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Youth Assembly

Conseil de l'Europe
Assemblée des jeunes

YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2012[1]

"Youth and democracy: the young generation sacrificed?"

STRASBOURG, 5-7 October 2012

CONCLUSIONS[2]

Thematic working groups conclusions:
1.   Democracy and religion
2.   Democracy and globalisation
3.   Democracy and new social media
4.   Democracy and access to social rights
5.   Democracy and youth participation
6.   Democracy and the role of youth work/ youth organisations
7.   Democracy and migration
8.   Democracy and the inclusion of minorities
9.   Democracy and citizenship education

Statement at the World Forum for Democracy

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[1] The Youth Assembly was organised in the context of the World Forum for Democracy
[2] Synoptic texts edited by the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly

Thematic working groups conclusions

1.   Democracy and religion

Key issues

- Is democracy sometimes corrupted by the misuse of religious messages?

- What happens if you mix politics with religion and vice versa? Are they most likely to misuse each other?

- Let's not get into absurd conflicts, we have to know each other, and in order to know each other, we have to promote and support as much as possible the intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

- Secularization of public space helps better coexistence and allows some balance between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The working group agreed that as long as you do not find a better alternative to democracy, you only have one choice: help and promote democracy while challenging it every day in order to improve it.

- Freedom to choose if you want to study religion – one in particular or none at all.

- Ensure that the religious minorities are not excluded from political decision making.

- Youth can contribute to promoting interfaith dialogue.

Conclusions and recommendations

1- Governments should remain impartial with regards to confessional and non-confessional beliefs and ensure that no representative religious and non-confessional organisation is excluded from the political decision-making process.

2- Social workers, teachers, confessional and non-confessional representatives, and youth organisations should be included in any dialogue with governments, with a gender-equality perspective.

3- There must be no legal obligation or pressure from governments to study religion(s).

4- The creation or expansion of non-denominational schools and the provision of non-religious ethics classes /courses (which include/foster critical thinking as well as philosophy, social/cultural studies) or courses of multiple religion studies, are essential.
-       This should be implemented by the member States of the Council of Europe.
-       Young people can initiate reforms, but they always need recognition and support.

Young people should be assisted to promote inter-faith dialogue and mutual respect through youth exchanges and gatherings, which they themselves run.

Youn people should encourage and promote interaction between different cultures through the use of social media and online learning platforms which will provide free and easy access.

2.   Democracy and globalisation

Key issues

On the one hand, people, governments and non-governmental organisations are working together; a great step towards collaboration and peace. Increased mobility enables us to work and meet on an international level. This interconnectedness can break stereotypes, build global friendships and contribute to the very valuable exchange of knowledge; people have never been able to learn so much from each other.

On the other hand, globalisation has resulted in a certain contamination of responsibility. When it comes to multi-nationals and the financial sector especially, there is a vacuum in the law system which makes regulation and control of these sectors difficult. This interdependence and the lack of regulation can lead to very severe repercussions, as we have experienced during the crash of 2008.

We notice there has been a shift to higher levels of power, which gives the grassroots less power and which influences the level of democracy. So, we can identify the emergence of stronger hierarchy in international politics. Decision making on higher levels diminishes democracy and transparency, leaving the people at the grassroots level with less power and insight of the current developments. We also express our concerns about cultural imperialism; a rather big threat to the richness of cultural diversity.

As regards the impact of globalisation on democracy, there is both a positive and a negative impact, depending on one's point of view. Main positive things: it really contributes to peace and collaboration, the international contacts break stereotypes, which is a big strength and contributes to peace.

Our opinion on the basics of globalisation differs. We had a discussion about the question whether to put emphasis on competition or collaboration. Competition develops competencies and leads to achieving higher quality. However, there are also negative consequences: inequality. How can we compete when we don't all start off on an equal footing? Is it fair to have global competition when some countries have more means than others in order to succeed? Moreover, competition influences the marginalized and people with a rather weak position in society.

The majority is in favour of global "competition", which should improve competencies and contribute to development, wealth and growth. A small minority was in favour of global "collaboration", taking in consideration that the current structures do not allow an equal chance for developed and developing countries to compete: "we should collaborate and help each other rather than wanting to be better than everyone else. Evolve together!"

We could not come to a consensus on where to put the emphasis, but all agree about giving a fair chance and aid to developing countries, in order for them to overcome poverty. We also realize that these matters are all a matter of perception and personal experience with these very concepts.

Conclusions and recommendations

-       Since information, education and critical thinking are essential for providing opportunities for everybody in the globalised world, education should not face financial cuts anywhere in the world in both the formal and non-formal settings; everybody should have free access to education and information, which would contribute to development of young minds.
-       Mobility with an emphasis on increasing youth competencies by means of employment, internships, traineeships should be encouraged. Therefore, it is crucial to launch supporting programs and frameworks and mitigate financial and administrative barriers such as visas, enrolment and registration fees..
-       Subsidiarity of decisions has to be strengthened, decisions at all levels ought to be transparent and governments have to provide real-time monitoring systems, so that citizens feedback can be heard.
-       All decisions should be taken with a long-term perspective, re-ensuring solidarity as well as equality. At the same time, decisions must protect the interests of future generations, which should be guaranteed through institutional protection at all levels of governance.
-       Cooperation has to be fostered at all levels - local, national and international - in order for global institutions to become more democratic and gain more power. International justice has to become mandatory to ensure and supervise implementation of international treaties and common decisions, regarding global security, economy, justice, etc.

In Chinese, the definition of challenge equals the definition of opportunity. Therefore, we consider the current challenges we face as opportunities to create better ways and form a true international community based on mutual solidarity.

3.   Democracy and new social media

Key issues

Social media provides a big opportunity for an unlimited number of people to come together and debate. This is a direct link to democracy. Though, on the other hand, it very often happens that the online campaigns are conducted via social media, but they do not reach their goals.

With the use of social media people restrict themselves in democratic expression. As an example, politicians, parliamentarians are playing online during sessions in social media.

Social media has, of course, made democratic practice easier and offers different opportunities, but on the other hand, there is less and less interaction in social media nowadays. People are just sharing links, but the discussions are not following. There is too much information and people are not able to digest it.

What about content being shared in social media. Is it just one person creating the content? The other people, who like and share the messages, are perhaps just tools for the leaders to achieve their goals. This is a real manipulation. People sometimes don't even know what they are sharing.

Sometimes people become the victims of fake postings in social media inciting them towards actions which give unexpected outcomes.

The link between social media and democracy is not always positive. From some points of view, the democratic actions, which are being carried out through social media, are not always representative and inclusive. They exclude those who are not online, those who do not have access to internet, etc.

The social media can provide a fake overview of certain developments. As an example, the campaigns, where people/organisations, which have 500 fans on Facebook, cannot gather even the half of their fans when needing support from them during a protest or a demonstration. Another opinion was expressed: even if you just click "like" and you don't provide any other concrete action for the cause in social media, your "like" puts the cause to the forefront of the search engines.

We should call for engagement by Council of Europe on the provision of privacy of the users on social media.

E-voting is easy to manipulate as is access to voting results. A software can easily be created to be used to hack and access the e-voting platform. On the other hand, normal elections cannot guarantee transparency and freedom from being attacked, but what is important, is that youth participation in politics could be activated positively if voting could be made accessible online.

The statements on social media, hate speech or freedom of expression: where is the line drawn? Who is defining the limits of freedom of expression and when this is perceived as hate speech? When should censorship be permitted?

Violation of human rights in a social media statement/post may justify censorship.

Freedom of expression cannot be limited to any country, it is universal. An opposite opinion was raised, that freedom of expression should depend on the local context and reality.

Conclusions and recommendations

1.   Influence of the social media in social changes
In order to increase the turnout of young people, governments should consider implementing modern technologies such as secured and independently observed electronic democratic participation system (e.g. e-voting, participatory budgeting, etc.).
2.   Free internet vs. Censorship
We believe there should be a way of overriding censorships that violate human rights on the internet, social media and media (e.g. an independent panel where you can produce your case).
3.   Education related topics
Every educational institution in a country should take steps in order to provide e-learning tools for its students about the basic internet skills.
4.   **Setting up a Test municipality council platform** for online video conferences replacing actual meetings.

4. Democracy and access to social rights

Key issues

In the introductory discussion, participants tried to connect the concepts of democracy and social rights to each other, identifying points where they overlap and where they oppose each other. The following issues were raised:
1. the ongoing financial crisis in the EU and its effects (via austerity measures) on social protection;
2. the trend towards lessening social protection and retreating social rights;
3. worsening social conditions, particularly in countries such as Greece and Spain, and the reactions to them (strikes, demonstrations);
4. the problems faced by young people, such as lack of jobs and high unemployment as a consequence of both the crisis but also of the flexibility of labour market, which causes the precarity of employment;
5. young people are more and more financially dependent on their parents and cannot plan their future.

After the resource people shared their views on relevant issues concerning the crossroads of democracy and social rights, participants entered into a debate, with the following four objectives:
- to share the realities of access to social rights and examples of youth work practice and policy initiatives;
- to deepen the understanding of access to social rights and the role of youth ensuring it;
- to explore the link between democracy and access to social rights; and
- to formulate concrete key points and proposed actions for improved access to social rights.

Conclusions and recommendations

Participants touched upon numerous issues relevant to the topic of Democracy and social rights. Firstly we made a tour de table, in which we explained what each of us does in our organisations regarding access to social rights.

In relation to youth (un)employment, we discussed non-paid internships as a particularly brutal way of exploitation of young people, who due to lack of jobs, are willing to work for free in hope that the accumulated experiences will help them to find a job. We concluded that this type of modern slavery is unacceptable and that governments should regulate it as well as attempt to reach full employment, which is not an utopia, but a policy choice.

In relation to youth unemployment and access to the labour market (important social right), challenges to self-esteem and competencies of youth were discussed. More and more young people are becoming desperate, retreating from active life, becoming apathetic and passive. Events in Greece and Spain have shown that there is a direct correlation between youth unemployment and youth suicide rates and between economic deprivation and psychological problems. We believe that these trends must be reversed and that young people should have a more active and meaningful role in their societies.

As the rights to health and education are two of the most important social rights, we discussed them in detail. With education and healthcare becoming more and more expensive and negative ratio between active and passive citizens, the notion of individual responsibility is becoming more important then ever. We agreed that equal access to healthcare and education must be assured, but disagreed on issues like free tertiary education vs. tuition fees, fees for visiting a doctor, etc.

5. Democracy and youth participation

Key issues / Challenges that young people are faced with (small groups' conclusions)
1. One of the first limits was access to information at local, national or European level. The lack of information about everything - even the activities organised by the institutions - is pointed out as a huge limit to Youth Policy. The format of information is not adapted to youth. There is a gap between citizens and institutions, leading to demotivation and disillusionment of young people.

2. Another limit is the underestimation of youth capacities and the lack of transparency of the deciding organisms, young people being put farther and farther away from decision making. There is a need to give consideration to the needs of discriminated minorities and to give a place for reflexion for young people so they do not fear police brutality anymore.

3. The loss of faith in politics and its corruption bring disillusion to young people and disinterest. Youth is feeling powerless to make changes; there is no space for them to act. Even if you are motivated, you cannot do anything about it: in schools too they should encourage young people not only to vote but to think by themselves for themselves!

4. The lack of motivation is linked to the fact that youth takes democracy for granted. Putting the blame on the government is not a solution: we have to fight for democracy; we have to involve young people. But there is a lack of recognition, a lack of long term sustainable funding and the lack of direct democracy. Educational methods are obsolete: we need experiences at school with more participative education.

Youth participation in the political process – proposed actions:
Political parties should encourage young people to join their parties. Have a minimum percentage of young people on the political lists (quota). "Young people political party" without a political programme. Objective = to make politicians to realise the power of young people. Have a better communication of a political programme towards young people – often non understandable. Enable 16 years old to vote. Limit one mandate for each in order for more turnover. Educate young people on politics, how policy process work + experience (theory and practice). Decisions at school should be taken by a representative group (by %) (more students in the Administrative Councils). Make sure by law that politicians have to involve youth population in the parliament. Have "student parties" at school to experience a political process. Involve in an equal way youth organisations in the decisions about youth issues (co-management).

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Education
Formal Education
School should not only be a place to convey knowledge but also a place to construct a future citizen. In order to introduce democracy and political education at school, it is important to:
- Train teachers on a new pedagogy on democratic principles;
- Introduce pupils to new ways of expression and experimentation;
- Have an equal representation in educational decision making bodies (teachers, pupils, parents).
Non Formal Education
In the building of a lifelong and life-wide learning society and in building of democracy, Europe cannot afford anymore to keep Non Formal Education invisible. Therefore Council of Europe, EU and member States should ensure the sustainable provision of quality Non Formal Education opportunities, including volunteering opportunities, by providing political and financial support to youth organisations and other Non Formal Education providers.

2. Funding
- Insure long term sustainable funding for youth organisations;
- Multi-level and transparency in financing of youth projects who wants to support democratic initiative and projects, for example by making the administrative process easier.

3. Co-management
Young people should be involved and consulted in the creation of youth policies and also involved in decision-making processes at all levels (Youth needs to be seen as a resource). Local politicians and young people should organise seminars and debates to talk and listen to each other; for example, the Youth Assembly should become an annual event - organised and attended by young people. The Council of Europe and European Commission should invite member States to start initiatives, such as setting up a voting age commission, in order to stimulate a debate about lowering the voting age to 16 and about the active participation of youth. Promote and support young people to stand for election to local authorities and national parliament.

6.   Democracy and the role of youth work / youth organisations

Key issues

The group debated on two issues. The first one was presented in the statement: "Young people can affect democratic processes only if they are organised." The opinion of the group divided half with disagreeing and agreeing on the argument. The second debated argument was "Youth organisations are the most relevant places for young people to practice democracy." There were slightly more people who disagreed than agreed with this statement. It was clearly identified that there are, indeed, other places for youth to practice democratic processes. The group which agreed claimed that the youth organisations have the clearest democratic processes. The group which disagreed saw the local community as the most relevant place for the youth. It was also pointed out that not all youth groups are democratically organised. Finally, the group looked into "the challenges of youth work and youth organisations", and came up with the following categories: Youth work and participation, youth work and support structure, youth work and promoting education, youth work and diversity and intercultural values. When trying to organise the post-it session to present findings, there were some interesting questions which came up. The one that was debated was: how to implement democracy and informal education in school. On this topic, the arguments were that with democracy in school we will reach a large audience vs. democracy only in organisations where you don't reach such a large audience. At the same time, will you plant many seeds or do you want to grow a really strong tree?

Conclusions and recommendations

There is a need for deeper sustainable cooperation between formal and non-formal education, where non-formal education is the key factor. This can be achieved through drafting policies with enhanced legal framework allowing exchanges and transfer of know-how to create new educational products, build on added value of life experiences and resources. We must identify the three factors of this solution. Formal education, non-formal education and research. Formal and non-formal education work in a two-way cooperation, where both actors share their knowledge.

A. Youth work should be accessible to everyone:
- Stronger promotion of diversity is needed. Among team members, volunteers and target groups; in local, regional, national and international levels.
- Cooperation. Groups working with youth must cooperate (NGO's, youth organisations, public bodies and informal groups). Networking, partnerships and knowledge and exchanges of experience must be supported.
- Education for achieving diversity and equality is needed. Learning from each other in intercultural groups must be fostered. There should be a wider variety of resources, including through non-formal learning training courses. Ex. intercultural group work and organisational management.

B. Co-management:
Include the youth in the decision making concerning youth
- Building partnerships with young people to include them in the decision-making processes.
- Inter-sectional cooperation -> important to co-management on all levels in the member States.
  Promote child/youth assembly on the local/national level.
- Adapt the youth organisations to the new realities of our societies, promoting open meetings with people which are usually not involved in youth work.
- Establishing youth quota in international bodies whenever there is a need for decision making. Especially on the subject of youth).
- Opening up the channels for communication.
- Ensuring that the information reaches the right people.
- Youth work should start form an early age (primary socialisation).
- Promotion of co-management in schools/educational institutes.
- Successful people (politicians etc.) should be invited to meet with students, sharing knowledge and giving advice.
It is important to have cooperation between the politicians and youth in a constructive way. This cooperation can help with the promoting of youth organisations at all levels (local, regional, national and international). In addition it is important to start the democratic work from an early age.
- Facilitate processes of getting visas for youth work (lobby).
- The recognition of youth work on the policy level in order to increase the mobility of youth work.
- Sustainable long term funding possibilities (including administrative costs) and decrease the level of bureaucracy (e.g. easier visa procedures, user friendly applications). This is to make it easier for youth to participate in youth organisations.

7. Democracy and migration

Key issues

Economy and unemployment
- Integration factors: the language
- Use Sport as a good practice
- Training for unemployed

Identity crisis
- Proposal of an official statement
- Recognising that French citizens are French, no matter of nationality (this approach has been criticised because of lack of actual meaning).
- Government promotion of good example and successful migration (however, it was agued this might lead to segregation)
- Creating a "minister of migration" Austrian Model (it was criticised as it could lead to separating migration and national identity)

Participation and the local society
- **Challenges:** Dialogue between migrants and society and administrative obstacles.
- **Solutions:** Actions at the local level, intercultural events, sports, empowering migrants to represent themselves (should the community integrate migrants, or just give them the chance to proof them are different)

Migration – Global Vision
- Globalisation has complex effects on migration worldwide, solutions to these problems need to be found by each state (a universal treatment applicable to everyone does not exist)
- Governments should enhance academic mobility worldwide (e.g. Erasmus must keep running and be taken as an example of good practice of mobility)

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Example of the Ambassador programme (Austrian and Norwegian practice where successful migrants tell their stories in schools). The Ambassador's programme is a government-sponsored programme where ambassadors with an immigrant background promote their achievements in order to raise awareness with young migrants and create an understanding of migration issues in the society.

2. Learning the language is a very important factor for integration. Learning the language leads to education: when you are educated it leads to integration. Also, language gives the sense of togetherness. Proposals made: governments should approach second-generation migrants and provide support to adult migrants (for example, through evening classes).

3. Mobility should be encouraged by the government. Two remarks were added to the initial statement: the institutional framework should concern academic exchange, as well as the worldwide recognition of diplomas; states should adopt similar higher education standards (in order to have the same visions on academic structures).

4. Both migrants and the host society have to work for integration. Final statement: there should be more visibility of migrants, and more opportunities for dialogue with them. Recommendations for this: establishment of a mentorship programme which will include volunteers from the local society, organising sport/art events.

5. Should integration policies be more restrictive or more open? After analyzing the feedback coming from the members working in other groups, the group concluded that immigration policy of each country should be clear, transparent, and information about immigration rules should be accessible for everybody. Also, bureaucratic processes of residency for young people should be simplified (the process has to be transparent and to reach interested, prospective migrants).

8.   Democracy and the inclusion of minorities

Key issues

The group started with attempts to discuss what our focus will be and trying to define terms like "inclusion", "minority" and related concepts. There were disagreements in these discussions and it was decided to establish a common understanding of the word rather than defining it as such. Since the topic is so broad and there is a wide variety of minority groups – starting from national, ethnic, linguistic, through to religious, LGBT, and including persons with disabilities – and after vivid debates, the group decided to move on towards coming up with some more concrete key points related to the situation and problems faced by all the minority groups. Another topic that was raised by the group was the concept of identity and identification of minority groups' members. The group decided to focus mainly on the topics of education (broadly defined) and media, and discuss what can be done and proposed by youth in these areas. The group also discussed and underlined the importance of providing people with opportunities of direct encounters with members of minorities.

Conclusions and recommendations

We found that only a long-term strategy would deal with the problems, therefore we would propose the creation of an international programme with short-, mid- and long-term objectives for the inclusion of minorities entitled "Unity in diversity". As a first step of this programme, we propose that the Council of Europe should recommend its member States to launch a national campaign with the active involvement of decision-makers and civil society on the inclusion of minorities entitled "European Campaign of Living Together" with the main message "I am, because we are." As part of the strategy we propose introducing changes in the educational system to address the issues related to minorities from an early stage.

The main objectives of these changes should be breaking stereotypes, promoting balance between minorities and majorities through common understanding, fostering peaceful living together and lightening the feeling of belonging to a",,minority" or a "majority". In this regard we have two proposals:
I.   Governments should introduce inter-cultural education in the curriculum through practical face-to-face experiences. This would involve:
•   Multi-cultural classes in pre-primary and primary education such as learning through games, storytelling, theatre activities, and debates may be initiated through prompts and flashcards, role-playing, visiting institutions, selection of specific topic-related reading materials, learning dances etc.
•   These activities should be coordinated according to age groups. A minimum curriculum should be drawn up and then it is up to the trainers to do further activities. These classes should be taken seriously by education institutions and trainers are demanded to have an open-minded attitude.

II.   Youth offices should be established and situated in schools. They will serve as an open and flexible space, which will connect together teachers, parents and children. Moreover, it will serve to link the NGOs, cultural centres, the community and the minorities. The youth offices can be run on a voluntary base by students. Schools need to provide a space for such office in order to foster open-minded attitude among everyone. Students from different social and ethnical groups can do an internship here and gain experience which will be important in the future to help them find a job in a time of rising unemployment. Every school needs to provide training for the youth workers in office. Activities in these offices could include: organizing workshops, trainings, DVD nights and discussion, panel discussions, directed dialogues on different topics regarding breaking stereotypes of minorities (LGBT, gender, Roma etc). These workshops would include students, parents and teachers. These offices will be opened for the community to see the progress achieved. They will serve as an information service for the youth, informing them on the different opportunities they have (scholarships, contests, training, exchanges etc).

Another issue we were discussing was the topic of media. The problem that we notice is a lack of representation of ordinary people from ethnic minorities in the media. This results in a bias where ordinary ethnic minorities are only associated with negativity e.g. crime and violence. As a solution, we suggest the creation of a national, voluntary source list where ethnic minorities can sign up in order to provide journalists with contact information. This will enable journalists to expand their network thus the articles they write on any subject will be more representative of the entire population.

And as a general final recommendation, we would recommend governmental bodies and institutions to provide minorities with direct access and participation in the decision making process because they are not politically included enough, although they are an important part of the community. They should have the possibility to represent themselves and be heard by decision makers. A round table with the concerned and interested people and the decision makers would go towards a solution which is more acceptable for everyone.

9.   Democracy and citizenship education

Key issues

A democracy can only survive with active citizens. Therefore we need to educate citizens to live in a democracy. Citizenship education helps to fight against political apathy. It plays a fundamental role in developing values. Also, active citizenship education helps to motivate people who aren't participating in democratic decision-making processes. This kind of education has to stimulate critical thinking and enable active citizens to make their own choices.

The way democracy and youth participation is practiced was questioned and pros and cons were seen in the most common ways of participation, such as protest, work with the governmental institutions on the documents, negotiations and etc.

One of the aims of the education as a whole was brought up, as a critical thinking development, which in case of citizenship education should provide people with the possibility to check whether governments' action reflects the needs of the citizens. The importance of non-formal education and its methodology in citizenship education was stressed. Participants agreed on the need to have a lifelong learning process of citizenship education, starting at the youngest possible age, and on the need to practice democracy in the educational process through the involvement of young people in the decision making.

Conclusions and recommendations

Work of the group has resulted in the development of five key points that were formulated as proposals.

1. First of all, as it has been discovered during the group work that citizenship education is not present in all the member States of the Council of Europe, we have agreed that Council of Europe should encourage its member States to introduce citizenship education as a subject in schools. The subject should be aimed at providing students with the information on how to actively participate and encourage critical thinking, and should give them opportunities to experience interaction with politics and society. This subject should be taught from an early age.

2. Furthermore, it has been concluded that also the way information is provided to students has great importance. There is a need to ensure that already adopted manuals and training materials regarding citizenship education are used in practice. To this end, the materials should be translated and promoted through the web-sites, newsletters and networking; training for education providers (schools, universities, youth organisations) should be held. Finally, the need to ensure quality of this education has also been stressed and the establishment of independent school inspectors was proposed.

3. Afterwards, it has been concluded that democratic governance should be practiced in schools in order for students to experience participation in the early age; therefore the proposal of the group is to include children and young people in the decision-making process. Examples that were given included students choosing the place of their field trip, and design of the room, timetables, events, and the ways of learning.

4. It has been agreed to propose using existing platforms (e.g. Wergeland Centre, North-South Centre) or establish new ones to promote, facilitate and improve cooperation between educational institutions and NGOs from the EU27/EEA (e.g. Netherlands, France) and other members of the Council of Europe (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia) and neighbouring countries including southern Mediterranean countries. This action should enforce sharing of best practices of citizenship education and increase its quality.

5. Finally, we realized that being able to speak a foreign language is very important to promote active European citizenship. Only when knowing foreign cultures and languages are citizens able to work and live together in peace. Therefore, we urge the member States of the Council of Europe to promote the learning of foreign languages (especially in schools) and international exchange programmes as indispensable tools for European Citizenship.

The first, third and fifth points are addressed to the Council of Europe and to the education ministers of the Council of Europe member States. In countries where the national State is not responsible for education the points are addressed to the education ministers of the federal States. The second point is addressed to Council of Europe and the member States. It should make sure that the information is spread to the relevant stakeholders. This fourth point is addressed to the Council of Europe directly.

Statement at the World Forum for Democracy

First, we will like to thank you, Mr Mignon, for your support for the 2nd Youth Assembly that took place this week-end in Strasbourg.

It would have shown more respect if we were allowed to address this speech after the keynotes speakers, when actually everyone was present in the hemicycle to listen, but, okay, here we are !

150 young people from Europe and beyond…
3 days of brainstorming…
100s of ideas relevant to youth of Europe but also to youth of the world!

So LISTEN to us!

INFORM us!
Young people want to participate!
But we are facing barriers in the access to information on HOW we can actually participate!

Give us opportunities to EDUCATE ourselves!
Democratic process is not something we are born with, it is something we need to have the OPPORTUNITY to learn!

RESPECT us!
Do NOT compromise on human rights!
Young people are not commodities, they are part of humanity!

We strongly believe that youth have a lot to CONTRIBUTE in our world today!

Let us take part in all decision and policy making that will define our future!

Youth should be treated with DIGNITY, which means we must have EQUALITY!

We demand real equality in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability!

The young people here will be attending sessions during the forum.
We believe that our voices contain REAL and CONCRETE ideas that can contribute to realizing our ambition.

You must let our voices be the beginning of the change we all want to see!

Ladies and gentlemen, we, youth, strongly, believe in the idea of the forum but we also strongly call upon you to include youth more actively in this process!

As Mr Mignon has stated in the past in establishing this forum as a Davos of Democracy, let this Davos of democracy include young people at the level they deserve.