



## Final Document

Adopted by the assembly of young participants

In Eibar on 28th May 2010

### Project partners:



### Funded by:



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*After five-day discussions in four committees and in plenary sessions, the assembly of young participants adopted the final document with consensus, indicating at the same time that no everyone who participated in the work of the assembly necessarily agree with each conclusion made in the final document.*

*With purpose to present variety of arguments and ideas expressed by young participants during 5-day discussions on youth participation, democracy and the media in Eibar, but also by visitors of the project web site, the final document is here supplemented with two annexes - the notes from 5-day discussions (annex 1) and the contributions from the YUp@ web site blog and forum (annex 2).*

*The final document is composed from conclusions made by four committees:*

## **Committee 1: Causes of Disengagement**

**Problem:** Lack of political education in schools, family and media, resulting in young people not understanding what politicians do.

**Solution:** Political discussion should be present in schools and political awareness encouraged, including visits by and to Members of the European Parliament, to speak but also to listen to us.

**Problem:** Young people are not educated in critical thinking and able to analyse the media.

**Solution:** The curriculum should address this.

**Problem:** The system is not youth friendly; we don't feel our voice is represented and we do not know the mechanisms in place if we wish to challenge it.

**Solution:** For a youth commissioner in each EU country to represent the opinion of youth, and to know that the Constitution allows us to leave the EU if the majority in a state wants to leave.

**Problem:** We do not always trust the media and what they tell us, we believe it is too closely regulated by governments.

**Solution:** Encourage independent media and give funding to alternative voices and opposition media.

**Problem:** We believe we have been the victim of other people's greed and our governments failed to protect us from that.

**Solution:** We wish to see the regulation of the economy in the people's interest.



## Committee 2: Engaging young people to exercise their rights

### Problems:

We can encourage participation through education, but it exposes the problem that the educational system does not offer basic knowledge to survive and succeed in existing society.

The basic knowledge we need is how to survive in nature. We can clearly see that the existing capitalist system divides us from nature by building a "synthetic" world.

If the system wants us to participate, it has to provide us something different from Berlusconi and similar profile of politicians.

Capitalism is about competition, about making any possible effort to beat the competitor. Human nature is adaptive; if we create absurd needs people will think that they are necessary to them. That is the reason for why there are different social levels. The politicians and youth people are also included in that situation.

If we don't use the media in proper way the distance will be larger.

It is difficult to find out what is true. The problem is that we can't rely on the media's evidences; the media organisations are in control of economy and politics.

The economy through the media and politics can create opinion constantly, if people are not aware what they really want. At the end, can or does anybody have his own opinion?

### Solutions:

We must stop to be passive user of the media, rather using media critically and be aware of the real situation.

Capitalism is not a good way.

We have to ask ourselves who wants to change a people way of thinking? Isn't it someone who wants to control the society?



Education and Culture DG  
'Youth in Action' Programme

## Committee 3: New ways of youth participation

We have made our reflections throughout the week and come up with **two key solutions** that will encourage participation, not only amongst young people, but the demographic as a whole. These solutions will bring benefit for future generations since young people are taught in a different way, with greater access to participate.

### 1) The education system:

We believe the increase in participation amongst every demographic will come about through "self regulating" young people, making them able to inform themselves. By self regulation we mean each young person will be able to independently rationalise what they hear, they see and they do. Each young person would have the ability to inform himself/herself and to know where to get information and how to interpret, analyse and make an opinion on this information no matter who from or where it came. This ideal should come hand in hand with essential subjects like maths and English.

*In primary/elementary school* around age 8 or 9, we propose the idea of "drip feeding" young people. By this we mean gently educating them on the system in the state or region in which they reside. This would involve relating everyday experiences to their lives at that particular point in time.

*In secondary school*, the soft skills and further exploration of emotional intelligence are fundamental in attaining self regulation. The curriculum should ensure pupils are participating in mock scenarios, again related to everyday and current issues. Voting, debating and participation in extracurricular activities should be treated as paramount. Young people should be shown that interaction, being open minded and explorative is highly beneficial, and that participation is something for the whole family too.

We believe that rather than dramatically altering the democratic system we should ensure the system in place is utilized to its full potential. We believe that in order to fulfill this potential, a fundamental addition is required within the education system. We are all shaped in our childhood by family/carers and our education. New media will work alongside personal practice, providing access to all things informative.

### 2) Online voting/participation:

We believe technology allows for a secure, cost and time efficient system of online vote/participation that goes hand in hand with traditional means. The idea is to compliment what we have, the aim of which is to increase informed participation.

We think strengths of online voting are: access, convenience especially for those unable to attend the voting booth; efficiency encourages vote; database automatically collated; increase in voting period; after initial outlay, reduced costs in time and money; already secure methods available, e.g. online banking; e-voting already heavily explored.

Weaknesses of online voting are: problems with security; loss of tradition (arguable, if we see result as the most important point); expensive outlay; not everyone has access (idea is to go hand in hand with traditional means); literacy issues.



Opportunities of online voting are: increased participation of young and old; increased number of voting opportunities on increased number of issues; increased number of informed people.

Threats of online voting are: possible loss in balance of tradition, security, participation, cost, efficiency; possible new ways of fraud; threat of 'the vote' becoming too commercialised and meaningless, where less of us are informed and just click the button.

## **Committee 4: The potential of new media**

### **Problems:**

New media offers a new democratic space and platform but it needs to be coupled with a permanent physical space to initiate and maintain engagement.

The internet is a quick and far reaching form of communication and important knowledge base. But problems exist with accessibility, information overflow and unsubstantiated information.

Young people need to be educated about new media, traditional media and politics so that they can exercise judgement based on the information that they receive.

The success of new media will depend on keeping the information credible and the issues interactive and relevant to youth.

### **Specific practical solutions:**

Members of parliament in all European countries should have open offices.

Online interaction with MEPs via forum blogs and live via Skype should be provided as well as the development of websites to inform us about our own MEP. It should include progress reports to monitor how MEPs are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Young Mayor projects to give youth representation.

Stimulation games based on "Farmville" concept where you can simulate being a MEP for a week. This would conclude with the opportunity to make an actual visit to your local government.

Increase access to the online community and multimedia equipment through EU funding to public institutions, for example through NGO's, schools and libraries.

Distinct commission for research into online voting as an adjunct to traditional voting systems.

Development of official parliament websites that are more user-friendly, interactive and targeted towards specific age groups.

