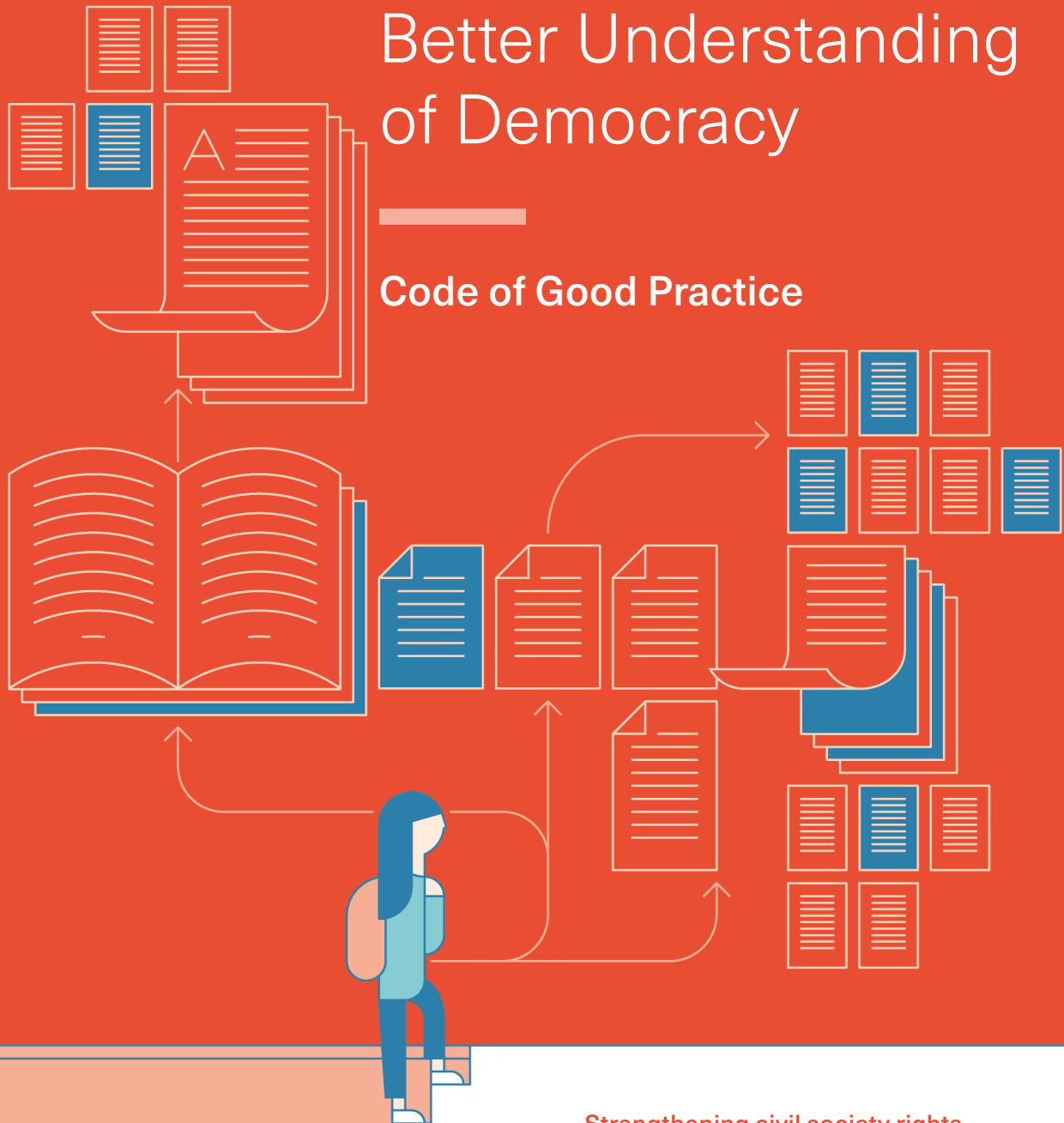


Youth Access to Public Information Towards Better Understanding of Democracy



Strengthening civil society rights
by information access for European youth



Strengthening civil society rights by information access for European youth

- 5 countries involved
- 9 workshops
- code of good practice

www.civicyouth.eu
www.gdansk.pte.pl



Polish Economic Society
Branch Gdansk



Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union



Youth Access to Public Information Towards Better Understanding of Democracy

Code of Good Practice

The theme of this year's celebration is "Leaving No One Behind!", a mission in which digital technology is an invaluable resource. However, the unprecedented digital transformation of our era is also leading to new forms of inequality. To combat this, digital innovation must go hand in hand with the obligation of Member States to adopt and improve legislation for public access to information. Through implementing laws, investing in relevant infrastructure, and engaging civil society and young people, in particular, access to information can protect human rights and drive sustainable development.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General

Message on the occasion of the International Day
for Universal Access to Information

28.09.2019



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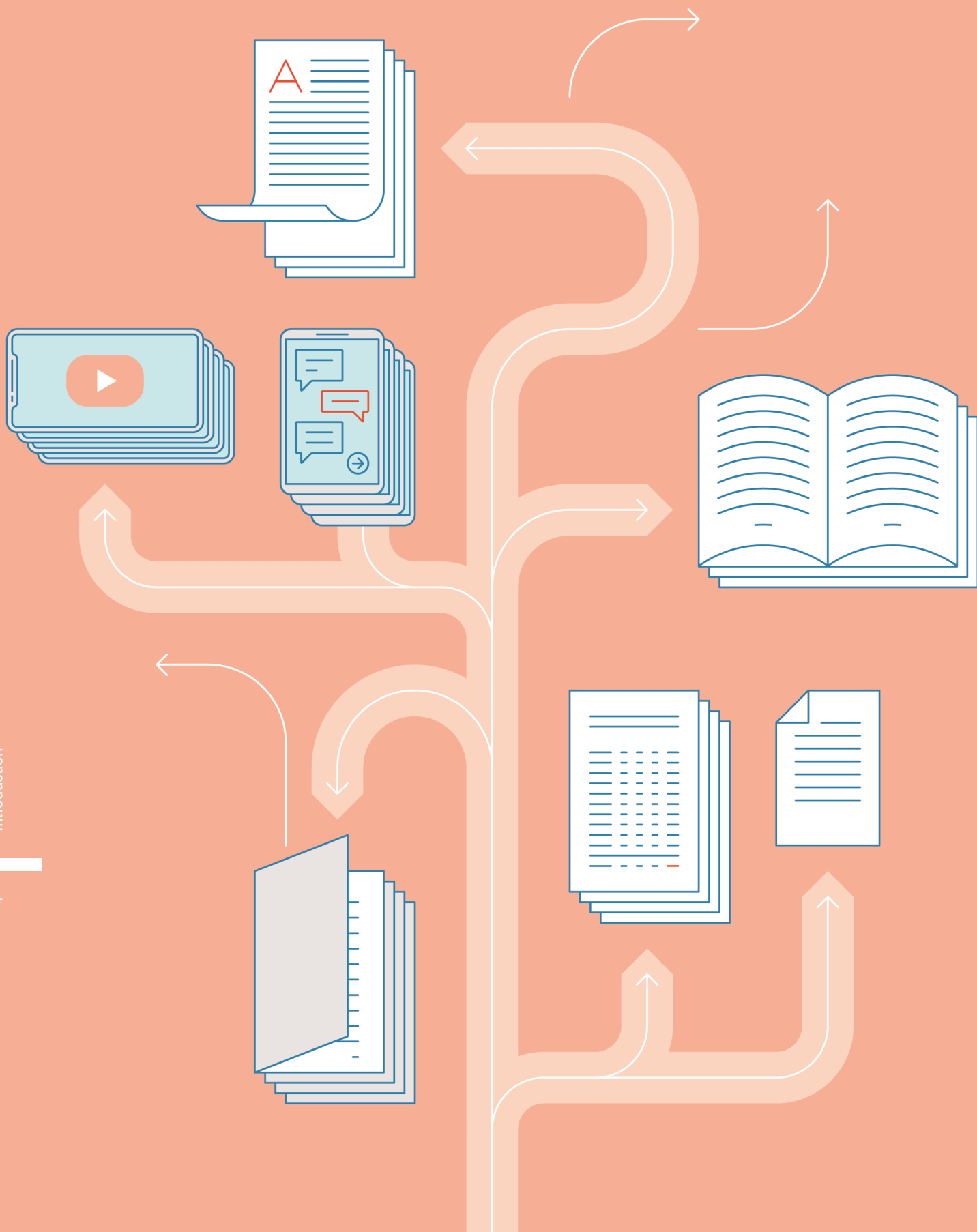


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Dear Readers,

The European Union treats participation as one of the essential democratic mechanisms for transforming individual interests into legitimate collective decisions.

The involvement of youth is regarded as particularly valuable. The Union focuses its activities in this area on striving to increase the participation of young people in civic, economic, social, cultural and political life. It calls upon the Member States to encourage and promote the engagement of the rising generation in society and democratic processes, the active involvement of young people and youth organisations in policies affecting the lives of young people at all levels, and to support youth organisations at local, regional and national levels. Besides, it points to the value of involving various young people's voices in decision-making processes at all levels and supports the development of civic competences through civic education and learning strategies. Finally, it notes the potential of the young, e.g. in counteracting such phenomena as populism, xenophobia and digital threats growing in the European Union.

To increase the level of youth participation, it is necessary to create conditions for young people to “learn to participate”, including raising awareness of the possibilities they have in this respect and methods of participation as well as benefits resulting from it. The young who have cognitive skills and the ability to communicate improved in the education process and through participation in social phenomena have a chance to become a subject of politics and not just its object.

The first step on the path to conscious and active citizenship may be the acquisition of skills to exercise rights that are not limited by age. Examples of such rights are: the right to freedom of information and the right to access public information.

The project Strengthening the civil society rights by information access for European youth, the aim of which is to popularise the right to freedom of information and access to public information among European youth has been developed and implemented by six organisations from various European Union countries: Project Leader – Polish Economic Society branch in Gdańsk, from Poland; WeCitizens – WijBurgers – NousCitoyens from Belgium; Socialas Inovacijas Centers from Latvia; Eesti Naisuurimus – ja Teabekeskus from Estonia; Aktiivinen Eurooppalainen Kansalainen Suomi Ry from Finland and Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic from Poland. As a result of joint discussions, meetings, interviews and a review of documents, strategies and policies implemented in the countries which are the project partners, a youth guide for exercising the right to information and public information have been created, together with a code of good practices. We have selected methods that, on the one hand, show what these rights are and how they can be exercised, and on the other hand, illustrate tools that help to use them effectively.

The publication we are handing to you will help you to take the first step towards a conscious and active use of FOI and ATI. We hope that its content will convince you that EU countries, by developing both youth policy and transparency policy, want to encourage you to embark on the great adventure of conscious and active participation in democratic processes. Nothing about you without you!

Sylvia Mrozowska, Barbara Kijewska





ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Only those young people who are informed about their rights and obligations can independently make decisions and pursue their goals as full citizens.

The right to freedom and access to public information, enabling young people to search for and receive public documents, serves as a vital tool in the fight against corruption, facilitates full participation in public life, increases governing efficiency, encourages investment and helps enforce fundamental human rights.

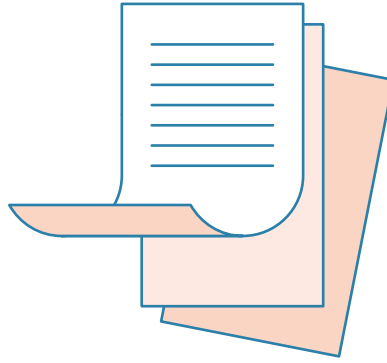
The openness of public authorities' actions is an indicator of a democratic state. It is the fundamental guarantee of citizens' trust in the state and its law, without which the harmonious functioning of society is not possible. Information on the activities of public bodies may be relevant for both the individual and the general public. Access to it is one of the essential tools enabling citizens to exercise control over those in power. That is why it is so vital to ensure the broadest possible access to public information. At the institution level, it means creating conditions for sharing information, and at the citizen level, the ability to exercise this right (I know how and for what).



A

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

In European countries the right to information (RTI), understood as part of the right to freedom of information (FOI), which is connected with the freedom of expression, is one of the rights of human freedom.



The signatories of international treaties have repeatedly recognised that it is not the duty of the state as such to acknowledge which of the values in the sphere of freedom and fundamental rights deserve protection. They exist regardless of the will of the state. However, the task of the state is to create legal guarantees for their fullest realisation. Among these *safeguards*, the creation of constitutional guarantees for the respect of the rights and freedoms already recognised in international agreements comes to the fore.

DO YOU KNOW?



All over the world, in early 2019, RTI is legally guaranteed in 128 countries. There are still 67 countries where citizens do not have this right.

See more: www.rti-rating.org

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) – Article 13

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, SDG Target 16.10

aims to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.”

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) – Article 11

Freedom of expression and information

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart knowledge and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.

European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (2010) – Article 10

Freedom of expression

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

Access to public information and freedom of information (FOI) refer to the right to access information held by public bodies, also known as “right to know.”

RTI — Right to Inform
ATI — Access to Information
FOI — Freedom of Information

YOU WILL FIND THIS RIGHT (RTI) IN YOUR CONSTITUTION!

BELGIUM

Right of access since 1994

Article 32 of the Constitution was amended in 1993 to include a right of access to documents held by the government: "Everyone has the right to consult any administrative document and to have a copy made, except in the cases and conditions stipulated by the laws, decrees, or rulings referred to in Article 134."

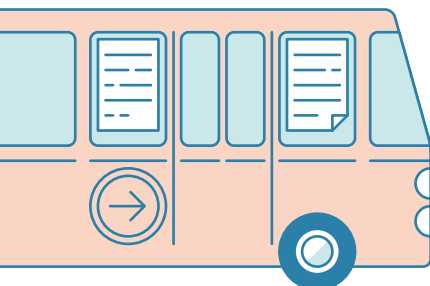
More: www.rti-rating.org/country-data/Belgium/

ESTONIA

Right of access since 2000

Article 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia states: "(1) Everyone has the right to obtain information disseminated for public use freely. (2) All state agencies, local governments, and their officials have a duty to provide information about their activities, according to the procedure provided by law, to an Estonian citizen at his or her request, except information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law, and information intended exclusively for internal use. (3) An Estonian citizen has the right to access information about himself or herself held in state agencies and local governments and state and local government archives, under the procedure provided by law. This right may be restricted according to law to protect the rights and freedoms of others or the confidentiality of a child's parentage and in the interests of preventing a criminal offence, apprehending a criminal offender, or ascertaining the truth in a criminal proceeding. (4) Citizens of foreign states and stateless persons who are in Estonia have the rights specified in paragraphs two and three of this section equally with Estonian citizens unless otherwise provided by law."

More: www.rti-rating.org/country-data/Estonia/



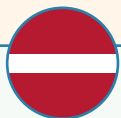


FINLAND

Right of access since 1951

[Constitution of Finland] Section 12, para. 2: Documents and recordings in possession of the authorities are public unless an Act has specifically restricted their publication. Everyone has the right of access to public documents and recordings. [Principle of Openness] Article 1 (1) Official documents shall be in the public domain, unless specifically otherwise provided in this Act or another Act.

More: www.rti-rating.org/country-data/Finland/

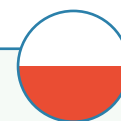


LATVIA

Right of access since 1998

Article 100. "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to freely receive, keep and distribute information and to express their views. Censorship is prohibited." Article 104. "Everyone has the right to address submissions to State or local government institutions and to receive a materially responsive reply." Article 115. "The State shall protect the right of everyone to live in a benevolent environment by providing information about environmental conditions and by promoting the preservation and improvement of the environment."

More: www.rti-rating.org/country-data/Latvia/



POLAND

Right of access since 1997

Constitution Article 61: (1) A citizen shall have the right to obtain information on the activities of organs of public authority as well as persons discharging public functions. Such right shall also include receipt of information on the activities of self-governing economic or professional organs and other persons or organisational units relating to the field in which they perform the duties of public authorities and manage communal assets or property of the State Treasury. (2) The right to obtain information shall ensure access to documents and entry to sittings of collective organs of public authority formed by universal elections, with the opportunity to make sound and visual recordings. (3) Limitations upon the rights referred to in paras. 1 and 2 above, may be imposed by statute solely to protect freedoms and rights of other persons and economic subjects, public order, security or vital economic interests of the State. (4) The procedure for the provision of the information referred to in paras. 1 and 2 above shall be specified by statute, and regarding the Sejm and the Senate by their rules of procedure.

More: www.rti-rating.org/country-data/Poland/

What are public institutions?

Public institutions exist to provide citizens with the possibility to access certain essential services. Their task is to protect and support citizens, as well as to improve the quality of their life. Thus, health care, police, fire brigade, municipal and state offices, public schools and libraries, universities, etc. are public institutions because they are financed from public funds. That is why every citizen can use them.

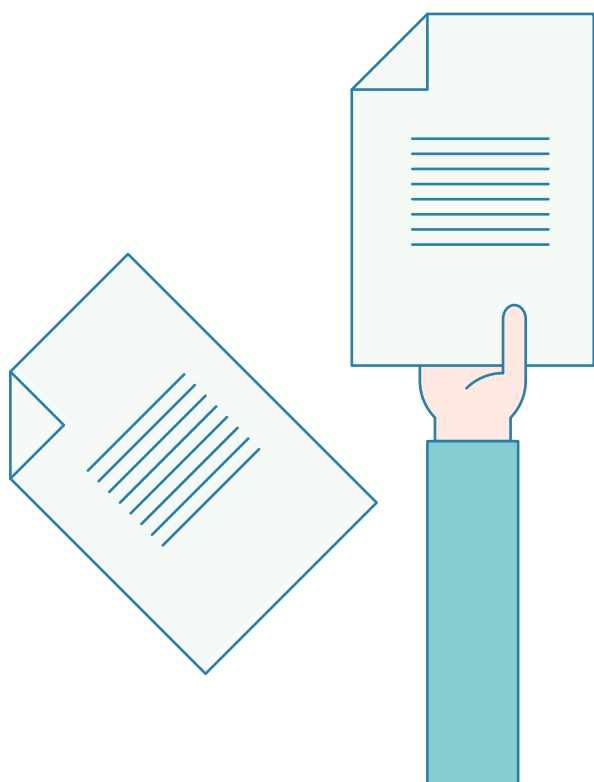
B

WHY ACCESS TO INFORMATION?

You and your loved ones pay taxes, and the state or municipality where you live performs tasks using tax money.

Institutions make decisions that affect your daily life, from construction in the city centre to buying vaccines or organising cultural events. Sometimes good things are done, and sometimes bad things are done. The more people are interested in public activities, the more they will be able to make proposals to improve things that are poorly done or to approve what has been done well. The more public leaders are aware that a citizen is checking what actions they are taking, the more careful they will be in managing our taxes. Democracy will be strengthened thanks to your watchful eyes.

On the other hand, institutions produce information that you may need to make a decision, or you can use this information to publish it on your blog or Facebook. In this way, you will make life easier for people who may need similar information, which is called the re-use of public information. Public information cover, among others, train timetables, information about the government's work, a list of hospitals in the area, or information about road construction on a specific route, and even messages from a public meteorological institute.





HOW CAN YOU DO THAT?

HOW TO GAIN ATI?

There are three main ways to become acquainted with public information:

1. participation in meetings of collegial public authorities, e.g. municipality/city councils;
2. getting acquainted with public information made available in the institution (displayed, posted on the institution's website, stored in a repository);
3. requesting public information.

ATI offers the possibility to see and listen to live debates of people sitting on bodies chosen in general elections, i.e. those that we, as citizens, have chosen.

Institutions publish public information on official websites and display them in their headquarters.



DO YOU KNOW?

In 2021 the range of data that can be re-used will be extended and will cover data created by state-owned entrepreneurs and scientific units that you will be able to download freely and openly across the EU, via Application Programming Interfaces (APIs).

EU member states have an open data portal where they post public information for re-use. In one place, you have access to hundreds of pieces of information according to categories!



BE <https://data.gov.be/en>



EE <https://opendata.riik.ee/en/>



FI <https://vm.fi/en/opendata>



LV <https://data.gov.lv/eng>



PL <https://dane.gov.pl/>



WHAT IF I CANNOT FIND WHAT I AM LOOKING FOR?

If you cannot find public information in open resources, you can ask for it orally, but you can only do so only if the information is readily available.

If this is not possible, you have to request information in writing, but this does not mean that you have used a unique form and do it in a particular way. In your letter or e-mail, write what information you want and how you want it to be delivered to you.

WHAT CAN I ASK PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ABOUT?

Law-making

The course of the meeting of the district council or city council is public and available, you can attend the meetings, and you can also access documents created by public authorities during the legislative process.

Spatial planning

If you want to know what buildings will be built in your neighbourhood, which architects designed constructions for which building permits have been granted. The building permit decisions issued by the architectural and building authority are public information subject to disclosure.

Contracts, invoices, bills, expenses...

If you want to know if outsourcing of services to people outside the municipal office was carried out transparently, who did what and how much it cost, you can ask the municipality. Just send an inquiry.

Information on employees and persons performing public functions

Do you want to know if employees of municipal institutions are substantively prepared to perform their tasks? How much money does the mayor spend on trips as part of his duties? You can ask.

Decisions taken

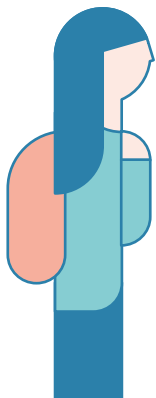
Or maybe you want to know how many permits the municipality issued for felling trees in your favourite park?



REMEMBER!

The above list is only a fraction of the whole wide world of public information which is available upon request.

Don't be afraid to ask!



STEP BY STEP, HOW TO SUBMIT A REQUEST?



STEP 1: CHECK

Before you submit a written request to the institution, check if:

1. The piece of information you are looking for is public information.
2. The piece of information you are looking for can be found on the official website of the institution (minutes, audio materials from meetings, reports, etc.). Institutions themselves often create a platform for communication with citizens, informing them about decisions and actions taken. Therefore, review the official site carefully. Be a detective in your case!
3. If you have found the information you are looking for, "work is done"!
4. If you have not found it, take a step no. 2.



STEP 2: WRITE

Write your ATI request. Remember: you do not have to justify your claim or say how you intend to use the information.

1. Check if there is an "ATI request" electronic form on the official website of the institution.
 2. If you have found the "ATI request" form, fill it in and send it.
 3. If not, you have to send an e-mail or a letter.
- You should receive a confirmation of submitting your ATI request.
 - You should receive the reply within 15-30 days depending on the law and the amount of work required to prepare the answer.



STEP 3: RECEIVE

The public institution can:

- Give you the information expected.
- Give you a partial reply.
- Redirect your ATI request to another public institution.
- Inform you that it needs more time to respond.
- Refuse to answer if they have the right (examples: the question is not about public information; the answer has already been published; the issue has been addressed to the wrong institution.
- Ignore the question.

Important! In many cases, e.g. refusing an answer to a public inquiry or ignoring the question, you can **appeal!** Here, knowledge of the procedure is essential. In democratic countries, there are various institutions supporting citizens in asserting their rights. An example is the civic support networks for using ATI – you can always turn to them for help!



BE <https://transparencia.be/>



EE <https://www.transparency.org/country/EST>



FL https://www.transparency.org/whoweare/contact/org/nc_finland



LV <http://delna.lv/eng/>

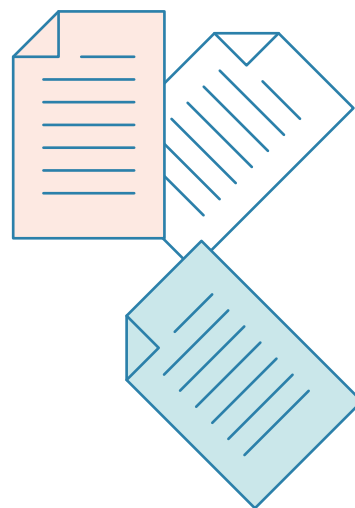


PL <https://informacjapubliczna.org>



REMEMBER!

ATI laws and their implementation differ from country to country. To get more information on the state of ATI in your respective country, please consult the www.rti-rating.org



YOUTH POLICY IN A NUTSHELL

The development of the European Union's youth policy in recent years has been primarily associated with the awareness of the importance of the young generation of Europeans for the further development of the integration process, mostly in its social, economic and political dimension, and the general situation of young people in the European Union, which for a long time has been giving cause for concern.

Youth policy is within the competence of the Member States. The European Union supports and complements their activities in this field, providing a forum for cooperation and exchange of experience and information on issues of common interest.

The demographic situation of the European Union is a matter of concern. Statistical data clearly show that the European Union is ageing. Currently, young people constitute around 17% of the total population of the European Union. This proportion varies from country to country. It is slightly smaller in Greece, Spain, Italy and Slovenia, reaching the highest level in Cyprus, where 23.6% of the population is under 30 years old. The share of young people in the total population fell gradually from around 24% in 1985 to 19% in 2010. According to forecasts, when the European Union population increases to 525 million (2050), the percentage of young people will decrease from around 17% in 2018 to below 16% in 2050, which corresponds to a reduction of over 7 million people.

The diminishing political and social activity of young people is another challenge. The results of the European youth 2016 survey indicate the reasons for the low electoral involvement of young people. Respondents (90%) mention among them: disappointment, lack of faith that their voice can change anything, general lack of interest in European politics. To stimulate youth's activity in this area, attempts are made to implement programmes activating young people's civicism initiated by international organisations as well as national institutions, non-governmental organisations and political parties. They encompass formal education instruments (e.g. civics, democratic education) and non-formal ways of attracting young people to local, national and international politics. Most of them promote basic methods of political participation, assuming that knowledge about the possibilities of participation, its benefits and practices is necessary for the development of active political participation.

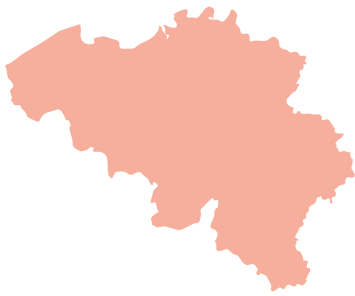
Strengthening of youth policy at both national and European level can be one way to change this grave situation. The European Union prepared the EU Youth Strategy, which provides a framework for EU cooperation in the field of youth policy for 2019–2027. It aims to support the participation of young people in democratic life and their social and civic engagement and to provide young people with the necessary resources to participate in social life. The Member States develop youth policy taking into account the specificities of this social group.

REMEMBER!

It is worth knowing what opportunities youth policy offers in your country!



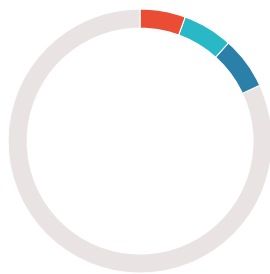
A BELGIUM



What is the youth population of Belgium?

The total number of young people:
2 057 718

Ratio of young people in the total population (%)



Age group 15-19	5,6%
Age group 20-24	6,1%
Age group 25-29	6,5%
Other age groups	81,8%

Total number of young people:
2 057 718

The Flemish Community formally defines "youth" as the group of children and young people up to and including the age of 30.

There is no clear understanding of young people in the French community of Belgium.

The target group for youth policy in East-Belgium is from 4 years up to 30.

Is there a Belgian youth policy?

Belgium has three youth policies (Flemish Community, French Community and German-Speaking Community). There is no National Youth Law, and there is no public discussion about the need for a single law. No national Youth Strategy exists at the moment.

The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights. The Act defines instruments and financing of youth policy, imposes on the Flemish authorities the obligation to run regional and local Youth Information Points (youth service) financed by local authorities.

In the French-Speaking Community, there are five decrees concerning the implementation of youth policies at the community level.

In the German-Speaking Community youth work is regulated by the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work (Dekret vom 6. December 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit) which sets out the essentials of the youth policy.

Who is responsible for the development and implementation of youth policy at the community level?

The Communities have a minister responsible for youth, a parliamentary commission and several administrative departments with 'youth' in their name.

Is there a Belgium strategy for youth?

The key instrument of the Flemish Government in the implementation of its youth policy is the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2015-2019), which operates on a four-year cycle. The current Youth Policy includes 12 strategic goals and 34 operational goals. The encompassing themes are (1) poverty; (2) sustainability; (3) being young; (4) mobility; (5) education 1; (6) education 2; (7) participation; (8) space; (9) well-being; (10) housing; (11) employment; (12) cultural education. The plan was developed using a participatory method involving young people, who set youth policy objectives covering 12 priority themes as part of the debates and surveys. The relevant ministers were then asked to submit action plans. Finally, administrations developed projects, processes and implementation indicators.

In the French-Speaking Community the Youth Strategy doesn't exist.

In German-speaking Community exists the Strategic Plan on Youth (2016-2020) entitled "Acting respectfully" (Jugendstrategieplan 2016-2020). The plan focuses on 11 actions in 4 categories: 1. Strong against Addiction, 2. Promoting diversity, 3. Political education, 4. Emotions and self-perception.

Which Belgium institutions are involved in the creation of a youth policy?

The Flemish Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults in the Ministry of Culture, Youth Sports and Media is responsible for implementing the Plan. At the local level, each province and the local authority has one officer who is responsible for youth matters.

What is the youth parliament in the Flemish community?

There is no youth parliament in Flanders.

What is the youth parliament – Wallonia-Brussels?

The Youth Parliament – Wallonia-Brussels is a non-profit organisation, which was set up in 1997. Every year it organises the “simulation” of the French-speaking Community’s parliament. Young deputies and journalists live together for a week and work together on fictitious decrees as deputies and journalists of a fictitious country. The event is broadcast by Belgian media.

What is the youth parliament of the German-speaking community?

The youth parliament created by the youth Council was a pilot project that started in 2004. It was to become a repetitive project, included in the secondary school curriculum. Unfortunately, this goal has not been attained yet.

What is the youth council of the Flemish community?

In Flanders, there are Youth Councils (Jeugdraad) at the national and local (Municipal Youth Councils) level. They are appointed as an advisory body to the Belgian Government. Each ministry addressing activities to the young is required to consult the Youth Council. As part of the Youth Councils, consultations are held in which the Youth Council advises on all matters related to youth policy and the development of a multiannual plan. Similarly, Local Youth Councils mostly cooperate with municipalities in the field of local policies addressed to young people and children. Youth councils regularly carry out surveys on youth issues and are responsible for keeping in touch.

What is the youth council in the French-speaking community?

The Youth Council is the leading and official advisory body for youth consultation in the French-speaking Community. The legislation governing the Youth Council is the Decree creating the Youth Council (Décret créant le Conseil de la Jeunesse). Its primary functions are: (1) To pass on advice on authorities’ demand or its initiative; (2) To promote civic participation of young people and their empowerment; (3) To consult young people on themes affecting them to build a collective speech to relay to the politics; (4) To represent young people and the youth sector at the national and international level.

What is the youth council of the German-speaking community?

The German-Speaking Community Youth Council (Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend – RdJ) was established by a royal resolution on 30 December 1983. It is an independent federation of individual young people, youth centres, local youth councils, youth political party organisations and youth organisations. The overall goal of the Youth Council is to promote all activities that enable young people of the German-speaking community to participate in making decisions on actions that affect them. The Youth Council considers itself a platform that allows the adolescent to participate in the development of youth policy actively, preparation of projects and to experience (European) democracy.

MORE INFORMATION

Youth policies in Belgium, 2017

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Belgium-Flemish-Community>

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Belgium-French-Community>

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Belgium-German-Speaking-Community>

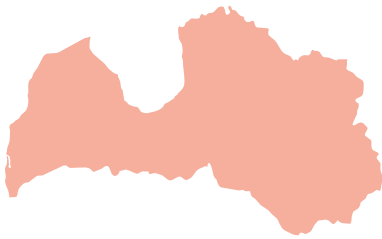
The Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy Plan 2015–2019

http://www.jkp.vlaanderen/assets/downloads/JKP_summary_digital_version.pdf

The Youth Parliament Wallonia-Brussels

<https://www.parlementjeunesse.be/>

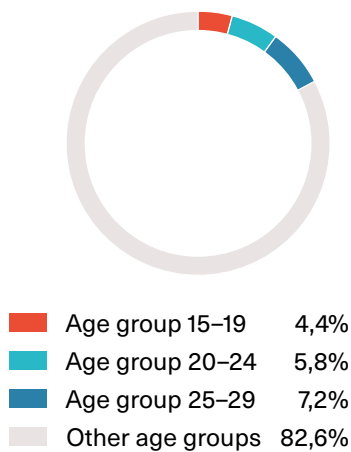
B LATVIA



What is the youth population of Latvia?

In 2017 the total number of young people aged 15–29 in Latvia amounted to **341 793** people. The number of young people in Latvia has dropped significantly over the past 20 years. Compared to 1990 it decreased by almost 40%.

Ratio of young people in the total population (%)



Total number of young people:
341 793

What is the main goal of youth policy in Latvia?

The main goal of youth policy in Latvia is to improve the quality of life of young people by promoting their initiatives and participation in decision making in public space. The specific objectives are defined in the medium-term policy planning document. The strategic goals in the 2016–2020 plan cover three areas: environment, participation and personal development. Directions of youth policy 2016–2020 in the field of “participation.”

- facilitating and ensuring active cooperation of those involved in the development and implementation of youth policy;
- development of research on youth;
- securing the representation of Latvia in international youth organisations and networks;
- providing young people with an opportunity to participate in decision making at the level of national and local authorities, supporting the participation of young people in democracy and strengthening the potential of youth organisations;
- providing young people with access to up-to-date, understandable information about their rights, obligations and responsibilities

Source: Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016–2020
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/281546-par-jaunatnes-politikas-istenosanas-planu-2016-2020-gadam>.

Who is responsible for the development and implementation of youth policy in Latvia?

Several entities are involved in the development and implementation of youth policy in Latvia, including public administration bodies, local authorities, youth organisations, youth initiative groups (informal youth groups), youth associations and foundations, trade unions, employers' organisations, religious organisations, youth researchers.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is responsible for youth policy. Each year, the MoES develops a programme that includes measures and actions to implement youth policy in the framework of the Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016–2020. In turn, a Youth Advisory Council exists to promote a coherent youth policy and encourage participation in decision-making and public life. Another important institution is the Agency for International Programs for Youth which is subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science. The main objective of the Agency is to promote youth voluntary service activities and mobility. At the national level, the body responsible for implementing the youth strategy is the Department of Political Initiatives and Development of the MoES, at the local level municipalities take responsibility for implementing youth policy, among others, by creating local youth policy documents.

What is youth law?

The Youth Law is a Latvian law defining persons involved in the implementation of youth policy and their competences, the role of young people in the development and implementation of youth policy, as well as the basic principles of allocating funds for youth initiatives and forms of youth participation in decision making in public life. According to the Youth Act, young people in Latvia are between 13 and 25 years of age.

What are the principles of Latvian youth policy?

There are seven principles of Latvian youth policy: the principle of participation; the principle of information availability; the principle of equal opportunities; the principle of respect for the interests of young people; the principle of favourable economic conditions; the principle of integration of young people; the principle of international mobility and cooperation.

What are: the latvian youth parliament and the youth council of Latvia?

The Youth Parliament is a project of the Latvian Parliament that provides young people with an opportunity to express and defend their ideas, as well as to get acquainted with the daily work of members of the parliament. Young people submit their ideas for elections and collect votes to support them. In 2016, such a project was implemented already for the sixth time in Latvia.

Any young person permanently residing in the Republic of Latvia, who has reached at least the age of 15 as at the moment of announcing of the project and would not be older than 20 at the end of the project, has the right to stand for election.

To stand for election in the Youth Parliament, a young person shall register their profile on the website according to the procedures specified in the Latvian Parliament project regulations.

Founded in 1992, the National Youth Council of Latvia is an association of youth organisations and organisations working with youth up to the age of 30 that voluntarily unites associations and foundations, the regulations or by-laws of which provide for youth work as

one of the aims and in which at least two thirds of members of the direct target group is persons below 30 years of age or organisers and/or implementers of youth work.

EXPERT OPINION

What is your opinion about the right method of raising awareness of youth about FIO in Latvia?

“The main channel for communication with youth nowadays is social media. Therefore the best results for raising awareness regarding FIO matters could be achieved through interactive social media campaigns and the creation of informative videos and infographics. Additionally, more civic education should be incorporated in the formal education system of the country; therefore youngsters already from an early age would have more knowledge regarding the importance of FIO in the functioning of a democratic country”.

Annija Kaktina

Social Innovation Centre
www.socialinnovation.lv

MORE INFORMATION

Flash Eurobarometer 455 (2018), European Youth
http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2163_455_ENG

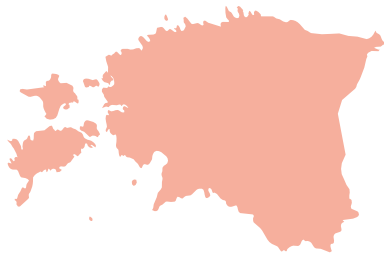
Ministry of Education and Science
<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/youth>

The Youth Law
<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=175920>

Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/281546-par-jaunatnes-politikas-istenosanas-planu-2016-2020-gadam>

Youth policies in Latvia, 2017
<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdllatvia.pdf>

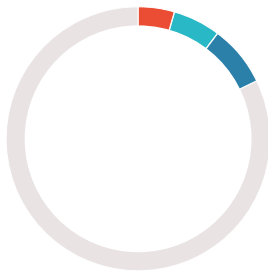
C ESTONIA



What is the youth population of Estonia?

The number of young people aged 15–29 amounts to **233 567** in Estonia. Youth in Estonia, according to the law, are people aged 7–26.

Ratio of young people in the total population (%)



■	Age group 15–19	4,4%
■	Age group 20–24	5,8%
■	Age group 25–29	7,2%
■	Other age groups	82,6%

Total number of young people:
233 567

What are the most important legal acts about youth in Estonia?

In Estonia, there are many different laws, which carry more or less direct relevance for young people as they define the obligations and rights of municipalities and central government towards the young people as well as entitlements, rights, duties and limitations of young people. Two most essential acts to the renewed Child Protection Act, which defines the principles of ensuring the rights and well-being of children in the age group of 0–18 and the Youth Work Act, which sets the age range for young people from 7–26 and the obligations of different authorities in the youth field.

Who is responsible for the development and implementation of youth policy in Estonia?

An institution responsible for youth is the Ministry of Education and Research, and more precisely, the Youth Affairs Department.

What is the main goal of the youth field development plan 2014–2020?

The main goal of the development plan maintains that young people will have a comprehensive range of opportunities for self-development and self-realisation and that the youth field will support the development of social cohesion and creativity in society in general. Moreover, the detailed goals indicate that: (1) young people will have more choices in terms of discovering their creative and developmental potential; (2) young people will face a lower risk of exclusion; (3) the participation of young people in decision-making will be supported more; (4) the youth field operates more efficiently.

What is the Estonian Youth Work Centre?

The Estonian Youth Work Centre (Eesti Noorsootöö Keskus) is a national centre for youth work under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Research – the national youth work agency. Its main objective is to develop and organise youth work in the framework of the national youth policy.

What is the role of youth participation in Estonia's youth policy?

Participation of young people in decision making is defined as one of four strategic objectives in the Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020. Most political parties in Estonia have a dedicated form for young people to participate – whether it is a substructure under the organisation or a separate organisation. There are local and county level youth participation councils in Estonia. The Estonian National Youth Council coordinates and supports the development and activities of youth councils in Estonia.

Considerable emphasis on youth participation in public life is related to the fact that Estonian youth is a passive group of voters. There is a noticeable disturbing tendency of a decrease in the participation of young people in the elections to the European Parliament and the national parliament. The emphasis on youth participation is intended to help curb this negative tendency.

In Estonia currently, innovative forms of youth participation are sought including supported by e-services and technologies. Smart youth work, including youth work using the developments of the technology, is a subject of high-priority in the youth policy throughout the youth field development plan period until 2020.

Are there youth representative bodies in Estonia?

In Estonia, the term “youth parliament” is not defined legally. Therefore, the term has been used for example as a name for some local youth councils (for example Narva Noorteparlament, see www.parlament.noortek.ee). However, just like in other European countries, there is the Estonian National Youth Council (Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit – ENL). The Estonian National Youth Council is an umbrella organisation established in 2002. It unites 56 youth organisations and 37 youth councils throughout Estonia.

Moreover, there are local and county level youth participation councils (osaluskogu) in Estonia. At the municipal level, local youth councils are consulted on topics that are relevant for youth. In 2015, the municipal youth councils were active in 70 local governments. The youth consultation in the public policy processes occurs mainly in 3 contexts: drafting sectorial strategies and development plans, implementing sectoral strategy and development plans and design of the youth work services.

MORE INFORMATION

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research

<https://www.hm.ee/en>

Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020

https://entk.ee/sites/default/files/arengukava%202014_2020.pdf

Youth policies in Estonia, 2017

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlestonia.pdf>

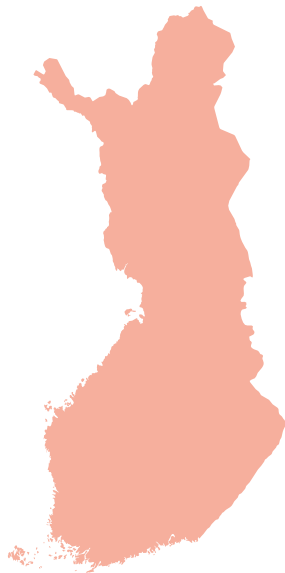
Youth Affairs Department

https://www.hm.ee/en/contact?tid_with_depth%5b0%5d=153

the Youth Work Act

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/515012016004/consolide>

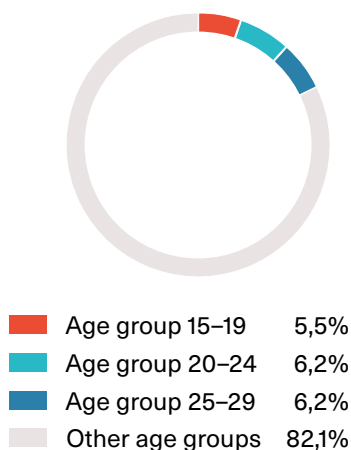
D FINLAND



What is the youth population of Finland?

The Youth Act defines young people as those under 29 years of age. Therefore, the actors that operate in the field of youth work target their actions at this age group.

Ratio of young people in the total population (%)



Total number of young people:
982 915

What is the Finnish youth act?

The Youth Act promotes social inclusion, opportunities to participate in decision-making on matters of concern, development of individuals' abilities, improvement of living conditions, and access to free-time hobbies and youth work – to name a few. The Government Decree supports the implementation of the act by, for example, specifying the assignment of the duties involved at the national, regional and local levels.

Who is responsible for the development and implementation of youth policy in Finland?

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the overall development of youth work and youth policy. The Ministry strives to support young people in growing up and gaining independence, promote their active citizenship and social empowerment, and improve the environment in which they grow up and their living conditions. The development of youth policy issues is informed by the Government Programme, the National Youth Work and Policy Programme as well as other strategies and implementation plans of the Government, including the Government Programme's key projects.

What are main goals of Finnish youth policy?

The Youth Act specifies the objectives and values of youth work and youth policy.

The goals of Finnish youth policy

- to promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities for exerting influence and improving their skills and capabilities to function in society
- support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for this purpose
- support young people's free-time pursuits and engagement in civic society
- promote non-discrimination and equality among young people and the realisation of their rights
- improve young people's growth and living conditions.

Source: The Youth Act, <https://minedu.fi/en/legislation-youth>

Is there a Finnish strategy for youth?

According to the Youth Act, the Government shall adopt a national youth work and policy programme every four years. The National Youth Work and Policy Programme (2017–2019) based on the Youth Act and the Government Decree on Youth Work were accepted on 12th of October 2017. The part of national policies of the programme comprises five youth policy objectives, which the government has outlined for 2017–2019: (1) Every child and young person has the possibility to engage in at least one free-time hobby of their choice; (2) Young people's employability skills are enhanced and social exclusion is reduced; (3) Young people receive more opportunities for participation in decision-making and exerting influence; (4) Fewer young people suffer from mental health problems thanks to preventive work, and (5) Young people receive sufficient guidance and other support for independent living.

Which Finnish institutions are involved in the creation of a youth policy?

The Regional State Administrative Agencies are responsible for the regional implementation of the Ministry of Education and Culture guidelines in the field of education, daycare, libraries, sports, and youth work. The municipality is responsible for how the youth policy and youth work is implemented at the local level. The municipal youth work services include e.g. information and counselling services, youth facilities and hobby opportunities, sports, cultural and multicultural youth activities, outreach youth work and youth workshops. The expert bodies assisting the Ministry of Education and Culture in matters of youth affairs are the State Youth Council and Assessment and State Aid Commission, the roles and tasks of which are defined in the Youth Act. As youth policy is cross-sectorial several ministries are responsible for policy areas concerning young people. These ministries include, e.g. the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Another critical national public agency involved in youth policy implementation is the Finnish National Agency for Education which merged with the earlier Finnish Centre for International Mobility CIMO on 1st of January 2017.

MORE INFORMATION

Youth policies in Finland, 2017

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlfinland.pdf>

The Youth Act

<https://minedu.fi/en/legislation-yout>

The Ministry of Education and Culture

<https://minedu.fi/en/policies-and-development-youth>

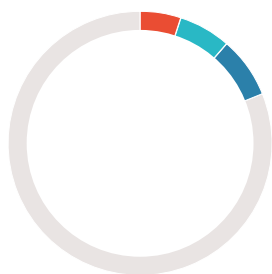
E POLAND



What is the youth population of Poland?

The total number of young people is **7 153 794**. According to social policy programmes, youth means people aged from 13 to 30 years of age.

Ratio of young people in the total population (%)



Age group 15–19	5,2%
Age group 20–24	6,3%
Age group 25–29	7,4%
Other age groups	81,1%

Total number of young people:
7 153 794

Does Poland have a youth strategy?

The “State Strategy for Youth for 2003–2012” (Strategia Państwa dla Młodzieży na lata 2003–2012) (Strategy) prepared before Poland’s accession to the EU remains the only document determining the development and directions of Polish youth policy. Currently, there is no strategy in Poland directly devoted to young people. It is impossible to indicate one official document focusing on the needs and rights of young people and regulating issues relating to them (“Youth Law”). However, this does not mean that Polish legislation does not cover young people’s lives, rights and duties. Youth-related regulations are provided in various legal acts.

At what stage is the creation of the national youth representation in Poland?

Official youth representation at the central level has been the subject of much debate since the onset of the political transformation in Poland. However, up till now, no permanent and single authority representing young people’s interests has been created. Work is currently in progress to create an entity whose activity may contribute to the development of Polish youth policy.

The Polish Council of Children and Youth of the Republic of Poland at the Ministry of National Education has operated in Poland since 2011. The tasks of the Council include expressing opinions and presenting proposals on issues concerning children and young people in matters related to government administration responsible for education and upbringing, in particular providing views on planned changes, including recommendations for solutions. The Council is composed of 16 members and their deputies, appointed by the Minister of National Education, one member and his/her deputy from each province.



What is the status of the development of Polish youth policy at the regional level?

At the regional level, we can observe the rapid development of youth policy. Seven provinces have established formal structures supporting and representing young people.

Examples of formal structures supporting and representing youth at the regional level in Poland:

- Youth Assembly of Dolnośląskie Province (2013)
- Youth Assembly of Podlaskie Province (2014)
- Youth Forum of Opolskie Province (2017)
- Youth Parliament of Wielkopolskie Province (Youth Assembly of Wielkopolskie Province) (2017)
- Youth Council of Zachodniopomorskie Province (2005)
- Youth Council of Pomorskie Province (2015)
- Parliament of Children and Youth of Lubelskie Province (1996)
- Youth Parliament of Śląskie Province (2017)

Source: Youth Policy in Poland 2017
<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlpoland.pdf>

There are more and more examples of such initiatives in Poland. Following art. 5, paragraph b of the Local Government Act, local authorities may appoint a youth council as an advisory body. In 2016, there were “about 200 youth councils operating under the authority of municipalities, cities, and in the case of Warsaw – also urban districts”. Some youth councils are members of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations (PROM) established in 2011. Since 22 April 2017, PROM has been a full member of the European Youth Forum. On 29 April 2016, the Parliamentary Group Supporting Youth Councils was established operating in local government units (the Parliamentary Team for Youth Councils at local government units), whose goal is to provide support and advice to youth councils integrating communities associated with youth councils and to promote the idea of active citizenship through participation in the work of youth councils. The group cooperates with the Polish Council of Children and Youth of the Republic of Poland operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education.

EXPERT OPINION

What is your opinion about the proper method of raising awareness of youth about FIO in Poland?

“Unfortunately, despite emphasising the strategic role of the youth component and loud announcements about the inclusion of young people in participatory processes, attempts to improve the current civic education system, or access to public information, there are still significant deficiencies in the system approach, on which we still need to work in order to lead to its improvement and this is a challenge that all of us must take on in the near future”.

Marcin Żuchowski

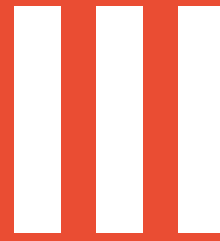
Association of Polish Communes
Euroregion Baltic

MORE INFORMATION

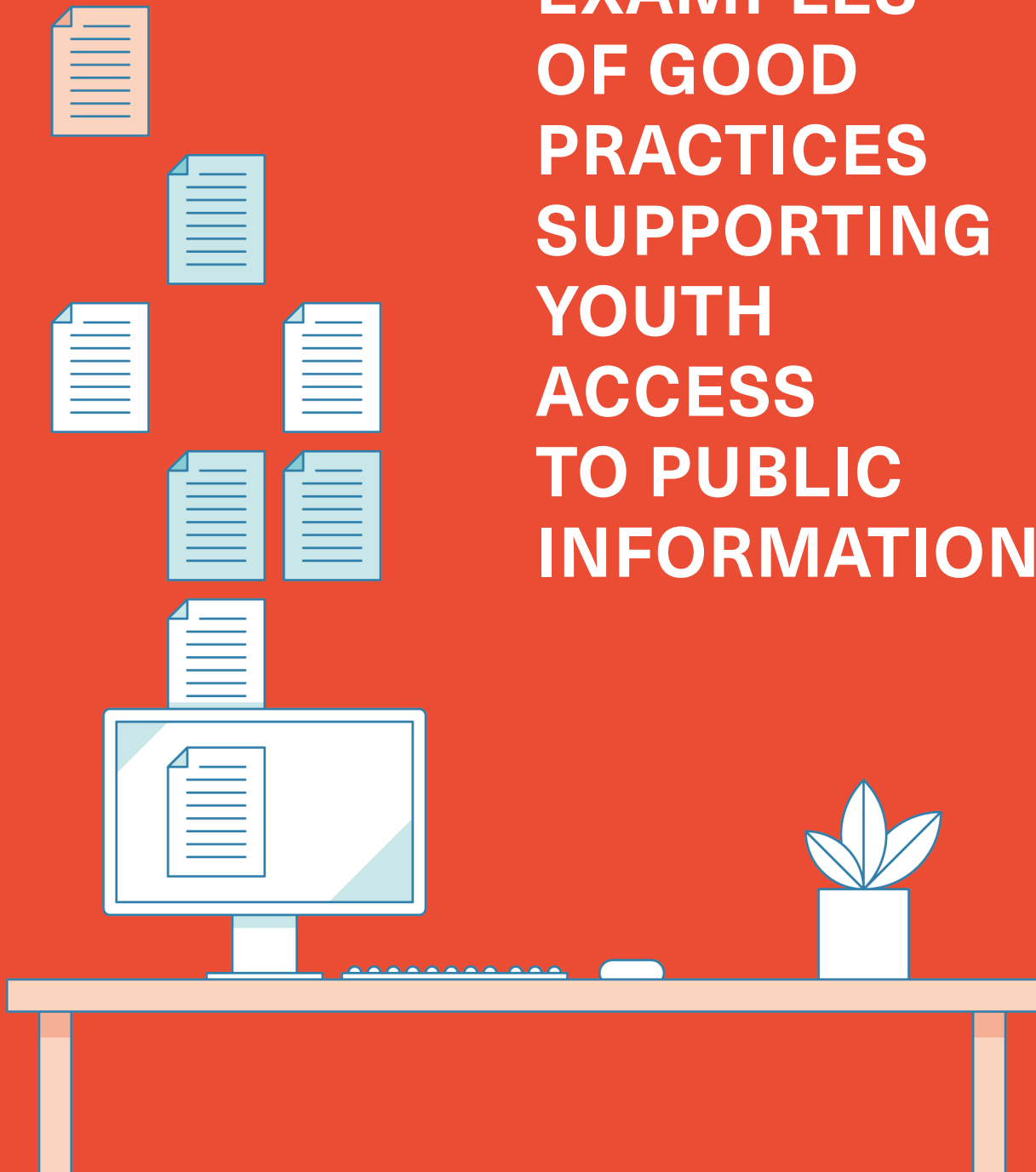
Youth policies in Poland, 2017

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlpoland.pdf>





EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES SUPPORTING YOUTH ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION



A TRANSPARENCIA

Country: Belgium

Organisation: Anticor

Dates: 2016

Number of participants: 100,000 readers per week;
7,000 subscribers on facebook

Youth Information tool: digital citizen technologies,
web platform

More information: <https://transparencia.be/>

<https://www.facebook.com/transparenciaBE>

<https://twitter.com/TransparenciaBE>

Description

Transparencia.be – an online platform founded to help citizens request access to administrative documents from a public authority. This platform gathers citizens' requests and publishes reports received from public administrations.

The platform was launched to promote access to public information, facilitate the submission of questions and strengthen civic control. The founders' idea was to fight corruption, abuse or misuse of public resources.

Any citizen interested in obtaining information from the authorities can ask a question via the platform form. If necessary, the team will phrase the issue correctly and direct it to the appropriate office. The portal has a list of public institutions in alphabetical and thematic order for better navigation around the institutions. In its register currently, Transparencia lists 1,212 national public institutions and European institutions with address data (csv).

Every user can track at what stage of processing his inquiry is. Each query is placed on the portal, and the status of the inquiry is specified – If the administration responds, the answer will also be published on the website, and the applicant will be able to assess the response and say whether he/she considers it complete, sufficient or satisfactory.

Besides, transparencia.be cooperates with volunteers wishing to increase the transparency of public institutions, thus developing their civic competences.

Achievements

Since its launch in 2016, the users of Transparencia have sent 1,513 questions. Complete answers have been obtained from 465 institutions. In the case of 173 applications, no response has been received, and 766 are being processed.

The greatest achievement of the portal was the change of 4 transparency provisions within three years from the creation of the portal. On 1 May 2019, the Walloon Parliament unanimously adopted an act strengthening the competence of the Commission for Access to Administrative Documents (Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs – CADA) facilitating citizens' access to documents and administrative laws in Wallonia.

The portal is available in French and Dutch.



B TRANSPARENCY INDEX OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Country: Belgium

Organisation: WeCitizens

Dates: 2016 and 2017

More information (in French):

Complete report (2017):

www.wecitizens.be/docs-fr/E18-ITPP17-Indice_de_transparence_des_partis_politiques-Rapport.pdf

Press release 2017:

http://www.wecitizens.be/newsletter/itpp17-communique_de_presse/

Press release 2016:

<http://www.wecitizens.be/newsletter/itpp16-presse/>

Description

The concept consists in calculating a rating of each political party concerning the easiness to find information about the party itself and its members. The main source, object of the investigation, is the party's website. It can be extended to some other popular databases.

This concept is implemented in Spain since 2011 by "Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia" (FCyT). It has also been applied in Chile.

Sometimes people ask for an assessment of the loyalty of parties to their promises and the sincerity of their declarations. This is obviously not possible (with the resources available for the investigation).

There is a check list of topics that should be published by/about the party. The calculation of the 'transparency' is rather straightforward.

Achievements

WeCitizens has been farther than FCyT and Chile Transparente, by including more topics in the checklist. WeCitizens uses statistics about the transparency of the party's politicians.

In the past, no single party published the party's accounts on its website. After two versions of Transparency Index, most parties had started publishing their account on their website.

In some parties they use our calculation method as reference to complete their website.



C OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA

Country: Estonia

Organisation: Government

Dates: 2015

Number of participants: 2140 unique visitors per month (2019)

Youth Information tool: Open Government Data

More information:

<https://opendata.riik.ee/en/andmehulgad/>

<https://github.com/okestonia/opendata.riik.ee>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1792458637715167>

Description

A traditional way of accessing public information is submitting as an application based on Freedom of Information (FOI) regulations. The application mode enables the interested parties to obtain information from government authorities that have not yet been publicly disclosed in the name of transparency. However, in the era of digital communication and universal access to the Internet, governments create conditions for transparency and openness of access to data so that citizens

have easy and full access. Estonian Open Government Data is a portal wherein one place, and everyone has unlimited access to public sector data with the right to re-use and redistribute the data for commercial and non-commercial purposes. Access to the information does not require registration or special software. The information is available in text files or machine-readable data formats (csv or XML). In each thematic area, there is the address and name of the person responsible for preparing the data. Users can also suggest which datasets should be published on the GitHub platform. The portal is run in Estonian and English.

Achievements

Since the portal was launched the number of datasets has increased from 90 in 2015 to 188 in 2019. Users have access to data on 12 thematic areas – regions and cities, government and the public sector, health, education, agriculture, economy, environment, transport, foreign affairs, society, law, science. On average, 1,700 users utilise the portal every month. Numbers of unique visitors per month is currently four times larger than at the time of launch in 2016 – it was 500.



D YOUNG ELECTION WATCHERS

Country: Estonia

Organisation: Estonian National Youth Council

Dates: 2017

Number of participants: 134

Youth Information tool: discussion groups, debates, networking

More information:

<https://enl.ee/projekt/noored-valimisvalvurid/>

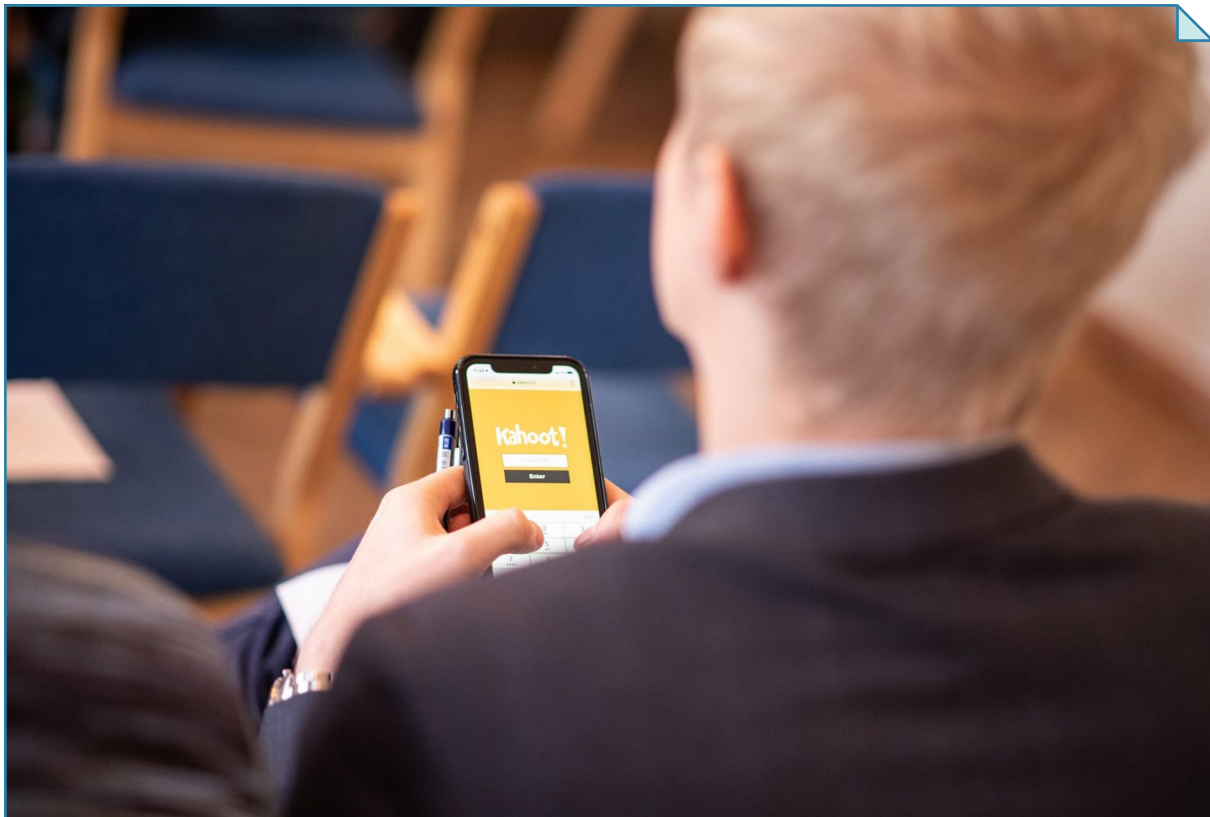
Description

Project “Young Election Watchers” allowed young people (age 16–19) to participate in the work of the local electoral committee, try out the role of the “election watchdogs” and take part in their work.

The aim was to increase participation in the local governments, to allow the youth to try election monitoring, while also assessing/overseeing that they are treated fairly and according to the law.

Achievements

Results – There were 134 participants. All the participants passed training arranged by the officials from the national election service. They also met with the manager of their local election station before the elections. Participants made sure that there were no infringements on election code, contacted the “law-breakers” and answered the questions from other young people.



E KOORDINAATTI

Country: Finland

Organisation: government and municipality

Dates: 2006

Number of participants: nearly 90% Finns aged 13–24

Youth Information tool: on-line publication, workshops for students, trainings for YI workers

More information:

<http://www.koordinaatti.fi/en>; <http://www.nutitlastot.fi/>

<https://www.nuortenelama.fi>; <https://www.nuortenideat.fi>

<https://www.facebook.com/Koordinaatti/>

Description

Koordinaatti is one of the national youth work centres of expertise, which was established by the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2018–2019. The Ministry finances the centres. The work of the centres is based on the national youth work programme and youth policy. The purpose of the centres is to provide advisory and information services for young people on key topics that affect young people. The centres deal with issues related to the life situation (health, relationships, problems), professional careers, but also promote the participation of young people in society as responsible citizens. Information and counselling for young people are to contribute to supporting independence and mobility. Guidance and advice are provided by municipalities and in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. Information is provided to young people through various channels, face to face – consultations, including by phone, meetings, workshops and using online tools – websites, webinars, mailing, newsletter, applications and databases. Koordinaatti runs two online channels. “Young people’s ideas” (Nuortenideat.fi) is a tool dedicated to young people which enables them to put forward their suggestions and consult with other young people. The other information-counselling channel “Young people’s life” (Nuortenelama.fi), contains also guides on democratic education prepared by Koordinaatti.

Koordinaatti cooperates with the European umbrella organisation – the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).

Achievements

In 2006, 30 networks of information-counselling services for youth operated, in 2019 over 240. Youth information points are visited by nearly 90% Finns aged 13–24 and 340 employees provide information and consultancy services.



F OHJAAMOT

Country: Finland

Organisation: government and municipality

Dates: 2014

Number of participants: only face-to-face services in 2017 were used by young people nearly 120,000 times

Youth Information tool: On-line publication, workshops for students, trainings for YI workers

More information: <https://ohjaamot.fi/etusivu> <https://www.facebook.com/ohjaamot/>

Description

One-Stop-Shop Guidance Centres (Ohjaamo) is a network of 70 counselling centres dedicated to young people under 30 years of age throughout Finland. In the centres, young people can receive free individual help and support, advice and information in the fields of education, employment, social security, housing and forms of civic activity or writing a cv. The centres are places where young people can get support in their ordinary everyday decisions and essential choices. The One-Stop-Shop guidance centres guarantee a holistic approach where service providers from the private, public and third sectors operate in one place, ensuring a better and simpler way of serving young people who are neither employed nor educated. The centres have been set up nationwide under the Youth Guarantee programme. Regardless of the location of the One-Stop-Shop Guidance Centres, every young person will get the necessary support (short-term and process-related) in every centre they come to. The centres organise meetings with various figures of political, social and cultural life.

The One-Stop-Shop guidance centres receive funds from the state and the necessary funds of the participating operators. The European Social Fund also supports their activities.

Achievements

After five years of operation, the Ohjaamo effectiveness study conducted in March 2019 indicates that 79% of respondents believe that the centres successfully support the well-being of young people in the area. 75% of respondents believe that the centres have improved counselling and education for young people. Two-thirds (59%) of respondents believe that centres help young people find new employment opportunities.



G DELNA'S SUMMER SCHOOL 2019 FOR REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS

Country: Latvia

Organisation: Delna

Dates: June 27th to 30th 2019

Number of participants: 30 civil society activists

Youth Information tool: Summer School

More information:

<https://delna.lv/en/2019/09/10/delnas-summer-school-2019-for-regional-civil-society-activists/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84EK8jSjwbc&feature=youtu.be>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMzwzKsD_h0

Description

Delna's Summer School is a cyclical educational event organised by Delna branch of Transparency International in Latvia.

This year's fourth edition of the school was dedicated to the transparency of public institutions, in particular, the clarity of information and data, monitoring public procurement, the use of EU funds, civic participation and citizen-city relations. The four-day programme included expert lectures, team exercises and involvement in the LAMPA talk festival.

The lectures were given by ten experts representing public institutions (Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau of Latvia), local government, journalists (editor-in-chief), programmers (Open Data Expert), activists of the organisation for activity and transparency and scientists.



The school was attended by over 30 representatives of non-governmental organisations aged 19 to 58 operating in various regions of Latvia.

The main goal for school participants was to increase knowledge in the field of increasing transparency in the use of public funds; the use of open data by researchers and journalists to increase transparency; using social activism to promote transparency and to foster the participation and involvement of citizens.

Achievements

The Summer School is an educational project in which many people with expert and activist experience are involved. The engagement of various entities: local government officials, activists, civil administration, journalists, students and social activists is of crucial importance in the organisation of the Summer School.

The main achievements of the Summer School are the transfer of expert knowledge, sharing experiences, and propagating knowledge about the importance of transparency and the significance of civic control in democracy, case studies. The Summer School is a cyclical educational activity in which, during four days, participants work on cases with practitioners. The Summer School 2019 was the 4th edition. In total, over 100 activists from Latvia participated in it.



H MANABALSS

Country: Latvia

Organisation: Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds

Dates: 2011

Number of participants: total number of signatures: 1,323,692; the total number of submitted initiatives: 1,533 initiatives

Youth Information tool: digital citizen technologies, web platform

More information:

<https://manabalss.lv/pages/par-manabalss-lv>

Description

The portal was created by two young people – entrepreneur Christoph Blaus and Marketing expert Janis Erts, who thought those excellent ideas should not remain at the kitchen table at home – they must reach not only decision-makers. In 2010, work began on the creation of the portal and the development and promotion of the first initiatives in the Saeima.

In July 2011 the newly launched portal ManaBalss.lv initially had only two initiatives – “Open Offshore” and “Open Saeima!”. However, hundreds of signatures were already collected in the first hours of operation of the portal. Two days later, then-President Valdis Zatlers called on the public to sign the initiatives. A week after the portal was launched, the first ManaBalss.lv project – regarding the opening of offshore offices – was considered at an extraordinary meeting of the Saeima and was approved at its first reading. The positive reception of the portal has made ManaBalss.lv a turning point in public communication and cooperation with the Saeima.

ManaBalss.lv is a social initiative portal, in which every Latvian citizen can submit their initiative and collect signatures for its submission to the Saeima. This is one of the largest and most successful participatory projects in Latvia's history, which has been highly rated by leaders and organisations around the world.

“ManaBalss now puts Latvia at the forefront of European efforts to shift some forms of political participation to the Internet”. The New York Times (USA), 9 April 2013.

The identity of each voter on ManaBalss.lv is confirmed by online banks registered in the Republic of Latvia. Initiatives can be initiated and signed by any Latvian citizen who is over 16 years of age. Any initiative signed by at least 10,000 citizens and meeting the Saeima's legal criteria will go to the Saeima.

After successful authentication, online banks send the person's name and personal code to ManaBalss.lv, where personal data is stored in protected databases. One person can vote for every initiative. Only the name is publicly available. At the Saeima's request, the signatory database will be compared with the register of citizens, which will be able to verify the authenticity of all signatories using its database.

Achievements

The total number of portal views is 1.4 ml. One thousand five hundred thirty-three initiatives have been submitted since the beginning of the portal's operation. Currently, there are 383 published active initiatives.

Work is currently underway on technical and content improvement as well as portal development, support for initiative authors, creation of new digital participation tools and promotion of community discussions.

I STRAŻNICTWO

Country: Poland

Organisation: Watchdog Poland and the Centre for Citizenship Education

Dates: 2014

Number of participants:

Youth Information tool: a tool kit for lesson on human right and FOI

More information:

<https://ceo.org.pl/english>

<https://kursy.watchdogportal.pl//>

Description

The Centre for Citizenship Education and Watchdog Poland have developed an e-learning course as part of the system project "STRAŻNICTWO Permanently and professionally in the public interest". The Citizens Network – Watchdog Poland – undertakes activities connected with providing each person with equal and full access to public information and strengthening the inhabitants of local communities in supervising the actions of their authorities. The Centre for Citizenship Education is the largest Polish non-governmental organisation operating in the education sector.

The course is a ready idea for an educational project carried out as part of the subject Civics on both the primary and extended levels.

The course aims to provide the participants with basic legal knowledge and examples of how to apply the law in the field of access to information. The course introduces students step by step to the activities of civic control in the public interest. The course includes educational materials, examples of letters, useful links and broadcasts.

Achievements

Starting from human rights, the course points to the constitutional importance of the right of access to information. For teachers, it is a ready educational material developed by expert organisations working in the field of openness of public life and educational activities.



J YOUTH CORE GROUP

Country: Poland

Organisation: Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

Dates: 2018

Number of participants: over 300 people

Youth Information tool: discussion groups in “round table” formula, debates, networking

More information:

www.eurobalt.org.pl

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SBYCGN/>

Description

The aim of the South Baltic Youth Core Group Network (YCGN) is to engage young people in the decision-making process at the municipality level in such themes like sport, culture, civic involvement of young people, ecology, spending free time. The YCGN, implemented in 2018-2020, is being carried out under the project with the same name financed by the Interreg South Baltic Programme.

The involvement of young people in the decision-making process takes place at the local and national levels. At the local level, thematic meetings take place in selected municipalities using the “round table” formula. The primary purpose of the conference is the debate of local government representatives (the mayor, Councillors, office employees) with young people. The round table meetings take place according to a specific scenario and contain a workshop and a discussion part in which 20 to 70 people participate. In the workshop part, the “World Café” method of participation is used to identify problems and analyse the conclusions and ideas developed by the participants working in teams. In the debate part, local government officials respond to young people’s proposals, they decide and justify why some of them are feasible, some still need to be clarified, and some are unfeasible.

The last element of the local network meeting is the public hearing during the meeting of the Municipality Council or the relevant Commission, during which young people present to the decision-makers

the conclusions and recommendations they have developed at the Round Table. The point is to induce the local government to take specific actions.

At the national level (Sweden, Lithuania, Denmark, Poland) there will be meetings of local youth groups in the form of forums to exchange experiences, learn about issues that have proved valuable in other countries and which may inspire undertaking similar ones in their local community.

Achievements

So far, round table meetings have been held in five Polish local-governments: in Elbląg, Iława, Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Dzierżoń. Three hundred young people from small municipalities were involved in the project. The project increased awareness of the role of local government in local life and of the possibilities for young residents to co-decide. Young people had the opportunity to present solutions they worked out and to have constructive discussions with local government officials from their towns.







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**STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY RIGHTS
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