

# HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE BE MORE INVOLVED IN SHAPING SOCIETY?

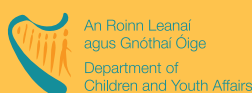
EU STRUCTURED  
DIALOGUE CYCLE 4

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR  
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

TRIO PRESIDENCIES OF ITALY,  
LATVIA & LUXEMBOURG

A report for the National Working Group of Ireland

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# EU STRUCTURED DIALOGUE CYCLE FOUR

## Youth empowerment for political participation

IN THIS DOCUMENT YOU WILL FIND DATA COLLECTED FROM YOUNG PEOPLE AND DECISION MAKERS THROUGHOUT THE THREE PHASES OF THE 2014/15 CYCLE OF EU STRUCTURED DIALOGUE.

### Rome Oct 2014

In September 2014 we selected three young Irish people to represent us at the EU Youth Conference in Rome in October. While there they met with their counterparts from across the EU along with Policy Makers. They did an important piece of work, they decided "what questions do we actually need to ask young people if we want to support "empowerment for political participation"?

### Red C Poll

Between November and December we did a Red C Poll which asked 400 young people throughout Ireland what their views were on empowerment and political participation. This was important because it gave us a fantastic insight into the variety of views and perceptions in this moment in time.

### Focus Groups

We combined the feedback from the Opinion Poll with the key questions from the EU Youth Conference in Rome and we hit the road in Ireland, visiting young people, students and youth projects to hold Focus Groups.

We asked the questions, and they gave the answers! We asked about Education, increasing trust with decision makers, joint policy making, youth work, inclusion & diversity, creativity....

What did we do with the answers? We shared them with Irish Policy makers and then created a report which we handed over to the next three Youth Delegates who would represent Ireland at the EU Youth Conference in Riga in March 2015.

### Riga March 2015

Our delegates returned from Riga after some hard work with a set of Recommendations! A total of seven recommendations, with two parts for each!! This was indeed the combined thinking of all of the young people who had been involved in all of the conversations across all of the EU!

So, a set of European Recommendations to help us promote Youth Empowerment for Political Participation! What would the youth of Ireland think of these? There was only one way to find out. Ask them!

### Ideas to Action 1 & 2

We held two meetings in Dublin and invited young people to travel from anywhere in Ireland and rejoin the journey or join the journey. The first meeting in April was quite important because we wanted to "unpack Riga" but we were also invited to support the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs who was heading to a High Level Ministerial Debate in May and wanted us to share our feedback from the Riga Recommendations. An intense day in Dublin gave us a brilliant insight into young people's thinking on the proposed recommendations and how they might work in the Irish context. At that meeting we agreed to meet again so that we could prioritise a number of recommendations for Ireland.

We met again in July where we used the Edward De Bono Thinking Hats to support our work throughout the day and ultimately the young people took the informed decision of choosing four priority areas which they believe will support Youth Empowerment for Political Participation in Ireland.

### Luxembourg September 2015

We finally sent our three new delegates to the final EU Youth Conference in Luxembourg in September with the priorities chosen by young people in Ireland and they returned home with a final set of Joint Recommendations and a Toolbox to support implementation. In the first six months of 2016 these young delegates will invite other Irish young people to participate in a National Implementation Project funded through Erasmus+ that will work on concrete actions from the identified priority recommendations.

# WHAT DID IRISH YOUNG PEOPLE THINK?

## VOTING & PROTEST

Voting in elections and participating in a protest have the highest perceived impact on bringing about change.

### VOTING IMPACT

SOME 44%  
BIG 36%

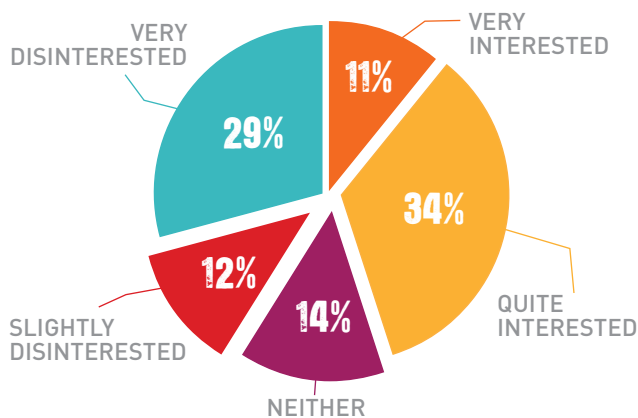
### PROTEST IMPACT

SOME 48%  
BIG 19%

Young people felt strongly that increased authenticity, accountability and transparency in politics would help young people trust politicians more.  
Focus Group

There is no diversity in Government - young people can't identify with them.  
Focus Group

## Level of interest in politics



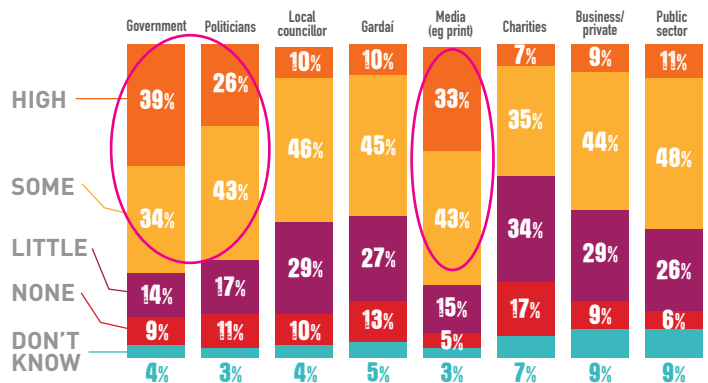
It was recommended that politicians go into schools and communities, particularly in disadvantaged areas, on a regular basis to listen to and consult with young people face-to-face in a meaningful way to develop mutual respect.  
Focus Group

Young people and politicians stereotype each other and each should take more responsibility to work together and trust each other.  
Focus Group

It's hard to know what politicians are about - they all seem bad when you hear them in the media.  
Focus Group

## Influence of decision makers on social and political issues

Base: All respondents 15-30 (420)

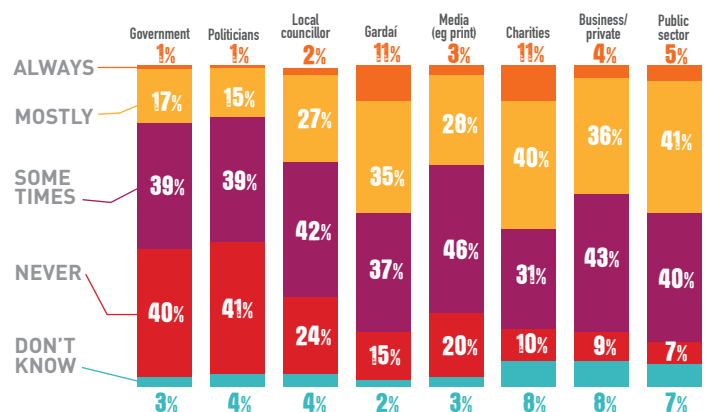


Among this age group, media such as print and broadcast has the greatest degree of influence on social and political issues, with government and politicians also having a strong degree of influence.  
(Q16)

REDC

## Trust in institutions

Base: All respondents 15-30 (420)



Although having highest perceived level of influence, the government and politicians report the lowest level of trust, with over 4 in 10 claiming they can never be trusted.  
(Q18)

REDC

Social media is the primary means of being kept up to date with current affairs with 1 in 3 citing this is their main method. Red C Poll



# PRIORITY 1: INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

In order to further involve young people in democratic life, Member States and local authorities are invited to implement pilot programmes starting at local level, where voting age is lowered to 16, accompanied by the adequate preparation, including quality civic education.

By implementing transparent, sustainable and collaborative structures and providing financial support, authorities on the local, regional and national levels should ensure full participation of youth in decision making processes of the policies that affect young people.

There was a unanimous decision by the group to support this idea and to endorse the proposal that if young people are adequately educated they would be more than capable of participating in elections.

In terms of youth sector involvement in decision making, Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF) is a worthy example of how the National Youth Council and other actors in the youth field can collaborate with the DCYA to produce a youth policy framework.

Enhancing the current CSPE provision on the curriculum and extending it to all year groups in second level education (as above) is a critical element if we are to improve the levels of involvement of young people in decision making.

In Ireland we undertook a comprehensive consultation process to develop a National Youth Strategy by involving all stakeholders and including young people as key stakeholders.

## KEY PLAYERS



**YOUNG VOICES**  
Have Your Say

**NYC**  
National Youth Council of Ireland  
CONSEIL NATIONAL DES JEUNES

**NYCI**  
**DCYA**  
**Young Voices**  
**Vote@16**

**Youth organisations**  
**Sports organisations**  
**Services**

**Student councils**  
**Schools**

**Youth wings of political parties**

**Youth dept of trade unions**

**An Roinn Leanaí agus Gníothaí Oige**  
Department of Children and Youth Affairs

**Government**

## + POSITIVE POTENTIAL

"Nothing about us without us"	Covers all areas, not just politics	Positive effect for the future
More opinions = More ideas = More change	More information for young people	Increases confidence and well-being
Increased interest in politics and social issues	Makes young people feel more important/accepted	

## - POSSIBLE NEGATIVES

Might not impact on this generation	Disempowerment because of tokenism	It needs to be more equal, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ageism
Apathy of certain young people	Tick box "youth consulted" attitude	Those who do engage are the exception?
Geographical discrimination	Not enough information available currently	Financial costs sometimes dictate who can attend meetings

### Relevant policies

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)

National Youth Strategy

### Relevant policies

National strategy for children and young people's participation in decision making

In order to involve young people in decision making we must have our voice heard by decision makers and be offered the opportunity to be part of making the change we want to see. #makeachange #wearethefuture





# PRIORITY 2 : DEVELOPING YOUTH-FRIENDLY TOOLS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Private and public organisations should involve young people in the development, implementation and monitoring of online tools for youth political participation. To ensure recognition of young people's participation and sustain their involvement in political processes, online tools should be complemented by offline methods and have a follow-up phase in which decision-makers reflect on how young people's contributions were taken into account.

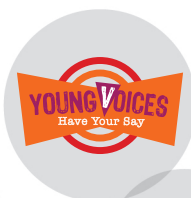
There are many groups and organisations with an online presence attempting to connect with young people but the only guarantee is that if young people are not involved the efforts are futile and doomed to failure.

There is a serious deficit in terms of "youth friendly" and "youth accessible" online tools for political participation. Young people feel that this is a direct result of the absence of any youth involvement in design.

In Ireland we have spunout.ie. This is a model of positive youth involvement and youth engagement and it can be used as a good practice example for any "youth friendly" online tools.

There is added value in terms of consultation events and face to face meetings.

## KEY PLAYERS



Govt Depts  
Politicians  
Education

Mainstream  
media



Social  
media  
providers

Marketing  
industry

Philanthropy

Digital  
media



## + POSITIVE POTENTIAL

Digital media

Financial support for participation  
(travel reimbursement)

Modernisation of consultations  
with young people makes it more  
accessible (eg online surveys)

Good chance for  
members of different  
orgs to meet up

We can work on  
the language used  
in documents

Breaking down  
barriers for youth  
participation

Learn from good  
examples -  
marriage equality  
referendum

## - POSSIBLE NEGATIVES

Do people even know  
that the websites exist?

The challenge of content and  
language and length of docs

No collaborative  
work with other orgs

Internet access can be a barrier

Does it all have  
to be online?

Over complicated  
language and  
concepts

Are the right  
online tools  
out there?

## Relevant policies

Better Outcomes,  
Brighter Futures  
(BOBF)

National Youth  
Strategy

## Relevant policies

National strategy  
for children and  
young people's  
participation in  
decision making

In order to develop youth friendly tools for political participation we must include young people as co-designers in making the tools. #makingchanges

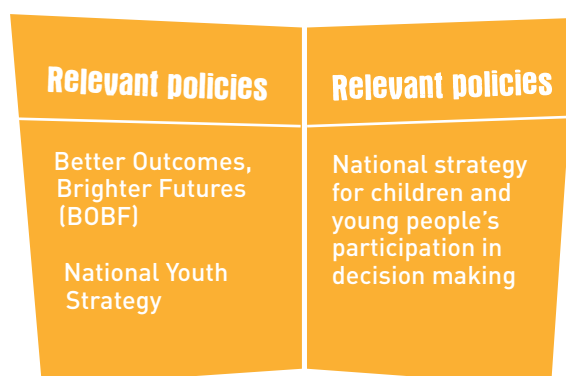
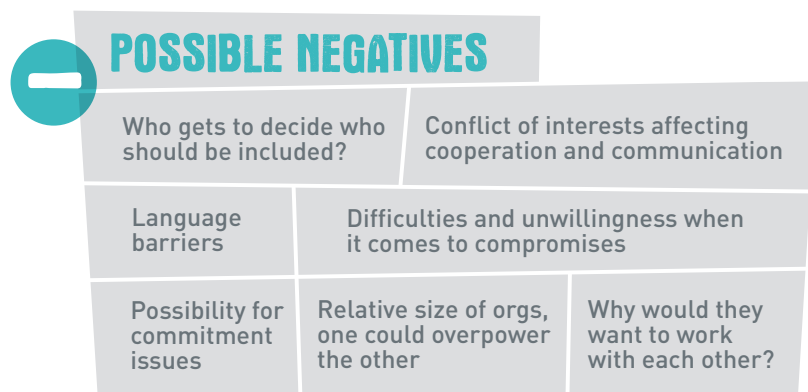
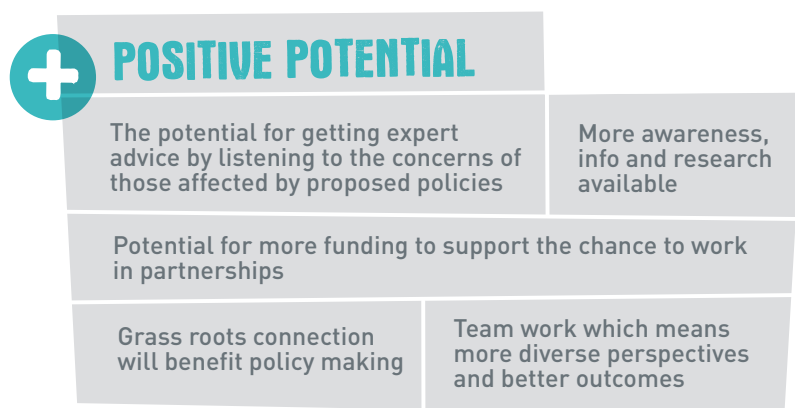
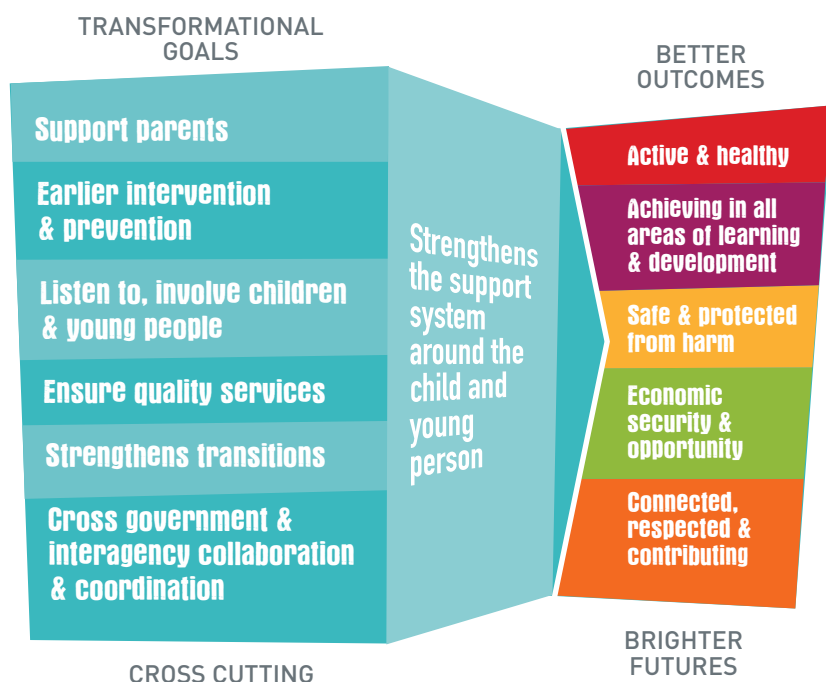


# PRIORITY 3 : INCREASING SYNERGIES AND COOPERATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT ACTORS

In order to involve young people in political processes and to enable easy and sustainable collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, the EU institutions and Member States should develop or improve coordinated cross-sectoral communication at all levels.

## BETTER OUTCOMES : BRIGHTER FUTURES

The national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020



In order to increase synergy and cooperation between different actors, we must empower lives by engaging young minds for a brighter future.  
#worktogetherthinktogether #cooperation4thenation



# PRIORITY 4 : STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

The crucial role of youth work for fostering a political participation which is based on the values of diversity, human rights, democracy and on critical thinking, should be strengthened and socially and politically recognised by the European Commission and Member States. Therefore, youth work should be provided with the necessary resources, support structures and formal recognition. EU institutions and Member States are encouraged to set up cross-sectoral initiatives and long-term partnerships at all levels with youth workers and non-governmental organisations, with the aim of transferring knowledge and developing political participation competencies of all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

Youth Work empowers young people while supporting them to develop as an individual and also to see their place in the community and wider society. The role of youth work in this arena should be recognised.

Youth work does support political engagement. It supports young people to develop the confidence to use critical thinking and to take opportunities when presented to engage with decision makers.

Ireland has a good track record for this but could strengthen the role of youth work in this regard by supporting and encouraging all youth projects to place a value on supporting youth engagement in these external decision making structures.

Youth work providers can be enablers of young people by supporting their access to decision making structures like local Youth Councils or Structured Dialogue events or National consultations.

## KEY PLAYERS



**YOUNG VOICES**  
Have Your Say

An tAon Leasail  
agus Gníomhaíocht  
Department of  
Children and Youth Affairs

**Govt Depts  
National Youth  
Council  
Young Work  
Orgs**

**Erasmus+  
National  
Agency  
Leargas**

**Youth  
wings of  
political  
parties**

**nyci**  
national youth council of ireland  
CONAILLE NA hÉIREANN

**Erasmus+**

**Philanthropy**

**Youth  
work  
NGO's**

**ETB**



## POSITIVE POTENTIAL

Young people making their own decisions

Good politically engaged groups of young people

Youth Workers are often the best people to do this because of their relationships with young people

It gives confidence to young people

It brings the issue of political participation to the grass roots where real concerns can be met



## POSSIBLE NEGATIVES

Youth Workers having a negative influence

Organisations might not be trustworthy

Parents might not want youth workers doing this stuff with their children

Are youth workers educated properly to do this?

Lack of resources to do it well

The challenge of differentiating between neutrality and bias

## Relevant policies

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)

National Youth Strategy

## Relevant policies

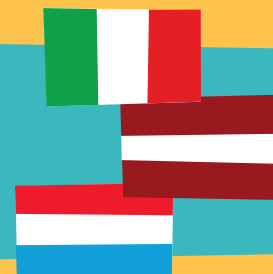
National strategy for children and young people's participation in decision making

In order to strengthen the role of Youth Work for political empowerment of all young people, we must adequately support the youth work sector with the tools to politically empower the young people who are members of our youth work orgs



# TRIO PRESIDENCY Italy • Latvia • Luxembourg

## Final Joint Recommendations on “Empowerment of young people for political participation in the democratic life in Europe”



- ▶ **Create a culture of participation at school**
- ▶ **Involve young people in political decision-making**
- ▶ **Enhance policy makers' engagement and commitment with young people**
- ▶ **Strengthen the role of youth work for political empowerment of all young people**
- ▶ **Develop youth friendly tools for political participation**
- ▶ **Develop local and direct democracy**
- ▶ **Develop alternative forms of participation**
- ▶ **Increase synergies and cooperation between different actors**

### Quotes from EU Structured Dialogue Cycle 5 Youth Empowerment for Political Participation

I will take these recommendations and submit them to the Council of Youth Ministers that I will convene later this year. I also think that improving young people's participation in Europe is a shared responsibility. All of the participants of this conference can and should add their contribution to the process. But beyond them, we also need to make participation a reality for all young people in Europe.

**Claude Meisch, Minister of Education, Children and Youth of Luxembourg**

Far from being apathetic or disinterested, young people are simply rejecting outdated political structures which do not respond to our needs and do not deliver what we want. We need new structures that include young people and their representatives in order to create a politics that prioritises young people's rights and helps them to be fully included in their society. Political leaders must listen to the voice of young people that has been expressed here in Luxembourg and through the Structured Dialogue.

**Johanna Nyman,  
President of the European Youth Forum**

EU Structured Dialogue and indeed the National Youth Strategy is, whether directly or indirectly, about building trust and it is about giving young people a platform for their voices to be heard. The value lies not only in creating policies that truly focus on youth needs and concerns but makes way for wiser policy making through cooperation between different stakeholders.

**Joseph Munnelly,  
Irish Delegate at the EU Youth  
Conference in Luxembourg**

Young Voices is part of the European Structured Dialogue process that gives young people aged 15 to 30 and youth organisations an opportunity to influence EU decisions affecting their lives. The EU Structured Dialogue process with young people is managed on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs by the National Youth Council of Ireland. It is overseen by the National Working Group which includes officials from the DCYA, youth workers, youth researchers and experts from the National Youth Council of Ireland. The Structured Dialogue Working Group is a national participation and consultation structure for young people.

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