



ITALIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Editor-in-Chief: Silvio Scanagatta | ISSN 2035-4983

Estonian experience of implementing the new forms of youth participation in youth policy

*Tanja Dibou**

Author information

*Institute of Political Science and Governance, Tallinn University, Estonia.

Contact author's email address

*dibouta@hotmail.com

Article first published online

February 2015

HOW TO CITE

Dibou, T. (2015). Estonian experience of implementing the new forms of youth participation in youth policy. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 7(1), 176-206.

Retrieved <http://journals.padovauniversitypress.it/ijse/content/estonian-experience-implementing-new-forms-youth-participation-youth-policy-dibou>



PADOVA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Estonian experience of implementing the new forms of youth participation in youth policy

*Tanja Dibou**

Abstract: The main objectives of the paper are to explore opinions of stakeholders about how young people are involved in the decision-making process of youth policy; to investigate whether youth have opportunities to participate in youth policy at various levels and whether youth opinions are taken into consideration in the implementation of policies affecting their lives. The study involves a mixture of desk research (analysis of documents, previous reviews of youth policy, youth research and statistics), semi-structured interviews and focus group with experts in the youth field. The study reveals that during the last decade several new options were implemented for better inclusion of Estonian youth in the decision-making process. The study presents the Estonian experience of several forms of youth participation such as youth participation councils, youth participation through youth umbrella organizations, youth work and youth research. The study identifies the main challenges for involving young people in decision-making in youth policy.

Keywords: youth participation, youth in decision-making, youth work in Estonia, youth policy in Estonia

*Institute of Political Science and Governance, Tallinn University, Estonia. E-mail: dibouta@hotmail.com

Introduction

There are a growing number of global, national and local agendas that explicitly focus on promoting youth participation in the decision-making process of policies affecting their lives. For instance, one of the objectives of the European Union Youth Strategy (2010-2018) is to encourage young people to be active citizens and participate in society. According to the World Bank's *World Development Report 2007*, one of the three main reasons why youth policy has often failed to achieve its goals is due to the fact that young people do not have a voice in the design and implementation of the policies that affect them (World Bank, 2007, pp. 211-212).

As mentioned by Schumpeter (1952) in political theory the narrow concept of participation limits it to the voting and broader concept is linked to different forms of citizens' involvement in politics. The development of various forms of youth participation is always challenging on two sides: firstly, it depends to a large extent on youth itself, in particular, on their motivation and readiness to take an active part in the process; secondly, inviting young people highly depends on overall adults' attitude toward youth and toward youth inclusiveness in youth policy. Both aspects have influence in terms of whether youth opinions are taken into considerations in policies affecting their lives or not. Neither motivated nor prepared youth are not interested in participation and skeptical attitude of officials about youth are the main factors that influence the level of youth participation. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of currently existing options for young people to exercise their decision-making in the national youth policy should focus not only on youth itself, but also on the attitude of officials, who tackle youth needs and other issues. One should offer insight and fresh perspective into better and more efficient ways of understanding the youth's role and their ability to influence their own lives in current youth policies.

Estonian experience can be valuable for both the youth policy makers and the practitioners, who work in the youth field, because it shows specific success points and shortcomings of current forms of youth participation and leads to new ideas of better recognition and inclusion of youth voices in the youth policy. Therefore, the paper focuses on evaluation perceptions of

stakeholders¹ about youth participation in youth policy in Estonia. It aims to explore opinions of stakeholders concerning young people's involvement in the decision-making process of youth policy; to investigate whether youth have opportunities to participate in youth policy at various levels (EU, national, local) and whether youth opinions are taken into consideration in the implementation of policies affecting their lives.

Specifically, the objectives of the article are to thoroughly evaluate the perceptions of officials, who work in the youth policy field, about youth participation, by using theoretical approaches in the field of youth participation (Arnstein, 1969; Hart 1992; Lofquist, 1989; Sapin, 2013; Schier, 2001). Furthermore, the article tries to identify the concrete good practice examples of youth participation in Estonia at various levels of governance (EU, national, regional/local levels in Estonia). The article has a predominantly descriptive approach. It analyzes the existing literature and presents perceptions of officials in the youth field.

The study presents the Estonian experience of specific forms of youth participation such as youth participation councils, youth participation through youth umbrella organizations, youth work and youth research. Since social, political and cultural participation of youth takes place in different areas and spheres of youth life, these specific forms of youth participation were opted for mainly taking into account two reasons. Firstly, because of time limits set for the research, the qualitative material was obtained through semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders are closely linked to the mentioned above youth participation forms. Hence, interview respondents were capable to share more detailed and trustworthy information. Secondly, these forms of youth participation in youth policy represent a relatively new development and are less explored in Estonia.

Theoretical background: various approaches to youth participation

Scholars in the youth field identify that not every action of young people in the decision - making process should be regarded as participation full of value. The models of youth participation conceptualized by Arnstein

¹ Stakeholders in the youth policy: policy makers as government, ministries, local municipalities, etc.; service providers as youth centers, schools, hobby centers, etc.; representatives of civil society as youth organizations, NGOs, etc.

(1969), Hart (1992) and Shier (2001), identify per se youth's and adults' different roles in the decision-making process. In this article, I will focus upon some of the yardsticks that help to identify different levels of youth participation².

Scholars suggest a specific hierarchical order for youth participation. For instance, Arnstein (1969) defines participation as the power of have-nots to influence agency decisions. Arnstein's model of participation consists of eight rungs accordingly:

- Citizen Power: Citizen Control, Delegated Power, Partnership;
- Tokenism: Placation, Consultation, Informing;
- Non participation: Therapy, Manipulation.

Each rung corresponds to the power of underrepresented groups to influence decisions and the scholar concludes that power holders often *manipulate* rather than *empower* these groups. Hence, when power holders hold community meetings for people after the decisions have already been made, these activities are *token* but not *real*. This holds true for young people, who are usually have-nots in influencing power holders' decisions. Arnstein's ladder of participation has led to much criticism, since in some ways the ladder was stereotypical and presented stages with little reference to context, due to which the young people are actually enabled to participate effectively.

Simultaneous participation of adults and youngsters in the process of decision-making assumes power and responsibilities which both interest-groups share. The level of power and responsibilities differs from passive forms of participation to active decision-making. For instance, the highest level of the Hart's ladder named *youth/adult equity* assumes that adult and youth are equal power holders in the decision-making process and their voices have equal value. The highest level is quite difficult to achieve in reality. We can more often meet lower levels of Hart's ladder such as *manipulation, decoration, tokenism*, where youngsters do not even have or in some cases have a little opportunity to formulate their own opinions. They are not informed about activities and all the decisions are taken by adults. Lower levels such as *manipulation, decoration and tokenism* don't imply youth responsibility, whilst at the upper levels it is expected of youth

² For a detailed presentation of these models of youth participation see also Dibou 2013a, Dibou 2013b

to assume responsibility. Lower levels have also been labeled as levels of non-participation and upper levels are termed as levels of participation.

In contrast to Hart's ladder of youth participation, Shier (2001) model starts from levels of participation and these levels are as follows:

- Level: youth are listened to.
- Level: youth are supported in expressing their views.
- Level: youths' views are taken into account.
- Level: youth are involved in the decision-making process.
- Level: youth share power and responsibility for decision-making.

However, it would be appropriate to mention here that listening to youth does not automatically imply taking into account their opinions. Therefore, the full involvement of youth starts at the third level, at which adults are ready to consider the youth's views. Shier model provides 15 provocative questions, that enable many practitioners to use this model as a tool for working with youth and for further youth studies. By giving answers to these questions, a researcher or a practitioner can evaluate the current level of participation and easily identify the next steps to increase youth participation. According to Shier model, the third level is the minimum you ought to achieve if you endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children. The crucial questions that ought to be asked are as follows: Are you ready to take young people's views into account? (III. level) Are you ready to allow young people to participate in the decision-making process? (IV. level) Are you ready to share some of your adult power with young people? (V. level).

Since one of the easiest way for youth to participate in the decision-making process is to become engaged at the local level as a member of youth organisation or association, it will probably be appropriate here to highlight the young people's rights and roles in the organizations. Youth organizations play a crucial role in representing youth interests. As only a small number of youngsters are organized through membership in youth organizations, it is quite important that youth, who are members of organizations, should have the rights to speak out and vote, thus becoming the full-fledged members of the decision-making process, who share opinions and strive for the interest of the whole youth group.

Sapin (2013) has highlighted rights and potential roles of youngsters if they take part in the decision-making process (see Table 1). Essentially, if youngsters do not have any voting or speaking rights, they can only be

observers of the process, who at least are still considered to be included in the process.

There are different interpretations of the aims of participation. One of the most commonly made distinctions is participation *as a means* and *as an end*. *Participation as a means* is used to achieve effective project implementation, the idea being that participation is a good way to have things done. *Participation as an end* sees involving young people in decision-making as a goal in itself, regardless of whether it actually results in better decisions (Braeken, Silva & Saïdy, 2004, p. 9). The process of measuring the level of youth responsibility in various activities gives an opportunity to split up activities, where youth is taken *as a means* to achieve adult wishes between activities, that are directed towards youth and youth are treated equally with adults as full-fledged partners and power holders.

Table 1. Young people's rights and roles

<i>Rights</i>	<i>Potential roles</i>
Voting and speaking rights	Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Full member, Appointed member, Worker or volunteer, Representative of subgroup or other group
Speaking rights but no voting rights	Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Worker or volunteer, Representative of subgroup or other group, Contributing member
No voting rights and restricted speaking rights	Representative of subgroup or other group, Invitee to discuss specific topics or make presentations, Consultant, Advisor
Right to attend only	Observer, Representative of network or forum, Shadowing member or officer
No voting rights and no speaking rights	
Receive minutes and/ or reports; no voting rights, no speaking rights and no right to attend	On mailing list

Source: Sapin, 2013, p. 159.

There are many perceptions that adults have in terms of the involvement of young people in the decision-making process. These perceptions influence the ways we opt for to achieve involvement of youngsters in the decision-making process. Here are a few of those perceptions first explained by Lofquist (1989). According to this model (see Figure 1), the level of youth contribution to youth policy depends on perceptions of officials working in the youth field.

The attitude, according to which the *young people are objects*, leads to youth policy, where youngsters are passive and have little to contribute. Officials with such perceptions do not allow youngsters to participate in the process. Nowadays, the most wide-spread attitude toward youngsters in youth policy implies that youngsters should be taken into account as a resource. Actually, *youth-as-a-resource* attitude presupposes the use of youth voices in various stages of policy management, where youth helps adults in planning, evaluating and implementing youth policy (Lofquist, 1989).

Figure 1. Youth policy approaches according to variety of attitudes to youth

<p>Attitude: Youth as objects. Young people are not engaged in decision making process, they are only observed and tested</p> <p>Youth policy approach: TO young people</p>	<p>Attitude: Youth as consultants Various programs for youth are made without participation, youngsters are asked only for sharing their feedback.</p> <p>Youth policy approach: FOR young people</p>	<p>Attitude: Youth as resources Youth helps adults in planning, evaluating and implementing youth policy</p> <p>Youth policy approach: FOR and WITH young people</p>	<p>Attitude: Youth as partners Youth work together with adults in all stages of youth policy</p> <p>Youth policy approach: WITH young people</p>
---	---	--	--

Adapted from Lofquist (1989).

The promotion of youth active participation at European level

The provocative question itself is why youth participation is important in youth policy.

The process of ensuring the active participation of young people in youth policy empowers youngsters to realize their full potential as citizens. The idea of citizen participation in policies is not a new approach in policy as much it is based on democracy. It is a democratic right to be heard on the issues that are of concern to one's life. Young people know and understand the needs, issues and challenges facing them much better than other age groups. Hence, young people are involved in the process of creating their

own decisions, which in its turn can improve existing youth policy and make demands for new approaches to address youth affairs. Involving youth in a decision-making process ensures that the policy, being now much easier to be implemented, is also advocated and supported by young people themselves, which ensures a higher certainty of success in implementation of youth policy itself.

According to Estonian National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, inclusion of youth in the process of participation in the policies affecting their lives is essential to achieve *integrated* youth policy. *Integrated* youth policy approach presupposes co-operation between various levels of governance, sectors, organizations and inclusion of youth itself. As discussed by Dibou (2012) the Estonian national youth policy like other EU members' national youth policies represents the multilevel-governance (MLG), where participation of citizens is an integral part of a democratic system of governance. '*Society dimension of MLG in youth policy*' is the degree of involvement of youth, non-governmental youth organizations and civil society organizations in decision-making, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation at various levels of governance.

Citizens' involvement in politics is essential for the credibility of institutions, as well as for the citizens' articulation of their demands (Letki, 2004, p. 665). The idea of youth involvement in the decision-making process of youth policy comes from the principle of co-management. Co-management can be defined as:

- the sharing of power and responsibility between the government and local resource users (Berkes, 1991, p. 12).
- the term given to governance systems that combine state control with local, decentralized decision-making and accountability and which, ideally, combine the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of each one (Singleton, 1998, p. 7).
- the sharing of responsibilities, rights and duties between the primary stakeholders, in particular, local communities and the nation state; a decentralized approach to decision-making that involves the local users in the decision-making process as equals with the nation-state' (The World Bank, 1999, p. 11).

According to co-management definitions, it is not surprising, that the main yardsticks for youth participation are still the same as those discussed in the models above: power, responsibilities, rights and duties, which are

shared between youngsters and officials (adults working in the field of youth policy).

The principle of co-management in the youth field was introduced in 1971 by the European Youth Centre and in 1972 by the European Youth Foundation (Hansen, 2010, p. 122), which proclaimed that youth should be taken into account as youth policy-making actors.

At the European level the ruling players in the arena of promotion of youth active participation are the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The guidance for youth participation in youth policy was introduced in 1992 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, when it was included in the European Youth Charter. The charter stresses that young people and non-governmental youth organizations have the right to gain access to consultancy and take an active part in decision-making on issues that affect young people at the municipal and regional level (Denstad, 2009, p. 26).

Strong contribution to promoting youth participation was made by the European Commission, that in November 2001 launched the White Paper on Youth, entitled “A new impetus for European youth”. The document sent recommendations to the EU states to consult young people and involve them in decision-making processes on issues that are of importance to them. One of the main impacts of the White Paper on Youth is the fact that due to the document, the promotion of active participation of young people in society has been increased to a great extent. Henceforth, youth should become more involved in decision-making processes at local, regional and national levels. In order to increase youth active participation, the White Paper proclaimed special instruments such as: informing; promoting participation through information and communication technologies; promoting participation in the media; encouraging voluntarism and community service; supporting young people’s projects and initiatives; promoting young people’s organizations; encouraging participation in political parties and non-governmental organizations; institutional participation in local and regional affairs (e.g., youth councils, parliaments, and panels); and general support for structures of youth participation (European Commission, 2001).

The next significant step in the development of youth participation was made by introducing the European Youth Pact. The European Youth Pact continued to proclaim youth citizenship and active involvement of all actors into youth field: young people, youth organisations, youth

researchers and policymakers. Such kind of involvement in youth policy was indicated by the new concept named *structured dialogue*. The main idea of the *structured dialogue* is to let all stakeholders at all levels in the field of youth policy to discuss relevant topics with young people before taking decisions. Dialogue implies that public institutions and policy makers should discuss relevant topics with young people before taking decisions. The debate is structured in terms of themes and timing, with events taking place on a regular basis where young people can discuss the agreed themes amongst themselves and also with local, national and EU politicians (Denstad, 2009, p. 35). The structured dialogue takes place both at the European level and at the level of the Member States through youth events, European Youth Weeks, simulations of EU institutions, debating activities, competitions, workshops, forums, consultations with youth, research on youth and other participatory forms.

The EU particularly supports projects aimed at enhancing participation of young people through the Youth in Action Program (2007-2013), Erasmus for all (2014-2020). Apart from the programs, the EU institutions also have a long experience in providing high quality information and advice, concerning youth issues, to young people and those who work with them through network Eurodesk.

To conclude, the European practical approach to youth participation is regarded as an encouraging factor, which enables young individuals' participation in the decision-making process at all levels through concrete activities initiated by youth or with the co-operation of other stakeholders. Although the EU has given an impulse for the EU member states to increase youth participation, providing guidance as the White Paper, Youth pact and appropriate funding through youth programmes, a big challenge of implementing the EU recommendations at national levels of the EU member states still remains. It is mainly due to the fact, that the EU youth policy is a legally non-binding policy area. All EU policies are governed by a wider range of instruments varying from hard law (regulations and directives) and new governance (open-method of co-ordination) to soft law (action programmes, recommendations and resolutions). All these instruments work together towards the achievement of the overall common objective. The EU youth policy differs from other EU policies in terms of being mostly governed by *soft law* instruments. For instance, the White Paper on Youth Policy, which is not a legislative text, represents a kind of document with recommendations only. The EU has no sanctioning rights in

the youth field of the EU member states.

Approach and Methodology

I intend to approach several elements of the presented above models while mapping out current forms of youth participation in youth policy in Estonia and evaluating the perceptions of experts working in the field of youth affairs in Estonia.

Primary data for this study was obtained through analysis of documents, legislation, development plans, youth research and statistics. Additionally, data were obtained during 15 individual semi-structured interviews and one focus group. The interviews were held during the period of February 2013 - June 2013 in Estonia. The focus group was held on 9th February in Tallinn within the framework of the seminar, organized by the Estonian National Agency of the EU program *Youth in Action*. The interviewees were the representatives of Estonia who work in the field of youth affairs at EU, national, regional and local levels, and who have gained expertise in the field of youth work and youth policy, possess capacity to grasp the changes in the youth policy and have a clear picture of the contemporary situation of youth participation in youth policy.

The individual and focus group interviews enabled the study of Estonian youth participation experience by reflecting on general views and perceptions of experts as regards youth involvement in the decision-making process and providing consultation with the youth on various youth policy issues. The main questions in the interviews were the following:

- What is a general relation of officials working in the youth field to youth participation in decision-making process?
- Are officials ready to take young people's views into account and allow young people to participate in decision-making process?
- Are they ready to share some of adult power with the youth?
- What are the main barriers for efficient youth involvement in the youth policy making?

Furthermore, experts have shared best practices of the participation of young people in youth policy.

It should be observed that the youth as a stakeholder group are not

presented in interviews and focus groups. Since the main purpose of the research is to explore the attitudes of officials, who work with youth, the scope of data gathering was narrowed to studying legal documents in the youth field and conducting interviews with officials.

Estonian experience: the findings

Analysis of legislation on youth participation

Youth participation is enshrined in Estonia in two main documents of the youth field, specifically in the Youth Work Act and National Youth Work Strategy.

The Youth Work Act 2010 for the first time in the history of Estonian youth policy established in law the format for local level youth participation as youth councils: “youth council is a participating council with advisory right consisting of youth operating at a rural municipality or city council” (The Youth Work Act, 2010, p. 2). According to the Youth Work Act city and rural municipalities’ council “shall consult with a youth council, if applicable, upon planning, performing and evaluating youth work” (The Youth Work Act, 2010, p. 3). It is positive to mention that youth councils are regarded as ‘formal’ participation structures that give youth voting and speaking rights within organization itself and opportunity to influence the decisions at a local level. The word ‘shall’ for city and rural municipalities does not imply here a strong obligation. It has a rather recommendatory character. Also, the Youth Work Act outlines the principles of youth work in Estonia, whereby one of the main principles says: “youth work is done for youth and with youth, involving them in the decision-making process” (The Youth Work Act, 2010, p. 2). This principle exposes that practitioners who work in the youth field have to regard youth as a resource.

In contrast to the Youth Work Act, the National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 proposed concrete measures in the field of youth participation, that are: creation of possibilities for non-organised youth to be represented at national, county and local levels; support for the formation of youth councils and their sustainability through elaboration of their operation principles and advising local governments; development of participation motivation of youth and participation habits (The National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, p. 27). The National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013

highlights youth participation as one of the core principles of integrated youth policy and as the main goal of youth policy in the period 2006-2013, achievement of which requires: ensuring that youth are consulted at local, county and national level; drawing attention and planning activities to increase the motivation of youth to participate (The National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, p. 18). Youth participation is defined in the document as the creation of diverse opportunities for youth participating in decision-making processes and the development of participation motivation (The National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, p. 24). Also, as in the Youth Work Act, the Youth Work Strategy draws attention to youth work as a crucial mechanism for ensuring youth participation and stresses that youth work is to be performed for and with youth. Moreover, youth participation is also indicator of the assessment of youth work in Estonia (The National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, pp. 21-22). Methods employed to promote youth participation include publishing instructions about the possibilities for youth to participate in the work of local governments; a functioning youth council in every county; a campaign to introduce youth participation (The National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, p. 30).

The new Youth Work Strategy 2014-2020 also emphasizes the importance of youth participation in the decision-making process. The third measure of the strategy proclaims: "Possibilities and desires of youth to participate in decisions that concern their lives is the basis for the development of a cohesive society in Estonia. Participation in the organization itself and the surrounding life and voluntary activities creates a strong base for the development of civil society, in which young people are active social change party. The participation depends largely on the perception of inclusiveness and sense of belonging, which helps to avoid the need and desire to express themselves radically, or leave the country" (The National Youth Work Strategy 2014-2020, p. 9). One indicator of the current Youth Work Strategy is that by the end of 2020 a youth participation system, comprising 200 youth councils, will have been implemented, which enables the youth to participate and be heard.

An analysis of the main documents of law and policies on youth participation shows that youth participation is not just a simple phrase in Estonia, but Estonia has the legislative framework, that promotes youth inclusion in decision-making at various levels and gives the basic guidance for 'formal' youth participation structures. It is a positive development that young people have lawful rights to voice their opinions on municipal

issues. However, one has to note that in reality municipal policymakers do not abide by the documents to share power and responsibilities with youngsters and take youth views seriously into account.

Using Lofquist (1989) theory, on the one side, the documents promote the *youth-as-resource* approach, but on the other side youth are taken into account more as consultants, and in some cases even as objects.. Youth policy in Estonia is aimed at people aged 7-26. This target group includes both groups: children and young people. The group, which is not a homogenous one, presents diverse interests and needs that depend on such aspects as: age, sex, culture, nationality, education, economic status of youngster etc. In general, children and disadvantaged or vulnerable youth are predominantly viewed as those, who present a problem, and therefore need supportive and preventative actions for taking care of their needs and managing their issues. The participation of these groups in the problem-solving process as regards to their needs and other issues are not of high priority to politicians. These groups are more observed rather than engaged in decision-making process.

Youth participation forms

Besides the positive legislative interventions in the field of youth participation, several new proposals of youth participation have been made in the last ten years. One should commence by describing the whole array of these new forms allowing youngsters to participate in youth policy.

In Estonia, youth participation mainly takes place in 'formal' representative forms of involvement. The most common form of participation for youngsters at a local level is youth participation councils, created in all institutions where young people can voice their opinions in the decision-making matter (e.g. local youth council, county youth council, advisory council, school student and student council, etc.).

School and university student councils are involved in the decision-making process respectively at school and university level, where youngsters have the opportunity to express their opinions on the school's everyday life, activities and future plans. The councils strive for the rights and needs of students and give the youth umbrella organizations advice on educational questions. The respondents of interviews and focus group recognised the fact that the impact of school and university councils varies across educational institutions, depending to a large extent on the attitudes

of officials to youngsters and youth readiness and motivation for active participation in the management of a particular school or university.

School and university councils are quite active and are in almost all schools and universities. Youngsters of various age and nationality can attend this type of youth form participation. Of course, the impact of certain school and university council is different. Each school has its own story and traditions. However, as time goes on it becomes more common place, and it is an elementary way to improve youth things through active participation in local youth representative organizations such as school or university council. We look at it very simply, if you are not engaging one of the parties, your decisions, actions have less chance to be full of value and success (representative of Estonian School Student Councils Union).

Many counties and cities have implemented specific youth participation form as youth council. Youth council is the youth participation council created by the local government. Its goal is to give young people opportunity to voice their opinions in the matter of resolutions made by the local government. The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia has promoted and initiated the creation of youth councils at the local level since 1998. At a county level the youth councils were established in 2006. The total number of the youth councils during four years rose from 31 in 2009 to 81 in 2013³, the rapid growth in the number of youth councils was in the year of 2010 (60 youth councils), mainly influenced by recommendations introduced in Youth Work Pact (2010).

The respondents, who represent the youth councils of counties and cities, are of the opinion that participation in the decision-making process presents no difficulty, but still it seems rather complicated to exert a strong impact on governments' decisions due to the lack of effective co-operation between local government and youngsters.

We have quite good opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, and our opinions are taken quite seriously. As we have only just started our work, the main shortcoming is the lack of experience of young people to participate in the process (representative of the youth council of Ida-Virumaa county).

³ Estonian youth monitor indicators: <http://www.noorteseire.ee/indicators/239#>

For youngsters it is not difficult to get involved in decision - making process through youth council. They should just go and talk. They should keep their eyes open, and they will consequently see a variety of ways how to make their voices heard (representative of the youth council of Pärnumaa county).

Certainly, there are still places for improvement in the field of youth participation. Also, there is an urgent need for developing direct co-operation between county government officials and youngsters. It is a perfect situation, when youth are involved in the decision-making process without any stereotypes and the relations between youth and the local municipal government officials are based on trust (representative of the youth council of Mustjala municipality).

One of the shortcomings of current youth councils lies in the fact that pilot formats of youth participation are to a large extent aimed at active young people, who are eager to make their own contribution into the matter. Hence, it is quite common for the same young people to be representatives of both the student youth councils and the youth county councils at a local level. The positive aspect is that youth participation councils are fully created, run and developed by young people and for the young people.

The crucial role at a national level in terms of standing up for the youth rights and needs is played by the youth umbrella organizations, particularly, Estonian School Student Councils' Union, Federation of Estonian Student Unions and Estonian National Youth Council.

Estonian School Student Councils' Union is the biggest representative youth organisation. By 2013, it consisted of nearly 200 school student councils, thus representing the interests and needs of nearly 100.000 school students across Estonia. The organization focuses on the questions, which are relevant to school life, such as a school curriculum, exams, and etc. The union supports all pupils in terms of providing them with the opportunity to become involved in shaping society, to gain experience, skills and confidence and to broaden their horizons. The main methods applied at work are roundtables, working groups, discussions and lobbying.

Federation of Estonian Student Unions is currently represented by over 95% (64.460) of Estonian higher education students. The main goal of organization is to represent and advocate the students' interests at a national level, hence it actively cooperates with the parliament and the government

members, different ministries, higher education institutions and other social institutions. Federation of Estonian Student Unions is recognized as a 100 percent partner by the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia and the government of Estonia. One of the most impressive initiatives launched in 2011-2012 is the struggle for free higher education and access to student grants.

The Estonian National Youth Council is an umbrella organization established in 2002 that unites youth organizations and youth councils throughout Estonia and promotes cooperation between youth associations and active participation of young people in society. The Estonian National Youth Council is mainly working for recognition and participation of young people. The council plays a crucial role as a government partner in the development of youth policy. The council works in the working group in co-operation with youth NGOs, youth associations, youth participation councils, Estonian Youth Workers Association, the Estonian Youth Open Center, the Estonian Union of Leisure time teachers, the Estonian Youth Work Institute, the European Movement Estonia, Estonian Youth Work Centre and the National Youth in Action agency in Estonia. The most valuable initiatives launched by the Estonian National Youth Council are *Shadow elections* and *Participation cafes*. *Shadow Elections* was a citizen education project that gave opportunity in 2009 for youngsters from the age of 14 to 17 to vote. The aim of the project is to motivate young people to develop their interest in social matters and politics, in particular, and help them become active citizens. "Participation cafes" is an annual forum, the format of which brings together young people from diverse backgrounds and the decision makers⁴ to discuss vital problems and find solutions to them.

Despite the differences concerning the focus of the work of the three umbrella organizations, they share some common features. They all have professionally developed strategies that help achieve the organization's goals. They possess the same strengths and face the same risks. The organizations have a well-established partnership with the Ministry of Education and other ministries, which results in organising a number of working groups, roundtables and discussion panels (Toots, 2013, pp. 80-81). Also, the respondents reveal that youth umbrella organizations are considered to be the most effective way for young people to influence

⁴Estonian National Youth Council: <http://www.enl.ee/en/Projects>

policies and let the voice and opinions of youth to be heard. All interviewed representatives of youth umbrella organizations claimed that their voice was heard and they were involved in decision-making processes as partners at national and local levels. Student umbrella organizations are mostly involved with educational questions and the National Youth Council tackles youth policy issues.

We often organize round tables, conduct questionnaires. These methods can help to bring youth opinion to the politicians. For young people it is much easier to influence the local level decisions and take part in the decision-making process there, at the state level it is more difficult. Young people themselves are not always active. So, representatives of youth umbrella organizations have to deliver the voices of youth to politicians (representative of the National Youth Council).

Youth umbrella organizations are to some extent facilitators of bringing youth opinions to the top level of governance (representative of Ministry of Education).

At the same time the umbrella organizations recognize the fact that youth activation and their engagement in decision-making process is a complex issue. Although mailing lists are used to trigger discussions and forums in social media, the number of young participants is still very low and varies due to different factors (Toots, 2013, pp. 80- 81).

Youth participation forms, considered above, are mainly for the youngsters, who already have a certain level of competence and strong motivation to participate in the decision-making process. But what are the alternatives to participation for so called *non-organized* and *inactive youth*? Here, the respondents allege that youth work is one of the tools for ensuring active youth participation at a local level. Youth work in Estonia is organized by youth associations, youth centers, hobby-schools, youth camps, work camps, youth programs, projects and extra curricular activities in schools. The interviewees express their opinion that youth workers support and train young people to become active citizens.

Through youth work initiatives it is possible to hear the voices of youngsters. In the youth centers young people express themselves socially, artistically and politically (representative of Saue youth center).

Young people, who visit youth centres, are rather inactive, and our goal as youth workers is to try to increase youth participation and enhance their motivation to be part of society. In the youth centre, we have a special, so-called active group, where youngsters discuss and try to implement their initiatives through various projects. This is actually one method we use while trying to increase young people's activity level (representative of Tallinn youth centre).

My experience says that 100% of all young people are not very capable and ready for participation. Although youngsters have good ideas, they often do things wrong. What is the problem? Young people do not often have experience. In this case the youth worker can listen to them and support them. The youth worker consults and informs youngsters about participation opportunities. Young people need a special kind of training in order to participate and youth worker's role is very important here (representative of the Estonian youth worker association).

Participation of young people could be bigger and better; it is not only that young people have been given the opportunity to express their opinion somewhere. Young people should have more opportunities to implement the youth's initiative at local and national levels. Through youth initiatives, they do not only express their opinion, but also learn to be an active citizen. In my opinion, it is a civil activity to be a participant in the decision-making processes, it is not just policy, it is more than that in case I want to do something good for the society or for the local environment. (representative of the Estonian National Agency of the European Union program Youth in Action).

In the context of youth participation at the European level, the participation is closely linked to the existence of a structured dialogue with young people and their organizations. In Estonia the implementation of a structured dialogue has been organized since 2010 by the Estonian National Youth Council with the financial support of Estonian National Youth in Action Agency. The structured dialogue in Estonia is conducted through the following methods: regional roundtables, youth events, group discussions and active online questionnaires. Participation in such dialogue is beneficial not only for the youngsters but also for the Estonian National Youth Council members. The young people become more aware of current social, economical, political issues in the EU and they have an opportunity to communicate their ideas and concerns about the way these issues should

be approached. The Estonian National Youth Council monitors the real situation in regard to youth needs and other issues by conducting regular consultations with young people. The results of the consultations are consequently reported to the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, the European Commission and other European institutions. This prevents the exclusion of young people from youth policy.

All interviewed experts alleged that the EU has made a significant impact on youth participation movement by enhancing its openness and importance at the national level. It is particularly valuable that young people are encouraged and motivated to initiate and implement projects concerning the development and improvement of their local communities with the support of the EU Structural Fund.

It is essential to highlight some good practice examples of youth participation that respondents have shared in the interviews. The youth inclusion helped to compile The Strategy of Children and Families at the national level in the period of 2012-2020. A nationwide discussion group of young persons was launched in cooperation with the Estonian Union for Child Welfare in order to consult them about the Strategy. The first version of the Strategy was sent to a larger group of stakeholders for their comments, whereby people were also asked to give their opinions via the participation web. The Ministry of Justice of Estonia have also engaged youth into developing the Strategy for fight against violence. Young people were encouraged to take part in the discussions in regard to lowering the voting age in order to stimulate their active participation in society at a local level, thus giving them the opportunity to vote at local elections at the age of 16. Annual youth forum event “101 kids to Toompea” highlights the opinions of the youth through serious discussions, which reach the wider public in the meeting hall of the Parliament. The goal of the forum is to not only emphasize the problems, but also generate suggestions for overcoming them.

The respondents also shared best practices of youth participation at a local level.

At a local level, there are many good examples of youth participation. The youngsters themselves influence the activities of youth centers very much. Here in Estonia they can freely express their opinions in youth centres. The way the whole system of youth centres is set up makes it easier for the young people to participate in the decision-making process. We have

approximately 200 young people at a youth centre, whose opinions were documented and afterwards used in the development plans (representative of the Open Youth Centre).

One of the good examples is youth debate on the permission to reform the law of graffiti drawings in Tallinn. Youth discussions, meetings with government authorities, lobbying of Tallinn youth city council certainly influenced the reform (representative of the Tallinn city youth council).

Some respondents also recognize the fact that youth are not involved fully, and the youth engagement in decision-making materializes on a random basis: *“from time to time”*; *“according to the need”*; *“there should be more such places where young people could influence the government by their voices”*.

From the analysis above, it is obvious that various forms of participation for youngsters exist at various levels. According to Shier model the positive fact is that all experts while being interviewed shared the same views in terms of their readiness to take youth opinions into account (III. level of youth participation, the minimum for endorsement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). However, the young people still lack opportunities to share power and responsibility in the decision-making process. Applying theoretical models of the youth participation to the practical ideas according to the perceptions of interviewers, it is not too difficult to conclude that at the national level youth participation very rarely reaches the highest level of youth participation models presented above. Institutions at the national level often consult young people or youth organisations on youth issues and ask their feedback. At the local level youth participation more often reaches the highest levels. Such example as allowing young people to make decisions and implement new initiatives by themselves serves as a proof to support this idea. As concerning Lofquest model, the attitudes of interviewers are varying from attitude *youth as objects* to attitude *youth as partners*. Depending on the scope of the youth issues, where youth opinions were asked, the attitudes of officials have tendency to vary. For instance, officials are mostly ready to work with youngsters *as partners* in the case of questions of culture and leisure. As concerning such themes as health, security, education, social care is more widely spread attitude *youth as objects* or *youth as consultants*. For example, a lot of cultural and leisure activities at the local level are fully

initiated and implemented by youngsters. Representatives of student and school youth councils in the interviews shared opinions that officials perceive them more often *as consultants*. It is also worth to add, that attitudes of officials to youth participation quite often depend on the particular situation, where the crucial role plays readiness of youngsters to be part of decision-making process, particularly their ability to enter the dialogue between adults and youngsters and strong skills to defend their opinions.

Shortcomings: issues relating to youth itself

The four main forms have been observed: youth participation through youth councils, youth participation through their representatives in youth umbrella organizations, youth work, and structural dialogue. Yet, whilst these forms of participation are of great interest in terms of taking into consideration youth voices, a few potential problems remain unsolved. One of the weaknesses is the capacity to influence political decisions in various policy domains. Previous researchers in the field of youth participation and interview respondents have both emphasized several aspects why youth opinions are not taken into account in decision-making.

Youth engagement is currently one of the most complicated tasks as youth participation mostly depends on youth's active stand. Youth are eager to participate in the decision-making process first and foremost when they are active (Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit, 2013, p. 15). A certain lack of interest and a growing passivity of youth can currently be observed. Young people have little experience in participation as they are not used to being active from an early age onwards. Their low motivation accounts for the fact that they cannot see the direct benefits of participation. As a consequence, they experience fear to assume the obligations and responsibility. Moreover, young people do not sufficiently acknowledge their participation opportunities and the objectives. The tasks of participation structures are often unclear to them. As a result, the complexity of youth engagement is linked to the small number of well-organized young people. As seen from the data obtained from youth organizations' registry of the Estonian Ministry of Education only around 7 percent of Estonian youth are involved in different organizations.

What else could be done in order to enhance youth activity in the decision-making process?

According to the replies of the poll conducted by the Estonian National

Council, youngsters emphasized the opinion that discussions concerning youth problems would be of more interest to youth if the methods of discussions were connected with different non-formal learning paths. Youngsters mentioned role models, the use of the youth-to-youth method, games, concrete actions, projects, programs and camps. All of them could make youth issues sound interesting for youth. Only 4 percent of respondents thought that discussions of youth problems should be held in more formal settings, mostly at schools (Müürsepp, Rannala, Taru, 2013, p. 115).

The interview and focus group respondents highlight the most frequently used methods to engage youth in the decision-making process. They are discussions, roundtables, brainstorming meetings and working meetings. Although the implementation of new methods and forms of youth participation is challenging, there is still a lack of good practice examples of how it should be done. After all, we must recognize the need for new models of youth inclusion in terms of their participation in youth policy. It appears that the implementation of one model only may be limiting in a number of ways. On one side, a small number of youngsters are organized and have full access to youth information; on the other side, youth as a social group have special values, interests and culture, that change with the time as the young people advance in age. Youth participation models should be flexible, youth-oriented and inclusive for all youngsters no matter what their background is. Some respondents stress:

There is still a lack of attractive and suitable opportunities for participation. Possibilities of youth participation should be more dynamic, youth-centered, diversified (representative of Tallinn city Youth and Sport department).

There is still a lack of comprehensive open consultations with non-organized young people, who are not members of any youth organization. Another problem is Russian-speaking minorities, which due to the lack of information and knowledge of the Estonian language, do not have an appropriate access to youth participation forms. There is still a difference in the number of such consultations between Estonian speaking and Russian speaking youngsters (representative of the Estonian Youth worker union).

New methods of youth engagement can be developed by sharing best practices in youth participation and by involving youngsters themselves in developing new participation forms (representative of the Estonian National Youth Council).

Shortcomings: issues relating to adults

A second set of youth participation shortcomings relates to adults, officials, such as skills deficits, lack of experience, negative attitudes and stereotyping as respects young people's capability to participate.

From time to time, youth are still perceived as objects that needed to be guarded and controlled. In the interviews respondents highlight the following:

The general mindset of officials is one of the main barriers that hampers youth in participation. Young people are not always taken seriously by officials, who often have the limited skills in involving young people (representative of Youth Open Centre).

Youth engagement in decision-making policy is still a very complex process. Since there is bureaucracy in Estonia as elsewhere, it inhibits youth decisions from being passed for a long period of time. Sometimes 1 or 2 years and in some cases even 3 years are needed for our proposals to be included in city strategies. We break the stereotype that young people know nothing, as we always get prepared well before attending the meeting. We learned how to work with politicians. We have statistics, documents and arguments. We try to do our work professionally. Thus, we make slow but firm attempts to influence the opinions of officials. However, there are still stereotypes that young people do not know anything and youngsters' proposals cause officials to work in a new way, that is why very often they do not like us (representative of the Tallinn city youth council).

The survey carried out by Emor⁵ indicated that 82% of people in Estonia are rather convinced that adults usually know better what is good for their children and only 44% of people believe that when a child's opinion is asked for, this opinion should also be taken into consideration (The Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, 2011, p. 28). The poll, conducted by the Estonian National Council among youngsters (n = 860), questioned them whether they were given enough opportunities for participating in political discussions. 43 % of the respondents answered "no" while 23% answered "yes." 6 % did not know the answer or answered "no opinion"

⁵TNS Emor. (2008). Inclusion of Children and Parental Education in the Society of Estonia. RISC Value Orientations Survey. Annex to the Country Report on Estonia. Ministry of Social Affairs.

and 28 % gave a variety of answers, mostly stating “possibly” (Müürsepp, Rannala, Taru, 2013, p. 115).

The research, carried out by the Estonian Union for Child Welfare (2013) among municipal authorities (n=115) notifies that only 12.2% of respondents always involve children in developing local strategies, 47% of respondents sometimes involve children and the majority of respondents, who comprise 40.9%, do not engage children and young people at all. Only 25.2% of respondents confirm that, if they engage young people in development strategies, they always take young people’s opinions into account. Most of the respondents, who comprise 68.7% sometimes take the youth opinion into consideration (Lastekaitse Liit, 2013, pp. 13-16).

The range of fields where youth opinions are asked is also still narrow. It is limited to issues of cultural and leisure life of the local community and to some educational and social matters that are of concern to young people. The results of the study conducted by the Estonian Union for Child Welfare (2013) expose the fact that local governments have asked for youth opinions in questions relating mostly to leisure time and activities (92.17% of respondents); school life (77.39% of respondents); cultural life (55.65%). In contrast, only 19.13% of respondents have been asked for their opinion in relation to the environment and 14.78% of respondents have expressed their opinion in relation to the transportation (Lastekaitse Liit, 2013, p. 9). And yet, there are some good practice examples when youth are asked for their opinion on the matters other than leisure, school and culture. The Estonian National Institute for Health has involved youngsters in the evaluation process of various events and activities (e.g. Health Promotion Idea Project, Smoke Free Class, the best school canteen, meal break, etc.) (The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, 2010, p. 19). All in all, youth involvement should be a part of all policies, concerning youth issues, as horizontal integrated youth policy is one of the key principles in the field of youth.

The highest level of youth participation in youth policy, according to the most widely recognized scholars’ models presented above, implies mutual sharing of power and responsibilities by both adults and young people. It is built on teamwork and partnership. That is why so many respondents have emphasized the importance of cooperation for youth and officials in terms of creating various teams, holding meetings and carrying out discussions. Working together should be a vital part of participation process, where people’s attitudes and relationships, the way how they perceive the world

and themselves in it play a crucial role.

One should mention here, that there are several shortcomings concerning youth participation. There exists a general consensus in regard to the need for youth inclusiveness in decision-making process and the necessity for voicing young people's opinions at various levels of governance. Some principles to which experts adhere are as follows:

Young people should participate in decision-making at all levels. Different levels of participation will be appropriate for different objectives. But whatever the level of participation, it is necessary to ensure that youth opinions are taken into account. Youth voices must be heard by politicians (representative of Tallinn city Youth and Sport department).

At each governance level there should be the opportunity for young people to participate and influence youth policy-making. Each level of governance has its own goals and its own opportunities, thus youth should be taken into account (representative of the Social Affairs Ministry).

It is indeed important that young people should be able to decide too. Young people must be given this kind of opportunity. Youth voices must be heard (representative of the Estonian youth worker union).

When you deal with young people every day, you have to always ask their opinions. The youth engagement is in the development phase. It is evolving here in Estonia (representative of Estonian Youthwork Center).

Young people should be given real responsibilities and power. When you ask young people their opinions, then surely you have to take those opinions into account and really implement them (representative of the Youth Open Center).

One thing also worth mentioning here as a positive side is the fact that the aspects concerning young people are taken into account in developing different policies through evaluation of the current situation via professional research. The tradition of youth monitoring was established in the year of 2009 when the first Estonian youth monitor received the training. *Youth monitor* is published once a year and creates a basis for the knowledge-based policy formation in specific fields related to the lives of young people such as youth policy, youth work, education, health, social policy, defence and other policies. The yearbook of youth monitoring consists of two significant parts, where the first part gives an analytical

overview of the changes that occurred in the lives of Estonian youth during the past year; the second part of the yearbook focuses on the in-depth analysis of a topic related to young people (the so-called topic of the year)⁶. Generally, the number of research, where the target group comprises young people, has been increased. For instance, in the year of 2012 150 new overviews of youth studies were added to the youth monitoring website (www.noorteseire.ee), where as in the year of 2011 only 98 overviews of youth studies were entered (The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, 2013, p.20). The study above presented the Estonian experience of several forms of youth participation such as youth participation councils, youth participation through youth umbrella organizations, youth work and youth research. Comparing the Estonian experience with other the EU countries it is possible to find some similar tendencies concerning youth participation structures, that include mainly active creation and promotion youth participation councils at local level, municipal and national level. As for example, 20 municipal and community youth participation councils are created in Cyprus in 2010 and in the same year the Ministry of Education in Poland supported the process of establishing National Youth Council. Also in the EU members' youth policy there is a great demand for youth work as participation structure that are able to support youth's involvement in the youth policy and to train young people to improve their participation skills. As concerning youth research according the EU Youth report on National youth policies 2012, most of the EU member states are implementing evidence based youth policy, where youth research plays a crucial role.

Conclusion

To conclude, if one is to grasp the implications of the recent development of the new forms of participation of young people in youth policy in Estonia, one should mark the two elements that characterize them. On the one hand, the novelty is that it is already widely recognized that youth should be a part of the decision-making process. Youth participation is guaranteed by the main documents in the youth field: Youth Work Act and National Youth Work Strategy. Both documents promote youth

⁶Youth monitor website: <http://www.noorteseire.ee>

participation at various levels of governance and give some guidance for officials working with and for youth. Additionally, it is a positive sign that society's attitude towards the involvement of children and young people has become more supportive. The distinction between *youth as objects* and *youth as resources*, that is commonly advocated by youth policy, is being accepted now by experts working in the youth field. On the other hand, although Estonian youngsters have opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process in the policies related to their lives, it mainly takes place in 'formal' structures. Youth participation is more often embodied in the function of representing young people rather than that of involving them directly. In Estonia the most popular form of such participation is youth council. Youth councils are implemented in schools, universities and at local municipality levels.

The interviews and the focus group conducted with experts working in the youth field confirm the results, which emerged from previous research. They also highlight some other interesting aspects. The experts share the approach that youth should be taken as a resource and youngsters should be involved in the decision-making process of youth policy at all levels: EU, national, regional and local. Moreover, there are good examples of experience regarding listening to young people and taking their views seriously. However, there is still a lack of opportunities for young people to share power and responsibility in decision-making process. It is still problematic for youth to influence the policies concerning their lives. Finally, improvements could be made by developing new diversified and youth-friendly participation forms, providing training to increase motivation of young people to enhance their participation and to ensure the appropriate attitude of officials toward them.

References

- Arnstein, S. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation, *JAIP*, *kd 35*, number 4, 216–224.
- Berkes, F., George, P., Preston, R. (1991). Co-management: the evolution of the theory and practice of joint administration of living resources. *Alternatives 18(2)*, 12–18.
- Brannen, J., Lewis, A., & Smithson, J. (2002). *Young Europeans. Work and Family Life: Futures in Transition*. London: Routledge.

- Braeken, D., Silva, U., & Saidy, E. (2004). *Setting standards for youth participation. Self-assessment guide for governance and programmes*. International Planned Parenthood Federation. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from <http://www.youthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/IPPF-YOUTH-GUIDE.pdf>
- Carlsson, L., & Berkes, F. (2005). Co-management: concepts and methodological implications. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 75, 65–76.
- Chisholm, L., Kovacheva, S., & Merico, M. (2011). *European Youth Studies. Integrating research, policy and practice*. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from http://www.youthstudies.eu/files/maeys_reader_2012.pdf
- Council of Europe (2001). *Youth policy in Estonia*. European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) 26th meeting, Budapest, 25-27 October 2000.
- Council of Europe (2003a). *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Council of Europe (2003b). *Final Report: Experts on Youth Policy Indicators*. Third and Concluding Meeting. Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport.
- Council of Europe (2005). *Revisiting youth political participation. Challenges for research and democratic practice in Europe*.
- Denstad, F. (2009). *Youth Policy Manual. How to develop a national youth strategy*. Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/YP_strategies/Research/YP_Manual_pub.pdf
- Dibou, T. (2012). Towards a better understanding of the model of EU youth policy. *Studies of Changing Societies Journal*. Special issue: Youth under global perspective. Vol. 1(5) 2012. Retrieved May 20, 2014 from <https://docs.google.com/a/tlu.ee/file/d/0B86UmkfJTkU3cHgwc25HVg9DMDQ/edit?pli=1>
- Dibou, T. (2013a). A discussion of youth civic activism: screening concepts and levels of youth engagement. *Studies of Changing Societies Journal*. Special issue: Youth under global perspective, Vol. 2(9). Retrieved May 20, 2014 from <https://docs.google.com/a/tlu.ee/file/d/0B86UmkfJTkU3OWotdWg3UTJ0d1U/edit>
- Dibou, T. (2013b). Youth engagement and participation. *Youth World Politic*. 2013. №2. Retrieved June 17, 2014 from https://www.academia.edu/7376205/Youth_engagement_and_participation
- Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit (2013). *Ülevaade osaluskogude tegevusest ja osaluskogu tööd takistavate probleemide kaardistus piirkonniti*. Koostaja: Kärt Pärtel.
- Estonian parliament. Riigikogu (2010). *Youth Work Act*. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/520122013004/consolide>
- European Commission (2012). *EU Youth report 2012*. Retrieved October 25, 2014, from http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/eu-youth-report-2012_en.pdf
- European Commission (2001). *White Paper. A new Impetus for European Youth. COM(2001) 681 final*.
- Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence:UNICEF. Retrieved May 31, 2014 http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf
- Lastekaitse Liit (2013). *Kokkuvõtte uuringust: Laste osaluse toetamine ja kaasamine*

- otsustusprotsessides. Laste ja noorte seisukohad. Kohalike omavalitsuste parimad praktikad.*
- Letki, N. (2004). Socialization for participation. Trust, Membership and democratization in East-Central Europe. *Political Research*, 57(4), 665-679.
- Lofquist, W. (1989). *The Technology of Prevention Workbook: A Leadership Development Programme*. Tucson, AZ: AYD Publications.
- Metsak, A., & Notton, K., Martinson, M., Valge, M., Reitav, U. (2009). *Noorte kaasamine ja osalus maakonnas, vallas ja linnas. Käsiraamat noorele, noortekogule, ametnikule, noorsootõtajale, maakonna ja kohaliku omavalitsuse juhile*. Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit. Tallinn.
- Müürsepp, L., & Rannala, I., Taru, M. (2013). *Youth and Public Policy in Estonia. Youth policy review series*. Published by International Debate Education Association. Retrieved April 20, 2014 from http://www.youthpolicy.org/pdfs/Youth_Public_Policy_Estonia_En.pdf
- Rahja, N., & Sell, A. (2006). *Evaluation study of Open Method of Coordination in the youth field*. Research conducted for the European Youth Forum.
- Sapin, K. (2013). *Essential skills for youth work practice*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- SA Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis (2012). *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011: Noored ja noorsootöö*. Retrieved April 10, 2014 from http://www.noorteseire.ee/system/resources/BAhbBlsHOGZmljsyMDEyLzA1LzE3LzA5XzU2XzA4XzQ0MF9OU0FmJmJAxMV9sb3BsaWtfcGFyYW5kYXR1ZC5wZGY09_56_08_440_NSA_2011_loplik_parandatud.pdf.
- SA Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis (2013). *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2012: Noored ja sotsiaalne kaasatus*. Retrieved April 10, 2014 from http://www.noorteseire.ee/system/resources/BAhbBlsHOGZmljAyMDEzLzA1LzE3LzEyXzI4XzQ1XzUyNF9BYXN0YXJhYW1hdDIwMTIucGRm/12_28_45_524_Aastaraamat2012.pdf
- Schumpeter, J. (1952). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. London: Allenand Unwin.
- Singleton, S. (1998). *Constructing Cooperation: the Evolution of Institutions of Comanagement*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Shier, H. (2001). Pathway to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations. A new model for enhancing children's participation in decision-making, in line with article 12.1 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the child. *CHILDREN and SOCIETY*. Volume 15. 2001, 107-117. Retrieved May 20, 2014 http://www.ipkl.gu.se/digitalAssets/1429/1429848_shier2001.pdf
- TNS Emor (2008). *Inclusion of Children and Parental Education in the Society of Estonia*. RISC Value Orientations Survey. Annex to the Country Report on Estonia. Ministry of Social Affairs.
- The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2013). *Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020*.
- The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2013). *Noortevaldkonna aruanne strateegia eesmärkide ja rakendusplaani täitmisest 2012. aastal*.
- The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2012). *Noortevaldkonnaaruanne strateegia eesmärkide ja rakendusplaani täitmisest 2011. aastal*.
- The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2011). *Noortevaldkonna aruanne strateegia eesmärkide ja rakendusplaani täitmisest 2010. aastal*.

- The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2010). *Noortevaldkonna aruanne strateegia eesmärkide ja rakendusplaani täitmisest 2009. aastal*.
- The Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2006). *Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013*. Tartu.
- The Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia (2011). *Smart Parents, Great Children, Strong Society. Strategy of Children and Families 2012-2020*. Retrieved 20 April, 2014 from http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/Sotsiaalvaldkond/lapsed/Strategy_of_Children_and_Families_2012-2020.pdf
- Toots, A. (2013). *Noorte kodanikuosalus*. Sihtasutuse Archimedes Euroopa Noored Eesti büroo, Noorsootöö õpik. Retrieved May 31, 2014 http://mitteformaalne.ee/failid/Noorsootoo_opik_veebi.pdf
- Walther, A., & Jensen, T. (2002). *Youth Transitions, Youth Policy and Participation*. Research Project YOYO. Retrieved May 31, 2014 <http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/YoyoWP1StateofArt.pdf>
- World Bank (2007). *Youth Policy: Doing it and getting it right in World Development Report 2007*, World Bank.
- United Nations (2014). *Youth Participation in Development. Summary Guidelines for Development Partners*. Retrieved April 04, 2014 <http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/policy%20guide.pdf>