



Forum: Baltic conference

Issue: Enhancing Youth Cooperation Within the Region

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Introduction

Opportunities for youth capacity development, state interest in solving the problems of the youth become central in modern conditions of socio-economic development. Effective youth policy directed to overcome existing obstacles for development, provision of necessary resources and infrastructure for creative self-realization and active social participation of youth are important components that work on the country's competitiveness in the long term. The most notable problems of youth development at the present stage are increasing marginalization, exacerbating income inequality, material position and access to power resources, increasing polarization of society, unemployment, imperfect education systems and health care.

The main objectives of the international youth cooperation are to uncover the creative, educational, social, spiritual and moral potential of the younger generation, strengthen friendship, mutual understanding and interaction as well as to support the integration processes, promote the consolidation of common humanitarian, economic, and socio-cultural spaces based on the experience of cooperation in various areas of humanitarian activity.

Without the participation of young people in political processes, the victory of democracy is impossible. Changes are needed in many areas of life, and developed countries have lost momentum due to excessive conservatism and the aging of political and economic structures. The modern world is in dire need of a strong attitude towards harmony, tolerance, community and peace. Young people are especially interested in this installation, because in the fire of wars, regardless of their causes, nature and scale, young people are dying first and foremost. For wars and conflicts turn their lives into objects of fear and unfulfilled hopes. Young people are a kind of social accumulator of those transformations that are always gradual (day after day, year after year) and therefore, invisible to the general view, occur in the depths of public life, sometimes

escaping even the attention of science. These are critical views and attitudes regarding the existing reality, new ideas and the energy that is especially needed at the moment of fundamental reforms.

Definition of key terms

Youth – the time of life when one is young, and often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity). The United Nations defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 with all UN statistics based on this range, the UN states education as a source for these statistics. The UN also recognizes that this varies without prejudice to other age groups listed by member states such as 18–30.

Background information

Today's youth is the first generation in the new history, living in conditions of not global confrontation, but the integration of the world community; a generation (in general) with improved access to knowledge, experience, technology and resources in order to steer the process of social development along a rational, positive path. Before our eyes, a planetary economic organism is being born. Gradually, new communities based on joint international production are being formed. Of particular importance are transnational corporations, which are becoming another form of power. The economy stimulates the search for new rational forms of dormitory, state organization and distribution of power functions. There is a manifestation of objective tendencies overcoming national egoism, the traditional antipathy of some peoples towards others. In this connection, in the youth environment, the ideas of a new culture of peace and democracy have become more and more widespread, and young people are becoming their active agents in life.

The main objectives of this interaction were identified: the disclosure of the creative, educational, social, spiritual and moral potential of the young generation; strengthening friendship, mutual understanding and interaction between the peoples of the states; support of integration processes, assistance in consolidation of a common humanitarian, economic and socio-cultural space based on the experience of cooperation between states in various areas of humanitarian activity. Among the objectives of international youth cooperation are the following priorities: educating young people in the spirit of the common humanistic values of the peoples of states, tolerance, friendship and good neighborliness, culture of peace, interethnic and interfaith harmony, respect for culture, languages, history and traditions of other nations; forming an active life position among young people, involving young people in the social, political, social and economic life of

their countries and interstate cooperation; encouraging creative innovative activity of young people in various fields, their participation in the creation of modern technologies; creating an effective model of interaction between children's and youth public associations and organizations of states; formation of youth skills of a healthy lifestyle, environmental awareness and positive social motives; involving young people in the preservation and multiplication of the cultural heritage of the peoples of the states; ensuring the mobility of young people and their involvement in international cooperation.

The main objective of the Council of Europe in the field of youth work is to develop a common European policy aimed to the participation of young people in public life, instilling her sense of citizenship, the provision of educational and employment opportunities. The Council of Europe contributes to the strengthening of interstate cooperation to promote development of youth structures in all member states of the Council of Europe, their initiatives, and the strengthening of international cooperation between youth organizations. Through Pan-European propaganda campaigns, the Council of Europe attracts the attention of young people and the public to fundamental human rights issues and promotes the implementation of principles and practices of social cohesion among young people.

Cooperation between youth in the Baltic Sea region, on one hand, may be considered as a part of this general cooperation in the whole European Union, and, on the other hand, should also be considered as an independent process defined by the specifics of the region and tight connections between the Baltic Sea states. This cooperation may be regarded as an important part of future understanding and cooperation between the states that should help to overcome different obstacles that may be faced by the countries in their mutual relations.

One of the first steps into promotion of the Youth Cooperation within the Baltic Sea region was taken at the end of the XX century. Under the initiative of Finland, in 1998, the 1st Ministerial Conference on Baltic Cooperation in Youth was held in Visby, Sweden. One of the main decisions of the forum was to establish a Baltic Sea Secretariat for Youth Affairs under the Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein in Kiel (Germany). At the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Youth Affairs of the CBSS in 2002, it was decided to establish a Working Group on Youth Affairs (WGDM). The WGDM consists of representative ministers of youth of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) countries. The Baltic Youth Forum, The Regional Youth Council of Schleswig Goldstein also participate in the WGDM. European Commission and Children's Department have an observer status in the WGDM.

Another important step into institutionalizing youth cooperation within the Baltic Sea region was taken when around 80 young participants from the Danish, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Swedish regions attended the Euroregion Baltic (ERB) Youth Conference on 20 April 2007 in Elblag and took part in the three parallel workshops on Environment, Intercultural dialogue and Democratic participation. Later that year, on 6th December 2007, the Council of Euroregion Baltic established a new structure within the organization: ERB Youth Board, responsible for the promotion and facilitation of cooperation actively involving youths from around the region. The main goals of the ERB include *'the promotion of political dialogue and reform, as well as sustainable, economic, social and environmental development, and thus strengthening local democracy and fostering people-to-people contacts between civil societies.'*

Major countries and organizations involved

UNESCO

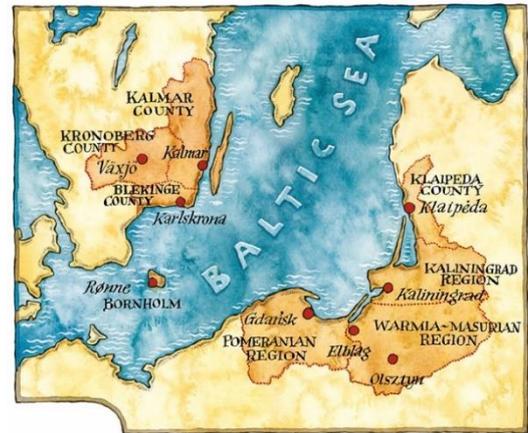
UNESCO promotes international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, information and communication, precisely in those areas that are vital for youngest people. It is important that UNESCO, in its activities, places in the forefront the high ideals of educating people in the spirit of peace, justice, solidarity, and sympathy.

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

CBSS is a single political forum for regional intergovernmental cooperation. The Council's membership includes 11 states of the Baltic Sea region, and the European Commission. CBSS is characterized by flexibility, focus on the needs of the region and performance. According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, *'The Council of the Baltic Sea States plays a key a role in the consolidation of a stable, democratic, prosperous and integrated Europe. For This CBSS defines political objectives, draws up action plans, initiates projects and serves as a forum for sharing ideas on regional issues of general interest.'*

Euroregion Baltic

As it has been previously stated, Euroregion Baltic focuses on promoting political and cultural dialogue between the member regions aiming at sustainable economic, social, and environmental development. Another important aspect of its policy is the emphasis on people-to-people contacts: Euroregion Baltic is a platform for cooperation not only between the states, but between smaller regions, such as Kaliningradskaya oblast' of Russian Federation.



ERB Youth Board

ERB Youth Board was established as a part of Euroregion Baltic on 6th December 2007. The main aim of the organization is to promote and facilitate cooperation, actively involving youth from around Euroregion Baltic. According to the ERB Youth Board website, *'The Youth Board, consisting of girls and boys between 16 and 30 years of age who each represent the eight regions in Euroregion Baltic, also takes active part in the ERB decision-making process.'*

Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein

This organization represents children and youth interests towards politics and society on a regional level in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. Their aim is to sustainably improve the living conditions of young people. Voluntary engagement, democratic participation and self-organization are the organization's main principles. In particular, it promotes international youth mobility, implementation of international projects, and intercultural work.

Relevant treaties and UN resolutions

The UN World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

This Program, adopted by the UN on December 14, 1999, is a fundamental document in which world experience is concentrated, including the quintessence of approaches from different countries of the world to solving actual problems of young people in the interests of the social development of each country and the world community as a whole.

The UN General Assembly endorsed and included in the World Program of Action for Youth 10 priority areas such as education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, the environment, drugs, crime among young people, the organization of free time and rest, the full and active participation of young people. in community life and decision making.

ERB Action Plans

These Action Plans, adopted by the ERB Council each year, outline the main targets of the ERB for a particular year and beyond. In 2008 a ERB Youth Board Action Plan was adopted, formulating the organization's main short- and long-term goals, including the following:

- *To increase interaction between regional authorities and the youths*
- *To reduce the distance between the youths in the regions in various areas by for example international cooperation, different projects and involvement in activities at regional level*
- *To encourage cooperation between the youths both at the regional and international levels*

In 2006, the European Union adopted a new Youth in Action Youth Support Program for a period 2007–2013.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Most part of the attempts to enhance the cooperation between youth within the Baltic region, as can be seen from the previous text, was aimed at creation international platforms for cooperation between youth from different states, at giving them the opportunity to voice their opinion and participate actively in the future of the region.

However, it should be noted that bilateral cooperation between particular states have also been taking place. For example, active cooperation is being developed between Germany and Russian Federation. The Russian and German sides seek to expanding contacts between children's and youth organizations of both states, creation and support of non-governmental public associations, compulsory engaging them in youth exchange programs. Priority is given to the exchange of experience and advanced training of specialists working with children and youth, and also improving and expanding contacts on regional level. For example, Goethe Institut, that promotes German language and culture abroad, is actively working in several Russian cities, including Saint Petersburg and Moscow.

Possible solutions

The effective implementation of the goals and objectives of this Strategy will be facilitated by the use of the following forms and mechanisms of international youth cooperation: implementation of projects and activities aimed at youth of the Baltic region member states, including public campaigns, projects, interstate youth actions, organizing discussion clubs, round tables, youth forums and conferences on topical issues in the region space, holding other mass youth events; creation of a common database of state youth projects.

It is also important to support already existing organizations such as the ERB Youth Board, to promote them in the region in order to involve more people in its work. As a result, the Youth Board would be able to engage youth in the cooperation and promote their perspective and interests in the ERB. As for the long-term goals, the Youth Board will be able to, among others, provide the opportunity for the youth to be involved in the ERB activities, act as a voice for youth in the ERB, increase interaction between regional authorities and the youth, encourage closer cooperation between the youth and local government, eliminate cultural prejudice and facilitate youth mobility.

Useful links

News on Council of the Baltic Sea States' website <http://www.cbss.org/young-people-from-across-the-baltic-sea-region-discuss-borders-identities-and-cooperation/>

Euroregion Baltic: <http://www.eurobalt.org/>

ERB Youth Board: <http://www.eurobalt.org/youth-board/>

ERB Youth Board Action Plan: <http://eurobalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/file96.pdf>

World Programme of Action for Youth:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth.html>