

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth Participation is the annual theme of 2018. During the year the events of the Rural Youth Europe network will reflect this topic in different and varied ways. This document will be updated as new and innovative methods on the theme will be introduced and developed during the year.

### ON THE LADDER

**Reference:** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/on-the-ladder>

**Time:** 120 minutes

**Group size:** 12 – 30

**Overview:** This activity involves role play and discussion. Participants reflect on the meaning of youth participation and discuss ways of increasing their own participation in the local community.

#### Related rights:

- Right to participate in government and free elections
- Right to participate in the cultural life
- Freedom of opinion and information

#### Objectives:

- To reflect on the ways young people can participate and the factors which impede or facilitate their participation
- To develop skills to co-operate, organise and take action together with others
- To cultivate a sense of responsibility for one's own actions

#### Materials:

- Handout: "The ladder of participation" (see also the background information on Citizenship and Participation: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/citizenship-and-participation#Hart'sladder>)
- Large sheet of paper, marker pen and scissors
- "Post-its" or small pieces of paper to be taped on a wall
- A wall

**Handout:** <https://rm.coe.int/1680089ac4>

#### Preparation:

- Make copies of the handout, one per small group
- Make 6 signs: obstacles, control, no control, enabling factors, control, no control

#### Instructions:

##### Part 1: What is the ladder of participation? (45 minutes)

1. Ask participants what they understand by the term "youth participation".
2. Hand out the diagram of the ladder of participation and explain that this is one model for thinking about different ways of participating. Briefly discuss the different levels.
3. Divide the group into 8 small groups. Allocate one level of participation to each group and ask them to prepare a short 2-3 minute role play to illustrate the level they have been allocated.

4. When the groups are ready, invite them to present their role plays in turn. Allow questions or time for comments between the different role plays if the participants want.

### Part 2: How we participate

5. Ask participants to work individually for 5 minutes trying to find examples in their own lives for as many of the 8 levels as they can. Tell them to think about what they do in all aspects of their lives: At home, school, clubs, work and with family and friends.
6. Then invite participants to share their examples in small groups of 4-5 people. While discussing the examples, ask participants to come up with ideas for obstacles (things that stop them from moving up the ladder) and enabling factors (things that help them move up the ladder). They should write each idea on a separate "post-it".
7. While the groups are discussing, stick the prepared headings "obstacles" and "enabling factors" on the wall about 2 metres apart. Then bring the groups into plenary and ask them to stick their papers on the wall under the headings.
8. Review the two lists with the participants. Ask for clarification about any ambiguous statements and try to resolve any disagreements between participants about the positioning of the statements.
9. Now put the "control" and "no control" headings up on the wall under the first headings and ask participants to sort each list into two sub-lists according to whether the statements are about things that they have (or could have) control over, or whether the statements refer to external factors that are out of their control.
10. Finally review the positions of the papers in the four lists. Then go on to the evaluation and debriefing.

### Debriefing and evaluation

- Did the activity help you think more clearly about the ways you participate in different areas of your life? What surprised you most?
- Do you think that youth participation in general is high or low – in your school, club, and community? What are the reasons?
- Does it matter whether young people participate actively or not? Why?
- Do they regard low participation as a result mostly of internal (psychological) factors, or mostly as a result of external factors?
- How do people feel when they are able to participate in a genuine sense – in other words, when their participation is not just tokenistic?
- Would participants in the group like to be able to participate at a higher "rung" than they do at the moment? If so, in which areas? What are the reasons for doing so, and what are the reasons against?
- How many people feel they could participate more than they do at present, and how many feel that they will do so? If so, how and when?
- How is the right to participate in decisions making guaranteed in human rights documents?