

# Gdansk workshop on Youth Participation, May 26, 2010

## PREPARATION MADE BY YOUTH

### Best aspects of youth participation in YOUR city?

- All districts are represented in the youth council
- All meetings are open for everyone
- Each year an open child council is organized
- Long-standing and lasting work
- Direct influence and channels to policy-makers
- Youth centres are great places for participation
- Willingness to listen to and take advice from youth
- Opportunities and structures for participation

### Dilemmas and barriers?

- To include youth from the entire city and to reach different groups
- Financial constraints and unemployment
- Lack of support from decision-makers; lack of communication
- Mental barriers; mistrusted and not taken seriously
- Lack of experience to work with youth
- Passivity among youth; lack of communication skills
- To involve those who do not want to participate; to reach out

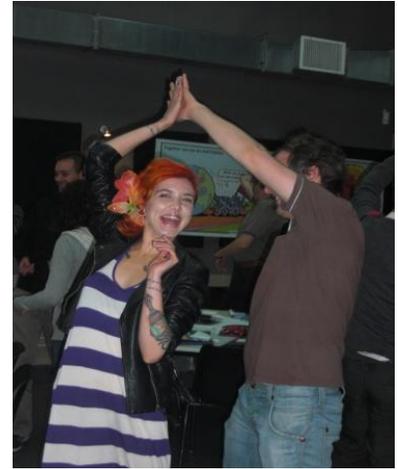
### Improvements YOU wish to see?

- Ensure that all socio-economic groups are represented in one way or another
- Make the youth council more visible
- Improve communication between youth council and the municipality
- Strengthen district councils
- Make information and knowledge about participation more accessible
- Greater understanding of the necessity to include youth
- Facilitate for youth organizations to participate and voice their opinions
- Organize training courses and involve schools
- Set up dialogue projects; conduct street interviews to voice opinions
- Include youth in the organisation of projects and activities
- Cooperation between the cities

## PART I – PERSONAL MOTIVATION

### What is a great place for YOU to live?

- Respect and equality
- Love
- Support
- Creativity and activity – music, sport and arts
- Good relations and a helpful atmosphere
- Opportunities and knowledge
- Supportive education
- Mentors and role-models
- Space to develop talents and to express yourself
- Interaction between groups
- Green places, beautiful surroundings and a beach
- Employment
- Lots of diversity
- Safety
- Harmony between generations
- Sense of community
- No social boundaries



### Why are YOU involved in youth participation?

- To empower young people, to give them space
- To give voice and to be heard
- Believe in mutual exchange of ideas
- Provide real and equal opportunities
- Link politicians to young persons
- Personal development
- To change things and start with myself
- Get rid of prejudices between generations



## **PART II – CASE STUDIES**

At each table the groups used either a positive, negative or creative approach to look at youth participation, both in terms of youth councils and more alternative ways of participation.

### **Positive**

- Use entertainment as a way to reach out and influence each other
- Skating can for instance be seen as a way of expressing participation
- Be proactive and build relationships with young people
- Create youth ‘hubs’ in each area of the city, tailored to the need and demands of youth, use these as a base for youth and politicians to meet
- Set up a Youth Panel with members from each areas of the city as a feedback mechanism to the Youth Council
- True balance of power, mutual respect is a vital component for this to come about
- Encourage youth to develop and strengthen other young people
- Make connections with politicians and co-work for change
- Influence the policy-makers by meaningful consultation

### **Negative**

- Lots of problems to overcome
- Lack of trust
- Financial constraints
- Communication breakdown
- Intergenerational issues
- Scale of the city, how to reach everyone?
- Too much diversity
- Lack of information and understanding among politicians
- Lack of interest and commitment among young people
- No venues to meet and discuss
- Negative and stereotypical images of each other
- Lack of long-term commitment
- Often rhetoric and lip-service rather than substantial efforts
- Youth are too self-obsessed



## Creative

- Use your imagination, think outside the box
- Political change - revolution
- Opportunities for all
- Respect for all
- Free will for all
- Sharing of experiences and ideas
- Offer real experiences for politicians and managers
- Make competitions and present ideas to the government
- Set up a world records of participation where young people work together and try to break the old records
- Let the youth chose decision-makers
- Provide feedback to ideas presented to youth
- Raise awareness through music, arts and dance
- Peer education
- Mobilise volunteers
- Reward those involved in youth council by sending them on trips
- Festivals and mash-ups
- Poetry slam
- Cultural food experiences
- Job-shadowing
- Have a national logo that represents Youth Action
- Promote the city as a youth city
- Adopt a high profile approach showing that youth matters, Year of Youth
- We do not all have to be leaders, balance of power and collective decision-making
- Use the internet and social media more creatively
- Celebrate success
- Unite 3 words > school, street, family
- Life-swapping between youth and politicians

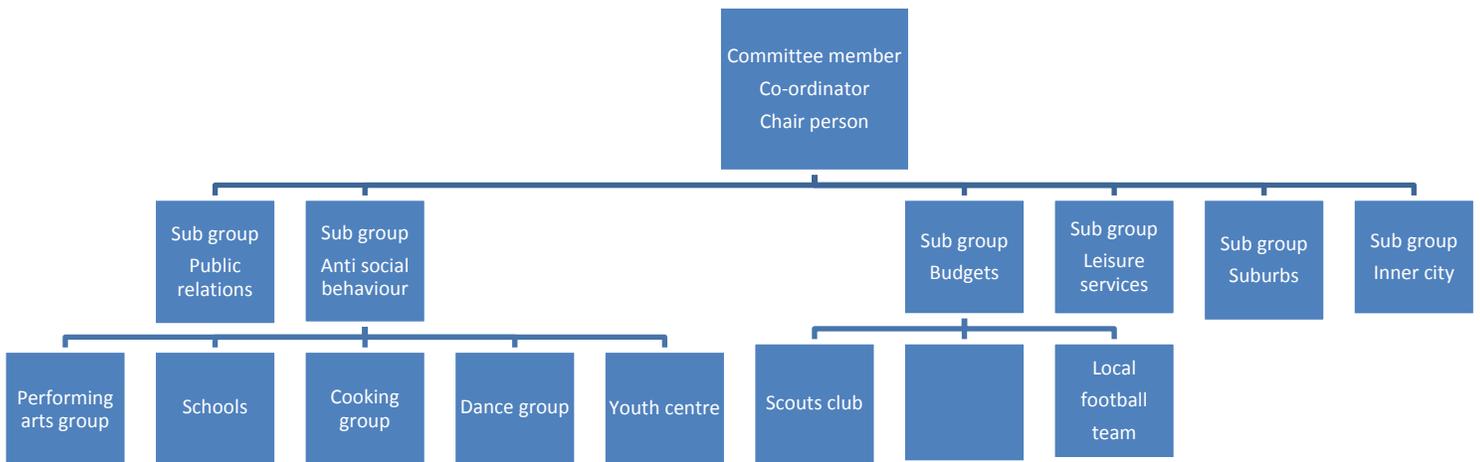
## Overall

- **Create shared spaces** – we need to facilitate dialogue between youth and others – politicians, older generations, other young people etc. These can be physical or virtual areas.
- **Be visible** – Be bold and imaginative. Use humour, colour and creativity to break old patterns and free up relationships – make sure people see what is going on. Also, be transparent and tackle nepotism which kills talent and ambition.
- **New Media** – Mobilise technology to get our messages across. New generation of ICT gives us huge opportunities to do things differently – to be immediate, fresh and authentic. Aligned to social networking tools it represents a very strong combination. Young people are the masters of this.
- **Win/win** – old style ‘us and them’ means we all lose. Success means convincing decision-makers of the importance of nourishing the next generation. Youth must be able to make and sell the case for this – as a two way street



## How should a youth council be set up?

- Sub groups linked to committees
- Representatives from all groups in the city, equal opportunities to join
- Events to attract a wide variety of youth from across the city
- Offering workshops and competitions – using sports and arts
- Using ambassadors to encourage and give voice to youth
- Invite organizations to show what is going on in the city
- Invite adults and decision-makers to Q&A sessions that are challenging and provocative
- Invite them also to the meetings
- Use different methods of communication: flyers, social networks, local radio and television, libraries, schools, and youth workers



## PART III – UTOPIA CITY

- A big heart in the middle
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Exchange of ideas and opinions
- Access to employment
- Do not be afraid to lend a hand
- No boundaries
- Nature and green areas
- Dancing in the streets
- Everyone are equal
- Focus on education for all
- No trash
- United together
- Intergenerational
- Sunshine
- We all listen and we all learn
- Self-reflection
- Open-mindedness
- We support each other
- Family and friends



## **SUMMARY OF THE DAY**

### **What is needed?**

- Supporting structures and a change in attitudes
- Building relations take time, effort and resources
- Need a platform to start from; to build personal development, respect and trust
- Inclusive atmosphere
- Shared vision and desire to make a change
- Allow for creative and challenging ideas; for the unfamiliar and unexpected

### **How to achieve?**

- Realize participation come in many different shapes and forms
- Better understand youth is a diverse and multifaceted group
- No quick fixes, work with a long-term focus
- Make space - provide structures, places to meet, host events and work on ideas
- Resources to realize these ideas
- Step aside - give trust and responsibility to youth
- Help connect different actors
- Encourage and support all youth, not only those already active and engaged
- Change attitudes; challenge what politics and participation is
- Use art and creativity as means of participation and influence

### **Results?**

- Make young and old alike realize the city is for all of us
- And to make it a better place we all need to participate and contribute
- Participation takes effort but is truly rewarding when change come about

### **Good examples of being the talent you are**

- Role model without ego
- Walk the talk
- Honesty
- Empathy and understanding
- Humor
- Passion and charisma
- Trust and faith
- Confidence and awareness
- Patience
- Self-reflection

