THE PARTICIPATION OF

MALTESE
YOUNG PEOPLE

IN THE

VOLUNTARY
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In collaboration with
The Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport
and
The Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

If children and young people are to develop a notion of citizenship as inclusive, it is crucial that issues of identity and diversity are addressed explicitly – but getting the pedagogical approach right will be critical: the process of dialogue and communication must be central to pedagogical strategies for citizenship.
http://publications.education.gov.uk/eorderingdownload/dfes_diversity_&_citizenship.pdf accessed on 3/11/2010

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THE SPIRIT
OF PARTICIPATING

HON. CLYDE PULI MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport

Each year Europe focuses on a particular issue of mutual interest and concern for action both at European and Member State level. 2011 was designated as the European Year of Volunteering and we in Malta were proactive in supporting and encouraging voluntary activity and further strengthening the strong tradition of volunteering in our country. As Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, I was enthusiastic about encouraging the spirit of participating and volunteering among our young people and the newly established Aġenzija Żgħażagħ organised a number of events for young people during the year in support of this.

In addition, Dr. Andrew Azzopardi was commissioned to undertake research into volunteering among young people in Malta. The results of Dr. Azzopardi's research are now available in this publication for all those interested in the promotion and support of voluntary activities in Malta and beyond. As well as providing an analysis of the current state of voluntary activity among young people in Malta, Dr. Azzopardi also provides some useful recommendations as to how this can be further strengthened and supported at both national and local level.

I am glad to provide the foreword for this publication and to thank Dr. Azzopardi for bringing his task to a successful conclusion.

THE HEART
OF OUR COMMUNITIES

DR. ANDREW AZZOPARDI
Author

Voluntary work lies at the heart of our communities. Malta and the Maltese people have repeatedly shown that voluntary work is considered as a value and an essential element in developing our individual and societal conscious. As a nation we hold in high regard people who have committed themselves to 'a cause'. Effectively it's about giving of oneself without expecting monetary or other returns. Apart from that, one just cannot miss out the formal and less formal initiatives that happen in every one of our communities, our villages and our towns.

We need to recall that welfare emerged from the need to negotiate and reinvigorate the social responsibility for collective needs. Voluntarism is one manifestation of benevolence, goodwill and compassion towards all those at the fringe of society. Social and community operators have developed myriad initiatives to meet the imperative of help for the casualties of the economic system. Is this what we are dealing with locally? Volunteering helps expand our moral currency. It is the road map that defines and develops this conscious. When it comes to young people, it's another path that leads towards full citizenship and societal engagement.

What is exciting is that our country seems to be moving away from 'a charitable helpless model' to 'a forward looking helping model'. It was an effort that saw at the forefront the forthcoming principles of 'help' versus 'helplessness', 'solidarity' versus 'belittling' and 'participation' versus 'competition'. In more ways than one voluntarism started taking on and complementing the government's welfare responsibilities, minimizing social tensions and going against the grain of community deterioration.

This study is another loop in attempting to decipher at what stage we are at, when it comes to the relationship between youth and civil engagement. This work will also lay out the strengths and weaknesses in this sector and the direction that our policy needs to take. Naturally this study is an indicator of the trends in this area. It can give us an idea of how things can work out and the road map we need to set out. It could well be the basis of a scientific nationwide study. A balance between creating 'a kitty mentality' and generating community is what is proposed in this study. The spine of a healthy community lies in the inclusion of all, volunteering is one way of guaranteeing this!

VOLUNTEERING
AS A SOCIAL GOOD

PROF. KENNETH WAIN
Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

This report on youth volunteering is the first commissioned research by my office, as part of the data gathering work we require in our efforts to obtain as accurate as possible, a picture of the voluntary sector in Malta. The subject was not chosen idly; the enthusiasm young people bring to the causes they become involved with is well-known, but there has not been any studied attempt that I know of up to this point, to gauge the extent to which that enthusiasm is presently channelled into voluntary work locally and abroad, particularly in Europe, where it is being channelled, and what could be the difficulties young people actually encounter with volunteering, or with seeking volunteering opportunities. Once the decision to begin with the research on youth volunteering was taken, the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport was contacted as an obvious partner and offered a collaborative partnership in creating and publishing the report; a partnership he immediately accepted. The next step was to identify a social scientist to research and prepare the report, for which purpose Dr. Andrew Azzopardi from the Department of Youth and Community Studies at the University of Malta was identified.

A new dimension was created for the exercise when we entered into the European Year dedicated to the promotion of volunteering in 2011, which event created a public debate into which the preparation of the report fitted like a glove. In fact it was adopted by the co-ordinating entity for the European Year in Malta, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, which immediately accepted to include the launching of the report at the conclusion of its programme of activities in December 2011. Meanwhile throughout the year a lively discussion on the theme of youth volunteering was created in different fora which served to publicise volunteering and its benefits among Maltese youth, hopefully to encourage a higher rate of participation in the sector both for their personal benefit and that of society in general.

This report, I believe, makes a good case for volunteering as a social good, for the participation of young people in volunteering activities as an altruistic gesture of solidarity with others, and as a positive character-forming experience. It also makes a good case for the less altruistic personal gains they may derive from volunteering and involving themselves in volunteering organisations in terms of the skills and experiences acquired that are transferable to the job market. The report also encapsulates the main issues related to the theme of youth volunteering in a broad sweep which includes an insight into what could actually be attracting and what could be hindering the participation of young people in volunteering work.

Finally, it draws attention to an aspect of volunteering that is not commonly recognised in the popular perception of the value of volunteering in Malta, but is recognised strongly in European Union policy documents and in other European countries; this is the aspect of citizen education through democratic participation. It draws attention, in other words, to the political aspect of volunteering, which involves both being a volunteer and participating in the administrative structures of voluntary organisations where young people, because of their youth, tend to be under-represented. One needs to emphasise the importance of this dimension precisely because it is popularly under-perceived and under-rated notwithstanding its value. This means encouraging young people to set up their own organisations, not just in the popular areas like sports, politics, and culture, but in other areas too, particularly that of rendering humanitarian aid and solidarity in its different forms.

My hope is that this report will be widely circulated and read and that it will lead the National Youth Council, as the entity that enfolds and represents the local youth organisations, to create activities, seminars and fora, about and around it. My hope is that the Council will make it its own not only by publicising it with youth organisations in Malta and Gozo but by creating its own response to it, both in terms of commenting critically about its contents and in recommending possible policy initiatives regarding the promotion of volunteering with the Government for the future.

RESEARCH TEAM

DR. ANDREW AZZOPARDI
Project Leader

Dr. Andrew Azzopardi is Senior Lecturer at the University of Malta. His lecturing and research focus on inclusive education, sociology, critical pedagogy, disability politics, youth and community studies. He has published extensively in the field of disability studies and inclusive education. He is a member of the Editorial Panel of the highly acclaimed International Journal of Inclusive Education and has edited a special edition called 'Creating Inclusive Communities'. He has contributed extensively in a number of other applauded journals.

He has published, Career Guidance for Persons with Disability (2008) (JP Advertising), Reading Stories of Inclusion – Engaging with different perspectives towards an agenda for inclusion (2009) (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller), Understanding disability politics in Malta (2009) (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller), Making sense of inclusive education – where everyone belongs (2010) (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller), Young people in Gozo – A study 2 (2011) (A & M Printing Limited Gozo), co-editor of Inclusive Communities: A critical reader (2012) (Sense Publishers) and editor of Roots to Inclusive Education – A question of wellbeing (2012) (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller).

DR. CLAIRE BONELLO
Research Assistant

Dr. Claire Bonello is a practicing lawyer, specialising in family and environmental law. She is also a family mediator and has read for a degree in sociology. She has been a regular columnist for two of Malta's national newspapers – Malta Today and The Sunday Times of Malta for the past years. Dr. Claire Bonello is the mentor for the online version of The Telegraph newspaper and has published several articles in the local and international media. She is a member of the Press Ethics Commission.

1 MAPPING
THE TERRAIN

MAPPING THE TERRAIN

1.1 Preamble

It is imperative that as we develop policies and ensuing strategies, young people are present in the debate and feature prominently and predominantly in the way that social planning develops. The formulation of the National Youth Policy (2010) was a catalyst in this respect, whereby young people from different backgrounds together with academics and researchers representing an array of fields and professions, pooled in their ideas and views on the complex issue of social development. Young people need to influence these policies, and their participation in this political process is crucial. We need to ensure that our policy direction is constructed around this vital link between engaged citizenry and a healthy democracy. One way of ensuring that this will happen is if we enhance the capacities of youth organisations to increase their involvement in civil society, namely through activity participation and volunteer endeavour.

Youth participation is a lynchpin in the whole debate on social cohesion.This study highlights very clearly the fact that young people themselves expect to be part of their community rather than wait compliantly for an opportunity to come their way before being able to influence the matters that concern them. However, openness to young people's active participation is not enough. What is required, as it emerges from this report, is that we have structures within the social fabric that can support such participation.

1.2 Study Objectives

This report was commissioned by the Hon. Clyde Puli MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sports and Professor Kenneth Wain, the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations. The research objectives and targets are outlined in Table 1.1 Research Goals and Objectives.

Table 1.1: Research Goals and Objectives

Goal 1	To define voluntary work	Goal 4	To quantify the amount of young people attending EU programmes
Goal 2	To investigate and list the reasons why young people find it difficult to engage in voluntary organisations	Goal 5	To recognise and catalogue the varied sectors where young people are involved
Goal 3	To identify and document the number of young people participating in voluntary organisations	Goal 6	To record the varied mechanisms of encouragement

The overall objective of this project was to unearth the level of participation and contribution of Maltese youth in voluntary work both locally and abroad and to produce a report on the subject for the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sports and the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations in view of the EU Year 2011 dedicated to Volunteering. This study is in line with the EU's Youth Strategy that encourages the engagement of youth in all European structures and their active participation within political and volunteering structures. It is also in harmony with the United Nations' rationalisation of volunteering;

> Voluntary citizen participation is an essential part of civil society, which in turn is a key contributor to sustainable development, human rights, good governance and social justice.
> (http://www.unv.org/en/news-resources/news/doc/broadening-civic-space-through.html Accessed on 12/2/2012)

Essentially, volunteering is all about participatory governance and engaged citizenship and how these come together. It is clear that the study surfaces two very important issues at the heart of volunteering, 'space' and 'networking'.

The research involved collating data on the participation of Maltese youth in the voluntary sector in Malta and abroad and on their participation in EU programmes. This is in line with a Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU (2008) document which strongly emphasises voluntary activities that are decisive in developing self-assessment tools. The report attempted to give an indication of and also to itemise the different sectors of voluntary work where Maltese youth are especially active in sports, culture, charity events, politics, pressure groups and environmental organisations.

It also investigates the type of resources that are made available to encourage participation, namely grants, learning credits and other systems of inducement, reward, and encouragement offered in the other European countries and available through the EU. This report seeks to collect data on what young Maltese people regard as the obstacles for doing voluntary work in Malta and abroad and list a number of recommendations with the aim of ensuring commitment towards a stronger youth involvement in civil society.

1.3 Defining Voluntary Work

One very important and complex dimension of this research was to define voluntary work. People may be engaged in an organisation at different levels of association; passive members, active members but on the receiving end, active members but engaged occasionally, active and taking on a leading and/or organisational role and finally a mixture of some or most. The National Youth Policy (2010) refers to the importance of not only participating but also engaging heavily and consistently in the process of social cohesion through active volunteering:

> Volunteering contributes to a cohesive society creating bonds of trust and solidarity as well as social capital. Youth volunteering not only contributes to personal development, but also to a cohesive society.
> (National Youth Policy, 2010 http://www.education.gov.mt/youth/nationalyouthpolicy.pdf Accessed on 1/2/2011).

The Maltese Voluntary Organisations Act 2007 (Cap. 492 of the Laws of Malta) defines a 'volunteer' as a person who provides unremunerated services through or for a voluntary organisation. Accordingly, voluntary activity is undertaken by a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and without regard to financial gain. The Voluntary Organisations Act also defines the 'voluntary sector', which includes voluntary organisatons, volunteers, donors who make voluntary grants of money or assets to voluntary organisatons, beneficiaries of the services of volunteers and voluntary organisations and the administrators of such organisations.
(http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8958&l=1 Accessed on 12/2/2012).

This definition allows an adaptable interpretation on how 'volunteerism' can be understood and explained. To compliment this definition, however, one can quote an Inter-Parliamentary Union, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and/or United Nations Volunteers (2004) report which refers to 'volunteerism' as follows:

> Volunteerism is an ancient and global phenomenon. Since the beginning of civilisation, a fundamental human value has been people helping people and, in the process, helping themselves. ... The act is familiar even where the word "volunteer" is not. Volunteerism is strongly influenced by the history, politics, religion and culture of communities. What may be valued as volunteerism in one country may be dismissed as low-paid or labour-intensive work in another.
> (http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/volunteeren.pdf. Accessed on 30/1/2011)

So within this context, 'volunteerism' is not only about engaging with sources and resources to make a better life for others but also about engagement with the self. Identifying what and why young people engage or not with non-governmental organisations (henceforth 'NGOs') was at the core of this research, but it was not always easy and clear cut to identify 'giving to self' as opposed (or complementing) 'giving to others'. One also needs to recognise the amount of voluntary work that is taking place in the community and amongst families which is unstructured, unrecognized and difficult, if not impossible, to qualify, quantify and appraise.

The following are some official statistics from the National Statistics Office (henceforth 'NSO') that provide an overview on youth membership and participation:

- "Overall youth membership in youth organisations made up 55.1% of the youth population aged between 15-24 years". (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1793 Accessed on 1/2/2011).
- "In 2005, child and youth membership of Non-Profit Organisations stood at 116,305". (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1880 Accessed on 1/2/2011).
- "In 2005, there were 504 Non-Profit Organisations that had members aged under 25. As in previous years, the bulk of child and youth involvement in NPOs was in sports organisations. In fact, 76% of the latter had members within this age bracket. Under 25, members of NPOs numbered 116,305. Of these, 48% were members of sports organisations" (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1880 Accessed on 1/2/2011).
- "Voluntary workers stand out in all levels of NPO (Non-Profit Organisations) staff. In NPOs with youth and child members, the voluntary sector formed 88% of all workers in 2005, which compares with 82% in all organisations" (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1793 Accessed on 1/2/2011).
- "Males accounted for 70.3% of members" and "between 2000 and 2001 voluntary participation went down by 1.5 %" (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=615 Accessed on 1/2/2011).
- "Figures obtained from the 2009 Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) revealed that 27,250 persons aged 12 and over (8% of the total population in this age bracket) were doing some form of voluntary work. Just over half these persons were contributing in a voluntary organisation, while 41% were working in other institutions (e.g. the Church). Fifty-two per cent of voluntary workers were females". (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=2908 Accessed on 1/2/2011).
- "In 2009, 27,250 persons aged 12 and over spent an average of 23 hours per month doing some form of voluntary work". (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=2908 Accessed on 1/2/2011).

- In 2009: "The largest proportion of persons doing voluntary work (32 per cent) were doing so through membership in organisations. They were followed by organisations engaged in social work activities (28 per cent) and religious organisations (21 per cent). Forty-six per cent of persons engaged in voluntary work participated actively in the organisation's activities, while a quarter had an administrative role, with the remainder having a supporting role". (http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=2908 Accessed on 1/2/2011).

- From the European perspective, in 2007, 30% of young Europeans surveyed by Eurobarometer thought that participating in debates was the most important political action to ensure that their voice is heard by policy-makers … Joining a political party ranked second (16 %) and taking part in a demonstration third (13 %). Signing a petition, being a member of or supporting an NGO, or joining a trade union were equally recognised as effective expressions of political activism by 11 % of young Europeans. (http://epp.eurostat. ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-920/EN/KS-78-09-920-EN.PDF Accessed on 2/2/2011)

Eurostat also claims that participation in recreational groups and religious organisations were the most popular types of engagements among European young people in 2006. Over the past twelve months, 27% of young men aged between 16 and 29 years took part in recreational activities through dedicated groups or organisations, against 19% of young women. Religion remains a common way of being active in society, with 20% of young women and 16% of young men participating in religious organisations.

> In general, men aged 16–29 were more active than women in political parties, trade unions, professional associations and recreational groups, while female participation was higher in religious or charitable organisations. In 2006, only less than 4% of young Europeans declared to have participated in the activities of political parties or trade unions.
> (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-920/EN/KS-78-09-920-EN.PDF. Accessed on 2/2/2011)

1.4 Understanding Youth Engagement

What happens when young people find themselves left out of communities? Who is missing out and why does it matter? The quality of life of any population, including that of its youth, is an important concern for all. What can one do to narrow the gap between young people and their communities? Who are the young people? What is community?

> Finding a common definition of youth is not an easy task. Age is a useful but insufficient indication to characterise the transition to adulthood. Other qualitative information also reveals how societies acknowledge the increasing maturity of young people. The age limit of child benefits, the end of full-time compulsory schooling, the voting age and the minimum age for standing for elections may be considered as key milestones to adulthood.
> (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pub/pdf/eu-youth-report_en.pdf Accessed on 4/11/2010).

> What are the ingredients that construct a community? In what way can we make our communities function as such? The term citizenship implies engaging with one's communities through economic involvement, public service, and other efforts to enhance the quality of life for all. An elementary principle in community involvement with this aim is 'authentic dialogue'. The expression has 'two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed − even in part − the other immediately suffers'.
> (Freire, 1972, http://www.marxists.org/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/ch03.htm Accessed on 12/10/2010).

1.5 "Common, Community and Communication"

The term community has positive and negative connotations for all who consider themselves a part of one community or another, including young people. Communities incessantly negotiate identity and who and what belongs in a community is often the subject of a complex debate. The boundaries of a community are symbolic rather than physical in that they represent social distinctions and divisions affected by a myriad of factors, events and social conditions (Twelvetrees, 2002). Nowadays, we can speak of symbolic boundaries of a community that relate to community identity and definition, power of community, culture(s) of community, and residents' attachment to and identification with community. In whatever way we define community, the civil engagement of youth within their communities remains a very important mechanism for their development and advancement.

The focus of this research helps us to understand:
(a) how young people shape their own social development and involvement, and
(b) the visibility of young people as socio-political actors within their communities and neighbourhoods.
It endeavours to understand the impact that such an involvement has on the potential for young people's political consciousness to translate into public, social, philanthropic and religious movement participation.

For young people themselves, civic participation and involvement in the development process of their communities provides an opportunity to obtain life skills and capacities which ultimately increase their employability, self-confidence, leadership, sense of belonging and may open up career trajectories they would not have thought about. Networking and youth associative life can further contribute to overcome cleavages, barriers and tensions and minimise conflict. Participation helps meet a fundamental development interest in increasing civic engagement and the involvement of people in the running of their lives, particularly through participation in NGOs.

1.6 Conclusion

The central issues that guided this research could be summarised in the following way:
a.   whether young people participate in their communities and, if so,
b.   what roles do they take on.

It also seeks to highlight ways how to promote policies and practices which contribute to civic involvement and which support young people's capacity to exercise increased control over their lives. It investigates what governs the development of youth engagement in civil society and explores the path society should take to maximise such potential.

2 STUDY DESIGN

2 STUDY DESIGN

2.1 Introduction

This study design is intertwined within a combination of human interaction, interpretation and the engagement of truth as perceived in human terms research. Human behaviours are truly reflected and their meanings best interpreted in the settings young people are located in. We have made it a point in this study to give prominence to what young people have to say about the issue in contention and that the data is collated directly from them. Importance is also given to the stakeholders involved in this sector.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

The research got underway in September 2009 and the first report was submitted in November 2010. The concluding report was submitted in February 2011 with a final review of the work completed at the end of 2011 following the collaboration and advice of Professor Kenneth Wain. Meetings with the people who commissioned this research and other stakeholders took place regularly. The research team met frequently to ensure the project remains on track.

Table 2.1: Research Phases

Phase 1	Laying out the research agenda	Phase 6	Presenting major themes
Phase 2	Developing and collating the literature review	Phase 7	Drafting initial report
Phase 3	Conceptualising the research tools	Phase 8	Public consultation (via conference) on first report
Phase 4	Pilot study & the collection of data	Phase 9	Presentation of final report and laying out the strategy and action plan
Phase 5	Clustering and coding of data		

2.3 Instruments

The methodology table as seen in Table 2.2 delineates how data was collated;

Table 2.2: Methodology

Questionnaire A	Young People		
Questionnaire B	Leaders of NGOs (working with young people)	Interviews	Twelve interviews with major stakeholders and policy makers in the field of young people
Focus Groups	Three focus group sessions with young people; 13-15 years; 16-22 years; 23-25 years	Consultation	Informal consultation meetings with major stakeholders

2.4 Sample

Contrary to having a scientific sample, the purposive sample group we used for this research was selected on the ground that it represents a range of experiences within the phenomenon of interest. Data was analysed as soon as it was collected. In fact, rather than follow a linear form of procedure, the researcher collected the data and analysed it immediately. When potential topics emerged during and after the analysis, they were 'teased out' to look for budding new directions in the area being explored. The core variable had three critical features; it recurs frequently, links the data together and explains much of the variation in the data. This variable was the basis for the eventual production of recommendations.

> A purposive sample is a sample selected in a deliberative and non-random fashion to achieve a certain goal. In a focus group, for example, you may want to consciously seek out respondents at both ends of a spectrum (as well as some in the middle) to insure that all viewpoints are adequately represented. You might also preferentially recruit subjects who have the best knowledge and experience in an area.
> (http://www.childrensmercy.org/stats/definitions/purposive.htm Accessed on 14/2/2012)

2.5 Questionnaires

Two types of questionnaires were distributed to respondents. The first one was directed at young people. It was circulated amongst those in the age range between 13 years and 30 years. Questionnaires were disseminated via the Employment and Training Corporation (unemployed young people), Unions, Schools, the University of Malta, the Junior College, the Higher Secondary School, MCAST and via Facebook and e-mail shots. The sample thus collected, with a total of 1,141 respondents can be regarded as reasonably representative.

Apart from that all the voluntary organisations registered with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and other groups who were not necessarily registered were sent a second questionnaire. All the Parishes in the Diocese of Malta, band clubs and Local Councils were invited to participate as well. Questionnaires were also sent to all the secondary schools, post-secondary and higher educational institutions in Malta.

2.5.1 Questionnaire: Young People

The target respondent group aged 13-30 years was further subdivided into three age groups, namely: those under-16 years of age, those between 17 and 24 years of age, and those who were 25 years or older. It was thought that in this way the whole youth spectrum could be represented in the sample, from those still attending compulsory education to those in post-secondary educational institutions, to those employed on part or full–time work, or else who were unemployed.

The first section of the questionnaire comprised 12 questions pertaining to the biographical data of the respondent, such as age, gender, the educational institution attended, the kind of work carried out by the respondent as well as by the respondent's parents, , whether the respondent works full- or part-time, or is not employed at all, whether s/he has internet access, and whether s/he is involved in any way with a voluntary organisation. Answers to these questions enabled the researcher to draw up a profile of the respondents, and to deduce whether their participation in voluntary organisations is in any way related to these factors.

The second part of the questionnaire was made up of six questions regarding respondents' involvement with voluntary organisations. They were asked if they were involved or affiliated and their reasons for being so. For those whose response was in the affirmative a number of contingency questions were posed. Respondents were asked how often they attended activities and the duration of the activities they were engaged in to try and establish their actual level of involvement with the organisation concerned. There was also a question exploring the factors which could impinge on a higher level of participation and whether respondents were interested in participating more actively had these constraints not existed.

The third section consisted of one question listing a number of activities (namely, signing a petition, doing voluntary work, contributing in the preparation of the village feast) to explore whether respondents who were not formally affiliated to a voluntary organisation may have still been involved in voluntary, unpaid activity in the social, civic, cultural, sportive or other field.

The final section of the questionnaire consisted of six questions pertaining to young people's awareness or involvement in EU programmes. Respondents were asked which programmes they were involved in, how they had got to know about them and the impressions and experiences they had had when involved in such programmes. They were also requested to indicate the factors which would hinder them from participating in similar programmes in the future.

A letter was included with every questionnaire sent in order to explain the aims and objectives of the study to the potential respondents. Those opting to participate in the review were informed why their responses were being solicited and how they would be used. Since respondents had the option of remaining anonymous the question of confidentiality did not arise. Contact details of the researchers carrying out the study were included in the cover sheet. In the case of questionnaires sent to minors in educational institutions, the researcher team obtained authorisation from the respective authorities.

2.5.2 Questionnaire: NGOs

The questionnaire addressed to the voluntary organisations was designed to facilitate easy completion within a reasonable time-frame. In fact when piloting it, the researchers confirmed it could be completed within 20-25 minutes. The questionnaire had the objective of providing basic data on the membership of young people in the particular organisation, the level of engagement, the design and scope of the organisation and, finally, the involvement of the organisation in the EU programmes which, the researchers felt, is one of the most important resources for the capacity-building of any organisation. As reported in other sections of this report, a significant number of groups did not reply to this questionnaire even though it was sent in hard and soft copy formats numerous times. Though the response rate improved marginally, the increase was not substantial enough. This is a clear indication of one of two reasons; either voluntary organisations lack the resources to undertake administrative tasks and therefore direct most of their energy to providing services, or they are not interested in providing such information as they do not feel they are involved in the wider picture.

2.5.3 Focus Groups

Another very important component in this research was the engagement of three sets of focus groups. The focus groups were conducted at the end of the research process to better inform the discussion. As anticipated, the discussions consolidated most of the findings that had been collected from the questionnaires but also provided the opportunity for the groups to reflect on other issues that were either not mentioned or not emphasised enough in the questionnaires. The focus groups involved young people.

2.5.4 Interviews: Policymakers

The interviews with policy and decision-makers were very important 'building blocks' in this study. A cross-section of people who are working directly or highly engaged in the field were interviewed, namely; youth workers, the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, the Commissioner for Children, and a number of academics engaged in the field of youth studies.

2.6 Conclusion

Finding a balanced way of triangulating the methods employed was important to ensure that the outcomes could be interrelated and understood copiously. The researchers are confident that the data collated can provide a broad understanding of the trends that constitute this sector. It was important to identify where we stand with regards to the participation of young people in the voluntary sector and get an indication of the potential areas that need to be addressed to ensure that such an important realm in the social sector and in the social fabric is nurtured.

3 INDICATORS

3 **INDICATORS**

3.1 Introduction

The following is a presentation of the data collected in this research project. We start off by listing the results collated from both questionnaires, the one with young people and the one with the NGOs. The main issues that emanated from the focus groups are listed as well in this same section. Finally, a summary is presented on what the policy makers told the researchers during the unstructured interviews when they were asked to assess where they stand in the youth agenda, what the role of voluntary organisations is in developing active citizenship, and what they think about the phenomenon of voluntary work in respect to this particular population.

As explained further on, the focus groups (and in the general collection of data) young people were clustered and rationalised within three age brackets:

13-16 age bracket. Age 13 was adopted to keep in line with the age 'young people' are referred to as young people in the National Youth Policy (2010) and age 16 is the age when they would have terminated their compulsory education.

17-24 age bracket. This is the phase when most young people are exploring their future careers and lifestyles, have taken on higher/further education, are in employment or unemployed..

25-30 age bracket. This is when young people are (supposedly) participating fully in adult life.

3.2 Questionnaire: Young People

Section A: General
The average age of respondents was 19 years. Respondents were further sub-divided into the following age groups as explained further on:

Table 3.1: Age of respondents

62.4%	Answered the question		37.6%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

13-16 years	31.0%		17-24 years	54.6%
			25-30 years	14.4%
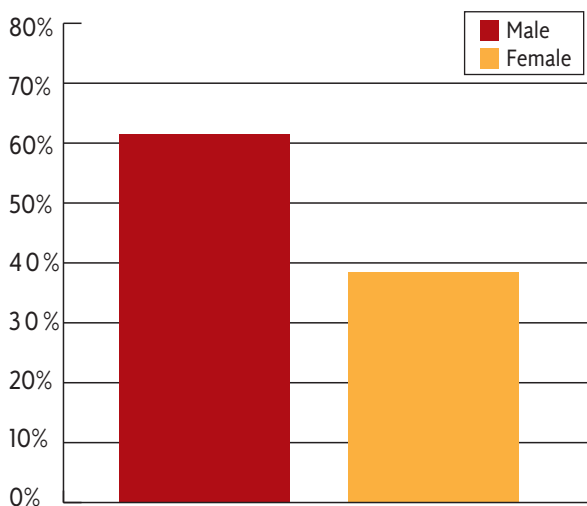
The majority of the respondents were female, 61.5% compared to 38.5% males.

The largest percentage of respondents, 47.6%, had attended or attend the University of Malta at the time the survey was conducted, 26.4% had attended or attend secondary school, 16.1% had attended or attend MCAST, and the remaining 10.3% had attended or attend other educational institutions, namely Junior College, Higher Secondary School, St Aloysius College Sixth Form, ITS, foreign universities and other private institutions.

Table 3.2: Distribution of respondents

91%	Answered the question	**9**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question (A few gave more than one answer):

University of Malta	47.6%	**MCAST**	16.1%
Secondary School	26.4%	**Other**	10.3%

When they were invited to indicate if they worked part-time and/or full-time, the majority of respondents did not answer the question. Of the ones who answered 58.2% stated that they were in full-time employment, whereas 44.8% said that they had a part-time job. The response was as follows:

Table 3.3: Employment

36.5%	Answered	**63.5**%	Did not answer

Of those who answered the question (A few gave more than one answer):

58.2%	Employed: Full-time	**44.8**%	Employed: Part-time

83.8% of respondents replied to the question about their father's employment, whilst 16.2% did not. A broad distribution of male parent jobs was indicated in the following Table (3.4).

Table 3.4: Father's employment
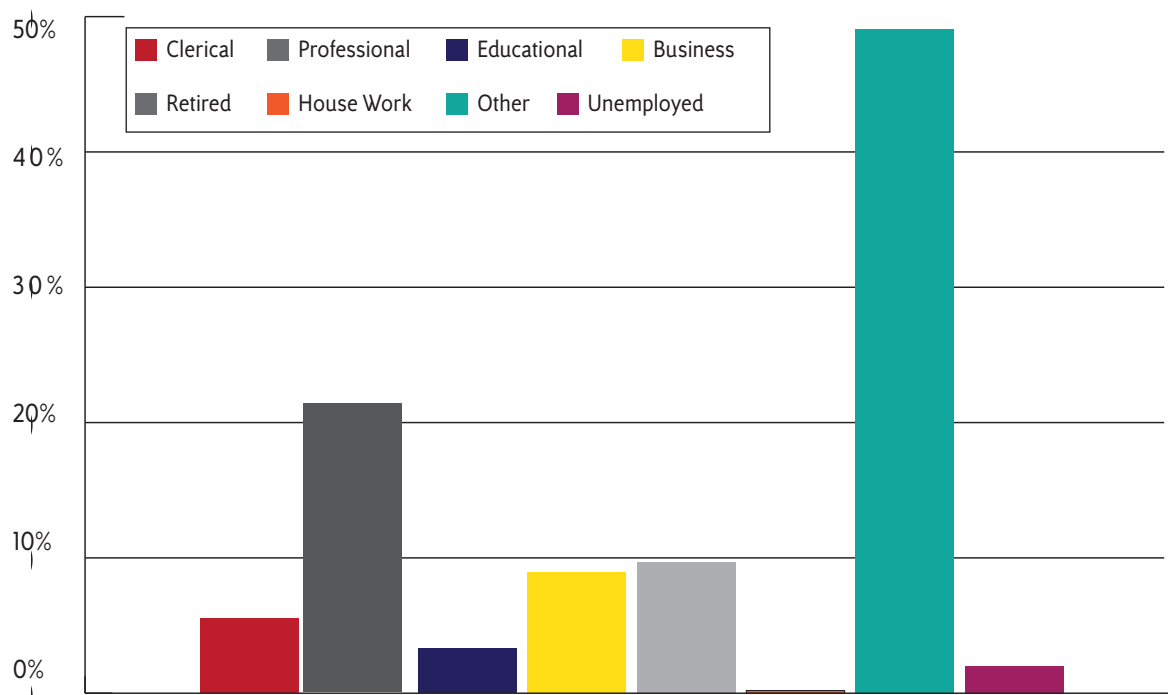
83.8%	Answered	**16.2**%	Did not answer

Of those who answered the question:

5.5%	Clerical work	**9.7**%	Retired
21.3%	Professional work	**0.2**%	House management
3.3%	Educational work	**2.0**%	Unemployed
8.9%	Business work (shop, etc.)/marketing	**49.1**%	Other types of jobs that included; delivery man, police officer, warden, self-employed, port-worker

80% of the participants answered to the question whether their mother worked. A significant percentage of this number, that is 51.9%, said their mothers were involved in full-time housework. When asked about other types of jobs their mothers were involved in, the predominant categories were, care workers, cleaners, postal operators, chambermaids and nursing aids.

Table 3.5: Mother's employment

80%	Answered	**20**%	Did not answer

Of those who answered the question (Respondents could choose more than one answer):

5.6%	Clerical work	**7.4**%	Educational work
9.9%	Professional work	**6.5**%	Business work (shop, etc.)/marketing
2.1%	Retired	**3.3**%	Unemployed
51.8%	House management	**13.4**%	Other type of job

Another important question we asked was whether the participants had access to the internet (from home). All respondents answered the question. 98.2% answered in the affirmative whilst 1.8% said they did not have any such access.

Table 3.6: Access to internet (from home)

98.2%	Yes	**1.8**%	No

Section B: Participation in Associations

The first question asked in this section was whether respondents were members of any association. 96% answered the question. At this point, respondents were not asked to specify the kind of association they were involved with.

Table 3.7: Membership in an association

96%	Answered the question	**4**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

64.7%	Replied that they are a member of an association	**35.3**%	Replied that they do not form part of an association

Most of the respondents who answered that they did not belong to any association said that the predominant reason is that they did not have enough time due to their studies. Others said that they were simply not interested and some said that they were members of an association in the past but their priorities had changed since then. Others claimed that they did not have the opportunity to join, that nothing they liked doing was on offer and some of them claimed that they had family members who needed taking care of which left little or no time for such involvement.

Table 3.8 Why aren't you involved in an organisation?

29%	Answered the question	71%	Did not answer the question

In order to establish whether they did any volunteering, respondents were asked if the association they were involved in was engaged in practical activities. Only 18.5% answered the question. This could indicate that the majority of associations the respondents were members of did not carry out any activities that involved them in volunteering and may have been more focused on activities of a sporting, cultural or political nature.

From the respondents it emerged that those who did respond to this question in the affirmative belonged to associations and were involved with activities that either supported children/young people in institutions, engaged in voluntary work abroad, organised meetings and activities for group members, raised funds and/or managed and organised activites within student organisations.

Respondents were also asked the name of the organisation or organisations they belonged to. 64% replied to this question. As expected those who did, were engaged with a number of different NGOs coming from a variety of fields that included religious organisations, sports clubs, environmentally focused groups, and other socially related voluntary organisations. A significant number of respondents said that they participated or were involved in more than one organisation.

61.6% of the respondents replied to the question why they had become members of their association. The answers given, shed some insight into the motivation of respondents for their involvement.

Table 3.9: Why are you a member of an NGO (Respondents could choose more than one answer)

61.6%	Answered the question	38.4%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question (Respondents could choose more than one answer):

71.6%	A hobby/activity that I like	37.1%	To make new friends and network
3.6%	Political party	18.9%	To advance in my career
56.6%	Because of friends and people I know are members of the association	26.7%	Other reasons

Respondents were also asked how often they attended meetings organised by the association they belonged to. This question was asked in order to establish what could hinder respondents from being more active in their association and from carrying out voluntary work. 62.7% answered the question. Other responses varied from twice a month to irregular attendance 'depending on the activity involved'. Some were even engaged on a daily basis whilst with others their involvement depended on the particular period of the year. Some were engaged with more than one organisation.

Table 3.10: Frequency of meetings

62.7%	Answered the question	37.3%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

59.2%	Once a week	2.0%	Once a year
7.1%	Once a month	31.7%	Other frequency

Research participants were also asked about the duration of the meetings they attended. Table 3.11 indicates how many responded to the question and the amount of hours these young people invested in their meetings. In fact, 55.1% spent two hours a week involved with the organisation, 22.1% less than an hour and 22.8% more than two hours.

Table 3.11: Duration of a meeting of 'the' association

61.4%	Answered the question	**38.6**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

22.6%	Less than an hour	**55.1**%	Two hours
		22.3%	More than two hours

Table 3.12 indicates whether young people wanted to participate more actively in their associations.

Table 3.12: Would they like to participate more actively in this association

58.7%	Answered the question	**41.3**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

78.7%	They do want to participate more in the association	**21.3**%	They do not want to participate more in the association

It was very clear that the issue of 'time' is a major factor when it comes to active involvement. With most young people from the ages of 16 years onwards (some possibly even younger) getting involved in summer and/or winter jobs (a growing trend) interferes with the available time for active social engagement and young people either end up not attending or else attending but without getting involved too much.

Table 3.13: Reasons for not participating more in the association (Respondents could choose more than one reason)

53.7%	Answered the question	**46.3**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question (Respondents could give more than one answer):

85.8%	Not enough time	**5.4**%	Disagree how the meetings and activities are organised
7.2%	Meetings held at a distant location or the time is inconvenient	**2.4**%	Fee to participate is too high
		22.2%	Have other interests

Section C: Participation in other activities in the community

Respondents were also asked about other philanthropic or charitable activities they may have been affianced within the past in order to try to establish whether they had ever volunteered and, if so, in what capacity. Table 3.14 presents their responses. It should be noted that the majority, 61.6%, said that they had engaged in a charity activity, though it was not indicated if this was on a sporadic basis, a one-off, or a more consistent rendezvous.

Table 3.14: Participation in activities in the community (Respondents could choose more than one reply)

90.3%	Answered the question	**9.7**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question (Respondents could give more than one answer):

61.6%	Charity activity	**25.0**%	Festival organisation/participation
36.1%	Walk or other sponsored activity	**65.8**%	Show/Play
28.8%	Cleaning/environmental campaign	**21.6**%	Contribute in a newspaper or magazine
51.4%	Competition	**49.1**%	Signed a petition
18.0%	Debate	**14.4**%	Demonstration
25.0%	Feast preparations/decorations	**27.5**%	Political meeting
49.6%	Exhibition	**6.5**%	Healing service
36.5%	Prayer meeting	**9.3**%	Others

Section D: Participation in EU programmes

The primary issue we wanted to explore in this section was whether respondents were informed about EU Youth programmes. Only 42.4% answered in the affirmative.

Table 3.15: Did you know about EU programmes for young people?

42.4%	Answered the question in the affirmative	**57.6**%	Did not answer the question

When asked how they had heard about these programmes the respondents offered a spectrum of sources where they got their information from, ranging from media information (newspapers, internet, fliers, radio etc), to their parents, local councils and parishes.

A worrying statistic, by today's standards, after a relatively long number of years as full EU members, is that 80% of young people who participated in the survey said that they did not get involved in any EU programme. Considering the fact that so much money is being dedicated to so many programme initiatives, we found this statistic disturbing and disconcerting.

Table 3.16: Have you ever participated in EU programmes?

81.6%	Answered the question	**18.4**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

20.0%	Participated in EU programmes	**80.0**%	Did not participate in EU programmes

When asked what programmes they had participated in, the respondents referred to a variety of different programmes namely *Comenius, Student Voice, Eko-Skola, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundvig, Youth in Action* and *Erasmus*. Others did not specify the type of programmes and youth exchanges they had engaged with.

Table 3.17: What programme they participated in (EU)?

16%	Answered the question	**84**%	Did not answer the question

Respondents were asked what they liked or found useful about these programmes. 17.7% answered the question. Replies varied from a vague 'interesting' to 'helping me in my studies', from 'helping me develop my work experience' to 'meeting new people'. 'An occasion to go abroad' and 'to have fun' were also on the agenda.

Table 3.18: Difficulties they found to participate in EU programmes (Respondents could choose more than one reply)

22.3%	Answered the question	**77.7**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question (Respondents could choose more than one answer):

41.6%	They do not have enough free time	**13.3**%	They need to be a member of an association
37.3%	Too complicated to apply	**9.4**%	There are too many fees
30.6%	Do not have access to information	**12.2**%	Other

The reasons given for dissatisfaction with the programmes were because: they were considered as being boring, there was too much bureaucracy involved in applying for these programmes, the funds took long to reach the association concerned and the allocation of funds, they felt, was unjust. They did not specify what they meant with 'unjust'.

3.3 Questionnaire: Voluntary Organisations

Voluntary organisations are different from informal or ad hoc groups because they have some level of configuration and organisation which naturally varies from one organisation to another. While only a mere 59 voluntary organisations participated in this second questionnaire, this is still a reasonably acceptable representative spectrum of organisations ranging from political, environmental, sporting (including football nurseries), religious (youth centres), social movements, musical (band clubs), animal welfare groups, philanthropic and student councils.

Table 3.19: Type of Association (Respondents could choose more than one answer)

100.0%	Answered the question	**0.0**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question (Respondents could choose more than one answer):

|			
3.4%	Political group	**6.8**%	Support group
40.7%	Union	**3.4**%	Environmental
67.8%	Educational	**3.4**%	Hobby
5.1%	Charity	**5.1**%	Sport
		45.8%	Other

An estimated 8,575 people are members of groups who participated in this research. The members in these groups are largely represented by young people themselves. A number of respondents were also registered with very small groups that do not go beyond the 15 member mark. These were mainly members of the student councils in schools and colleges.

Table 3.20: How is the membership in the organisation split up? (According to ages)

Ages: 13-16 years

39.0%	Answered the question	**61.0**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

66.0%	Males	**34.0**%	Females

Ages: 17-23 years

47.5%	Answered the question	**52.5**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

56.0%	Males	**44.0**%	Females

Ages: 24-30 years

39.0%	Answered the question	**61.0**%	Did not answer the question

Of those who answered the question:

55.0%	Males	**45.0**%	Females

When we asked whether there is a specific section within the association dedicated to young people, 78% of the associations replied in the affirmative whilst 22% said that they do not have a specific section for young people. All associations who participated in this research answered this question.
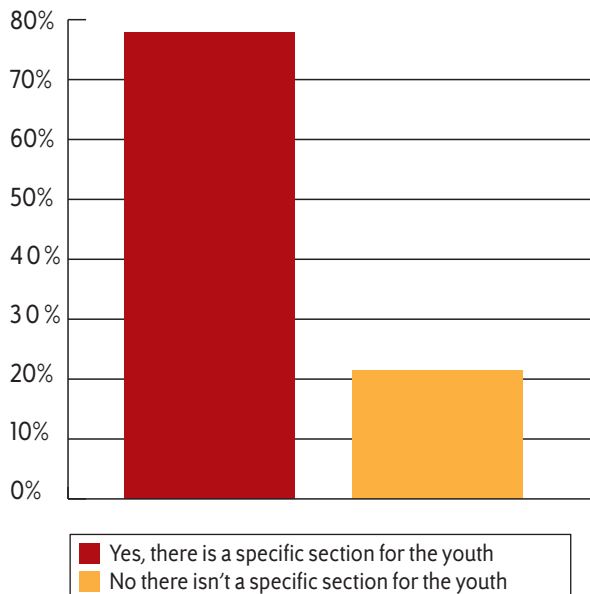
88% of the organisations replied to the question, 'what are the activities that young people participate in?' Going by the replies received, a number of young people are involved in debates, fundraising activities, parties, adventures, debates on various social and personal themes, committee meetings, sexual education and leadership courses. The researchers also explored whether the associations had participated in any EU programmes to date. Only 42.4% replied in the affirmative.

When asked to name the programmes they had participated in, 93% replied to this question. 43.6% named the programmes they were involved in whilst 58.2% gave a whole spectrum of reasons why they did not participate in any programmes, namely, that they never had the opportunity to participate, that there was no will to do so, that the procedures were far too bureaucratic, that they were never invited to get involved in the programmes, that some members participated on their own initiative, and that the group did not have the depth in its structure to see through the process of participation.

3.4 Level of involvement: Passive Involvement or Volunteering?

A number of questions were intended to establish what were the factors limiting a more intense degree of involvement or more active participation of young people in civic or community life. This was done in an attempt to gauge the level of engagement in civil society and to explore whether participation consisted of;

a.   a nominal and passive association with a voluntary organisation or

b.   a significantly active mode of volunteering, or

c.   an involvement which figured somewhere on the continuum between these two.

It should be noted that it transpired from this research that occasionally there are overlaps between membership in a voluntary organisation and volunteering, even though the two may be independent of each other. It is also interesting to see that most school councils are actively engaged in the purposes of the council and do not just sit on a committee. The fact that schools are the initial encounter with active citizenship is an encouraging fact. What seems to be lacking is that schools do not give enough space and bandwidth to the voluntary organisations to 'market' the activities and agendas they are committed to, or the voluntary organisations themselves do not ask for such space.

3.5 Focus Groups

Three focus groups were organised for this study, each with circa ten members. Each focus group met once with the researchers and every session took about one hour and a half. The sessions were recorded and then transcribed. Those who engaged with these focus groups spoke highly about the process. They enjoyed the experience of being and talking together about a theme they feel is so forthcoming.

3.5.1 Focus Group 1: 13-16 year olds

●   The young people in this focus group mentioned that they enjoy participating in the activities of different associations because it is an opportunity for them to meet friends and to learn organisational and social skills.

- They said that they were occasionally teased by friends who called them 'busy bodies' when they got involved in a lot of events. However, even though there were times when they were even ostracised from their friends and felt under pressure, they were still keen to be involved and participate in every opportunity that came up.
- They also said that these opportunities and the time they gave voluntarily to participate were helping them become better persons, and that their involvement had even given them the opportunity to reflect on their future careers.
- They also had a lot of positive comments to make on the Council of Children that operates under the patronage of the Commissioner for Children.

3.5.2 Focus Group 2: 17-24 year olds

- Most of those who participated in this focus group had been involved in various groups over the years.
- They mentioned the importance of groups being well-organised, with young leaders who are innovative and up to date with the way young people think, even though they valued the influence that seasoned leaders can have on the group.
- They said that if and when given the opportunity they participated in a number of activities.
- They indicated technology and ICT as the main tools to engage with and excite young people.
- They also mentioned at length the need to have good leadership because positive leadership is essential for well-organised and effective groups.
- They agreed that voluntary groups should have a syllabus/curriculum that guides their meetings and actions.
- They also felt that the meetings and actions should be productive and exciting and not routine, predictable and boring.
- They also complained that a number of voluntary organisations do not have the resources, financial, physical and/or structural, to run their groups. They found little or no help from the community. Some said that they expect local councils to provide more resources to support their initiatives.
- They indicated that, despite these draw-backs, they were willing to be engaged in civil society when given the opportunity and space. At times, they said, they felt that they were not being taken seriously enough and that their reaction was often a feeling of disillusionment and disengagement.
- They remarked that not enough money was available for them to market their activities.
- They also remarked that voluntary work had contributed in helping them develop an interest for their future plans (career wise).
- They mentioned the need for the groups to 'breed' leaders who were prepared to mentor other youngsters to take up leadership and managerial roles in the future.
- Some young members of the focus group were completely uninterested to the concept of a voluntary group and found it alien. They described such groups as claustrophobic and stifling and inessential for their lives. They also mentioned Facebook and other social media and mobile phones as more stimulating ways of interacting with friends and social groups.
- They also said that meeting informally in gardens and public places is another way of having a group, and that formal organisations were not a necessity for everyone.

3.5.3 Focus Group 3: 25-30 year olds

- The members of this group expressed the view that a lot of young people are involved in voluntary groups. Though they acknowledged that the number fluctuates they were confident that there is a high representation of young people in such groups.
- Some felt that partisan politics were not leaving a positive impact on young people's involvement in civil society. They described themselves as floating voters and expressed the ambition to change the nature of Maltese politics to ensure more engagement of young people.
- They welcomed such initiatives as Degree Plus (University of Malta) which encourages young people to get in touch with voluntary initiatives.
- They felt that the participation of young people in civil society is affected by the lack of a clear separation between the Church and the State, and expressed their irritation that issues concerning such things as sexuality, contraception and divorce had to be endorsed by the Church before being taken up by the State.
- Some members felt that at times it was too expensive for young people to join a group (especially if parents cannot support them financially).
- They queried the validity of having voluntary work imposed on them as part of the curriculum of some University courses or as part of the Systems of Knowledge syllabus.
- They also felt that at times state agencies and voluntary organisations abuse of the 'free' time they give to the organisations that should otherwise be focused on formation.
- According to this focus group social class seemed to affect the degree of involvement in voluntary group activities.
- There was agreement that the skills taught through working in voluntary groups are not always easy to generalise.
- Some complained that, at times, there was excessive and unhealthy competition between organisations working in the same areas.
- They commended the work being done by band clubs to attract young volunteers.
- They also expressed the need for Local Councils to take a more active role in promoting youth civil engagement.

It is clear from the responses recorded above that young people are willing to be involved and to engage with the agenda of the organisations they belong to. It is also clear from the focus group responses that young people are interested in being fully involved in society and are passionate about their involvement with their organisations. Many young people state that, with more time at their disposal, their interest would go beyond mere participation and move towards actively engaging in different volunteering initiatives. The focus groups clearly indicated that the civil engagement that young people are after is one based on an active and reactive involvement that brings about social change.

3.6 Interviews

A number of interviews were held. In-depth, unstructured, interviews were conducted with stakeholders coming from different sectors, namely; representatives of the *Kunsill Nazzjonali Żgħażagħ* (KNŻ), academics at the University of Malta involved in research with young people, and other stakeholders that are either directly or indirectly related to the sector, namely; the Commissioner for Children and the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations. Youth workers working with young people or else involved in the training of youth leaders were also interviewed.

Young People

The people interviewed from the *Kunsill Nazzjonali Żgħażagħ* (KNŻ) said that their organisations need to be reviewed and revamped to reflect the needs of young people today. Their main challenge, in their view is centred around the fact that the structure and statute of KNŻ renders its procedures so laborious that even commenting on a mundane standard national issue requires that all of the representatives on the KNŻ central committee are in agreement. Most decisions are vetoed and fail to go through if there isn't agreement by all. The feeling of the two persons interviewed was that, as a consequence, the central committee's decisions take a lot of time to seep to the member organisations, and as a result the visibility of KNŻ and its work is obscured and watered down. An evident consequence, they said, is that people do not feel that they really belong to KNŻ. On the contrary, they feel that their allegiance rests with their own organisations, first and foremost. This state of affairs, they concluded, is not within the spirit of being actively involved in the community.

They also said that rather than harnessing their efforts to a common cause, members of the KNŻ tended to retain their own individual (group/association) priorities. Still, they felt that this organisation is very important for civil society and extremely useful and that, if run adequately, it could bring about much needed change and transformation in the field of youth activity.

The support from the State and individual Ministries are evident, but they are still too sporadic. On the other hand, they commended the support they got from the Commissioner for Children who is supportive in a number of initiatives that are taking place. They felt that it is very important for them to develop a good rapport with this important institution. Nonetheless, they felt the need to be more organised operationally. According to these two committee members, the involvement of young people in civil society is on the increase both at participation and volunteering levels. Young people, they say, show a readiness to be strongly involved if given the space and opportunity.

Returning to the KNŻ they emphasised that most organisations and structures are not interested in what the KNŻ tells them, and that the engagement between the groups involved was still distant. Even the media hardly covers their press releases, so they scarcely get any public (and publicised) exposure.

When they talked about young people, they said that it is not the 'quantity' that is lacking in young people, but the 'quality'. In their view, the involvement of young people in civil society seems to be at a crossroad with the change in lifestyle patterns, whereby most young people opt to work and/or study and take on other personal commitments which hardly leave them any space and time for commitment to volunteering. Nonetheless, they still feel strongly that there are still a significant number of young people that are involved in voluntary organisations who may not be visible, and yet are having a very strong and important impact on our communities.

An interesting point highlighted in these interviews, is that State and professional run agencies are increasingly recruiting people to do voluntary work, and that because the work is becoming so structured, it is 'burning up' young people who are being asked to deliver more than one would expect. They said that at times they felt that State agencies are exploiting young people with the excuse of providing them with an experience. These state agencies and NGOs were loading young people with responsibilities they may not be interested in taking on.

They also criticised the fact that the University of Malta and MCAST are sending students to voluntary organisations without adequate guidance and mentoring. They also doubt whether it is a good idea to have University and MCAST courses that 'oblige' people to do voluntary work – describing it as a bit of a contradiction in terms. The nature of voluntary work, they argued, is spontaneity and 'we' need to make sure that we retain this characteristic.

They also said that they agreed that the National Youth Agency is a good concept but not if it sets out to take over initiatives and activities that are being organised by KNŻ or other entities. On the other hand, they were unclear about what role the National Youth Agency should assume.

They were also of the view that it is the right time for the youth agenda to be taken up to a Ministry level to give more weight and credibility to this agenda.

When they discussed political activism, they mentioned that young people have become less interested in collective action. In fact it would be a mammoth task, if not impossible, to get young people involved in protests according to them even if there is something which is really worth 'fighting' for. On the other hand, in their view young people are ready to be engaged, if they are given the space. They feel that the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisation has taken the administrative aspect of the voluntary organisations forward, but they feel that the Commissioner also needs to be more in touch and visible with the grassroots activities.

Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

When asked about his role as Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, the Commissioner said that it is two-pronged. One aspect of his role is to monitor the voluntary organisation related legislation and see that it is being enforced and applied well. In this respect he has the responsibility to ensure that well-founded complaints about abuses of whatever kind involving voluntary organisations are investigated within the parameters of the law. He emphasised that the law does not make enrolment of a voluntary organisation on the register mandatory, however it is required and necessary for a voluntary organisation to be eligible for certain benefits and public funding. In this respect, Professor Wain stressed the importance of having a level playing field where all voluntary organisations are treated equally.

The other prong of the Commissioner's remit is helping the voluntary sector in the area of capacity building, in other words supporting voluntary organisations to be more professional in their organisational and operational structures. This is done in collaboration with the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, which is also set up by the respective legislation. The Council, which also manages a Voluntary Organisations Fund, encourages and facilitates voluntary organisations to avail themselves of State and EU funding, to form lobbies, federations and platforms, to network and to develop training programs. Voluntary organisations he said, require different levels of help and support. With some of the smaller ones they need help to achieve very basic aims, such as keeping accounts or raising funds, or having a place to meet and knowledge on how to keep their records.

On the role of government in relation to voluntary organisations, the Commissioner said that it should give more recognition to the political role of voluntary organisations in civil society, as is required in a participatory democracy. He had suggested to the respective Ministry, that the Council be consulted in pre-budget meetings amongst other. There had also been discussions with the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, on matters related to the taxation of voluntary organisations and the use and administration of the Good Causes Fund. But the most important role of the Government, in his view, was to foster a culture of accountability and transparency by example, in its own dealings with the voluntary sector, and to support the work of the Council and of his office.

Commissioner for Children

The Commissioner for Children gave her views regarding the level of engagement of young people/children in civil society. She spoke on the way the Council of Children is organised and said that she gives a lot of importance to that structure. She mentioned a number of groups/ associations that are functioning very well, are very organised and give a good service to the community. Pointing to the large number of groups that exist, she said that this cast doubt on the assumption that there was more involvement of young people in the past than there is today. Her view was that when young people find organisations that are attractive to them they join and participate wholeheartedly. The Commissioner said that she did not interpret the past with nostalgia because the quality of life has improved considerably for young people today and so have the opportunities. She said that values remain the same on the whole but it is a fact that society is changing and occasionally, values change as well – but in essence what was good before remains good now, and NGOs have the responsibility to preserve the good that comes out of their work.

The Commissioner spoke at length about the importance of parental involvement in such initiatives and stressed that the activities should be fun and that children and young people should not be forced to do things that we grown-ups want them to do. At times parents, she observed, tend to put excessive pressure on their children on what type of groups and activities they want them to participate in.

The Commissioner also mentioned the important role of the social media in the lives of young people, where she saw a lot of positives and some negatives. Computers, she believed, should be available for children, but under supervision, especially at certain ages. Another proposal of the Commissioner was that voluntary organisations should be encouraged and developed in schools. We also need to support the volunteers, she said, because they are the people who keep the associations going. One needs to provide the adequate support services required to ensure that children are excited about the prospect of participating in activities and contributing through voluntary work.

Youth Worker

As part of this research we spoke with a youth worker regarding the perception that the participation of youth in voluntary organisations is decreasing. This youth worker said that, "Perhaps voluntary organisations have to adapt. They demand a level of physical presence from their members and a formal level of involvement and affiliation. This is not always possible for young people because most of their time is already taken up with other activities such as school and other activities that are organised for them by adults" and so volunteering becomes quite a difficult task to juggle in their already packed timetable.

Another issue which voluntary organisations have to work around, according to this youth worker, is the mode of communication that is changing drastically, and this might entail that young people have moved away from the 'village square' to the 'virtual square'. Civil society, including voluntary organisations, must reflect on how they can capitalise on this transformation. When asked why young people choose to participate in civil society, our interviewee said that there is no one answer, but he would attribute this mainly to the fact that young people find an extended comfort zone within voluntary organisations . They also find other young people there who think like them and share the same passions and interests. It also helps a great deal if the voluntary organisation has achievable goals. Young people have to be allowed to take ownership of the activities of the voluntary organisations otherwise they will not feel a real sense of involvement and belonging.

Academics

A number of academics, who are researching youth issues, were asked what their take is on youth participation and volunteerism. Replies produced some interesting insights. Firstly, with regard to the scope and aims of voluntary organisations, they said that the State should not abdicate its role within the voluntary sector and should support them in a practical way as much as possible. Secondly they said that the State, cannot be expected to enter into every aspect of society and so the role of voluntary organisations is crucial within this context. Ideally voluntary organisations should not require too much regulation. Though it was necessary to rally resources, these do not necessarily lie with the State. Another observation they made was that there are 'turf wars' and power struggles in this sector. There should be as much space as possible for the private sector in civil society but always within a regulatory structure to avoid any 'turf wars'.

With regards to the effect of legislation on the voluntary organisations, they said that this was necessary as one cannot have a laissez-faire situation where no standards are indicated or maintained. If the law manages to create these standards, they said, this would be a positive step as long as people in the voluntary sector were not stifled by the bureaucracy.

There are various other factors, some interviewees observed, that hinder the advancement of the voluntary sector. One of these is that we have become a society dominated by economic concerns and calculator politics, which might place solidarity, equity, equality and inclusion at the bottom of the scale of values.

Another issue that was raised is that, while certain voluntary organisations expect to receive financial resources from Government, they are not ready to provide proper records or make a clear statement of the aims and objectives which they are pursuing and of the costs incurred.

There was also a problem, they said, regarding the administrative structure which regulates the voluntary sector. If a structure such as that set up to govern the voluntary sector is not backed up by the proper resources than it will simply be an ineffective system. Until now there is no real interest to make this sector effective.

On the level of participation of young people in the voluntary sector, a particular academic said that his impression was that there was a certain amount of engagement in the level of involvement which is still significantly high. As an example, he said that there were many young people involved with the Catholic Neo-Catechumen group, and others who are doing voluntary work abroad. This indicated that there was a level of interest in participating in the voluntary experience the group offered. If one had to include sports voluntary organisations, he said, youth participation will be seen to have increased significantly. Another interviewee observed that traditionally the voluntary organisations affiliated to the Church and the major political parties have been very successful over the years.

Asked whether smaller voluntary organisations should team up, another interviewee said that, as with any other issue, there are pros and cons to this action. At present there are many voluntary organisations with limited resources and members so it would seem that pooling resources and 'know how' would make sense. On the other hand if these were to coalesce this would lead to less variety, a smaller circle of leaders, and a more hierarchical structure where not everybody would necessarily be able to have a say. This might be off-putting for young people.

On the constraints to greater youth involvement, this same academic said that time is perhaps the biggest limitation as young people of school-leaving age are taking on part-time jobs. Though this trend is not easy to combat, she believed that one way of doing this was to publicise testimonials of people who have been involved in the volunteering sector and have acquired rewards and satisfactions, not economically maybe but in terms of the acquisition of leadership skills, team building abilities and other.

Some of the academics said that there were many new challenges for the voluntary sector to be able to attract and engage young people. Primarily, this was due to a change of lifestyle whereby the way society is evolving has changed from one emphasising community life to one which is more focused on the individual.

The progression in the economic sphere and the improvement in the standard of living have been accompanied, they pointed out, with a shift towards a more individualistic ethos and a more hectic lifestyle (this development was foreseen in the 1994 work carried out by Abela on Shifting Family Values). In addition to this, there is the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find leaders who engage and inspire young people.

The academics also talked about the challenge voluntary organisations face to continue operating in a post-modern mindset where virtual communities have become the norm. These new technologies, they said, could be beneficial, but only insofar as they serve to strengthen existent relationships or a as a means of networking.

The phrase "relazione mancata" has been coined to describe virtual relationships which are superficial and do not have the qualities of real relationships. One interviewee said that, as a society, we are experiencing an emerging phenomenon of people suffering a "social disability" due to the fact that they spend an excessive amount of time online.

3.7 Prevalent Views

The prevalent view among the interviewees was the obstacle that young people faced in participating in the voluntary sector, that is, finding time to participate in activities which are not linked to their education or to money earning, and which take up a substantial portion of their time. Many young people, they observed, are highly engaged in their relationships, their studies, and with part-time jobs. However, those of them who were involved in voluntary work testified that they have benefited greatly from this experience.

Secondly and equally important, was the fact that young people today have been poorly socialised into giving time. People with an overwhelmingly high work ethic usually prioritise economically rewarding activities over voluntary work. One interviewee indicated that an anticipatory socialisation exposing children to community and the benefits of voluntary work is very important, otherwise they would be alienated from these ideals and fail to consider, or even see, the value of participation in such activities. Others remarked that professional youth workers were very important to educate and inspire young people to ensure they are engaged in civil society.

3.8 Principles of Volunteerism

Principles of volunteerism may vary significantly from country to country. Generally they include many of the following basic standards:
- Volunteers participate on the basis of freely-expressed consent.
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken in order to receive pensions or government allowances.
- Volunteering is not carried out in expectation of any financial gain.
- Volunteering complements, but must not result in, the downsizing or replacement of paid employment.
- Volunteerism should be encouraged with a certain degree of autonomy from the public authorities, to safeguard its independence.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate actively in the development of community and social life and address human needs.
- Volunteers act for the common good and on the basis of a social commitment.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.
- Volunteerism respects the rights, dignity and culture of the communities involved.
- Volunteer recruitment is based on equal opportunity and non-discrimination.
- Volunteering is inspired by democratic, pluralistic, participative and caring social tenets.
  (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/action2_en.php. Accessed on 30/1/2011).

It is clear that local voluntary organisations swing from one opposing polarity to another. There is excessive professionalisation in a 'volunteering' sector at one point, and limited to no structure at the other. The mean is difficult to find. Nonetheless there are very clear trends that these voluntary organisations are very important building blocks to social structures and for the support they provide to the community.

The voluntary youth sector lacks the human resources necessary to see through its plans and seems to be experiencing difficulties in attracting the participation of young people. Voluntary organisations also seem to have a dearth of the basic resources they require to cope with the complex process to apply for funding through EU programmes. Most lack legal, financial and a governance framework. The

introduction of the Voluntary Organisations Act (Cap. 492 of the Laws of Malta), improved the visibility of the Maltese voluntary sector and in a way brought its deficiencies to the surface. This complements the fact that the focus of the National Youth Policy seems to be shifting away from direct government intervention towards a new vision constructed around the creation, identification, and mobilisation of active communities and citizens, who are able to take greater responsibility for addressing their own socio-economic well-being and quality of life issues. This new approach reflects the realisation that communities represent the essential capacity building blocks of social harmony and progress.

The new logic is that more developed communities and communities with more capacity, are safer and healthier places to live in. The opposite is also true in that over-dependent communities are, by definition, unable to take responsibility for themselves or the environment around them, and often contribute to their own socio-economic woes. The emphasis on community-focused citizenship has profound implications for the form and character of local governance and social planning. It potentially establishes new relationships between State agencies, youth organisations and communities.

Community development even in the youth sector, has always had a radical agenda. What this means is that it is inspired by a vision of social and environmental justice. It is fundamentally committed to bringing about social change which contributes to this end. So, its practice starts in young people's everyday lives. It also calls for a critical approach – situating local practice within the wider political picture. It requires an analysis of power, of the structures of oppression in the world that reach into our local communities and impact on personal lives - we need to be careful that our practice is likely to be tokenistic at best.

Social operators, community leaders and social activists should be prominent in youth policy and development whilst the State's primary role is to focus on policy co-ordination (moving away from policy-control). But this discourse raises important questions (and a few eyebrows) about the challenge of independent governance to State power and the related questions of self-governing even in the field of youth involvement. The aspect of governance is important in this day and age, as it gives greater attention to the links between public administration and the public interest. With the expeditious changes that are affecting and transforming our communities together with the complexity of community, maximising engagement of young people is of decisive importance.

A society that is committed to community development, is one that sustains itself on citizen participation. The theory and practice of citizenship and differing interpretations of the role, rights and duties of citizens, issues of nationality and national identity, and the impact of globalisation are at the forefront of the complex debate on the subject. The notion of community commands; increased youth participation in politics, aligned with learning, which is connected with political concerns, particularly combating powerlessness, with promoting shared values and strong community and with promoting sound national leadership. We need to connect the complex issues that envelop community and reflect how in this day and age the politicising of the youth population through community education can become a device for regenerating society.

Engagement makes young people more confident and puts them in charge of their lives, more able to contribute to their local community and to be assimilated within social and cultural activities as an illustration of citizenship. In this connection, community involvement has been associated with learners engaged in establishing effective public participation and involved in participatory processes. A sense of belonging is an important factor here because the motivation to participate is dependent on a sense of being and able to identify with the context within which one is participating. Even so, citizens who live in the same geographical location or share the same interests, is only one way of defining community. The feeling of identity and common membership need not necessarily be based on traditional, conventional and time-honoured social bonds, and that is where volunteering and participation come in.

3.9 Conclusion

If children and young people are to develop an inclusive notion of citizenship, the role of voluntary organisations is crucial to confirm that the issues of identity and diversity are addressed explicitly. The process of dialogue and communication must be central to pedagogical strategies for their active participation in civil society. Currently in citizenship education, issues of identity and diversity do not tend to be linked explicitly enough to political understanding and active participation.

If children and young people are to develop an inclusive notion of citizenship, it is essential that such issues be addressed in the curricula and practices of schools and post schooling institutions. Schools and voluntary organisations should build active links between and across communities, with education for diversity as a focus. The number of youth workers needs to be increased and their role more clearly defined. Through performance management assessments, the training needs of voluntary organisations should be identified to ensure they fully understand the importance of these initiatives.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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4.1 Introduction

Although the level of youth participation in voluntary work involving civil society in Malta is encouraging, the indications are that this involvement will decrease unless participation is promoted persistently. Participation in civil society is measured in three ways; by the level of participation in community-led activities, membership in an organised group and by one's ability to respond to both.

Findings from this research indicate that youth participation varies with the level of educational attainment. Participation also seems to be correlated with a healthy and positive lifestyle, with strong social capital, and with the mental tranquility and sense of calm that permits them to engage both with their own needs and with the needs of the wider community. There may also be a connection, though this is difficult to assess, between the involvement (and type of participation) of their own parents/care givers on how and in what way young people are involved in civil society.

4.2 Proposed Strategies

Youth participation in civil society and political life is increasingly recognised as an important development objective. Nonetheless, research that sheds light on the extent of the participation remains limited. Promoting civil engagement is not about trying to fit everyone into the same mould, or creating the 'model' or 'good' citizen, it is about enabling young citizens to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives and their communities. This research seems to indicate that civil engagement is related to qualities like social and moral responsibility, a strong sense of identity, political engagement and community involvement. It also seems to indicate that a significant proportion of young people participate actively in society (community life, civil society, political life), both to shape their own future and to contribute to the development of their communities.

The strategic recommendations of this report will be organised in four sections:
- 4.2.1 regarding early socialisation of young people;
- 4.2.2 regarding ongoing educational campaigns;
- 4.2.3 regarding facilitation of youth involvement in the political sphere;
- 4.2.4 regarding monitoring/tracking of the level of involvement in the voluntary sector;

4.2.1 Recommendations regarding early socialisation of young people

Youth organisations and individuals should be:
- Encouraged to increase their access to the sites of decision-making and policy implementation at the local level perhaps by cooperating with local councils and to promote further the national youth parliament and a stronger engagement of local youth councils. This would be another mechanism to include youth in the decision making processes. These structures can become major channels for the cooperation and exchange of information with the Government.
- Facilitated in obtaining the required attitudes and skills of participation and involvement by being offered more intense civic education in schools where they would learn about their rights and responsibilities to and within their community through a programme that extends beyond the formal PSD sessions.
- Rendered confident enough through this training to engage with research to find ways how they can develop a stronger desire to actively and effectively connect with their communities.
- Given the incentive that will attract them towards joining voluntary organisations in schools through the organisation of events and ongoing exhibitions that provide a market place of initiatives that will offer them the opportunity to choose where to go and what to participate in.
- Offered the opportunity to capitalise on the positives of social media access and use.
- Facilitated to use the resources of public buildings such as schools or local council offices, where they can hold meetings, pursue creative interests and engage in leisure-time activities. The provision of such space and opportunity is crucial if youth voluntary organisations are to continue to function. New school premises should provide adequate space and should be resourced to accommodate such voluntary organisations in the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Given the opportunity and facilitated to create inter-generational relations where they can share, cooperate and engage in activities with older people.
- Given a clear message that their personal development is viewed as integral to the well-being of society.
- Provided with the opportunity to recognise the crucial role voluntary organisations can have in helping young people come to terms with the career choices they want to pursue. Efforts to support voluntary organisations must be governed by the realisation that these social structures have provided us with a large number of professionals in the care sectors starting from their engagement in these groups.

4.2.2 Recommendations regarding ongoing educational campaigns

Youth organisations and individuals should be:

- Offered better opportunities to access the internet. There are still disparities in access between different regions of the country and probably between different social groups and age groups. Ways should be found to decrease the digital divide. Increasing Wi-Fi access, subsidising PCs and tablets are one way of bridging the gap.
- Provided with the tools to improve their access to information on opportunities for voluntary work and participation in the activities of voluntary organisations.
- Given a sense of empowerment from the quality of their participation in decision making processes related to their participation.
- Enticed towards training and offered resources (notably online) especially if they are the leaders of youth organisations.
- Advised on capacity building strategies and the tapping of funding schemes.
- Strengthening of the National Youth Council in terms of resources and active engagement in the development of Government policies related to youth.
- Given the space to be involved in the design and direction that the National Youth Agency takes.
- Involved in the establishment of a task force that includes youth-led organisations to develop educational and awareness programmes specifically targeted to the youth population on civic and social issues.
- Offered the space to give their position on urban development and how it impacts them.
- Offered as many opportunities as possible to practice sports and physical exercise that not only contribute to one's health and to a positive self-image, but can also serve as a platform for social inclusion.
- Instilled with the idea of being European citizens. Most of the programmes youth engage with are of a very temporary nature and the mindset is more focused on 'visiting' rather than 'engaging' as active EU citizens.
- Provided with the tools that will help them transit into the labour market in a smooth way. This requires more collaboration between the Employment and Training Corporation and the school's Career Guidance structures. Effective engagement in voluntary organisations will instill in young people the skills and attitudes that will enable them to participate meaningfully and effectively in society and in the labour market; namely, organisational, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

4.2.3 Recommendations regarding facilitation of youth involvement in the political sphere

Youth organisations and individuals should be:

- Supported with professional youth workers to ensure personal and social development.
- Instilled with an interest in politics, which seems to have died down in these last years.
- Given the resources to consolidate, support and equip youth organisations and federations.
- Highlighting campaigns that encourage youth social and community involvement utilising testimonies from people in the voluntary sector.
- Provided with skills to assess the organisational structures of institutions so that they may be encouraged to assume an active role in the institutions' core functions.
- Given the space to be involved in institutional reform on a consistent basis and not only in ad hoc or project-based events.
- Given media space that report their activities.
- Facilitated to capitalise on ICT, particularly in the areas of information on employment, training, and education.

4.2.4 Recommendations regarding monitoring/tracking in the voluntary sector

Youth organisations and individuals should be:

- Given the opportunities to undertake fieldwork practice placements (Post-Secondary, Higher Education and Tertiary Education) in other countries. Such placements are seen as a valuable building block in paving the way to more awareness of global justice issues.
- Provided with training programmes, workshops and seminars on how to manage the financial aspect of an organised group.

- Provided with safe and convenient meeting spaces for in/formal encounters.
- Facilitated in participating actively in national and international cooperation programmes between youth organisations.
- Informed about an annual mini-study to trace the types and intensity of involvement of young people in voluntary work.
- Provided with a special fund administered by KNŻ to finance local cultural and enrichment activities for youth.
- Given the infrastructure and opportunities to create leisure activities to engage young people. Leisure time should not just be an element in the lives of privileged youth given its contribution to enhancing personal growth and the wellbeing of communities.

4.3 Conclusion

This research is an attempt to reflect on the fact that too often youth are left out of the processes that shape their present and future. Participation is an essential component in the route to empowerment. However, it is not always fully appreciated that young people are valuable contributors to policy formulation, appraisal and execution. Promoting youth in decision making positions, improved participation in the home, school and the community, benefits their socioeconomic milieu and also their personal development.

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