

Hosted by



European Committee  
of the Regions

## Seminar

### “YouthMetre

### An innovative tool for e-participation of youth in policy making across Europe”

14 February 2017

Committee of the Regions // Rue Belliard 101  
JDE 51

## REPORT

On 14 February, the consortium of the project YouthMetre officially launched the YouthMetre platform, an online tool to promote e-participation of young people across Europe. The launch event took place at the Committee of the Regions (Brussels), and gathered together more than 100 representatives of European institutions, local and regional authorities, civil society associations, experts and ordinary citizens to exchange knowledge, experience and good practice on how to involve young citizens in the decision-making process, both at the local and European level.

The event was moderated by Mr. Jonathan Hendrickx from StampMedia, covering speeches delivered by representatives of the organizers of the event and panelists, followed by a round of Questions and Answers.

### ***Welcome speech: Mr. Luc Van den Brande, Member of the CIVEX Commission, Committee of the Regions.***

Mr. Luc Van den Brande welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of being an open house not only for local and regional people but for all citizens committed to democracy and a common Europe approaching. He expressed that in his work with the President Juncker on the outreach towards citizens, the Committee of the Regions welcomes this initiative, since it's about knowledge sharing and reflects participatory democracy. Equally, he underpinned the importance of trust and confidence in the democratic processes and involvement of young people at the local, regional, national and European level, along with the intergeneration's' commitment.

As representative of the CoR, Mr. Van den Brande suggested 3 further initiatives to partner with:

- The city hall debates organized this year;
- The EuroCom big conference, where hundreds of people are involved; and
- The Open Day of the European Institutions on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

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**Welcome speech: Ms. Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General, ALDA**

Ms. Valmorbida welcomed the audience and stressed the role of ALDA's work in engaging local and regional authorities in Europe around the topics of good governance and citizens' participation. She highlighted that ALDA's methodology is based upon three levels of action: 1) empowering civil society associations and citizens, in order to make them to be a stronger voice in front of decision makers by providing them with knowledge, resources and connections; 2) support decentralisation processes and the development of capacities and awareness of local authorities in setting mechanisms involving citizens in the decision making process; 3) advocate at all levels of government to create an enabling environment for a fruitful cooperation between the two actors.

Ms. Valmorbida concluded that to promote effective youth participation in the decision-making process at the local level, we need to work both with youngsters and local authorities and YouthMetre is a key tool to bring the two sides into dialogue.

**Welcome speech: Mr. Karl Donert, Project coordinator YouthMetre**

Mr. Karl Donert highlighted the equal need of European Institutions, local and regional governments, NGOs, and young people in taking the full potential of the YouthMetre. He also stressed the importance of information and tech tools in an open data era and particularly how YouthMetre can contribute to shifting the balance of power: "in the past, the power was in the hands of people who had the information but now, with YouthMetre, information will be accessible to anyone who has access to some source of technology with Wi-Fi". Mr. Donert believes that we can create a dialogue between people that access information and people who take decisions, and that is the big change.

**Mr. Graeme Robertson, Policy officer, DG EAC** has stressed the important need of engaging and empowering young people within the new European strategy along with inclusion.

**Ms. Aikaterini Dimitrakopoulou, the panelist representing Unit D3 – Union citizenship rights and Free movement, DG JUST** highlighted that at the EU citizenship rights and free movement unit they released a report on EU citizenship (adopted on January 2017) about the Commission's plans to bring the EU closer to its citizens, among which:

1. Promoting E-Citizenship rights and the EU common values;
2. Promoting and enhancing citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU;
3. Simplifying Daily life for EU citizens;
4. Strengthening security and promoting equality.

Moreover, the report presents a series of measures to engage with everyday people and have a first perspective. "To deliver the agenda we need to work together not just with the institutions at the local, regional and national level but also with civil society, all the NGOs, media and all the citizens", she stated.

**Mr. Davide Capecchi, Research and Youth Policy Officer, Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the in the field of youth** stressed that the European Union and Council of Europe Youth partnership exists since 1998 trying to understand what the new and alternative forms of participation are,

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designing policy, designing actions and addressing the needs of young people in society. He also pointed out that there is a need to reinvent a democratic face of Europe by strengthening the participation of citizens and taking into consideration all the other indirect forms of participation in all areas. Understanding participation, learning to be a democratic citizen, communication, inclusion and usage of good practices can amplify democratic participation processes.

**Ms. Rebecca Palmer, Senior project manager for Children and Young Peoples participation, Greater London Authority** acknowledged YouthMetre as a great tool to encourage young people in every small way to get engaged in politics and to protect their environment based on each other's experiences. She further mentioned that in Greater London they genuinely call young people stakeholders and try to involve them in creating solutions to those big issues the community faces.

**Ms. Angela Seanor, Descriptionari** offered her vision on the tool from the perspective of a writer and teacher. Ms. Seanor stressed that YouthMetre has the potential to be a powerful tool because it ensures a needed communication between young people and policy makers, where creativity is at the core, helping to imagine the world we want.

**Dr. Joanie Willett, Researcher University of Exeter** related to her experience within the research that University of Exeter did in common with Cornwall council, a local authority in the Southwest of the United Kingdom. The main take away message was the importance of new technologies and information channels such as apps, Facebook, etc. to encourage more young people to participate in town and parish councils.

**Mr. Valentin Dupouey, Secretary General of the Young European Federalist** listed the important pillars to enhance youth participation and engagement:

1. Strengthening the democratic change;
2. Sharing successful initiative;
3. Breaking down obstacles to engagement;
4. Fighting for and renovating civic and citizenship education;
5. Promote intercultural societies;

He concluded by saying that youth participation is important for people to feel valued, to be engaged to share a common sense of responsibility regarding the present and the future of society, and create trust not only between citizens and their institutions but mostly among citizens themselves because one of the main risks that our societies is facing at the moment is lack of trust.

**Mr Karl Donert, the Project coordinator YouthMetre** concluded that YouthMetre is providing exactly the environment where young people can use information to help them give evidence for what they want and then to present it in a certain way. YouthMetre in self is only one component, the training and the support materials support it to create to go on advocacy actions.

In the end, he highlighted one more time the strong points of the platform such as being accessible on the phone, tablet or PC. Having data in a format that can readily and easily be used; aggregating indicators that are considered important by young people; providing data at different scales (from local to European) and on different subjects, and encouraged everyone to use the hashtag **#Yengage** when using the tool.

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The Panned discussion was followed by a **'Question and Answer' Session** where the participants at the event showed their further interest in particular aspects of the tool, such as: the design of the platform, processes from inside, accuracy of the data provided, piloting and implementation phases of the tool, dissemination and training of multipliers.

**Mrs. Maria Freitas, policy adviser at Foundation for European Progress studies FEPS** was interested in how the tool will perform in helping to blur the clear division between the North and South countries for many indicators.

The organizers stressed one more time the complexity of the tool and the importance of the scalar approach in this sense. Letting people to express themselves and giving access to information is part of the process to create change.

**Mr Sergej Koperdak, Policy adviser at DG EAC, EC** was eager to know more about the design, the visual story telling, the creativity behind and who was the team responsible for this work.

Mr. Karl Donert pointed out that the maps is a state of the art mapping designed by the Spanish partner from University of Zaragoza. The added value of these maps lays in the effective layout deemed useful and close to the interests and preferences of the youngsters.

**Mr. Evaldas Rupkus from the International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany enquired on how the YouthMetre process looks from inside.**

In response to it, it was highlighted that the tool is more than maps, it's also a place for deliberation where young people can say what their needs are, where they can build their campaigns and create a movement.

**Another participant (name not provided)** at the event was concerned to what extent the data provided is accurate.

The technical team stated that the indicators collected are from the European Commission and official data coming from regional and national data, which is objective and not survey based. Moreover, though the platform is available in English only, for the moment, the team showed optimism in trying to extend its features further.

**Mr. Jorge Molina-Martinez from Campus Iberus of International Excellence** asked whether the tool was already implemented at the community level, tested and had some feedback on the degree of satisfaction by the different target groups? Moreover, he put forward the question of the existing mechanism to keep the tool alive.

Mr. Donert mentioned the hard work that has been already done in partnership with regional authorities, NGOs and young people to create and adjust the tool. However, the true added value of the platform will be realized starting with its implementation, where the next 18 months will be characterized by a process of consulting, testing, and updating. He also added that the old fashion face-to-face contact between youngsters, authorities and NGOs to find synergies for long term is equality needed.

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**Ms Chloé Berthelemy, representing JEF – Europe** addressed another dissemination related question about how the team is going to disseminate the tool for non-active young people, outside the training.

The respondents pointed out that by creating an additional online training and uploading the materials on the platform will give the opportunity to any interested young person to engage. Moreover, further consultations with young people and local authorities should foster the connection between them and to lead to the approval of new project ideas.

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