth Strategies, recommendations and policy reports were generally screened out. Also, the analysis did not include the more specific legislation that regulates exclusively the provision of social services for children and young people at risk (e.g. child welfare issues: legal custody, separation from parents, foster family service, adoption, prevention services, child placement, the Ombudsperson). In countries without a Youth Law, or a law regulating the activity of youth organizations, the report relied on references to various internal laws where issues that apply to young people are included.

The review did not start from a predefined set of topics. The approach was **to generate a set of themes** based on the text of each law and to collect all the fragments from laws that enter a particular theme. The final structure of topics emerged from the legislation texts themselves. Some of the themes that have been generated in this way incorporated a large amount of legal information (e.g. support for youth organizations, or definitions of youth organizations). This suggested that the topic was largely reflected in the youth legislation. For other themes (e.g. housing, young refugees and asylum seekers), the legal content in the reviewed documents was rather poor. NVivo9, a software for qualitative data interpretation was used for managing the very large amount of information.

This project had to deal with inherent **language barriers**. The documents collected were under one

[1] URL: http://www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies/

of the situations bellow:

- Laws where an official English translation exists
- Laws that are publicly available in an unofficial English translation
- Laws in other languages. The content has been translated in English with Google scholar and may be liable to inherent inaccuracies.

The weak representation of an issue in the a country youth legislation should not be taken as absence of regulations, as there might be other, more specific, laws that were not included in this review . For instance, the Education laws may include stipulations on non-formal learning (NFL), whilst NFL seems weakly represented in many Youth Laws. This review did not include more specific legislation that may, certainly, be addressed to young people among other groups (e.g. housing, health, and asylum).

The compilation in the data base is a first exercise of this kind for the EYF. By no means should it be taken as a comprehensive image of the state on youth legislation as of January 2014. Due to the language barriers or unavailability of data, not all European countries could have been included. Moreover, a comparative interpretation of the legislation on youth needs to consider the other laws that, inevitably, intersect young people's lives (e.g. national laws on Education, Health, Justice, to name only a few).

3. Review of the binding documents that apply to young people, youth organizations and youth work

3.1. Legal issues that refer to young people

As expected, there is a large variety in the **definition of young people**, across Europe. The lower age limit varies from 7 (in Estonia) to 14. However, there are situations when the lower bound remains unspecified (Austria), or when the notion of 'young people' incorporates childhood, or the two are associated (Iceland, Liechtenstein). The upper limit also goes on a wide range, but it generally extends to 30. In Romania and Ukraine, it goes as far as 35. Georgia does not define the age of youth.

National governments reinforce their commitment to increasing **youth employment and entrepreneurship**, also by special provisions in Youth Laws. The large majority of laws reviewed include a first part devoted to more general principles and modes of action related to youth employment (e.g. the principles of non-discrimination, social inclusion and solidarity, general measures addressing employees and meant to encourage youth employment, provision of free vocational counseling for youth). A second part contains country-specific measures, such as first job placements and a quota system in Ukraine and France, variations of a youth-guarantee scheme (Moldova), provisions of qualifications to disadvantaged young people aged 16-25 without formal qualification (France) or facilitation of training for young people in state care or supported by youth services (Liechtenstein). France has special provisions on apprenticeship and the Youth Laws of

Ukraine, Romania and Bosnia Herzegovina specify the types of economic incentives available for supporting youth entrepreneurship:

- creation of business incubators, provision of long-term preferential loans, granting of production premises, business risk insurance, preferential rates for registration of enterprises in Ukraine;
- free consulting and training services, preferential crediting with priority in disadvantaged areas, tax exemptions for at least one year granted to young graduates regardless their level of education in Romania;
- federal grants and transfers to support (i) young entrepreneurs, especially those without previous working experience; (ii) talented high-school students; (iii) university students; (iv) young authors; (v) scientists and inventors in Bosnia Herzegovina.

All Youth Laws and the other binding documents reviewed, include **stipulations on young people's representation/ participation in policy-making**. The level of detail in regulating the concrete mechanisms for youth participation varies. Austrian Youth Law includes detailed indications on the functioning, composition, sphere of activity of the Institution of a Federal Youth Representation. It shall be equal in status with the legal representations of the employees, of the businessmen, of the farmers, and of the Austrian Senior Citizens' Council. A system of consultation is used in Kyrgyzstan, where the government is organizing a National Youth Congress biannually. Liechtenstein legislation stipulates the mechanisms for involving interest groups of young people from the municipality level. Slovenian government appoints a consulting body for youth, whilst Finland has an Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, working in the same capacity. Spain has a commission on youth with consultative character, largely based on local units and with representatives of youth associations.

Very few documents reviewed include stipulations on **young people with disabilities**. However, it is important to note that: (i) young people with disabilities may enter the more general category of 'disadvantaged young people' and be, thus, subject of the legal stipulations on this group; (ii) there may be other, more specific laws on people with disabilities that have not been included in this review. The laws consulted are grounded in the principle of equal rights and opportunities. Ukraine links the notion of disability with the total or partial loss of the ability to work and promote labor market inclusion, also by employment quotas.

The reviewed documents include very few references to issues of **health, healthcare and healthy lifestyle**. Whilst there are, nevertheless, specific country laws on health and the medical assistance of young people (matters of care, diagnosis and therapy), the issues that are incorporated in Youth Laws refer to:

- general principles on state policies in regard to preventing alcoholism, drug abuse and promoting sexual health, sports (Moldova, Ukraine, Romania)
- more specific stipulations on free medical assistance and healthcare for young people with chronic illness

In Liechtenstein, strict stipulations apply for the advertisement and selling of alcohol and tobacco products to children and youth. In Ukraine, various institutions and organizations need to ensure annual medical examination of all young citizens and young people bellow 18.

Very few Youth Laws and other binding documents reviewed, mention issues of **housing**. Romanian, Moldovan and Ukrainian Laws on Youth include stipulations on crediting facilities for young people and young families. A national program that facilitates the purchase/ construction of the first house for those bellow 35 is in place in Romania, whilst the Ukrainian Youth Law stipulates housing facilities for young people working in disadvantaged rural areas or engaged in farming.

Whilst many countries have specific legislation on **youth offenders** and Child Ombudsman, very few Laws on Youth that have been reviewed have stipulations on this particular group. The French legislation includes reglementations on the education of young people in detention and their social and professional reinsertion. Liechtenstein legislation regulates the support measures and the obligation of institutional cooperation (the office of social affairs, the National Police, the prosecution office, the district court and the Probation office). The Belgium law regulates the organization, functions and procedure of the Juvenile Court Service, as well as the qualification of staff and the involvement of the youth welfare service. Measures that can be ordered by the juvenile court in Belgium are age-specific and include (among others):

- educational or therapeutic support for young people or parents/ guardians
- mandatory training for parents/ guardians
- family accompaniment imposed by an organization
- two years educational program for parents or young people
- observation of young people in a psychiatric institution or psychiatric unit of a hospital
- more than two years in an open inpatient facility or maximum one school year in a boarding school.

Many countries have laws on **volunteering**[2] and accelerated their recognition processes in the context of the 2011 European Year of Volunteering[3]. Whilst a large number of young people are engaged in voluntary activities, volunteering is not a practice of young people alone. Volunteering is included in several Youth Laws, in relation to protection from exploitation, development of skills and non-formal education. Several Nordic countries have, out of principle, no regulations on volunteering, which is considered an expression of free will (Shalaeva, 2012). France has a long tradition in volunteering and operates with the notion of *civic service*.

3.2. Legal issues that refer to youth organizations

Generally, a **youth organization** is defined simultaneously by: (i) a 75% membership of young people (or youth associations) and (ii) representation of young people interests. In order to account for the

[2] Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, among others.

[3] For a more detailed comparative overview of legal basis for volunteering of young people in Europe, see Shalayeva (2012) *Findings of a summary analysis of the information template on youth volunteering in the EKCYP* URL: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Voluntary/Research/Summary_report_VOLUNTEERING_OF_YOUNG_PEOPLE_IN_EUROPE.pdf

diversity of organizational structures representing young people or working on their behalf, several countries operate distinctions between: 'youth organizations', 'organizations in youth sector', 'organization for youth' (Slovenia). An apparently rare distinction is made in Kirgizstan: 'unorganized youth' and 'informal groups of young people. Serbian law distinguishes between 'associations of young people' and 'associations for young people'. Luxembourg operates a distinction between 'organization acting on behalf of youth' and 'service organization for young people' (representing the role of state in ensuring the social, familial and medical wellbeing). Ukraine distinguishes between youth organizations and children organizations. Whilst most countries do not restrict young people's membership, Bulgarian legislation specifies that minors' membership in youth organizations is conditioned by the explicit agreement of their legal representatives. In Ukraine, young people at least 15 years of age may be founders of youth and children associations.

Almost all countries included in the review, stipulate the **status and attributions of the National Youth Council.** There are large similarities in their definition. NYCs are largely considered an umbrella body, composed by representatives of the local and regional youth organizations. NYCs are generally considered a main partner in the dialogue with the national governments on matters that refer to youth. As reflected in the legislation, the role of NYCs is: (i) monitoring the situation of youth; (ii) acting as a consultative body for state institutions with activities in the area of youth; (iii) proposing measures in the youth sector and monitoring their implementation; (iv) advancing policy recommendations. Slovenian legislation is extremely detailed also in terms of stipulating the legal obligations of the NYCs (including membership conditions), as well as the obligation of the state authorities in regard to NYC.

The existence of a single-entry point for accessing **data on a country's organizations** active in the Youth Sector has long been a concern. As youth organizations often have a shorter life cycle and institutional memory than other organisations, a unified system of record keeping is important. In Latvia, Slovenia and Serbia, the Education ministry and the Minister responsible for youth affairs hold the evidence of the youth organizations and associations, based on the data obtained from their regional bodies and based on the information submitted by associations. Bulgaria applies a system of public registration by request. Estonia's Youth Act has detailed stipulations on the registration processes for youth associations and youth camps. In Serbia, the Registry contains:

1. Name of association, head office and address
2. Date of foundation of association
3. Area of activity
4. Purposes for which the association is founded
5. Personal name and unique master citizen number, i.e. passport number and the country issuing the passport, of the association's representative
6. Membership in associations
7. Total number of members of the association
8. Number of members aged 15 to 30.

The **provision of state support for non-governmental organizations** is a divisive issue. Whilst many youth NGOs work under a strong economic pressure and welcome state support, there are also

counterarguments linked to the risks of jeopardizing organizations' autonomy of functioning. The Luxembourg Youth Law is one of the few stipulating government obligation to respect organizations' autonomy. The reviewed laws indicate that state support is granted to youth organizations and associations, but also to youth initiatives, institutions of open youth work and non-formal groups of young people (see Austria). In general, the preconditions for granting support are linked to:

- organization eligibility (e.g. status, non-profit orientation, but also 3 years of organization existence in Switzerland)
- the development plan, activities, performance of former duties (performance criteria, previous record, quality assurance mechanisms)
- the target group and the capacity to address its needs
- acceptable expenditure
- goals and principles in line with the national priorities of youth work and youth policy

The major types of state support are:

- financial state subsidies (e.g. a flat-rate annual state contribution in Liechtenstein, tax exemptions and facilities in Romania, Moldova and Finland among others)
- state provisions for the construction, renovation and equipment of youth work facilities (Finland, Romania, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- tax exemptions for membership fees and lucrative activities[4] (Kirghizstan, Iceland, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia etc).
- support for financing of staff and organizations operating costs (Belgium)
- state contribution to the training of staff and volunteers (Moldova, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- financing of staff and organizations operating costs (Belgium)

Besides state support, youth organizations may receive independent donations from individual and legal entities or other sources not prohibited by the legislation. In general, religious and political-party youth organizations have different regimes of support. Youth laws tend to include special provisions in regard to the economic profits of youth organizations or the management of revenues from a gainful occupation. The Youth Laws of Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Austria contain detailed procedural provisions for granting support (incl. procedure for issuing the Call for tenders, the process of application, evaluation, contracting etc.) All laws reviewed include statements on: (i) quality assurance and control of the use of support and (ii) the conditions for suspension, withdrawal or return of support.

The majority of the legal documents reviewed do not include any references to **liability issues**. Those including such issues refer in general terms to the obligation of youth organizations to comply with the civil and criminal provisions of the country legislation (Moldova). The Ukrainian legislation includes stipulations on the failure to report and misuse of funds. The Belgian law includes: (i) the procedure for the termination of contract in case of organizations non-compliance with the contractual obligations upon receiving a state subsidy; (ii) the procedure for issuing a complaint

[4] Under certain conditions.

against a youth organization; (iii) the criminal law provisions against any natural or legal person dealing with young people (mainly youth services and the protection of minors). The Youth Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina stipulates the fines for legal persons violating the Constitution and the international conventions, promoting hate speech, racism and discrimination. The penal provisions apply also to government bodies and local authorities that do not ensure minimum measures for youth work. Estonian Youth Work Act stipulates penalties for the personnel violating the restriction on working with young people. The Ukrainian Law on Public Associations stipulates the types of penalties for violating the law (a notice; fine; temporary prohibition/ termination of certain types of activity; forced dismissal/ liquidation).

Whilst all Youth Laws are grounded in the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, very few include more specific stipulations on the **support measures for young refugees, asylum seekers, or minority youth (including support measures for their organizations).** In Serbia, young people with refugee status are eligible for an individual support grant (Fund for Young Talents). In Slovenia, youth organizations with members of the Italian or Hungarian national communities or the Roma community, shall obtain the status of a national youth organization irrespective of the membership conditions and the territorial organization. In Austria, Jewish youth organizations having existed prior to 1st September 2000 are exempted from the obligation to provide quantitative evidence for obtaining an association-type status. Nevertheless, most states have other binding documents, in accordance to international conventions, that regulate the status of these groups/ organizations (e.g. The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, The 1951 UNHCR Refugee Convention).

3.3. Legal issues that refer to youth work

The analysis of the legal documents confirms that **'youth work'** is a heterogeneous concept with no agreed definition. Youth work is grounded in country-specific approaches to education, non-formal learning, community-work and voluntary activities. Several countries distinguish between youth work and youth activity/ non-formal education (Serbia). Few others do not use the concept of 'youth work' *per-se,* but 'youth activity' (Iceland, Romania). ''Youth work'' is generally defined as organized, purposeful youth support based on young people's voluntary participation. It is defined outside political participation. Several states see the role of youth work in regard to promoting youth social inclusion, development of skills and community development (Slovenia, Ukraine). Other countries adopt a *bottom-up* approach and reinforce the role of youth work in promoting youth empowerment and participation.

A small number of documents consulted include **stipulations on youth workers**. There are two types of legal conditions included in such laws. One refers to the educational qualifications: a degree in social sciences/ professional experience/ special training for work with young people (Iceland, Bulgaria, Moldova). The second set of conditions refers to age, previous criminal convictions, and

alcohol and drug consumption during organized youth activities. Germany legislation mentions a deontological code which is part of a Manual for quality assurance in youth work.

The large majority of Youth Laws reviewed include the **principles guiding the state youth policy (including youth work)**. Generally, they integrate a policy vision on the institutional structure, with principles that apply to youth participation (e.g. Lithuania, Moldova). Some countries (Austria, Serbia, Slovenia) seem to prioritize a bottom-up approach (a high priority given to the needs and interests of young people themselves). These Youth Laws acknowledge the principle of co-determination and participation of young people in all the spheres of life, physical and mental development, intercultural dialogue, equal opportunities. Raising awareness on the importance of youth and their social role is a principle of youth policy in Serbia, whilst Austria and Switzerland promote the civic and ethics-related education of young people. Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan laws have a strong focus on youth socialization and institutional capacity (e.g. inter-agency cooperation, provision of financial support, monitoring and evaluation of public authorities working with young people).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Different countries have different political rationales for regulating an area or not and there is an element of risk in advancing recommendations. There are, however, several issues that may be considered at a more general level, by members of EYF. Cross country comparisons are a useful instrument for informing country-level policy developments in the area of youth. Whilst various country reports abound, there is a weak availability of **English translations of binding documents**. In order to increase the potential of this database, EYF members need to call for/ engage in proficient English translations of the major laws. As the database is only a partial compilation of the legislation on youth, periodic updates are warranted.

Whilst many countries seem to follow a **mainstreaming approach** in youth policy making, this is rarely made explicit[5]. In this respect, the status of Youth Laws, as related to other national laws, risks remaining ambivalent. The intersectional vulnerability of several groups is rarely incorporated in the laws reviewed.

Several Youth Laws seem very detailed in regard to a particular issue and leave other (arguably important) matters of concern, less regulated (unless included in other, more specific, laws). Examples of **themes that seem very rarely included in the legislation** are: youth political participation, the support measures for young refugees and asylum seekers).

For the time being, youth legislation is centered on the role and obligations of state authorities, and leaves largely unaddressed the growing involvement of private and commercial actors, including

[5] Luxembourg legislation is explicit on the mainstreaming approach.

media). In the same time, the **involvement of the private and corporate actors** in activities that concern youth is expanding (see, for instance, the new developments in the area of youth entrepreneurial learning in non-formal settings, the growing number of commercial providers of volunteering experiences abroad, or of youth camps[6]). There are nevertheless, opportunities, contradictions and major dilemmas involved. In view of these transformations, there is a need for a more coherent legal frame that incorporates the obligations of commercial actors. The main rationale is to ensure private actors, as well, comply with a set of principles related to young people. Also in view of emerging protocols on corporate responsibility, it may be timely for the youth policy community to prepare a set of expectations to be incorporated in further agreements and to advocate for developing such legislation.

Cross-country comparisons allow more informed conclusions on the **different 'regimes' of youth policy making**: from the more flexible approaches, providing a minimum level of regulation, to regulatory regimes, with strict monitoring mechanisms. When reading legislation comparatively, it is possible to gain a sense of the underlying principles that frame the legal documents. They may go from a developmental approach focused on youth socialization, institutional capacity-making (the so called 'fitting young people in' approach), to a tendency to provide young people with enabling opportunities for personal and collective participation. Ultimately, this reflects an overall social and political vision on the role and status of young people. Engaging in more meaningful debates on the very **social and political thinking that shapes the legislation** may be a pertinent approach in youth policy making. Hope the database will enable this type of reflection, besides providing an easy-to-use catalogue of youth related legislations in European countries.

[6] Estonia is one of the few countries that have a detailed legislation on youth camps (e.g. conditions, standards, providers).

Information for the use of organizations involved in advocacy work

This section aims to provide an advocacy tool for the use of youth organizations advocating for legislative changes at national level. It draws on the concrete experiences of several organizations involved in advocacy work, as well as on various written materials available on this[7].

As organizations across Europe operate in different administrative, political and social circumstances, what may work in a country, might not work in another. The main rationale behind proposing this section is that, although there are no recipes for advocacy work, some very indicative guidelines on the steps followed elsewhere, are likely to be of some help. Some elements linked to success that can be generalized.

The next part will present several suggestions for organizations involved in processes that may lead to legislation change. They are largely informed by semi)structured interviews with staff working in advocacy, in particular, with Alliansi, a national service and lobbying organization for youth work in Finland.

1. Be the change you want to see (Gandhi)

It is important for youth organization/ advocacy agencies themselves, to actually incorporate youth participation in the daily layout, operations and institutional culture. It is an ethical obligation and a professional requirement for organizations to reflect in their own practice, the ethos they are advocating for. In the UK, at Action for Children, even recruitment of senior staff (CEO and director levels) involves a youth panel and is considered a significant part of HR.

2. Know the policy community well

Different countries have structures with different degrees of influence. Some policy environments are highly structured and the advocacy processes develop in ways that are more regulated and predictable. When openness and transparency of any administration is a high priority, organizations may navigate the policy environment more easily. In other countries, the policy processes are more intricate: consultations and parliamentary hearings may be more recent developments and youth organizations operate in more convoluted circumstances. They all need to know how the policy-

[7] The author would like to thank for support to: Barbara Giovanna Bello, Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez, Sladjana Petkovic, Tomi Kiilakoski, Toni Burrowes and especially to Anca Nastase and Hanna Sauli who helped in producing this section.

making processes work: what is the policy cycle, who are the main members of the policy community, what is the role of youth organizations and the types of influence that may work.

3. Be familiar with different communication channels

Political situation often changes fast and the communication channels, as well. Internet changed a lot and different strategies may work to reach different audiences. Sometimes, policy makers are impressed if young people want to meet and share their experiences and concerns. Other times, a lot of expertise is needed in order to argue on a topic of concern.

4. Build expertise and legitimacy

Organizations need to know the topic they are arguing for, well. The most professional organizations have people specialized on different topical issues, who can rapidly provide policy briefs and information notes. Importantly, no advocacy work can start without legal expertise. Teams need to include persons knowledgeable of the existing legislation and the way the proposed chance interfere with the existing laws. The professional power of advocacy organizations and their recognition as competent stakeholders, have a bearing. If the lobbying organization is perceived as competent, credible, objective and trustworthy, chances for it being able to exert influence, are greater.

5. Create alliances

Although a grass root organization can occasionally influence youth legislation, alliances may be more effective at producing change. It is useful to have an established position and have the umbrella organization recognized as a major stakeholder.

There are, definitely, successful stories of grassroots youth organizations that created a movement or leaded a successful campaign. These initiatives are usually mobilized by few motivated individuals, interested to change an issue and started to do something about it. Working alone, a single organization may change a single issue and run a 'one issue campaign'. In the absence of a stable structure of advocacy, a second advocacy process needs to start everything from the beginning (e.g. to start getting expertise, contacting stakeholders etc). Umbrella organizations, on the other hand, have different people with different expertise and have the resources to bring more people to the table.

Finnish Youth Cooperation – *Allianssi* is a national service and lobbying organization for youth work. It is a politically and religiously non-aligned lobbyist with more than a hundred national youth and educational organizations as members. It is recognized among politicians as one of the most established Finnish youth organizations dealing with advocacy work. Many of the Finish politicians have been active in one of Allianssi's member organizations, including youth organizations of their

own party. Many Finish politicians have been involved as young people, in one of Allianssi's member organizations.

Alliances can also be created outside the third organization sector. Some actors of the policy community may be, from the start, *very supportive* of the advocacy process, some are *obviously antagonistic* and probably the largest part is *indifferent*, but has the potential of being mobilized. Building on the potential support of the first and last group may be effective. Trying to change the second is likely to require much effort, resources and function as a discouraging experience.

6. Use the *windows of opportunity*

Follow public discussions, what kind of rhetoric is appealing to each party involved. Do not underestimate the influence of each politicians' own personality and communication style.

a. **Develop consultation processes with young people**

Consultations are processes whereby adults seek to find out about children and young people's experiences, views and concerns in order that legislation, policies and services are better informed (Lansdown, 2001). They can be based on questionnaires, focus groups, but also on role play, artwork and the use of social media. According to Wright et al (2006), the strengths or limitations of a consultation will depend on whether the appropriate methods are used when the children/young people are consulted. Consultations are not without their own limitations, as they can re-enforce the unequal power relations between adults and youth (adults often initiate, manage and control the outcome of the exercise); the absence of follow-up, the self-selective character (the underrepresentation of the 'hard to reach' young people) and the idea of consultations being a 'quick fix' that replaces meaningful youth participation (Wright et al. 2006).

b. **Hold direct meetings** with politicians, but also with leaders of labour unions, jurnalists, NGOs. These meetings work also as opportunities to gather expertise. It may be that politicians are interested in what are the most important topics of concern for young people.
c. **Publish statements on the organization's position on certain topics** when new laws are prepared.
d. **When ministries ask for open consultations, be prepared to contribute** to the public debate. Organizations receive invitations to contribute to processes of public consultation. Be an active player in this process on a more consistent basis! At a later stage, when draft laws are passed to the Parliament, a ministerial commission may ask for organization's opinion. This is an influential position, as this is an early opportunity to shape the content of the new law.
e. **Earlier an organization intervenes in the process of law change, bigger the influence**. Trying to shape the legal process at a later stage is more difficult. The Parliamentary hearings or similar processes are often conventional and may involve an element of rigidity.

They can be efficient in instilling the need for further change. At this stage, organizations can help shaping the future legal directions.

f. **Participation in ministerial working groups**: Often, laws are prepared in ministerial working groups. Some (umbrella) organizations have a member there. In parallel, umbrella organizations have their own working groups, which gather representatives of member NGOs. They involve a diverse range of expertise and are a place where goals and main arguments for strengthening the position, are discussed.

g. **Organize public events** with people who are interested and media. Elections provide windows of opportunity.

h. Participation in political events provides capacity to influence *before* elections. This sits at the core of advocacy work and needs to start very early, sometimes a year before the elections.

i. Organize campaigns.

Campaigns can be addressed to decision makers, but they can also help raise awareness among the general public, in the case the public is misinformed.They may take many forms:

- Social media
- Videos
- Events
- Leaflets
- Youth organizations may try reaching media attention.

7. Structure the argumentation well and be brief

Essentially, the argumentation includes problem description and the presentation of policy options. According to Young and Quinn (2002), the *problem description* needs to meet several criteria:

- To present an argument that an urgent problem exists and it requires government action;
- To focus on outlining the problem within its context and not to concentrate on the general environment itself;
- To outline the past and present of the problem
- To construct the argument in logical, coherent units, with clear links between elements;
- To consist of a claim, support and warrant;
- To be based on a wide variety of sources;
- To include references for all sources unless the data is considered common knowledge.

The presentation of *policy options* needs to present an argument for the preferred policy alternative based on the evaluation of all possible alternatives (Young and Quinn, 2002).

8. Be prepared for a long process

The process of advocating for a legal change may take time and organizations need to be prepared for this.

The process of introducing a legislation change on volunteering in Romania:

2009: Two consultation campaigns, 15 round tables in different regions and an online consultation that reached 229 volunteers and 106 organizations.
Debates hosted by UNDP and Soros Foundation
2010: 50 organizations and the National Authority for Sport and Youth found the VOLUM federation, an umbrella organization.
Window of opportunity: 2011- the European Year of Volunteering
2011: a working group for the modification of the Law of Volunteering is being formed
A national conference on volunteering stated officially the need to modify the law.
Four thematic working groups are created with the purpose of generating the concept of the strategy for the development of volunteering in Romania. At the end of 2011, they launch for public consultation three documents.
2012: two public debates organized by the National Authority for Youth and VOLUM.
The governmental leadership changed. The series of public debates is reopened, despite the format of the law having been previously agreed upon.
The National Authority takes over the process.
2013: VOLUM Federation initiates discussions and the Law enters the Parliament. In 9 months, there were as many as 27 meetings with the VOLUM team in Parliament.
2014: the Law of Volunteering is awaiting the final approval by the three Parliamentary commissions. From 2009 to 2012, the entire process mobilized over 500 persons from organizations, companies, public institutions.

9. Be prepared to re-visit organization's view of the political world

Advocating for a change in legislation involves creating alliances with all members of the Parliament that hold a diversity of political orientations. Many organizations developed views that may generate distrust and resentments on the political world. Also, personal political convictions may hinder co-operations with politicians from a certain political spectrum. In order to succeed to advocacy work, organizations need to revisit more generally held assumptions on the political class and open the communication channels for dialogue. Young politicians may be more receptive to a change in youth legislation.

10. Build on the support of European and International organizations

By their status, European and International organizations do not interfere with influencing legislative change in Member States or signatory countries. However, they may formally endorse organizations' work toward legislative change. Securing formal letters of support may help in creating legitimacy for a cause.

Potential limitations to be considered:

- Often, youth organizations have a shorter life cycle and institutional memory than other organizations. This may hinder their ability to capitalise on previous achievements and to embark in long term advocacy processes.
- Influencing legislation change may be more facile in a small country, where the networks of influence are easily accessible.
- In some countries, navigating the policy making process is more intricate and may require some 'inside knowledge'. In others, the openness and transparency of the administration process is a high priority and organizations may know very well the stages of negotiation processes and the communication channels.
- Different professions have different levels of status, public credibility and influence. The extent a professional group (incl. youth workers) are considered reliable and competent, matters when they are involved in policy-making processes.
- Youth organizations may have different degrees of power, which reflect their capacity to influence policy change. Some rely on an established legacy of influence and recognition, while others struggle to gain a voice in the political arena.
- The degree the policy making process considers research a reliable source, makes a difference. If the objectivity of research is questioned and the policymaking process is not commonly informed by research findings, the advocacy process misses an important base for persuasion.

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