



The state of youth participation

Report of the local visits, spring 2019



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Introduction

Between 2018 and 2021 MIJARC Europe is leading its work around three thematic focus points described in the Specific Objectives adopted by the General Assembly back in 2017. The work plan 2019 addresses MIJARC Europe's commitment to support citizenship and youth participation in rural development.

Through this work plan we aim to help rural young people in MIJARC Europe network and beyond feel that they have the right, the means and the skills to drive change at local level and to motivate other stakeholders to support their ideas and create opportunities for youth participation together.

We want young people to feel that they know, they can, and they want to be involved, to be able to imagine the concrete, sequential steps towards achieving real impact and to identify how to determine local authorities to join their initiatives in order to see those changes they envision, happen in reality.

This aim is pursued through the following specific objectives:

- enable young people from rural areas to differentiate between self-imposed barriers to participation (their own perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes) and real barriers and find inspiration to identify solutions to both types of barriers;
- teach young people how to communicate with, involve and ask for support from local authorities and perceive them as partners rather than opponents;
- empower young people from rural areas to become competent and effective digital citizens;
- contribute to the implementation of the principles of the Revised Charter on participation of young people in local and regional life and to the dissemination of the “Have your say manual” to local public authorities and youth NGOs in rural areas in Europe.



One work plan – three phases

This work plan 2019 of MIJARC Europe includes one local activity and two international activities, reinforced by follow-up activities at local level and the promotion of the outcomes and outputs in two issues of the MIJARC Explore magazine.

Supported by: EYF, 7th Framework Programme, European Union

1 activity
"LET'S HAVE A LOOK"

10 local visits through which we aim to lead a detailed analysis of the state of participation at local level in ten different rural areas of Europe, to be used as a starting point for further measures and actions

120 young people

10 local and regional authorities

10 countries

FEB APR

The infographic features the MIJARC logo and logos of its partners: EYF, the 7th Framework Programme, and the European Union. It details the first activity, 'LET'S HAVE A LOOK', which consists of 10 local visits across 10 countries, involving 120 young people and 10 local and regional authorities. The activity is scheduled from February to April.

The first activity includes ten visits at local level, performed by a team of two young volunteers of MIJARC Europe in a rural area in different European countries in order to perform a direct analysis of the state of youth participation and co-operation with public authorities at local level. The present report is summing up the findings of these local visits. On one side, it is shaping some trends and common issues between the countries. On the other side, it includes a country-specific report.

The second activity is an international seminar, gathering 30 young people, for four full working days. It builds up on the findings of the local visits, especially the identified challenges and barriers to an efficient youth participation. The seminar helps participants to build their confidence in their potential and in the positive effects of their small actions at local level. It also stimulates their openness towards co-operating with public authorities and towards learning how to work together.

Supported by: EYF, 7th Framework Programme, European Union

2 activity
"LET'S HAVE OUR SAY"

an international seminar which will aim to help the young people and the youth organizations involved to gain confidence in their own capacity to influence decisions that affect their life and to gain trust in co-operating with public authorities

30 young people

KRANEVO BULGARIA

9-12 JULY

The infographic features the MIJARC logo and logos of its partners: EYF, the 7th Framework Programme, and the European Union. It details the second activity, 'LET'S HAVE OUR SAY', which is an international seminar for 30 young people held in Kranevo, Bulgaria, from July 9-12. The seminar aims to help young people and youth organizations gain confidence and trust in their capacity to influence decisions and cooperate with public authorities.



The third phase is an international training course on e- citizenship that offers additional tools and ideas to tackle the problems identified in the third phase. The training course provides an upgrade of the approach to participation in line with the most recent trends in civic engagement, teaching young people how to make use of the Internet and online tools in order to participate.

Finally, each organization involved does a follow- up activity of their choice, involving a minimum number of 10 participants and one local authority – preferably one of those involved in the first phase.



Methodology

Methodology

The first activity of the work plan is a mid-scale evaluation of barriers to youth participation at local level and of the co-operation between young people, youth organizations and local authorities in ten rural areas from ten different countries in Europe. It is the object of this report and constitutes a continuation of the consultation process initiated by MIJARC Europe with its member movements and it will give a more detailed insight into how participation is perceived by our young members, how they cooperate with public authorities and what are the barriers to a more meaningful youth engagement at local level. Its aim is to create a detailed analysis of the state of participation at local level in different rural areas of Europe, to be used as a starting point for further measures and actions.

The following objectives will be pursued:

- identify the biggest barriers to youth participation in each local context in the rural areas involved
- evaluate the state of cooperation between young people, youth organizations and local public authorities
- promote the six-step model of implementation of the recommendations of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (the Charter) and inspire ideas on how to adapt it to the context of each local community.

This activity offers extremely valuable insight into the causes of the reduced level of engagement of young people and their reluctance to co-operate with local authorities that we have been witnessing over the past three years and especially in 2017.

The local visits included a presentation of the European Youth Foundation, of the Council of Europe and of MIJARC Europe, a focus group, a short simulation game, a focus group, a plenary session and an evaluation. The purpose of this report is to sum up the outputs of the focus groups.

All focus groups follow the same plan with the same questions whereas the other parts of the local visits are flexible and adapted to the concerned group.



European Report

A definition of youth

Youth is defined by the age in most of the organizations and countries where focus groups took place. In general there is no under limit: only three focus groups named the age at which you start to belong to "youth". Nevertheless, there is a strong acceptance of the upper limit to youth, which is situated between 25 and 30 years old. This is interesting that it seems that there is no starting point to be youth but a clear end of this state. Even if most of them also recognizes that one can be considered as young if he or she is still open minded and ready to try new things.

A definition of youth participation

In all countries, the participants agreed that youth participation is not only about voting. Youth participation means to them take part in the life of the community, work as a volunteer, take responsibility, organize projects and demonstrations in order to build a better society.

Youth organizations as spaces of real youth participation

They consider their own organization as spaces of good youth participation. Most of the focus groups ranked the participation from rung 5 (young people consulted and informed) onwards. As a maximal rung, the focus group of France ranked the participation at rung 8 (shared decision making). In between, there were rung 6 (adult initiated, shared decision making) and 7 (young people led and initiated).

The communication with local authorities

The target public of the focus groups was young people, youth worker and local and regional authorities. In only four focus groups, it was possible to have local and regional authorities participating which is a deception. We can add that in two cases the contacted local and regional authorities declined this invitation because the focus group took place on a weekend and so not on working days. This can be considered as a first obstacle for a good communication and cooperation between youth organizations and in general organizations working mainly with volunteers. Naturally young pupils, students and citizens are available on evenings and weekends to engage voluntarily. There is obviously no matching between their availability and the availability of local and regional authorities.

Secondly, we notice that in fact the authorities who accepted the invitation were local authorities: from the municipality. The volunteers of the organizations were in charge of inviting them. Obviously, there are already more contacts between youth organizations and local authorities. This fact reinforces the definition of youth participation in which it is about taking part in the life of the community. This community is seen as the closest community young people can find: the village or city.

Further, we have to underline the very good feeling the local and regional authorities had after participating in the focus groups in Armenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Germany. Two of them told that they have been thinking or tried to take contact with young people and the focus groups were a great opportunity to make it finally. These two local authorities were thankful for the opportunity and promises that this focus group will be a starting point for a stronger cooperation between them and youth organizations. It could be an interesting following research to see in few years if the participation in these communities have been strengthened.

What happen if it does not happen?

The question "What happen if youth participation does not happen?" opened and gave participants the opportunity to reflect on the long term. Even when the group of participants were very young, the results were impressing regarding this ability to imagine the society without youth participation. And these results were strong pessimistic. On one side, no youth participation would have bad influence on the society. There would be less innovation and new ideas but also the existing services would be threatened. Because if young people don't engage in local activities, local firemen, schools, the life in rural areas would become less attractive and families would leave these areas. Also if young people are not in a situation to participate and through this to become engaged and aware citizens, they would in the future no engaged adult and all our democratic system would be in danger.

On the other side, the participants underlined the importance of youth participation for their personal development. They gave examples of skills they learned and ideas about what they want to do in the future they get through volunteering.

The obstacles to youth participation

One result of these focus groups is that all groups recognized that the barriers to youth participation are self-imposed. All participants were very positive and believed that if they want something, they can look for the solution and achieve it. If we take a look at the different barriers they listed, it is possible to attenuate this affirmation.

The first category of barriers is time and motivation. Young people are busy with school, university, sports, family and friends. On top of this, there spend a lot of time online. For the youth workers present in the focus groups, it was identified as big challenge to motivate young people to find time for non-formal

education and volunteering. The young people present spoke themselves about this "dilemma" or reported this incomprehension over friends who find no time or interest to join youth organization.

A second category can be the lack of information, of experience and of communication between local and regional authorities and young people or youth organizations. Mostly young people, if they want to involve themselves or as a local group to start a project, don't know where to find support, where to find information and feel lost in front of all procedures they face. Also they not always have all competences to convince local and regional authorities why their project or their participation makes sense. In that case, we can say that this is not completely a self-imposed and internal barrier of young people. A better communication and cooperation between local and regional authorities and youth organization is a both way process that must be followed by both sides.

Finally, the third category of barriers to youth participation is the national culture and environment: is it considered as normal to speak up, to take initiative in the community and how is it considered socially? In some East European countries where the focus groups took place, this was reported as a obstacle that putting established things in question, bringing news ideas are not valorised in the society and for that reason young people could not trust in themselves and have the courage to speak up, launch new projects and ask and expect to be consulted by the local and regional authorities.



Countries' Report

Countries' report



Armenia



6 young people

4 youth workers

2 local/regional authorities

Youth is defined by the age, until 25 years old.

One specific point of voluntary youth work in Armenia is that there is a majority of girls. Youth work research institute says 60 % women and 40 % men. For the participants a reason could be that girls speak better English and are more interested in debating and participation. Boys, on the contrary, concentrate on studying and earn quickly money by working.

In FYCA “youth participation” is understood as non-formal education, volunteer work, encourage and motivate to be the change.

“Youth participation” is freedom, active citizenship, being involved in democratic life, be able to make decisions following what youth thinks it is right and not being told by adults.

It is definitely more than voting. Aim is a better society. There are many ways to participate others than political debates and demonstrations in the streets.

Young people are seen as persons having strengths and talents and as a group that is capable of contributing to the solving of their own problems. Youth have to want it and to work hard.

Something that needs to be changed about the perception of youth that people can do whatever they want, the fear of what people will think about one should be changed by freedom of doing what you want to do. In Armenia it is not good seen that young people speak up. It was not common to have your own opinion during the Soviet Times. Nowadays it is still difficult for young people to speak up because it is not expected to do so.

All participants agreed to say that inside FYCA the participation is at rung 6 (adult initiated, shared decision making) or 7 (young people led and initiated). The participants were nevertheless more negative on the participation in national processes. The regional authorities present pointed out that letting everybody participate in each decision process would make processes even slower, that's a reason why they only inform the citizens on certain topics.

The participants did not realize the benefits of participating. Not participating is easier. The discussion was more animated on the question of what are external or self-imposed barriers of youth participation. The conclusion is that barriers are all external. The ones which are self-imposed can be broken with non-formal education and empowerment of young people.

To address the challenges of youth participation there is a need of motivation, of raising awareness and of teaching debate techniques. As an ally the schools could play a role if they would use more interacting and debating methods. The participants believe schools and teachers have an important role to play

If there is no youth participation, nothing will change and the society will not adapt to new challenges like climate change. On the personal level young people will not find ways to develop their own personality and grow to be active citizens.



Belgium



10 young people

1 youth workers

0 local/regional authorities

Young people are defined as anybody aged between 3 and 30 years old.

Youth participation is mainly seen as youth work. It is defined as the socio-cultural work based on non-commercial purposes by or for young people of three to thirty years, during leisure time, with educational guidance and to promote the general and integral development of the young people who participate in it on a voluntarily basis.

Inside KLJ, the participation level is evaluated as being on ladder 7: young people led and initiated. Whereas youth participation at national level is evaluated at ladder 8 because the National Couth Council of Belgium is the official advisory board of the Government on all matters concerning children and young people.

A best practice example of Belgium is the process which was started to prepare the future pact between the policy makers, young people and the civil society called Youth Pact 2020.



Bulgaria



9 young people

5 youth workers

2 local/regional authorities

Youth is defined by the age, 15 to 29. But not only. The representatives of local authorities add that a young person is also someone who has an open mind and keen on keep learning.

Youth participation is to understand the importance of youth active life within a community.

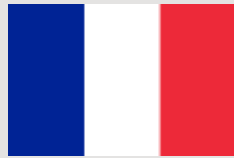
The representatives of the local authorities came to the meeting in order to know better youth needs and create a communication platform.

Young people are seen as a person that needs protection and having strengths and talents and as a group capable of contributing to the solving of their own problems.

What need to be change is the way how youth and municipality communicate.

Most of the barriers to youth participation are self-imposed such as negative stereotypes, that youth can act to break, and lack of information, because youth can make more efforts to inform themselves.

Youth participation is first useful for the community and secondly for themselves. Youth participation makes the society better and adapted to all generations.



France



9 young people

5 youth workers

0 local/regional authorities

Youth is defined by the age in the French organization, MRJC. Youth is from 13 to 30 years old. But the participants underlined that between leaving school and being an adult, there is a time span during which one is a "young adult".

Youth are not a homogeneous group. In France, they are many young girls and boys interested in voluntary work. In the rural areas, young people are mainly interested by active participation.

Youth participation within MRJC is taking responsibility, be actors in the territories young people live in.

The French organization, MRJC, gives information to and within young people, let them take responsibility and develop themselves. MRJC helps young people to be responsible and well-educated citizens, to learn new knowledge and skills.

Youth participation in a large sense means to be engaged in actions and activities so as to contribute to the building of a better society. It is something towards voting. It must include the freedom of choice where to be involved.

Young people are seen as persons having strengths and talents and as a group capable of solving their own problems. But the group could not agree on what needs to be changed on the way young people are perceived. Some ideas were to be more respected and involved in decision making processes. Youth does not need protection but must as for more recognition.

The way MRJC let young people participate was judged as very good and put on the rung 8 (shared decision making).

The biggest barriers to participation are time and motivation. Unmotivated young people are more than motivated young people.

To address the challenges of youth participation, young people should go to youth clubs, youth NGOs. They can count on other young people to be their allies.

No youth participation would have a bad impact on other citizens. It is core for responsible participation. We need more participation to bring more peace in our world and because it makes developed persons and powerful citizens.

Germany



13 young people

2 youth workers

2 local/regional authorities

Youth people is defined by the age. Most participants were less than 18 years old so that they were wondering if you are still young when you are more than 18 years old.

Youth participation is voting but also organizes events and demonstrations such as the Fridays for Future, be active in youth work, do projects in the village or being elected in the pupils' council.

Young people are not an homogenous group. For this group of young members of the German organization, KLJB, there are big differences between young people from urban and from rural areas. The interests and activities during free time are very different.

In the federal state of X young people can vote starting from 16 years old at local and federal elections.

Young people are seen as a group that needs to have its problems solved by somebody else, that needs protection and as persons having strengths and talents. The group agrees that as young people, they sometimes need protection on some topics (alcohol, violence...), they sometimes need the help of adults and they sometimes can do on themselves. Finding the balance which frame young people need in which situation is the difficulty.

The way KLJB let them participate is put mainly on rung 5 (young people consulted and informed). The representatives of the municipality used the opportunity to invite the local group of KLJB to visit the town hall in order to start a stronger communication between them and the young people and to keep them informed and involved in all current projects. The local group of KLJB is aware that they are lucky to have such local authorities and want to make a good use of it.

One problem identified is that they are more boys than girls in the local group and in the responsible of the group. One reason is that girls seems to follow more her friends than boys. So if the friends don't want to join, they will not. The local group is aware of this and will take care about this.

Different levels of involvement were identified by the participants: in KLJB, in school, in music school young people are involved and take initiative. In the contrary, in sports' association, young people go more in a individualistic way and are also not able to take over responsibilities because you need to be more than 18 years old to be a trainer and drive the team to the games for example. They feel well informed on political participation due to the information they get at school.

The barriers for youth participation are mainly: - lack of expertise on how to involve young people in a meaningful way, - different levels and types of experience, - lack of youth-friendly procedures and policies within organizations.

No youth participation would be bad for the whole community and society. Some local services like the firemen would disappear or have not enough volunteers. Young people and families would leave the village. It would lead to frustration by young people and maybe violence. It would have negative consequences on the future because these people who were not involved as they were young would not be aware citizens and they would be no engaged adults in politics and society.



Malta

12 young people

2 youth workers

0 local/regional authorities

Youth participation is the involvement of young people in the daily life.

A big barrier to youth participation for the maltese organization, GYC, is the fact that Malta is a small community and for this reason, they have to deal with few volunteers. Also it is difficult to attract young people offline. Malta is full covered by wifi. Cultural and youth clubs are places to meet and spend time together. But the financial situation of this clubs is unstable and the public support for youth work weak.

Challenges for young people are mostly social: life is expensive, it is difficult to get an own housing. This situation decreases motivation to be involved in social life and society.

On the same time, participation rates are high. For the first time, young people from 16 years old could, besides local and national elections, also vote for the European elections. They have active voting right but no passive: candidate to the European parliament still need to be more than 18 years old.

Youth councils are well developed in many municipalities, Ministries and Parliament.



The Netherlands

11 young people

4 youth workers

0 local/regional authorities

Youth is defined by the age, from 13 to 30 years old. After some debate, the participants of the dutch organizations, EuroMove and DiggOut, agreed to say that young minded people can be considered as youth.

Youth participation is coming together, working together, communicate and listen to each other. The participants were young people with social inclusion troubles. For this reason, the way the organization is helping them is by listening to them, being a home for them. The participants were first interested in discover who they are to be then able to know what are their place in the society.

For this reason, the organization works closely with the local authorities.

Young people are seen as a group that needs protection, as a group that wants to do things on themselves and as persons with strengths and talents.

The bigger barrier to youth participation is the communication between young people and the community. This and all barriers are self-imposed. If one want, he can achieve every goal.

To address these challenges the main thing is to motivate young people. For this, allies are other youth.



Romania



12 young people

3 youth workers

2 regional authorities

Young people are defined as anybody aged between 14 and 35 years old.

Youth participation is a form of teamwork and cooperation and of implication.

The young participants of the Romanian organization, Agenda 21/APDD, feel like there are different values and habits between young people and adults and also that there is a lack of information from youth's side but not of skills.

The biggest barriers for youth participation and especially in rural areas is "what the others are going to say?".

The local authorities who join the meeting had very positive opinion and felt sorry not to have started earlier to hear to young people earlier.



Spain



6 young people

4 youth workers

2 regional authorities

Youth is defined in general by age, until 30 years old.

Youth participation is a key to build a better society and to know your rights. Few people are involved in organizations in general. Young people prefer to be involved in short-terms actions.

The way the Spanish organization let young people participate was put on the rung 7 (young people led and initiated) and 8 (shared decision making).

Youth participation is important because we have to work on a better future and even on a better present. The world is under our responsibility.

One big problem for young people in Spain is that it is difficult to be independent, to get a job and a housing. More barriers to youth participation are lack of expertise on how to involve youth, the lack of skills to participate and the strong believe that it is someone else' job to increase youth participation.

More activities and support should be given from adults to the younger generation to empower them and encourage them to do more.



Follow-Up Activities

Follow-up activities

Digitalization is a topic at the event of rural youth and CDU with mayor Ansgar Brockmann. (article published in the local newspaper in September 2019)

The average age in the Council Chamber has probably not been as low as on Thursday evening for some time. Some 30 young people had accepted an invitation of the Neuerkirchen CDU - represented by the board members Tobias Lahrmann and Felix Quebbemann - and the Catholic Rural Youth Movement (KLJB), which was only re-established in February, to a discussion with Mayor Ansgar Brockmann. The Christian democrats as well as the two CDU council members Bernhard Wessel and Renate Pohlmann stood for the young ladies and gentlemen speech and answer.



The concept was well received. In preparation to the event, KLJB had specified the topics of environmental protection, digitalization, public transport and leisure activities. Mayor Brockmann introduced each one before the opportunity for discussion arose. It was very interesting to get an insight into local politics and their processes. All topics were exciting.

The mayor sees an urgent need for action on the subject of digitalization.

Sophie Krolage, the chairwoman of the KLJB, also called for more flexibility in buses with regard to public transport, so that pupils could also use them if, for example, school lessons were cancelled, and they had to go to school later.

The Mayor is concerned about some developments in the field of leisure activities. Although there are still many offers in the town through associations, churches and other associations, the full-time teaching in schools poses great challenges for the organizations. In addition, the leisure behavior of young people has changed. And: The willingness of citizens to volunteer is decreasing. The revival of the KLJB was a very pleasing development against the trend. (...) Developing and organizing events and thus addressing young people: that is entirely in the spirit of the rural youth. Because, as Sophie Krolage put it, it wants to be a voice of young people in Neuenkirchen authorities.

Conclusion

There are three main ways in which this activity will feed the next ones: (i) through its main outputs: ten reports - one after each visit - and the final report, it secures the factual basis for setting the learning objectives for the next two activities and for choosing the right methods to achieve our objectives; (ii) it creates a pool of young people who are informed about the work plan, are aware of its next phases and might be more inspired to join the international activities with concrete personal learning objectives and a mid-term follow-up plan; (iii) it creates a good contact with representatives of local and regional authorities in ten European countries which will be useful for their further engagement in the international activities as speakers or experts and in the follow-up activities.

This activity directly contributes to the implementation of the principles of the Revised Charter on participation of young people in local and regional life and to the dissemination of the "Have your say manual" to local public authorities and youth NGOs (WPO4), by promoting the Charter and disseminating the manual in 10 rural areas in Europe, directly to young people, youth organizations and local authorities. Indirectly it contributes to all the objectives of the work plan as it helps identify barriers to participation (their own perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes) young people impose on themselves and also some external barriers. It facilitates the interaction between young people and local authorities, thus contributing to perceiving each other as partners rather than opponents. It gives a clear image of what young people need and want and thus helps in choosing the right set of measures and methods to empower young people from rural areas to become competent and effective digital citizens.

As the network of MIJARC Europe has increased largely over the past five years, it has become obvious that we need to get to know our members better, offer them opportunities to learn from each other and to reach the grass-root level more often. This is why we decided to include this set of local visits as the first activity of the work plan and gather our own data on the problem we have identified. We believe that outside this work plan, the impact of this activity will be seen in the following results: (i) it will bring MIJARC Europe closer to the grass-root level in the ten countries involved; (ii) it will empower the newly appointed commissioners, bring them closer to our members and give them a concrete and important role in the structure of our network; (iii) it will offer valuable long-term tools on participation to our member organizations; (iv) the final report will be made public and it might provide inspiration to other organizations working on the topic of youth participation and with the same target groups; (v) it will create a precedent of co-operation at local level between young people, youth organizations and public authorities which might serve as a starting point for future activities and events.

Appendix

Focus group format - young people & local authorities

DESCRIPTION
Invite all the participant to think about what participation means. Spread definitions and pictures in the room and invite them to pick one definition and/or one pictures which they feel describes their idea of participation.
Invite four-five people to share their ideas with the rest of the group.
Reflection time 1 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How does your community/organization define youth (age limit, psychological criteria or other criteria)?2. Who are the young people you work with? To what extent are they a homogenous group?3. How is “youth participation” understood in your organization/institution?4. How do you know this? Is there an agreed definition/approach or rather your own assumption and perception?1. 5What does your organization want to achieve in the area of youth participation?
Give the definition in the Manual (https://rm.coe.int/16807023e0) Definition of participation of the Have your Say Manual Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for elections, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. (Page 12)
Reflection time 2 Ask participants what they think about this definition: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Are there similarities with your idea?2. Are there differences?
To help you throughout the rest of the workshop, you have 5 minutes to think about one concrete example you personally experienced.

Reflection time 3

1. When and where you, as young people, participated?
2. When and where you, as youth NGO, participated?
3. When and where you, as local authorities participate and could help other entities participate?

You can have this example in mind for the upcoming discussions.

They can write it down on post-its/paper; give different colours of post-its for youth, youth workers and local authorities.

Reflection time 4

1. How are young people in your community/organization seen?
2. Are they seen:
 - as a group that needs to have its problems solved by somebody else? – as a group not wanting to take responsibility?
 - as a group that needs protection?
 - as clients that need to have everything provided?
 - as persons having strengths and talents?
 - as a group that is capable of contributing to the solving of their own problems?
 - as a group that wants to do things by itself (not accepting help)?
 - in any other way?
3. Is there anything that needs to be changed in the way young people are perceived in your community/ rganization? If so, what?

Show them the ladder of participation (page 14 of the Have your Say Manual).

On which ladder of youth participation is your community? (page 14)

Give 2-3 minute for everybody to put a sign (a cross/a point) where they feel they are (one colour for young/one for youth workers/one for local authorities)

Reflection time 5

1. Are all the colours in the same place?
2. Why did you put your colour in that place?
3. Look at different youth initiatives that are currently taking place in your region or local community. In which areas of youth participation do most of initiatives take place? In your opinion, what is the reason for this?
4. In which area of youth participation is your organisation/institution involved? Why?

Explain that those working on youth participation sometimes face challenges and obstacles.

Reflection time 6

1. What happens if it does not happen? if youth participation does not happen?
2. Why do we need youth participation?

Reflection in small groups, write down, present (quick, the paper is very important).

What are the biggest barriers to youth participation in your local context?

Write all statements below on a flipchart. Imagine there is a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is insignificant and 5 is very strong and ask the participants to assess the influence each of the barriers you are going to read out affects their participation at local level. Young people move on the scale.

Local authorities observe.

STATEMENTS (8-10 statements):

- I feel there are different values and habits of young people and adults;
- young people lack the necessary skills to get involved;
- there is a lack of expertise on how to involve young people in a meaningful way;
- there are different communication styles;
- there are different levels and types of experience;
- there is insufficient support provided to young people and adults;
- there are many negative stereotypes (“all young people are ...”; “all the adults are ...”), mutual misconceptions and biases;
- lack of youth-friendly procedures and policies within organisations (for example, large amounts of formal documents to read, analyse and react to);
- there is a strong belief that it is someone else’s job to work on youth participation;
- there is a lot of lack of information;

Ask them to sit down after you have finished with the statement.

Continue the reflection:

1. Which of these are self-imposed barriers (eg. young people don't believe in their power to change things, are uninterested etc.) and which ones are external barriers?
2. What can you do to address these challenges?
3. Who can be your ally in this process?

Make sure you involve the representatives of the local authorities in the discussion and that they have a chance to state their opinion about the barriers.