



Annexe 1:

Notes for the final document

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The Notes for the final document are composed of reflections and suggestions made during 5-day hearings and discussions in four committees and in plenary sessions of the assembly of young participants.

On youth participation

Reflections

On education

- Youth have no good political education; no education on democracy
- We believe in education, but the question is if we are offered knowledge that is in our best interest. We are educated to become consumers of the system, of capitalism rather than to think critically and challenge it
- We depend on the system and have not enough knowledge to go back to nature
- Education would be improved by stimulating young people to express their interest
- We have not enough understanding of politics, political procedures and institutions on local, national and EU level

On political participation

- Young people do make individual political gestures such as boycotting different products, but it is probably too simplistic to have real political influence
- We don't feel heard
- If politicians wish us to participate, they must provide better role models than, for example, Berlusconi
- Because of such cases we have become disillusioned with democracy
- Protests against war in Iraq had not effect on real politics, but will be remembered
- The Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty has made us question if we are really being listened to. If what we say is not respected then why should we contribute?
- If we say the youth is disengaged, why it is like that? Our society encourages us to care for ourselves and our individual needs and interests?
- Is it really true that all young people are disengaged? Many of them participate in protests, and some of them are actively involved in radical, racist movements - is this something we want to encourage?
- Youth are especially disengaged from European politics: we don't know who are our representatives; we are disconnected from it
- On local level there are not many possibilities for participation; not much can be changed and we don't see quick results
- We may say that European politics is not real democracy, elites dominate, the individual cannot change anything and money means influence
- We might claim that European politics is built to make people disengaged, despite formally stating the opposite
- Young people think about issues and perspectives, and not about 'politics'
- Young people feel excluded from political processes; they do not feel equal, they are not on the same level politically and economically and believe they would be ignored



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- Moral/ethical standards of politicians are problematic, they have not provided good examples and their personalities do not encourage us to participate
- Is morality of individual politicians a problem, or is a disregard of morality inherent to the system?
- We should be careful with the idea of morality since it is often used by conservative, right wing groups to advocate measures of discipline and control
- If young people are invited to participate they are expected to follow topics and the agenda that is dictated to them
- Autonomy, freedom of expression and level of engagement are more important concepts to be considered when talk about youth participation
- The political 'system' is distanced from youth
- We hear continuous arguing, rather than solutions
- But to make change we have to start somewhere – to work as a generational group to make shift; it is work that will take years, if not generations
- The change got to start with young people
- We need better information, need to be better informed
- It would be good to have direct democracy and referendum on every important issue, but participatory democracy is more realistic
- We may be an idealistic youth but one day we may succeed in making the world and the system better
- We feel secure that our rights to vote, to healthcare and to education will not be taken away from us even if we do not vote, we feel too safe to care about the details
- Young people care, take example of education or environment which are two topics in which they engage passionately and massively

Suggestions

- We need assistance, training and teaching of young people on the subjects of autonomy, political engagement and social empathy
- Introduce political education, education on democracy as a subject/topic in schools
- Give young people the option to define topics to be on the agenda, and not only to be invited to follow what is given to them as a topic of debate and participation
- Readdress moral values and give young political activists an alternative way of being heard

On democracy

Reflections

- We need to be two-way accountable. It is our responsibility to exercise our rights, as it is for the politicians to represent us
- Democracy/politics is two way process, meaning that young people have to make steps
- Crucial points are education and information, including fundamental role of educational system (family can help but the system can't rely on it)
- We must learn what the right to vote means, and how many are denied the right



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- Media have an important role in educating us on politics
- Sometimes we talk too much about utopian issues
- Politicians should listen to people on streets, not just interest groups
- Misuse of power has been demonstrated throughout history; the problem is in human nature
- Behaviour of politicians: once they gain power they start to take into account mainly their private interests, and interest of their family and clients
- To bring more young people actively into politics, but how to make it happen
- To change the entire system in our best interest
- Despite misuse of power and democracy being compromised by wrong actions of individual politicians, we would rather find a way to make such actions and politicians punishable (put out of the system) and not to simply say the system is wrong
- We should have higher expectations and demands of the system, to demand things that are only imaginable; human beings have huge potentials; remember that not very far away in history women didn't have right to vote...
- What we expect, we want that to happen
- We should demand more from politicians, they should be more accountable
- On having utopian ideas during this meeting: are they really utopian? Why should we not demand an ideal world?
- We can have a vision, but reality can be much different. We have no ability to make it true, but first step is to realize where we are
- On capitalism: the existing crisis is demonstrating that it is wrong, but despite many efforts made since the beginning of this crisis nobody comes yet with an alternative
- Is it really true that nobody comes with an alternative? In some parts of the world there are cases made to organise economy and society in different way than through capitalist system
- It is important not to equate democracy and capitalism, they are not dependant on each other
- How can we establish real democracy instead of 'fake' democracy?
- The democracy we live in is imperfect
- Abstinance from voting is an option. It doesn't mean you are not active if you don't vote
- Politicians strive to achieve their own goals, their own interests
- Europe is capitalist democracy that is dying. Should we leave it to die?
- Capitalist democracy is an illusion...
- Power corrupts individuals
- Big institutions on central level don't represent anybody
- The system cares for money not for the people
- It is difficult to feel you are not being represented, difficult to demand that your voice is heard
- Once you come to the point, after a conflict, when democracy is established, even it is not ideal, it is necessary when you compare it to where you were before.
- To work together in democracy we can achieve more than in other ways
- But what type of democracy? We have a capitalistic type of democracy; capitalism leads to where politicians are now...
- How can we empower people for change?
- Maybe we can't change much globally or on a national level, but we maybe can change something on local level
- Local politicians also embrace capitalist system...



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- Our political traditions and the political history of each of our countries is very diverse and not all have had the same experience of democracy
- Be aware of socialism experience/period in former Yugoslavia: is it possible to take some positive examples from the system applied there?
- Be aware of importance of ownership on material means/key resources/assets in our countries
- While we criticise capitalism, can we feel OK enjoying products of capitalist economy/system?
- Capitalism is about competition, about making any possible effort to beat competitor
- We take benefits from capitalist society every day

Suggestions

- We need young people represented in the parliament, not necessarily have quota on portion of young people
- What is an alternative? We can try to create different rules and atmosphere to make a parliament without corrupted politicians and with more young people
- Alternative: to have more local decision making; to have decentralisation;
- Federalism and greater local decision making, giving people on local level chance to participate plus some issues to be taken on global level
- Can we take best from capitalism and socialism?

On media

Reflections

- The media have an important role in providing information and helping people learn about the political system and democracy
- But the media does not challenge the system, it helps its to continue as it is
- Politicians are too aware of the media, and use it to make themselves to look good and savvy and to reach people in their attempts to win votes
- Public and private television channels, national and local are influenced by politics, by the government or political parties
- It is difficult to find out what is true: problem is with the facts and arguments on which the news are based, how the media present the facts and arguments. We can say there is often no evidence or we can't believe their evidences. Often there are irrational arguments, emotions and opinions given instead of facts
- We have to start with changing ourselves, and be aware how we shape our opinions, based on what information we receive
- If we want to have critical opinion we have to have evidences/facts – to be able to decide
- If there are decisions to be made on the issues on which you don't have information, where to go to find them?
- Where to find credible information? No access to evidence



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- It is hard to find something that is neutral; but in searching for neutral source of information, for neutral media we have to be aware that there is no such thing as neutral or objective media since what we can see in the media is subjective selection, it depends on what the editors/journalist choose to report, how they cut it, what expressions and connotations they use. Always be aware of this
- Media formats in which two different opinions are presented, for and against, are made to make us believe they are equal opinion, but problem with such kind of balance is that the view closer to dominant ideology prevails
- We don't need new media, but new opportunities to process the information in collective manner, in a group to discuss reporting etc.
- In cases when we are direct subject of media reporting we can clearly see big gap between what is reality and what is being reported
- In what form do young people receive media? Education is important to help young people to learn to use media, to establish their own opinion rather than being manipulated
- Maybe we should stop search for neutral media, but rather educate young people to be aware of what is been told to them through the media
- Media use the news to manipulate us
- It is important to get access to variety of media that report in different manners
- It is the media's responsibility to show transparency and challenge politics
- The media are making citizens passive consumers
- Big media channels, TV channels are another way of making politics They are used for political fights and agendas
- If the political system is corrupted, we hope smaller independent channels will fill the void of critical programming
- We have to work more and more to live, therefore we are too tired to search for hard and demanding media content, but rather watch mindless television
- The system is made in a way not to give us time available for critical thinking and critical use of media and for political participation
- Television is an expression of capitalism; it makes us disengaged with our lives and with political participation
- Alienation at work and alienation in our free time is a way how we live our life. I order to change something we have to change everything
- Still, maybe we should be more hopeful on media and put our hopes on education. Media and political education in schools is needed and these changes take time
- Advertisements in the media encourages us to want more, to spend more, to have illusionary needs. Manipulation is contained in too many advertisements. Are advertisements good for us?
- But on the other hand, commercials in the media make the media organisations able to produce also good/quality content with money earned from commercials. Without income from advertisements the media would be too expensive for users and many of them would collapse, probably many of those with quality content. Are we ready to pay more for the media to get content without commercials?
- Do we have the media we deserve? We buy biased media, also soaps and telenovelas are watched much more than serious, quality production. Should we accept the blame as an audience for the way in which the media has developed?
- Do we want special channels targeted at young people, would it lead to further fragmentation of audience/citizens?
- We have to be aware of the labour relations in the media industry being part of so called creative industries, where many journalists and creative workers work for small



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- money without protection of their jobs, social security etc., while big business makes huge money out of it
- Should we put all our hopes on education (media education, political education) or we should also request from the governments and the EU to regulate media industry and political elites better?

Suggestions

- Schools should be the place of media education and political education - to teach young people to listen to arguments, take and analyse them, to appreciate what is being said and to make own decision
- We can't protect young people from the media but we can educate them to process it critically
- To empower young people through critical thinking
- To ensure that all citizens, including young people have access to variety of media that report in different manners

On new media

Reflections

- Online campaigns face a problem of efficiency - there are many petitions with numerous signatures, but without real effect
- Politicians have to approach youth not only virtually, through messages and forwarding campaigns, but with face to face communication
- Virtual space for doing politics with youth is not enough, physical space managed by youth is needed to serve as a meeting place
- To learn and even vote online can help, but also alienate young people (and other citizens participating in that way), and contribute to lack of "man to man" physical "offline" contacts, communication and empathy
- Online mechanisms to learn and practice democracy are not meant to make young people spend even more time in front of computers, but we have to find them where they are and give them chance to use the channels they use also for political education and participation
- To find balance in introducing online mechanisms of participation and requesting accountability from democratic institutions and elected representatives
- Emphasis should not be on internet mechanisms but on schools, probably mainly primary schools where socialisation in political system should start and be initiated
- Access to the internet is essential and we understand that not all people have access to internet. This need to be addressed
- New media can be used to increase knowledge about democracy. Time is necessary to achieve improvements (maybe even generations)
- Similar to the punk revolution that helped in late 1970s and 1980s maybe we now have to stimulate youth participation by using new media for revolution
- Still, enthusiasm on potential of new media has to take into consideration wide presence of hate speech on the internet, often not only open, but also subtle hate speech



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- New media can be better way in our search for credible information, try to find out yourself rather than watching what is on offer
- We say TV can be mindless, but what about new media, networking such as Facebook, silly games..., new media can be even more thoughtless than TV

On the Democratic potential of the internet

Reflections

- The internet is readily available for people to use and is also easy to use
- It provides easy ways of communication and access to services and other individuals
- It provides a tool for political organisation but also for work and studies
- Security issues are serious and important issues, such as identity theft and not having secure access
- There are secure digital certificates and safe keys available now, like in e-banking
- It should also be noted that postal voting exists already in some countries and is much less secure than an online system
- There is also an issue about accessibility as individuals for a variety of reasons might not be able to use/access the internet
- There are also problems with "misinformation" and whether or not information accessed is necessarily true
- In some cases people might just get stuck with "first page google syndrome"
- Lack of human interaction with the internet only and it is not a question of the internet instead of human interaction. It can be used »side by side« and individuals should be able to have a choice, especially if unable to attend the polling booth
- Increase in polling time if the internet system was adopted, votes would not have to be counted
- There is also a cost involved in the use of the internet
- Online voting is a potential use of the internet. With benefits such as: it would be quick and easy to vote, increased time/cost efficiency after initial outlays, but there are also drawbacks in the form of security and possibilities of voting being influenced or manipulated
- Other forms of concern involve the »policing« of the internet and how this could possibly be done, for example dealing with hate-speech
- There is fear of the internet being too commercialised
- Still a dependency on literacy



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