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Strasbourg, 2 August 2017

Youth Participation in Internet Governance

Seminar

Strasbourg, 24-26 October 2017

Seminar presentation

Call for participants

Dead-line: 6 September 2017, 13:00 CET

Council of Europe, youth participation and Internet Governance

Participation of young people in decision making is a structured process which, if done meaningfully and ethically, can bring social inclusion of young people and further support society develop. Youth participation in society at all levels and in all its areas has been always at the core of the mission of the youth sector of the Council of Europe as also reflected in the recent [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2016\)7 on access to rights of young people](#) and in the revised [European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#).

The Council of Europe youth sector has a unique model of youth participation in decision making at political and programme level, [the co-management](#), where representatives of youth organisation (gathered in a body called Advisory Council on Youth) and representatives of the states-party to the European Cultural Convention (European Steering Committee on Youth) take decisions together by consensus.

Young people are the main users of Internet among population groups in Europe. They experience online and offline life as a continuum and reportedly make use in high numbers of the Internet on a daily basis. They are also more skilled than older generations and this gap is likely to increase in the following years with more digital natives entering youth. However, there are significant numbers of young people that currently cannot enjoy access to the Internet and that are more likely to experience an ever increasing gap with more public services becoming available mostly online.

The Internet, through its nature, allows for new forms of participation and organisation of young people to emerge, along with new means for reaching out to young people otherwise remote from centres of decision making. Combined with a disengagement of young people with traditional politics, this led to new forms of participation that are somewhat more punctual (focused on one issue and limited in time) with clear and simple ways of involvement (i.e. signing a petition) showing a need to be able to see the effects of their participation. The rise in use of social media among young people has offered new forms of expression and communication online, sometimes political in nature and content, but escaping the mainstream of political dialogue and decision making.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has defined Internet governance to be “the development and application by governments, the private sector, and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and the use of the Internet.”¹ Internet Governance is a complex and inter-disciplinary process, evolving together with the Internet and technology, which covers several areas of public interest such as: infrastructure, security, legal aspects and Internet law, economic aspects, development, sociocultural and human rights issues applying to the Internet and public policy concerning it.

Internet Governance Forum, sponsored by the United Nations, is an annual global forum to gather all stakeholders involved in Internet governance issues that has been in place since 2006. Since its start, regional fora such as the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) and national fora have been created to further support discussions at various levels.

The Council of Europe has recognized early on the importance of the Internet as both a tool and a public space for democracy, highlighting the fact that human rights should equally apply online and offline. The [Convention of Cybercrime](#) and the increasing inclusion of Internet dimensions in other

¹ <http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/about.html>

standard setting documents of the organisation (i.e. [Convention on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence](#)), together with the [Guide to human rights for Internet users show a constant concern](#). The Committee of Ministers has also adopted an [Internet Governance Strategy \(2016-2019\)](#) further articulates the aims of the organization in this respect focusing on further developing Internet's function for democracy and participation, ensuring the respect of human rights online, and on ensuring security and online safety for all.

The Youth Department of the Council of Europe has developed a significant level of expertise and experience through the [No Hate Speech Movement Campaign](#) (2013 onwards) in engaging young people online and developing their capacity and competences in combatting discrimination and racism online. Through the campaign, young people and their organisations have also become involved in matters of Internet Governance through participation in the Internet Governance Forum and EuroDiG in the past 5 years.

However, often enough those young people who participate in shaping the future of the Internet are media and politically literate and they can navigate the circles that involve governments, businesses and civil society in shaping the Internet. However, a much broader array of young people are using the internet and are affected by the ways it is regulated. In order for young people to be able to participate they should have the rights, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support to participate (RMSOS model).

The priorities of the youth sector for 2018-2019 place a strong emphasis on the development of competences of young people and youth organisations in influencing decision making processes, especially in respect to e-forms of youth participation and promotion of human rights online. This is seen as part of the follow-up to the No Hate Speech Movement campaign.

The seminar "Youth participation in Internet Governance" will explore how participation of young people in shaping the Internet can be ensured without reproducing and creating new patterns of exclusion. It will critically review how youth participation shapes currently Internet Governance processes, as well as how it is currently reflected in and through youth policy. The seminar will formulate recommendations for future action to be taken by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, but as well as at national level through youth policy and youth work in order to support young people and their organisations meaningful participation in Internet Governance processes.

The seminar

The seminar will explore how youth participation in Internet Governance can be ensured in a meaningful and inclusive manner and will formulate recommendations for future action to be taken by the Youth Department and the Council of Europe to support youth participation.

The objectives of the seminar are:

- to develop a shared understanding of youth participation in Internet governance and analyse the achievements and pitfall of current youth participation in these processes;
- to critically review the ways youth participation in Internet Governance is reflected in youth policy and envisage ways it should be;
- to further explore what are the rights, the means, the spaces, the opportunities and the support required by young people in order to meaningfully participate in the shaping of the Internet;
- to share experiences of youth participation in Internet governance fora and online youth participation at local/national/ international level, and reflect on the successes and pitfalls;

- to elaborate policy and programme recommendations for the Youth Department and the Council of Europe that aim to support and enhance youth participation in Internet Governance.

Programme and methodology

The three day programme will aims to provide a space for participants to learn about the topic of the seminar, to share from their practices and experience, to identify challenges and opportunities and work towards a common approach and actions. The programme will therefore include plenary presentations and several working group sessions.

Participants' profile

The seminar aims to bring together 35 participants that fulfil the following profile:

- are representatives of national youth councils and national youth organisations already involved or motivated to become involved in national Internet Governance processes;
- are representatives of local/national/international youth organisations and networks actively involved in matters of youth policy and youth participation;
- are representatives of public authorities involved in Internet governance fora at national and/or international level;
- representatives of Internet services, online gaming, and other companies interested in further development of Internet governance and youth participation;
- show clear motivation to follow up the seminar with measures to ensure youth participation in Internet governance matters and fora;
- are able to work autonomously in English language;
- are resident in a state party to the European Cultural Convention, exceptions are possible;
- are able to attend the entire duration of the seminar.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the above mentioned profile, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Application procedure

All interested candidates are requested to duly complete the application form at <http://youthapplications.coe.int> together with all relevant support documents.

Dead-line for applications

The dead-line for applications is **Wednesday, 6 September 2017, 13:00 CET.**

Practical information

Arrival and departure

All participants are requested to organise arrival on 23 October and departure on 27 October 2017.

Languages of the conference

The seminar will take place in English.

Board and lodging, conference location

Board and lodging will be offered to all participants at the [European Youth Centre Strasbourg](#). The seminar sessions will also take place in the European Youth Centre Strasbourg.

The European Youth Centres are accessible to people with disabilities and can take measures to accommodate for any specific needs of participants in this respect. Please provide the necessary information in your application form.

Travel, visa and insurance

Participants' costs in respect to travel and visa will be covered by the Council of Europe Youth Department by bank transfer after the seminar given that the rules of the Council of Europe are strictly observed. Participants will be insured by the Council of Europe during travel and participation in the conference.

Further inquiries

For further information, please contact Anca - Ruxandra Pandea, educational advisor, anca-ruxandra.pandea@coe.int or Nina Kapoor, programme assistant, eyc.programme@coe.int.

For technical assistance with the application form, please address: youthapplications@coe.int.