

# MIJARC

issue 1 / 2019

# explore

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2019 - A Busy Year

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## EDITORIAL

Our dear magazine got an upgrade in 2019, changing its name to MIJARC Explore and fitting its content into a more colourful, vibrant design. This first issue of 2019 presents our annual topic: citizenship and youth participation, one of our three thematic focus points for the period 2018-2021.

Enjoy the reading!



# Introduction

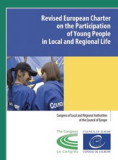


by  
**MIJARC EUROPE SECRETARIAT**

2019 will be a busy year, that's a fact. With three international activities, a round of ten local visits led by the commissioners and final follow-up activities all squeezed into these 12 months, there is no wonder MIJARC Europe's engines are running at full speed. The topic this year - citizenship and youth participation - lays out numerous challenges as to lighting up that spirit of involvement and driving change. First, young people do not know how to approach local authorities and ask for their support or they feel that public authorities in general are not interested in cooperating with youth. Secondly, the feeling that they are too little to change

anything or that a single action would not make any difference blocks young people's initiatives and keeps them trapped in the same thinking pattern. Thirdly, most young people are unaware of how information and communication technologies could be used to participate meaningfully. That's why with the financial help of the Council of Europe, the guiding principles of the Revised Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life and the detailed steps of the "Have your say manual" we embarked on an ambitious journey with young people at the steering wheel. Read about it in the next pages.

## Tools in focus



### **REVISED EUROPEAN CHARTER ON THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL LIFE**

The revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted in May 2003 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, is a standard-setting instrument for youth participation.



### **"HAVE YOUR SAY" MANUAL**

An educational and practical tool to support all those committed to making the right to participation a reality for more young people in the Council of Europe member states.

# News from MIJARC

## Local visit in Armenia

**ELIZABETH MAYER**, one of our commissioners, led the local visit which took place in Armenia. Her opinion about it: *"the young people were very motivated to talk about youth participation. It took just one question and we were already deep into the topic. The feeling that youth participation, in any form there is can change society, was always present. Young people know what must be changed in their country that is why they should be empowered to participate".*



## Local visit in Bulgaria

**MIKHALEV ARTYOM** and **IONIȚĂ DIANA**, two of our commissioners, were in Bulgaria to lead the local visit with young people and representatives of youth NGOs and local authorities. *"For us it was very interesting to watch debates with youth on one side and local authorities on the other side. We noticed that it was really helpful for both sides to get to know about each other's needs and about what each saw as problems in their municipality. Local youth were very active and there were a lot of questions to the municipality. Personally, we felt happy to do this kind of work, even though the language barrier posed a lot of difficulties for us".*

## Local visit France

Our brave commissioner, **HARUTYUN TSATRYAN**, led the local visit in France all by himself, discovering his French was not that rusty after all. *"The young people, who took part in this meeting, have been highly motivated to talk about their experience and youth participation. Some of them were really keen on speaking. Many had been involved in the youth field since very young ages. For instance, it only took asking a question and we were starting to go deep into the topics.*

*The feeling that youth participation is important, and it can make positive changes in the society was always in their mind. Unfortunately, the young participants could find common understanding on what must be changed in their own region and country to empower young people to participate in activities. One was saying something, another was supporting that idea, but another person then came up with a new idea".*



## Local visit in Germany

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 Neuenkirchen CDU parish association - 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 Chrisdemokrat 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 the run-up to the event, landjugend had specified the topics of environmental protection, digitisation, 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 digitisation. 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 organisations. In addition, the leisure behaviour 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 organising 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.

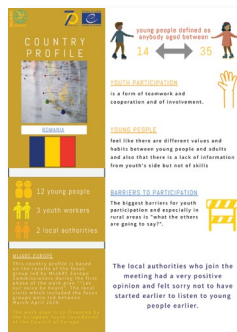


## Local visit in the Netherlands

**MIKHALEV ARTYOM** went to the Netherlands to talk about youth participation with the beneficiaries of Digg Out – a wonderful local organisation working with vulnerable young people. Getting into the topic was a bit more challenging but once the ice was broken, it proved hard to stop the young participants from talking. *“For me it the target group was very interesting. They were young people with special needs, that’s why I adapted the programme and added more interactive activities. For example, on the second day we watched a movie about self-motivation, and after that we discussed that and how motivation was connected to participation”*.

## Local visit Romania

The youngest group who took part to our local visit was the group in Romania. It was not an easy task for **CAMILLA RÖDDER** to lead the discussion with them but her rich experience in working with children proved quintessential to the success of this visit. *"They group was lively and motivated. They really enjoyed the discussion with local authorities and their principal. In the end they felt heard and understood. The next step would be to establish a youth organisation there to let them experience their self-efficacy as young people in real life and give them a voice".*





## Summary of focus groups performed during the local visits

### SUM UP OF THE LOCAL VISITS

From February to April 2019, MIJARC Europe organized focus groups, called "local visits" in 9 different countries in Europe. Small groups of 10 to 20 people aged from 12 to 22 years old came together, sometimes also with representatives of local authorities, to discuss the topic of youth participation. Questions like "what does youth participation mean?", "what kind of youth participation does take place?", "does real participation take place?", "how young people are involved, do they have a real chance to participate and co-decide?" have been deeply discussed with the help of the manual "Have your Say". The manual Have your Say is a tool of the Council of Europe for young people and local authorities to implement and use the Charter on youth participation in the local and regional life. In this article, we will present you the central findings of the focus groups.

### NO MINIMUM AGE LIMIT TO BE YOUTH

In general there is no minimum age limit: only three focus groups named the age at which you start to belong to be "youth". Nevertheless, there is a strong acceptance of the upper limit to youth, which is situated between 25 and 30 years old. 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.

### YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS NOT ONLY VOTING

Youth participation means to them to 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. The majority of the participants at the focus groups consider their own organisations as spaces of good youth participation.

### THE COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The target public of the focus groups was young people, youth workers and local and regional authorities. Only four focus groups benefited of the presence of representatives of local and regional authorities which was very disappointing. One obstacle to good communication with local and regional authorities was availability. Young people can engage during their free time (evenings and weekends) while some representatives of local and regional authorities are available only during working hours.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF IT DOES NOT HAPPEN?

Even when the group of participants were very young, the answers to this question were impressive. Children and youth had the impressive ability of imagining their society without youth participation. The results were strongly pessimistic for the future of the society. On the one hand, there would be less innovation and new ideas and the existing services would be threatened. Also, less engaged youth results in less engaged adults in the future and weaker democracies. On the other hand, the

participants underlined the importance of youth participation for their personal development. They gave examples of skills they learned and ideas they got about their future professional paths that they got while volunteering.

### THE OBSTACLES TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The first category of barriers is time and motivation. Youth workers said it was a big challenge to motivate young people to find time for non-formal education and volunteering. The young people present spoke about this "dilemma" or reported this incomprehension over friends who find no time or interest to join youth organisations.

A second category is the lack of information, of experience and of communication between local and regional authorities and young people or youth organisations. Young people do not know where to find support, where to find information and feel lost in front of all the procedures they have to face.

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? In some East European countries where the focus groups took place, this was reported as an obstacle. Questioning things, bringing news ideas and change in general are not action valued in the society. For that reason young people did not have self-confidence and did not have the courage to speak up, launch new projects and ask and expect to be consulted by the local and regional authorities.

# Youth participation in our movements

## YMDRAB – Bulgaria



FOREST - "For everyone saved a tree" is a project that brings together young people and forest scientists from Bulgaria and Serbia in joint activities for finding practical solution of environmental problems related to conservation and sustainable management of forests. The partner organisations are NIIT Society Innovation Center (Serbia) and Forest Research Institute of The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. 50 young people (equal number Bulgarians and Serbians) will participate in each of the 8 international activities planned.



Interreg - IPA CBC  
Bulgaria - Serbia  
For everyone saved a tree (FOREST)

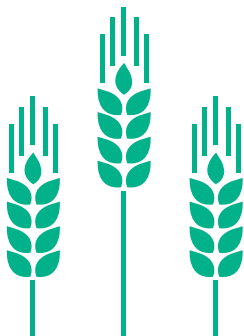
The project is co-funded by EU through the Interreg - IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia Programme.

## Euromove



We are very proud to share with MIJARC Europe's readers the result of one of the most interesting projects we have ever implemented during the existence of our organisation. The one-and-a-half-year work that was put together by four organisations: coobra – cooperativa braccianti (Austria), Ha Moment (Portugal), Euromove (the Netherlands), and the International Youth Work Trainers Guild (Germany/europewide) during the project "You Train". This was a long-term strategic partnership, which aimed to increase the quality, reach and impact of non-formal education activities by creating a video toolbox for educators, and by promoting the use and production of educational video-tutorials in general. In the frame of Youtrain we produced introductory videos on non-formal education, a set of video tutorials on specific non-formal methods and a manual on how to produce video-tutorials by yourself. The project Funding was provided by the Austrian National Agency for ERASMUS+ under the "ERASMUS+ Key Action 2 - strategic partnership in the field of education, training and youth" granting scheme.

See the materials here: [youtube.com/youtrainvideoproject](https://youtube.com/youtrainvideoproject)





# Special guest

## —Daniela Ordowski – “Women Be Brave”

When I came back from Rome, I had a tattoo because of the pope and a good story to tell.

Being a feminist and being active inside the catholic church seems to be a big contradiction. This is how I feel much of the time.

When I was invited to meet 300 international youth in Rome to work on a document for the Synod on Youth I was thrilled. And on the other hand, I was uncertain of what to expect. The catholic church is diverse global community, and I was strongly hoping that I would see that reality reflected at this meeting.

I am on the board of MIJARC Europe – a platform of catholic organizations from all over Europe working with agricultural and rural youth – where democracy, transparency and equality are values we base our work on.

The organization lives from what the members bring and cannot exist without their voluntary commitment. When you work in a network like this, you are a part of something greater than you alone, you experience what can be done together and how faith is connecting us. Our

operations take place in a self-organized and democratic manner, with active participation. We encourage each other to ask questions so as to contribute to a positive change in the world.

To criticize the official church structures means questioning power and affiliation. If you do not believe enough, you will be marginalized. Democracy, gender equality also in the question of authority: not Catholic. And the people who support it: not either. Who decides that?

To regard this potential of criticism as an alien, even harmful element in the church is to separate the church from the world.

Allowing criticism and giving room for doubt is theologically required. It is not a weakness, but a protection of the weak, not a lack of faith, but an invitation to growth.

“You are the protagonists. So, speak clearly. The church is getting old, without young people taking risks.”

Pope Francis addressed these clear words to 300 young people from all over the world. The Vatican inviting young

people to prepare a document for the Synod of Youth: this had never happened before.

We did our best to do this historical moment justice and to bring together the diverse perspectives of the young people coming from so many different realities.

We extended the deadlines, answered questions they didn't ask us and used every minute to exchange because we had a lot to say.

As we hand over the document to the Pope on Palm Sunday, there is doubt if our demands will be heard and if time was enough. But above all there is hope in the air as we walk together with palm branches across St. Peter's Square.

For as Pope Francis on Palm Sunday says to us: “Dear young people: with you is the decision to scream. (...) When the others are silent, when we, the elders and those responsible, are silent, when the world is silent and loses its joy, I ask you: do you want to scream? Please decide before the stones scream.”

The pope arrived to meet us in St. Peter's square. I stood in the crowd surrounded

by so many other young people as he looked at us and said "Women, be brave".

There I was – walking through the streets of Rome after a week full of doubt and inspiration, criticism and new ideas, stuck in this whole big contradiction of thoughts, and overwhelmed by the energy I had felt the whole week, the energy we young people want to bring to the church.

And I was constantly thinking about the discussions we had during the week, the pope asking us to take risks and women to be brave.

And without even realizing it I walked into a tattoo studio and ask if I can have a tattoo now?

The confused faces in front of me asked me if I already knew what I wanted. I answered simply "yes" and without ever having considered getting a tattoo before I painted the little symbol on a piece of paper.

This is the result of a battle I was fighting inside for a very long time, and which now found its way outside in a very physical way.

It summed up so perfectly what this week was about for me: love, faith and women's empowerment.

I never felt more strongly what I believe in and what I want to fight for.

I am part of the church and I am a feminist. This is not a contradiction. Just a call for change.

**DANIELA ORDOWSKI,**  
MIJARC Europe board member

First published on 24, January 2019: <https://cidse.org/blog/2019/01/24/women-be-brave>

# Calendar

## of upcoming activities

When ...?	What...?	Where...?
6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	Extended General Assembly	Kranevo - Bulgaria
9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	Seminar "Let's have our say"	Kranevo - Bulgaria
21 <sup>st</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Training course "Let's go online"	Overijse - Belgium
7 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	Study session "I, Youth Advocate"	Budapest - Hungary

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