

## The Co-Management Structure

### 1. What is Participation?

Majority of governing bodies are built on the concept of ‘representative democracy’, which enables the participation of the citizens, once every couple of years, in order to elect their representatives in the state structures. A similar method of expressing the will of the people is applied in the Republic of Moldova when electing the Parliamentary Deputies. However, due to the longevity of the mandate, the reality of maintaining the priorities on the span of 4 years becomes less and less in the current ever-changing environment.

The previous experiences from the past 2 years have shown that the opportunity of voting more is a reality, but it is not always for the better. The right of the citizens to initiate legislative actions or organise referendums, to be consulted on diverse decisional projects are parts of ‘participative democracy’, which makes up for the short-comings of ‘representative democracy’. Participative democracy` is the continuous relations between the elector and electee, public servant and constituent. In practical terms it represents the ‘Dialogue with the citizen’. Ideally, all members of a community must have the right to participate in the decision-making process altogether.

Through active participation, the youth are empowered to play a vital role in their personal development, as well as their surrounding community, aiding them to learn vital life-lessons, to build knowledge on human rights and active citizenship, and to promote positive civic actions. Participation can be consolidated by involving the youth in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the tools, strategies and programmes.

These are but some of the participation methods which supports and allows youth to participate in the decision-making processes of the public structures: **(1) Co-Management and Co-Development Structures, (2) Youth Councils, Youth Parliaments, Student Councils, and Student Boards, (3) Voluntary Participation of youth, (4) Youth Activism and Protest, (5) Digital Participation of youth.** Where cooperation between the youth and institutions exists, communities’ benefit from an improved life quality, which also means that youth organisations are a lot more active, and can attract investors a lot easier, and benefit from recognition.

### 2. What is Co-Management?

Establishing the co-management structures presents an efficient empowering and promoting instrument of youth engagement in the decision-making processes which affects them, such as education, social protection, employability, health, environment, etc.

Over the last years, the co-management concept grew as an important subject in several sectors, including the youth sector. At the core of this concept lies the principle in which those who hold power (politicians, public servants, service providers) distribute in an equal manner the rights and responsibilities with the representatives of the target-groups/beneficiaries. The co-management process encompasses the following steps:

- A. **Co-Creation:** refers to the developed policies, programmes and specific services developed in close collaboration between the decisional factors and beneficiaries;
- B. **Co-Management:** refers to the continuous undertaking of shared monitoring, governing and decision-making between the decisional factors and beneficiaries regarding the implementation of a policy, a programme, providing services or providing services or managing a process.

### 3. How to develop a co-management structure and how it operates?

A co-management structure can take on different forms and possesses various competencies regarding the field and its objective. The following refers exclusively to the **Youth Policies Committees** as a type of co-management structure promoted by the government:

- **The Central Level** is established through the order of established of the head of the public authority responsible for youth policies and brings together officials of public dignity and leadership from the authorities, non-profit organizations and youth associations with projects and national coverage, as well as other actors relevant to national policy;
- **The Local Level** is established by the Decision of the local public authority of level II and brings together actors from public institutions, representatives of the private and associative sector with competences and attributions in the field of youth policy, as well as active young people, opinion leaders, etc.

In order to make the Commissions functional and efficient, we must keep in mind that at its core lies the principle of **cooperation, not competition**.

The participants are guided by a **common goal** and contributes voluntarily with their individual expertise and experience in order to ensure the prioritisation of youth needs on the public agenda and to develop the youth sector accordingly. The founding public authority must ascertain the **benefits and opportunities** offered by a functional and efficient structure. The constitution process is **exclusively** related to the competences of the public authorities.

The youth and youth structures can promote the creation of co-management structures through **advocacy** actions and activities, bringing to the agenda of the responsible authorities the importance and the need to have a functional structure. Members' participation in the Commission is **voluntary** and not financially remunerated. However, the founding public authority is encouraged to plan financial resources, from the resources allocated to the youth budget, for the work of the Commission (round tables, consultations, trainings, presentations, etc.).

#### 4. How to involve myself? My role and my importance in the co-management process

The role of all actors in the co-management process is **contributing with the experience, expertise and information** they possess based on their specifics of the field of activity. Each participant in the structure comes with their own **perspective** on the problem or challenge addressed, be it a thematic or an overall one.

Assuming the challenge is related to the internal migration of young people after the completion of the local education program. In this segment we can identify the relevant actors and the contribution they can make to develop a public policy that will provide those benefits to young people, which will reduce the level of local migration.

#### 5. The benefits and opportunities of the co-management process

In order to understand the benefits of the co-management process in the development and implementation of youth policies, it is imperative to realize that we are talking about an intersectoral field that requires a systemic and complex approach.

If we refer to infrastructure policies, for example, the area of competence of a central public authority, we can say that the state has the necessary mechanisms and levers to implement policies and reforms **vertically**. The field of youth, on the other hand, mainly because it includes the **development of the human component**, requiring a **horizontal approach**. However, the youth component includes in itself the policies related to formal and non-formal education, culture, sports, entrepreneurship and

employability, etc. All this needs to be developed in parallel with the **infrastructure** projects for the provision of services and programs focused on young people. In order to develop effective youth policies, it is necessary to create a system that includes institutions, service providers, practitioners, researchers, etc.

#### **The benefits of a co-management structure:**

- Platform for dialogue and coordination between relevant actors with skills in the sector;
- Relevant fresh statistics underlying policies;
- Program for the involvement of young people and youth structures in the decision-making process;
- Platform for attracting investments and financial resources in the field;
- Continuous policy monitoring and evaluation mechanism;
- Increasing visibility, attractiveness and trust in public authority;
- Ensuring the link between direct beneficiaries and policy makers

#### **6. Planning and Sustainability**

A key-component of public policies which is vital to be at the base of the development process is their **sustainability** in time. It is necessary to ensure the **balance between the benefits and used resources** in order to reach said benefits. This is also relevant and applicable towards public policies, institutions, structures or services.

The process of planning the financial resources for the work of the Youth Commissions is the basis of their resilience over time. However, if the work within the structure is not remunerated, the assigned powers and competencies may require additional financial resources.

The Commission carries out its work on the basis of an **annual Business Plan with outlined objectives and planned activities**. The founding public authority can plan the financial resources for carrying out the activity in compliance with the budget planning process and can analyze the trend of the resources used.

The planning process **must not be an ad hoc activity**, but is the result of awareness of the usefulness and need for **systemic approaches**. In order to provide a local **impetus** in the process of creating co-management structures, the state promotes a mechanism based on **parity-based co-financing** of the Commission's activities. The mechanism is based on the allocation of financial resources to local

from resources allocated in the **state budget**, analogous to the process of **co-**

**financing local grant programs for youth initiatives** carried out by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.

Another key element to ensure the sustainability of the Commissions is their flexibility, or the form promoted by the Government leaves it to the discretion of the founding authority to decide on their constitution and composition depending on the local specifics. The obligation to include representatives of young people and youth associations in the composition lies in the principle of dialogue and the decision-making process on an equal footing between policy makers and direct beneficiaries.

## 7. Promoting local youth initiatives and local advocacy

### What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a continuous process in order to adapt, collect, organization and developing of information in an argument, in order to be communicated by the decisional factors through different channels in order to influence their outcomes. Advocacy is a strategic and planned process which the representatives of the civil society and individual entities can use in order to bring about change through identifying a problem inside a community, proposing a solution for solving said problem, holding true to its sustainability and providing the plan of putting it in an efficient manner.

### What we must keep in mind in order to be as efficient as possible in the advocacy procedure:

- *Presenting the decisional factors of the researches and concrete data;*
- *An efficient communication requires concrete messages, which target the right audience;*
- *Educating and involving the decisional factors;*
- *Developing the basis of a strong, diverse and involved partnership.*

### What is the importance of the involvement of the non-profit organisations in this process?

- It builds a bridge between decision makers and the community, knowing the specific needs of the target group to which they are connected;
- They have experience both in interaction with the target group and with the public authorities;

- to identify necessary data in the advocacy process, to formulate proposals as well as to implement activities, projects;
- Provides credibility to the parties (young people - local authorities) in the collaboration process, sometimes having the role of mediator;
  - There is a growing public attention, interest and awareness of the issue at hand;
  - They can more easily mobilize other partners, including donors.

### What are the necessary steps in developing an advocacy plan?

- Step 1: Identify the subject which you desire to focus in the advocacy process;
- Step 2: Identify the necessary actions for solving the challenge and establish a plan;
- Step 3: Identify your target for advocacy;
- Step 4: Collect information and data;
- Step 5: Identify the strong points of your team;
- Step 6: Develop the plan of your advocacy initiative;
- Step 7: Follow and tabulate the results.

### Where do we start in the promotional process on the public agenda of a youth initiative?

- Informing;
- Planning;
- Implication;
- Partnership;
- Responsibility;
- Preparation;
- Communication.

## 8. Experiences and Good Practices

### The European Council: the founding structure and the veritable promoter of the co-management concept

The co-management concept began immediately with the commencement of youth activities in 1963. As it is known today, the co-management with a complete parity of 50:50 between the government



institutionalized in 1972. The concept and practicality

co-management developed by the European Council involves several participation fields:

- Consulting;
- Cooperative dialogue;
- Co-decision;
  
- Co-management.

### **Izola, Slovenia- model of shared responsibility**

Izola was one of the first municipalities in Slovenia to start using a new approach to young people in order to empower them and increase their interest in managing public affairs. The mayor of the municipality, since then (1999), Breda Pecan was very interested in the idea of involving young people in the decision-making process and encouraged by local initiative, he made an effort to create a youth structure based on the principle of co-management.

After applying this participation mechanism for more than 2 decades, the representatives of Izola municipality conclude that if we really want young people to behave responsibly, we must let them manage high-responsibility projects. This is the basis of co-management in our local community.

Today, the Youth Commission functions as a meeting point for different opinions of young people and is a representative body that transmits to the municipality and other public institutions the ideas of young people, regarding the development of infrastructure and public services in the local community. This involves all active local community organizations working with and for young people. Prior to the establishment of the Youth Commission, the views of young people were rarely taken into account in the preparation of major development agreements and other important decisions taken by the city council. After the establishment of the structure, its president signed an extensive collaboration with the municipality. Gradually, the young people noticed that the politicians and the mayor are serious and that the promises are not just temporary. This was an important understanding for young people who are sufficiently motivated to take an active role in various youth organizations and the activities of the Youth Commission.

of good

practice between local authorities and young people in

Izola would never have evolved so quickly and successfully if it had not been for the strong support of the mayor and the major political parties that have recognized young people as the future of our city.

There are a number of contexts in which the model presented has already been transferred, for example: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has adopted the co-management model for its new field of youth programming; The Regional Office for Youth Cooperation for the Balkans (RYCO) operates a co-managed system of governance; Croatia, Lithuania and Finland have all adopted a co-management system for programming national youth

policies; and local and regional authorities in several European countries govern their youth programs through co-management systems, including municipalities in Estonia, Finland, Slovenia, Germany, Greece, Iceland and Portugal.