



## Report from the Regional Conference

# Youth Involvement in Decision-making Processes and Social Activities

Time /Place:

5 December 2012 / Prishtina

Organized by:

Association of Kosovo Municipalities

In cooperation with:

GiZ/EDYK- Kosovo

## **AGENDA**

<b>10.00-10.40</b>	Opening of the Meeting (Moderated by Mr. Sazan Ibrahim) Mr. Pal Lekaj, AKM Board Member Mrs. Teuta Haxhiu, Member of the Parliamentarian Commission on Youth Mrs. Ganimete Musliu, Head of Informal Parliamentarian Group on Youth Mr. James Macbeth, Head of GiZ Office in Kosovo
<b>10.40-11.15</b>	<b>Mr. Haver Husaj, Chairperson of the AKM Youth Commission</b> (Legislation of Kosovo related to youth, Youth Activities in Kosovo, LYAC) - <b>Discussion</b>
<b>11.15-11.55</b>	<b>Representative from Slovenia</b> (Legislation in Slovenia related to youth, Youth Activities in Slovenia, Youth Participation) – <b>Discussion</b>
<b>11.55-12.30</b>	<b>Representative from Albania</b> (Legislation in Albania related to youth, Youth Activities in Albania, Youth Participation) – <b>Discussion</b>
<b>12.30-13.30</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>
<b>13.30-14.05</b>	<b>Representative from Bulgaria</b> (Legislation in Bulgaria related to youth, Youth Activities in Bulgaria, Youth Participation) – <b>Discussion</b>
<b>14.05-14.40</b>	<b>Representative from Croatia</b> (Legislation in Croatia related to youth, Youth Activities in Croatia, Youth Participation) – <b>Discussion</b>
<b>15.00-16.00</b>	Conclusions and Recommendations

**The purpose of the conference was:** Discussion on the implementation of legal infrastructure on youth, discussion on relationship between central and local level affecting youth sector, Youth Budget, the work of Local Youth Action Council (LYAC).

**Participants at the Conference were:** Municipal Directors for Youth and Sport; Municipal Officers for Youth; Members of the Parliamentary Commission for Youth Issues; Members of the Board of the Informal Parliamentary Group on Youth of the Parliament of Republic of Kosovo; Chairpersons of Municipal Youth Councils and Youth Centers; Community of International partners that support development of Youth sector in the Republic of Kosovo.

## MAIN SPEECHES

### Mr. Pal Lekaj, AKM Board Member

I have the honor that on behalf of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities to welcome you at the Regional Conference on Youth Involvement in Decision-making process and Social Activities.

Local authorities being authorities closer to the youth, play a very important role in promoting youth participation in decision-making. In doing so, local authorities can ensure that youth not only listen and learn for active participation in decision-making but rather to have the opportunity to exercise the competences and responsibilities arising from the laws of the Republic of Kosovo. However, youth participation is not just about creating active citizens or building democracy for the future. It is vital that if participation is to be meaningful for youth, they can influence and can shape decisions and actions when they are young and not only in a later stage of life.

Given that youth constitute about 60% of the population and it is this youth from which depends the future of Kosovo, AKM considers that it is time, if possible, to make an extra effort to allocate more funds for this area. The fact is that although the majority of the population is under 36 years, youth probably is not represented in all areas of public life. Moreover, the needs of youth in general and ensuring that youth has the care and access to public services are of key importance.

Municipal involvement is crucial because they are the government part closer to the citizen. New inclusive strategies and policies that enhance true commitment of municipalities will be implemented to address the needs of youth in urban areas and in rural areas. However, for this to be effective, the local authorities will need to work very closely with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. Moreover, they have to be allocated more financial resources from the central level.

Youth activities are very limited where especially are lacking sports facilities, such as sports fields and sports halls. Activities are very limited, which is in contrast to many motivated youth groups in municipalities. Youth has many ideas, but budgetary constraints together in some cases with poor infrastructure pose an obstacle to the development of the youth sector. Municipalities recommend that each municipality must have as a minimum: a sports hall, a youth center and a cultural center. Municipalities require from the Ministry to support these initiatives and the municipalities could provide the space for the construction of each of these centers. Regarding the participation of youth in decision-making process, youth should be consulted more on local issues that will impact their lives and their future. Youth complain that those who take decisions regarding youth are mostly adults who, though well-intentioned, make decisions based on their impressions of the situation and needs of youth and sometimes this perception does not match the reality.



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Therefore, emphasis should be placed on empowering these groups and attracting them to participate in public life.

### **Mrs. Teuta Haxhiu – Member of Parliamentarian Commission on Youth**

This conference is very welcome and from now and on the Commission commits itself to support them by addressing all requirements, initiatives and ideas that come to us from starting with the right budget allocation for youth in municipalities to influence the strengthening of mechanisms for the advancement of youth activities.



### **Mrs. Ganimete Musliu, Head of Informal Parliamentarian Group on Youth**



Informal Parliamentarian Group on Youth was formed in the last term and from six members under 30 years old, now we have 26 members. From our commitment we have initiated the Law on Youth and through our activities have been some improvement in the role and greater inclusion of youth in decision-making processes to strengthen their role. This commitment includes our involvement outside the offices of the Kosovo Assembly. Now we have started amending the Law on Youth and in this case would like to thank the mayors for cooperation. We took the initiative for the Law on the

protection of children's rights and we would like to thank GiZ for their great support in this regard.

### **Mr. Guenter Gryzbek – Head of the Programme for Youth in GiZ**

Everything revolves around the budget. That is totally right. But along with AKM, Municipalities and Informal Parliamentarian Group on Youth have worked for months on the draft-law on the protection of youth. Involving children and youth in this law will have budgetary implications, as well. Currently we have 16 laws and regulations for the protection of children and youth and in seven ministries and their implementation has problems due to lack of budget.



## PRESENTATIONS

### **Mr. Aver Husaj, AKM Chairperson of Youth Commission**

Mr. Husaj was focused on Kosovo Youth Legislation which sets out the main responsibilities for strengthening the youth sector in the Republic of Kosovo and supporting youth participation in decision-making and responsibilities of central and local government institutions to youth and youth organizations in relevant areas regulated by this law.

He presented the functioning, organization and views over Central Youth Action Council, Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC), Youth Centers and their activities. Also Mr. Aver Husaj presented the organization of the Youth Commission in the framework of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities which aims to examine specific issues related to the field of culture, youth and sports at the local level. He added that based on the action plans which are approved by the Municipal Assemblies; they also receive financial obligations based on them, such as different cultural manifestations and youth cultural exchanges. Among the activities of municipalities are those for environmental protection, cleaning parks, forests, rivers, cultural heritage preservation, in collaboration with regional institutions for the protection of monuments, sports competitions, and training and various courses.

### **Ms. Barbara Horvat – Association of Municipalities and Town of Slovenia**

Ms. Horvat introduced Legislation relating to youth in the Republic of Slovenia and the rules on the implementation of provisions of acts on youth. Youth vertically is organized to the Youth Office of the Republic of Slovenia as part of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport consisting of representatives of governmental and non-governmental sector. Public interest in the youth sector is associated with the National Youth Programme which sets priorities and measures.

Talking about what is a youth center in Slovenia, Slovenian representative added that it is a legal organization (Association - 45%, Private Institutions - 13% and Public Institutions - 42%) that offers activities approved by the local governments or municipalities, allows an open program (in 7 different areas) and provides an organizational structure that enables the democratic process and the coordination of the implementation of the planned program.

At the inter-sectoral approach, activities are organized with the intergenerational cooperation (supported by EU programs, actions led by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs), Multimedia Center (provides space for musical youth groups, coordinator of e-points in cities ...) (actions guided and supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture) and Entrepreneurship Incubator (provides help and support for entrepreneurs to start their first business).



### **Mr. Artan Pogoni – Director for Youth and Sport in the Municipality of Tirana**

Mr. Pogoni after presentation of the legislation of the of Youth in Albania said that in Albania are operating around 80 youth associations or organizations, which are run or joint the Albanian Youth Council. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports has developed Youth Strategy which aims at creating an enabling environment that ensures youth participation in policy formulation and decision-making process at the national level. In Albania, the youth being one of the greatest assets of this country (approximately 70% of the population is under age 30), by the side of the institutions, the youth is seen with the eye of a real and worthy partner of good governance and overall.

In many municipalities in Albania are created Youth Centers, which represent youth interests and major problems of organizations by working with political institutions, parliament, government, organizations and interest groups in Albania and abroad. Their goal is to develop international relations that have as a focus their recognition, cooperation, promotion and development in the world of youth and to promote and implement actions, activities and joint meetings with various organizations in the field of education and growth of capacities of youth.

Municipality of Tirana has undertaken since a year also the launch to equip students with Student Municipal Charter which is now a reality and the a great advantages for the youth students from public to local private companies on the basis of a partnership agreement.

### **Mrs. Ginka Tchavdarova – Executive Director of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria**

Mrs. Tchavdarova talked about the framework of the European Union for Youth, National Policies for Youth and Local Policies for Youth, forms of involvement of youth in local level and European Act and programs for youth. Among the acts and

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operational policies in Bulgaria for youth she mentioned the Act of Physical Education and Sports, Strategy for National Youth Policy, the Annual Programs Youth Activities, etc.

Among the problems and challenges of youth, she mentioned changes of life values, changes of life philosophy and behavior models, tendencies to individualism and negativism, consumerism and "I want all here and now!" style, "Sinking" into the virtual world, rejecting the traditional marriage and postponing the birth of children. Then discrepancy with economic reality: youth unemployment, pressure for internal migration - from small towns (or villages) in major cities or the capital and external migration – massive immigration in other countries in search for a better life.

National policies for youth of Bulgaria are included such as measures to stimulate educational activities as IT equipment for schools, awards scholarships to low-income students, students with disabilities and children without parents, loans with lower rate for higher education, then training in foreign languages, IT skills, business and administration skills, vocational education and training voucher system.

Finally she pointed out various national programs without the provision of resources, youth are underrepresented in political positions at the local level, problems with youth unemployment and training of youth, the main rate of youth participation at local level - youth councils and parliaments, most difficult problem - to overcome a lack of motivation among youth, the majority of youth aside politics as social activities even though over 40% of municipalities have implemented policies for youth.

## **Ms. Anamarija Soco – Coordinator of the Croatian Youth Network**

Ms. Soco in presentation of the youth sector in the Republic of Croatia spoke about the youth realities and commitment and youth work. She said that youth activities have begun as a strong youth in student organizations. Their origin is in the peace movement in the 90s and most strong organizations in 2000, where influences were bigger in political developments and responding to local needs.

Currently diverse fields of youth actions are informing, free time, ecology, culture, non-formal education, exchange ... responding to crucial problems: unemployment, quality education, participation, social exclusion. At the organized structures of youth today we have Youth Centers, Youth Clubs, Regional/Local Info Centers.

While the challenges affect lack of definitions and lack of support, need for more investment from local communities. While the capital has the Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth which is a multilocational and multifunctional center which bring youth together with their cultures.

