#BePart Summit 2016
Berlin
Official Documentation

1. Introduction

More and more decision makers, municipalities, youth organizations, youth workers and other practitioners in Europe get involved in the topic of e-Participation. They experiment with new tools and services and gain increasing practical experience in the field.

This is extremely valuable. But still, although progress is being made, the activities and pioneer projects taking place in Europe are yet rather fragmented and disconnected. Many experienced practitioners in the youth field don´t know about each other, software developers in different countries develop the same kind of tools over and over again, and many user organizations make the same experiences – but also repeat the same mistakes. In this context, the establishment of a regular European-wide exchange between youth workers, participation experts, software developers and other actors in the field is of great mutual benefit. With the #BePart Summit, we aim to gradually establish such an exchange.

Within a **3-day event** European youth workers obtain the possibility to **share good practices and experiences on e-participation with other experts and practitioners**, identifying the **challenges and opportunities** as well as **needs for training** and qualification.

2. The Event

2.1. Activities during Day 1

The first day began with an official opening of the summit by the moderators Linnea Riensberg and Sven Retore. They summarized the programme for the next days as well as explained the story behind the organizing of this event. Afterwards the participants were invited to take part in a game through which they could better get to know each other so that they could easily work with each other during the next days.

Then the participants were asked by the moderators to come together in the first round of group discussions with the purpose of creating a common ground. They exchanged their experience as professionals in the field of e-participation. They led discussion on the following topics:

1. **Why are you interested in e-participation? To what need is it a response?**

The participants of have discussed and come to the conclusion that e-participation is a tool for interactive decision making online. Through it a wider range of people, mainly the younger people, can be reached and engaged in giving their opinion on topics that influence their lives. On the subject of what need is it a response they concluded that through its usage the state or the European Union can manage and use its resources and finances more efficiently, further drawing attention to the fact that the offline processes, currently managed by the EU, are more costly. They think that adapting such new ideas and methods of connecting with one another such as the e-participation is an innovative and evolutionary step in itself. The e-participation can be used as a tool to solve the problem with the lack of communication, especially in the younger community within EU, as it serves as a means to reaching each other easily online even to people living in more remote areas. It gives the opportunity to address issues, which young people face, not only on a local but on a global level as well. It is the ideal method for turning youth's thoughts and opinions into actual involvement.

2. **How do you work on e-participation (in the youth field) on international level?**

The participants are working in different ways of e-participation. They are developers, teachers, social workers etc. These professionals are interested in finding a common platform for exchange. Some of them try to develop tools for already existing platforms. They mentioned Facebook as a good example for a platform where young people can get in contact. For these kinds of platforms they develop add-ons for e-participation. But they also registered that there are a lot of another platforms as well.
Other participants want to have an impact on policy-makers so they organized themselves in groups and try to stay in contact. The core-group of the BePart Event itself is a good example. As team it is more effective to create a good network and exchange about e-participation. And of course the core-group consists of international members from the whole European Union. To keep on this kind of exchange will be a great benefit for the next years for the developing of e-participation strategies and it would save a lot of resources because superfluous projects could be noticed and integrated in existing ones.

3. **Which platforms do you already use and/or did you develop yourself?**

The participants exchanged their experience and knowledge on the types of different platforms they are using. Except for the widely used forms of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, the participants are using platforms specially designed for the purpose of facilitate the exchange of ideas or concerns of young people, and generally give them a mean of expressing themselves. Some of the platforms are:

❖ OPIN.ME - OPIN is an all-in-one digital and mobile participation toolbox, easily embedded in the web presence of youth organisations or public administrations. It provides participation projects with a digital home where all the stages of the project are transparent. Through its user-friendly interface it gives the user the opportunity

to easily embed participation processes on your web site and even integrate offline events. OPIN platform and features are developed within the project "EUth - Tools and Tips for Mobile and Digital Youth Participation in and across Europe". The project is running from March 2015 to March 2018 and is supported under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

❖ YPART.EU – Ypart is a European-wide online participation platform specially designed for adolescents and youth. The goal of Ypart is to provide young people with a platform, where they can meet online, develop ideas, discuss concerns, and be able to engender a collective influence on political decisions. Ypart directs its service also at the youth and regional organisations in which adolescents partake. Ypart is a non-profit project, which is developed by Liquid Democracy e.V.

In some countries such as Finland the e-participation workers realised that they cannot connect with the youth through social networks such as Facebook since the youth doesn't use it as much and in 2004 they came with the idea to reach out to them through Finland's only national online youth club named Netari. It operates from all the main online communities that young people in Finland use: IRC-Galleria, Habbo, Twitch, Ask.fm, Snapchat, YouTube and others with the aim to enable participation in youth club activities online, giving the opportunity to those who for whatever reason do not want or cannot take part in youth club activities in their own municipality to be more active online; strengthen and support youth development by providing company of peers, adult help and communal activities in the online environment; create a safe discursive environment on the internet. The resource is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland.

4. What has happened during the last year (since #BePart 2015)? What worked out?

A recurring answer to the question was that since last year's #BePart 2015 more funding was allocated for projects involving e-participation and youth engagement. The EU is taking more proactive steps towards involving young people in politics through their initiative #AskNavracsics which aim is to exchange ideas on how to motivate young people to engage with their communities through volunteering and other activities. Through discussions with young people EU likes to find a way of reducing or removing the barriers which discourage the youth from getting involved such as the insufficient information on the opportunities and projects that are available, the high costs of participation, the very little recognition of all the effort that was put in, little acceptance by potential employers of the new skills gained through getting involved.

A very big step for the team that developed the platform OPIN.ME was that currently five pilot programmes are testing OPIN and will give feedback for improvements. The programmes are managed by the City of Paris, the French Federation of Community Centers, AEGEE - European Students' Forum, a cross-border partnership between Italy and Slovenia as well as the Region Heart of Slovenia.

Another trend that the participants noticed is the general rise in interest in politics on the part of the youth as well as a rise in interest in offline and online participation on the part of the politicians and state. The example which was given was of a project initiated by the state parliament of Salzburg. It invited 36-50 young people in the age of 16 – 20 years from all parts of the region to slip into the role of a member of the regional parliament. Prior to that one-day activity the preparatory work in different technical committees will be simulated. The young participants will be selected in a way that they stem from diverse societal backgrounds and therefor represent different interest groups. By involving experts from the state administration the multilevel character of politics should be communicated. It should become clearer which legislative competencies are located at which level and who is to be made accountable for certain decisions. By participating in the project young people have got the chance to experience directly the process of political decision making. Decision makers and experts get in touch with youngsters, are immediately informed on their concerns and are given the opportunity to put their demands into action. All activities are documented by a young team of reporters, among others by the means of live-stream. Online participation will be possible in particular during the preparation phase of the project.

5. **Which obstacles are more pressing / interesting to deal with?**

There are a lot of obstacles which slow down or interrupt the process of e-participation. You can categorize them in these groups:

- Technical Problem

It contains the budget problem which means that every single project or idea costs money, to spread and launch them as well. An access to the internet is necessary, too.

- Communication Problems

How you can motivate young people to participate in e-participation-projects? The participants figured out some problems about the communication level between the youth and professionals. The language of the participants is different in comparison with the technical terminology of the professionals.

- No common platform for sharing experiences as professionals

E-participations-projects often work very well on the local level, but they are unknown on the higher levels. The participants criticize that there aren't possibilities to share their projects on a European level and to have an exchange about e-participation.

- Public perception

E-participation needs to be noticed by the public. At the moment the topic isn't popular enough, that means that political institutions do not take care about it.

6. **Which 5 possibilities are more interesting/ have a big impact? (Jeremy)**

After that the moderators started the "E-participation Utopia". The participants could set their own agenda for a session round. During the four sessions that took place the participants came as groups together again, but they were motivated by the moderators to change the groups as they wish and move between groups. Within every group a protocol was drawn by one of the participants. The discussed topics were as follows:

Session #1

❖ **Stage Berlin:** How do we make sure that young people get enough information for participating processes?
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #1 Berlin"

❖ **Stage Brussels:** Criteria for a successful (e)Participation process?
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #1 Brussels"

❖ **Stage Athens:** Underrepresented groups
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #1 Athens"

❖ **Stage Buxdehude:** Output/Input Quality - or How To Avoid Boaty McBoatface
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #1 Buxdehude"

❖ **Stage Helsinki:** User friendliness in tools
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #1 Helsinki"

Session #2

❖ **Stage Berlin:** E-Participation Tools in 2021
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #2 Berlin"

❖ **Stage Brussels:** From WhatsApp to Parliament / Institutionalized e-Participation
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #2 Brussels"

❖ **Stage Athens:** Mainstreaming: how to stop preaching the converted?
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #2 Athens"

❖ **Stage Buxdehude:** Output/Input Quality - or How To Avoid Boaty McBoatface
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #2 Buxdehude"

❖ **Stage Helsinki:** Analysing input for the output
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #2 Helsinki"

Session #3

❖ **Stage Berlin:** Creating a new participation culture
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #3 Berlin"

❖ **Stage Brussels:** Participation training and initiators
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #3 Brussels"

❖ **Stage Athens:** Balance offline/online participation
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #3 Athens"

❖ **Stage Buxdehude:** Conflict: new and existing platforms/ how to create a relevant and efficient link between participation platform and social media?
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #3 Buxdehude"

❖ **Stage Helsinki:** School Projects based on e-learning
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #3 Helsinki"

Session #4

❖ **Stage Berlin:** BePart Network
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #4 Berlin"

❖ **Stage Brussels:** How to get as many people involved- Registration and anonymity
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #4 Brussels"

❖ **Stage Athens:** How to use e participation for more offline participation
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #4 Athens"

❖ **Stage Helsinki:** How to stimulate interaction and discussion in online participation
For more information see Open Space Document "Session #4 Helsinki"

2.2. Activities during Day 2

During the second day of the summit the participants were invited to identify issues they personally passionate about. After a round of voting, the top seven issues were established and groups were formed with the goal to do some brainstorming and come up with a prototype for the idea. For the brainstorming phase specific brainstorming tools and methods were applied - Scamper, Walt Disney method, Slack tools.

After the brainstorming phase the groups were invited to present their ideas and Feedback was given to them by the other participants. The groups presented their end

products in a different venue - a cinema - equipped with the means to present them appropriately.

2.3. Activities during Day 3

The activities of the last day of the summit involved a round of feedback from the participants.