

Krystyna Gomółka, Izabela Borucińska
Rimantas Stašys, Remigijus Civinskas

YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTH BALTIC REGION

Example of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden

wydawnictwo
poltext

YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTH BALTIC REGION

Example of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden



SB YCGN
South Baltic Youth Core
Groups Network



European
Regional
Development
Fund

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014–2020.

Krystyna Gomółka, Izabela Borucińska
Rimantas Stašys, Remigijus Civinskas

YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTH BALTIC REGION

Example of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden



SB YCGN
South Baltic Youth Core
Groups Network



European
Regional
Development
Fund

wydawnictwo
poltext

Reviewers

Prof. Magdalena Musiał-Karg, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland
Prof. Tadas Sudnickas, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

Proofreading

Les Rozenberg

Cover design

Amadeusz Targoński, targonski.pl

Typesetting

Protext

Copyright © 2020 by Poltext Ltd.
All rights reserved.

Warsaw 2020

Study prepared and published as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) project, number STHB.05.01.00-28-0117/17, implemented under the Interreg V-A South Baltic Programme 2014–2020, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Study published as part of an international project co-financed by the program of the Minister of Science and Higher Education titled “PMW” in 2019–2020; contract no. 5034/SBP 2014–2020/2019/2020/2.



European
Regional
Development
Fund

Poltext Ltd.
www.poltext.pl

ISBN 978-83-8175-133-9

Spis treści

Preface	7
Chapter 1	
Civic Participation: Theoretical Considerations (<i>Krystyna Gomółka</i>)	13
1.1. Definition of civic participation and its forms. Definition of youth	13
1.2. Youth policy and civic participation in European Union documents ..	16
1.3. Youth policy and youth civic participation in Poland, Sweden and Lithuania (legislation, strategies, action plans)	29
Chapter 2	
Project Description (<i>Krystyna Gomółka</i>)	51
2.1. Project objectives, work plan, deliverables	51
2.2. Quantitative and qualitative study assumptions	68
2.2.1. Quantitative study assumptions	68
2.2.2. Qualitative study assumptions	82
Chapter 3	
Youth Civic Participation in Selected Communes of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in the Local Public and Non-public Institutions' Perspective (<i>Izabela Borucińska</i>)	85
3.1. Introduction	85
3.2. Areas and forms of youth civic participation as an expression of its influence on decision-making processes at the commune level	86
3.3. Barriers to youth civic participation	100
3.4. Local institutions' needs and effective instruments for youth civic participation enhancement	108
Chapter 4	
Youth Civic Participation in Selected Communes of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden from Young People's Perspective (<i>Izabela Borucińska</i>)	125
4.1. Introduction	125

4.2. Young people's interest in influencing decisions taken at local level and forms of their civic participation	127
4.3. Barriers to youth civic participation	152
4.4. Effective actions to increase civic participation as seen by young people	163

Chapter 5

Youth Political Participation and Engagement at Local Level in Poland, Sweden and Lithuania: A Qualitative Approach (<i>Remigijus Civinskas, Rimantas Stašys</i>)	191
5.1. Introduction	191
5.2. Youth participation in local political and public policy processes: concepts and definitions	195
5.3. Youth participation in Poland, Lithuania and Sweden	196
5.4. Findings	204
5.5. Conclusions	221

Chapter 6

Youth Political Engagement at Local Level: The Role of Youth Councils and Open Youth Centres (<i>Remigijus Civinskas, Rimantas Stašys</i>)	223
6.1. Introduction	223
6.2. Youth participation in municipal decision making: the form of youth councils and youth centres	226
6.3. Findings	231
6.4. The communication between youth and politico-administrative actors	237
6.5. Discussion and conclusion	248
Conclusions	253
Bibliography	267
List of tables	283
List of figures	285

Preface

The issues of civic participation, including youth civic participation, have been present in both the scientific and political discourse for many years. The changes taking place in modern societies and civic activity encourage the search for effective solutions, especially systemic ones, to involve as many citizens as possible in decision-making processes.

The importance of youth issues has been emphasised in a number of European Union documents: the Maastricht Treaty, the Treaty of Lisbon, European Commission White Paper, the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, the European Pact for Youth and the EU Strategy for Youth. Young people are also the subject of many national documents: laws, ordinances and strategies of Sweden, Lithuania and Poland. However, neither the European Union policy nor the policies of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden concerning youth and its civic participation can ensure the desired level of youth engagement in decision-making concerning young people as citizens. International projects, particularly those co-financed by the European Union, have an important role to play in promoting young people's civic participation. They allow the exchange of knowledge and experience, the creation of new solutions to problems and their implementation at the grassroots level. This was the role of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) project implemented in the framework of the 2014–2020 Interreg V-A South Baltic Programme by a Polish-Lithuanian-Swedish partnership. One of its outputs is this monograph.

The aim of this study was to show youth civic participation as a social inclusion element in the Southern Baltic region in need of reinforcement, based on the examples of selected municipalities from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The authors focused on the diagnosis of key elements of youth civic engagement at local and cross-border level, taking into account the context of national youth policies and the European Union policy. The problem was highlighted from the perspective of two social groups: adult decision-makers represented by employees of local institutions and young people aged 14–24 from the Lithuanian municipality of Telšiai, Polish municipalities of Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto

Lubawskie, and the Swedish municipality of Hässleholm. For this reason, the core part of the monograph consists of the results of quantitative studies and qualitative studies conducted on the two populations. The objective of the quantitative studies was to identify and assess the needs of institutions and young people relating to the stimulation of youth civic participation at local and cross-border level, youth engagement in decision-making processes, key barriers to civic participation of young people and effective forms and methods of involving youth in active citizenship. The quantitative studies of institutions and youth were conducted by a Polish-Lithuanian group whose members were Prof. Krystyna Gomółka, Dr. Izabela Borucińska (Gdańsk University of Technology), Prof. Ligita Šimanskienė and Dr. Jurgita Paužuolienė (Klaipeda University). The qualitative studies were carried out with the aim of supplementing and broadening the knowledge of youth civic participation issues at local and cross-border level, with particular emphasis on political involvement. The authors of these studies were the Lithuanian team composed of Prof. Rimantas Stašys (Klaipeda University) and Dr. Remigijus Civinskas (Vytautas Magnus University).

The following research hypothesis was adopted: youth civic participation is an important element of civic society that requires strengthening in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden through bottom-up actions at local communities level, with the central role played by institutions. The institutional environment offers hidden, untapped potential, surpassing that of youth, for initiating and implementing inclusive action, so that the voice of young people in decision-making processes can be heard and taken into account by decision makers.

The following supporting questions were formulated to facilitate verification of the hypothesis:

- What are the objectives of the youth policies of the European Union, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden with regard to civic participation?
- What is the current and desirable level of youth civic participation in the Lithuanian municipality of Telšiai, the Polish municipalities of Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and the Swedish municipality of Hässleholm from the perspective of public institutions, NGOs and young people?
- What is the participation of young people in decision-making from the perspective of public institutions, NGOs and young people themselves?
- What are the barriers to youth civic participation according to public institutions, NGOs and young people?
- What are the determinants and youth-friendly forms of political engagement?
- What are the needs and expectations of public institutions, NGOs and young people in respect of intensification of dialogue and cooperation with young people and stimulation of their civic participation at local and cross-border level?

The following research methods were used in the study: literature, legal and institutional analysis along with quantitative and qualitative studies. The quantitative studies were based on the diagnostic survey method and the electronic survey technique on a sample of 213 institution representatives, and a sample of 1001 respondents aged 14–24 from seven Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish municipalities. The qualitative studies used focus group discussions with the participation of 33 young people and 15 adult representatives of institutions, as well as the method of semi-structured individual interviews with 17 adult representatives of youth institutional environment in the Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish municipalities participating in the SB YCGN project.

The material utilised in the preparation of this monograph was varied, including both unpublished and published sources. Some valuable source material was acquired in the course of primary research based on the quantitative and qualitative approach to the research problem. Among the many outstanding publications referred to in the theoretical layer are the works by: Astraea Aussberger; Mary Elisabeth Collins; Whitney Gecker Meaghan Dougher¹, Anna Brite Coe², Matt Ekström & Malin Svenningsson³, Marit Jansson & Ulf Ramberg⁴, Ilaria Pitti⁵,

¹ A. Augsberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, M. Dougher, Youth civic engagement: Do youth councils reduce or reinforce social inequality? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2018, 33.2; A. Aussberger; M. E. Collins; W. Gecker, Best practices for youth engagement in municipal government. *National Civic Review*, 2017, 106.1; M. E. Collins, A. Augsberger, W. Gecker, Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65: 140–147; M. E. Collins, A. Augsberger; W. Gecker, Identifying Practice Components of Youth Councils: Contributions of Theory. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 2018, 35.6.

² A. B. Coe, Practising gender and race in online activism to improve safe public space in Sweden. *Sociological Inquiry*, 2018, 88(3), 1.; A. B. Coe, M. Wiklund, M. Uttjek, L. Nygren, Youth politics as multiple processes: How teenagers construct political action in Sweden. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2016, 19.10, pp. 1321–1322.

³ M. Ekström, M. Svenningsson, Young people's experiences of political membership: from political parties to Facebook groups. *Information, Communication & Society*, 2019, 22(2). M. Ekström, A. Shehata, Social media, porous boundaries, and the development of online political engagement among young citizens, *New Media & Society*, 20(2). M. Ekström & A. Shehata, Social media, porous boundaries, and the development of online political engagement among young citizens. *New Media & Society*, 2018, 20(2); M. Ekström & J. Östman, Information, interaction, and creative production: The effects of three forms of internet use on youth democratic engagement. *Communication Research*, 2015, 42(6).

⁴ M. Jansson & U Ramberg, Implementation and effects of user participation in playground management: a comparative study of two Swedish municipalities. *Managing Leisure*, 2012, 17(1), pp.1–13; M. Jansson Children's perspectives on playground use as basis for children's participation in local play space management. *Local Environment*, 2015, 20(2).

⁵ I. Pitti, *Youth and Unconventional Political Engagement*. Springer 2018; I. Pitti, Y. Mengilli, A. Martelli, P. Loncle, Participation and everyday life. In: *Young People and the Struggle for Participation: Contested Practices, Power and Pedagogies in Public Spaces*. Eds. A. Walther, J. Batsler, P. Loncle, A. Pohl, Routledge 2019.

and works by Radosław Marzecki⁶, Beata Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, Anna M. Zalewska, Kerry Kennedy⁷.

Attention was also given to the legislation relating to youth issues and the opportunities for youth participation in social and political life. The study shows that the issue of youth civic participation in Poland and Sweden is dealt with in numerous legal acts and youth policies are implemented by a number of bodies. In Lithuania, the Law on youth policy was adopted in 2003 and subsequently amended in 2005. The policy is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, which is responsible for designing and coordinating the policy and for overseeing its implementation. The Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour implements the objectives and measures of the national youth policy.

The study consists of six chapters written by four authors, two from Poland and two from Lithuania. Chapter 1, written by Krystyna Gomółka and entitled “Civic participation: theoretical considerations”, presents the definitions of youth and participation as well as different forms of participation. In the second part of the chapter, the author outlined youth policy and civic participation, and in the third part youth policy and youth participation in Poland, Sweden and Lithuania, as detailed in the legal acts, strategies and action plans of these countries. The second chapter, also written by Krystyna Gomółka, outlines the objectives, work plan and expected outcomes of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) project financed by the Interreg V-A South Baltic Programme 2014–2020 on the basis of agreement no. STHB.05.01.00-28-0117/17, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Chapter 3, written by Izabela Borucińska and entitled “Youth civic participation in selected communes of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden from the local public and non-public institutions’ perspective” focuses on the areas and forms of youth civic participation as an expression of young people’s influence on decision-making processes at the municipality level, the barriers to civic participation of young people, and local institutions’ needs and effective instruments for youth civic participation enhancement based on quantitative research results. Chapter 3 presents the results of studies on civic participation of young people in the perception of

⁶ R. Marzecki. How to Engage “Democratic Natives”? Political Sophistication as Important Determinant of Civic Activity of Young Citizens in New Democracies (the Case of Poland), *Romanian Journal of Political Science*. 2017, 17; R. Marzecki, Młodzi wyborcy jako audytorium „dyskursu zmiany” w 2015 roku. *Przegląd Politologiczny* 2017; R. Marzecki, The ‘Drifting Generation’ without a Helmsman. Main Obstacles in Shaping the Relations between the Political Parties and the Youth in Poland. *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences*, 2015, 15.4; R. Marzecki, Depolityzacja jako element stylu życia młodzieży. *Przegląd Politologiczny* 2015, No. 1.

⁷ B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, A. M. Zalewska. K. J. Kennedy, *Young People and Active Citizenship in Post-Soviet Times: A Challenge for Citizenship Education*. Routledge, 2017.

representatives of the institutional environment from a total of seven Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish municipalities. Chapter 4, entitled “Youth civic participation in selected communes of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden from young people’s perspective” presents the results of a quantitative survey among young people aged 14–24 from a total of seven municipalities of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. Based on the survey results, Izabela Borucińska identified young people’s level of interest in influencing decisions taken at local level, the areas and forms of youth civic participation and the main barriers to young people’s involvement in public affairs, as well as the methods of enhancing youth civic participation that are effective in the opinion of young people.

Chapter 5 by Rimantas Stašys and Remigijus Civinskas summarises the results of the qualitative research carried out by the Lithuanian team in three countries: Lithuania, Poland and Sweden on civic participation from the perspective of the young people of these countries. Chapter 6 outlines the results of qualitative research into youth civic participation in the three countries from the perspective of institutions cooperating with young people.

This page is intentionally
left blank

Chapter 1

Civic Participation: Theoretical Considerations

Krystyna Gomółka

1.1. Definition of civic participation and its forms. Definition of youth

“Civic participation is a process whereby members of the public gain influence and, indirectly, control over the decisions of public authorities, where such decisions have a direct or indirect impact on their own interests”¹. In Poland the interest in active participation in events which relate to the public on the macro and micro scale is not strong. To increase such interest, it is necessary to identify the citizens’ problems, explain how their problems are solved and engage citizens in resolving or dealing with their issues².

Civic participation may take various forms, depending on the degree of citizens’ involvement in the decisions. These include:

1. Information limited to the provision of information to citizens about the decisions concerning them.
2. Consultation is the second degree of participation, in which the authorities give the general public an opportunity to comment on the future actions. Consultation participants act as advisers in the particular case. Polish laws guarantee this most popular form of civic participation to members of the public.
3. The highest degree of civic participation is co-deciding, i.e. granting the citizens the authority relating to taking certain actions and decisions.

¹ B. Sadowska, M. Szaja, J. Włodarek, Partycypacja społeczna wehikułem rozwoju lokalnego, *Studia i Rozprawy* vol. 1048, Szczecin 2019, p. 7.

² *Komunikacja i partycypacja społeczna. Poradnik*, Małopolska Szkoła Administracji Publicznej Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, ed. J. Hausner, Kraków 1999, p. 28.

Decisions in the following areas are made with civic participation: spatial planning, communication, ecology, safety, vision and future, and social problems such as unemployment³.

The techniques used in the participation process are: public consultations, referenda, civic law-making initiatives, intermediate representative bodies, request for access to public information, public hearing, communication with councillor/mayor, participation in sessions, meetings with residents, civic panels, round tables, petitions, demos, protests, making documents available at public offices, Internet tools: SMS, instant messaging, Skype, online transmissions (e.g. of town council meetings), as well as quantitative and qualitative studies⁴.

Civic participation promotes the development of local democracy and resolution of disputes: it provides an opportunity to hear the views of all the parties concerned, to mitigate conflicts and reach a compromise. All citizens, local authorities and non-governmental organizations can participate. The reasons for participation may differ with respect to the role played by a particular party. One of the groups involved in the process of civic participation is youth.

The term “youth” refers to a social category of people defined by the age criterion. According to Stefan Baley, it consists of individuals between 13 and 20 years of age. Mieczysław Kreutz, on the other hand, states that youth is the period between 11 and 21 years of age, while in the opinion of Maria Żebrowska it is the time between 12 and 18 years of age. Mieczysław Markiewicz defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 29. A different age criterion was presented in the European Commission programme⁵ “Youth in Action 2007–2013” aimed at individuals aged 13–30⁶. This is a criterion recommended by the European Union, though not always applied in a consistent manner. The definitions given above indicate that researchers find it difficult to adopt a uniform interpretation. Therefore, youth should be understood to mean the period of human life characterised by the absence of developed cultural awareness, with people in that age group being influenced by various attitudes and orientations and showing the ambition to change the reality, criticism towards adults, dissimilarity of interests and aspirations and frequent lack of moderation in the pursuit of a model of independent life and new means of self-creation⁷.

³ Ł. Krzyżanowska, Ł. Faciejew, *Partycypacja obywatelska w Polsce*, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warszawa 2009, pp. 11–12.

⁴ E. Sokalska, Znaczenie konsultacji społecznych w demokracji partycypacyjnej, *Opolskie Studia Administracyjno-Prawne* 2016, no. XVI /3 pp. 163–176.

⁵ A. Chodubski, *Młodzież jako przedmiot i podmiot życia publicznego* [in:] *Polityka Młodzieżowa Unii Europejskiej*, eds. M. Boryń, B. Duraj, S. Mrozowska. Toruń 2014, pp. 9–10.

⁶ Youth in Action, <http://stara.pzn.org.pl/pl/dzialania-projekty/65-europejski-program-mlodziez-w-dzialaniu/304-program-mlodziez-w-dzialaniu-2007-2013.html> [accessed: 01.06.2019].

⁷ A. Chodubski, op. cit.; W. Pawliczuk, *The definitions of the term “youth”. A review of conceptions*, *Postępy Nauk Medycznych* 2000, no. 6, p. 12.

The importance of young people in modern society is due to two main factors: their future role in society and the protection of human rights. Thus youth civic engagement is a key aspect of the future development of each society and should be shaped by means of effective youth policy⁸. Participation of young people in the public life is crucial for social processes. By enhancing the dialogue with young, the quality and legitimacy of public policies can be improved.

A number of the activities, structures and processes can be identified within the different spheres of youth participation⁹:

1. in the public sphere (structures within the existing decision-making structures and processes) there are forms such as youth councils, youth parliaments, school councils, youth advisory panels, members and leaders of youth organisations or groups, voting, standing for election, organisational or institutional panel or committee and formal consultations¹⁰;
2. in the social sphere (formal or informal structures created outside of formal political or organisational structures) these include: civil society organisations, social or cultural groups, local services or projects, social movements, grass-roots campaigns, housing associations, faith groups, informal networks, identity or interests groups;
3. in the individual sphere (individual choices, decisions and interaction with the world) the forms of participation include: involvement in decisions having a direct effect on individuals (e.g. judicial proceedings), educational and health matters, choices, decisions and behaviour as part of everyday life, personal customs, values or principles, religious beliefs, consumer choices.

There are a number of obstacles to civic participation of young people. Some are due to schools, NGOs or local governments, whereas others are attributable to young people. The research carried out in Poland shows that young people's participation in parliamentary elections is unsatisfactory¹¹.

⁸ I. Rystina, Z. Kussainova, *Comparative Analysis of National Youth Policy in Different Countries*, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2014, no. 140, pp. 654–656.

⁹ E. Brodie, E. Cowling, N. Nissen, *Understanding participation: a literature review. Pathways through Participation*, 2014, <https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/strefa-wiedzy/biblioteka/publikacje/understanding-participation-a-literature-review/> [accessed: 15.06.2019].

¹⁰ P. Maciaszek, *Partycypacja społeczna młodzieży na przykładzie młodzieżowych rad gmin – part II*, „Rocznik Samorządowy” 2016, t. 5, pp. 171–187.

¹¹ A. Chodasz, P. Cykowski, *Partycypacja polega na podziale władzy i dorośli powinni się nią faktycznie dzielić z młodzieżą*, <http://www.dobrezycie.org/publikacje/partycypacja-mlodziezy> [accessed: 02.06.2019].

tion of the Member States. “The Community shall implement a vocational training policy...”¹⁶.

In the Treaty of Lisbon youth policy was named one of the competences supporting the EU support, while in Article 165 the European Union declared support for high quality education and “(a) encouraging mobility of students and teachers, academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study; (b) fostering the development of youth exchange and exchange of socio-educational instructors and encouraging young people to participate in the democratic life of Europe; (c) development of European sport (...) including protection of physical and mental integrity of athletes, especially youngest ones”¹⁷.

Although the European Union has no mechanisms imposing the principles of youth policy on the Member States, it has repeatedly evaluated the socio-political situation of young people and sought to develop the principles of youth policy¹⁸. The most important documents was: European Commission White Paper. A new impetus for European youth (2001). The open method of coordination proposed there was expected to increase participation in public life by better information on European affairs, volunteering and improving knowledge of the problems of young people. Youth as an entity has also been included in Sectoral Policies: education, employment, social inclusion, fight against racism and xenophobia and autonomy for young people¹⁹.

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003) included youth in sectoral policies, identified the ways of participation of young people and characterised the methods of institutional participation of young people in the local and regional life and the support offered to youth structures²⁰.

¹⁶ The Maastricht Treaty (1993) – The Treaty on European Union OJ C 191, 29.7.1992, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:11992M/TXT> [accessed: 05.06.2019].

¹⁷ The Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52005AE1248> [accessed: 03.06.2019].

¹⁸ M. Sińczuch, Polityka młodzieżowa jako odrębny obszar działania Unii Europejskiej, *Studia BAS* (Biura Analiz Sejmowych Kancelarii Sejmu), no. 2 (18) 2009, pp. 147–173.

¹⁹ European Commission White Paper. A new Impetus for European Youth (2001), http://www.młodzieżowarada.pl/files/bank_wiedzy/04.pdf [accessed: 06.06.2019].

²⁰ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth. Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship COM(2005) 206 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52005AE1248> [accessed: 09.06.2019].

The European Pact for Youth (2005) considered youth matters in three dimensions: 1. employment, integration and social progress; 2. education, vocational training and mobility and 3. the reconciliation of family and working life²¹.

An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering (2009) identified the following three main objectives of action:

1. creating more opportunities for young people in education and employment, promoting creative and entrepreneurial attitudes; 2. improving access and full society inclusion in terms of health, sports and participation; 3. increasing solidarity between young people and other members of the society by social inclusion, volunteering and international exchange²².

The priorities of youth policy are set out in the document concerning European cooperation in the field of youth (2010–2018)²³. The objective defined therein was improving the prospects of young people by raising the quality of education, increasing opportunities on the labour market and promotion of active citizenship, social activity and solidarity. The strategy outlined eight areas of priority actions for youth policy: 1. education and training; 2. employment and entrepreneurship; 3. health, well-being and environment; 4. participation; 5. culture and creativity; 6. volunteering; 7. social inclusion; 8. young people and the world. The individual activities were promoted in the successive years during the presidencies of the individual Member States, for example the priority adopted during the Polish presidency was young people in the world²⁴.

On 4 December 2018 the Council adopted a resolution on a new youth strategy. The new EU strategy is to identify the needs and respond to the challenges facing young Europeans²⁵. The document emphasises that young people in Europe are facing many challenges, including the transition from education to employment, starting an independent life, beginning a relationship or starting a family.

²¹ F. Y. Denstad, *Youth Policy Manual. How to develop a national youth strategy*, Council of Europe Publishing; Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship (October 2005), <https://publicystyka.ngo.pl/opinia-ekes-dotyczaca-wprowadzenia-w-zycie-europejskiego-paktu-na-rzecz-mlodziezy-i-wspierania-aktywnego-obywatelstwa-pazdziernik-2005> [accessed: 10.06.2019].

²² Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth-strategy-assessment-2009_en.pdf [accessed: 10.06.2019].

²³ Rezolucja Rady z dnia 27 listopada 2009 r. w sprawie odnowionych ram europejskiej współpracy na rzecz młodzieży (2010–2018), Dz. U. C 311.19.12.2009.

²⁴ M. Sinczuch, *Dialog z młodzieżą w praktyce UE. Formy, metody i ograniczenia*, Warszawa 2015, <https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/dialog-z-mlodzieza.pdf> [10.06.2019].

²⁵ Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (OJ 2018/C 456/01), [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218(01)&from=EN) [accessed: 11.06.2019].

Many people feel insecure because of globalisation and climate change, technological progress, demographic and socio-economic trends, populism, discrimination, social exclusion and misinformation. The document recommends that attention should be paid to young people under threat of marginalisation due to ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, beliefs or political views.

The framework of the strategy includes the objectives, principles, priorities, key areas and measures of youth policy addressed to all stakeholders, i.e. societies of EU Member States, institutions and other organizations, i.e. the Council of Europe, local and regional authorities, youth councils and organizations as well as persons working with young people, researchers investigating youth issues, civil society actors and the structures of the Erasmus+ program and European Solidarity Corps. The objectives established for the years 2019–2027 are:

1. supporting personal development of young people and equipping them with life skills necessary to cope with changes in the world;
2. encouraging youth to be active promoters of solidarity and changes, inspired by European values and identity;
3. improvement of political decisions concerning young people in the sector of employment, education, health and in the social sector²⁶;
4. elimination of poverty and all forms of discrimination against young people and promoting the policy of social inclusion of young people.

The guiding principles of the youth policy for 2019–2027 are:

- A. Equality and non-discrimination: combating all forms of discrimination; gender equality.
- B. Inclusion: promoting activities that ensure inclusion of all young people in youth policy, especially those with fewer opportunities.
- C. Participation: policies and measures affecting youth should promote young people's right to participate in shaping and implementing youth policies as well as the participation of young people and youth organisations. The policies should accept the changes in digital communications affecting the participation in democratic and civic life.
- D. Global, European, national, regional and local dimension: in order to ensure sustainable impact on young people, the EU youth policy should be implemented with a view to the mutual regional and local connections.
- E. Dual approach: the policies whose aim is to make life easier for young people must not be limited exclusively to the youth sector. The dual approach means including initiatives in other policy areas on the one hand and special initia-

²⁶ Rezolucja Rady Unii Europejskiej i przedstawicieli rządów państw członkowskich zebranych w Radzie w sprawie ram europejskiej współpracy na rzecz młodzieży: Strategia Unii Europejskiej na rzecz młodzieży na lata 2019–2027 (2018/C 456/01), Dz. U. U. E. 18.12.2018, nr C 456/1.

tives in the sector of youth on the other hand. In view of the above the Council recommended:

1. Efforts aimed at the effective implementation of the strategy in all sectors concerned with youth matters.
2. Addressing the key areas in the youth sector: engaging, combining and strengthening the position that increases the participation of young people in the civic, economic, social, cultural and political life.
3. Cooperation on the basis of instruments and governance.

The development of a youth policy should reflect the needs and the situation of young people, which necessitates contacts with youth and youth organizations, supported by the web service Youth Wiki and networks dealing with research on youth, cooperation with the Council of Europe, OECD and youth organisations. Mutual learning and dissemination of information is necessary. Expert groups will develop the strategy and practical tools for the sharing of good practices in the framework of three-year work plans and on the basis of the existing network. The strategy envisages that the participatory management must be based on the recognition of the role of young people as experts in their own lives and ensuring their participation in representative organisations. The Commission's aim is to organise meetings of the representatives of EU institutions, Member States, youth organizations, local and regional authorities, the national agencies of the Erasmus+ program and European Solidarity Corps, European structural and investment funds "Horizon 2020", "Maria Skłodowska-Curie", "Creative Europe" and other programs. The use of EU funds for the benefit of young people is subject to monitoring. To ensure effectiveness of the whole process it is extremely important to inform young people of the strategy in a user-friendly language. The meetings organised in the individual Member States are to enable a voluntary sharing of information on the implementation of the priorities of youth policy and to increase transparency in the implementation of youth policies at regional, national and EU levels. They should also help in identifying suitable partners to achieve the action goals. On the basis of the achievements of the dialogue with young people and youth organisations to date, a new type of EU youth dialogue will be established with the aim of engaging more young people, whose voice has not yet been taken into account in the decision-making process and implementation of the EU strategy. The European Commission will appoint the EU Youth Coordinator in order to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and develop contacts within the European Commission services. The coordinator should work with different stakeholders to ensure coherence of the information addressed to young people. The European Youth Portal is to guarantee equal access for young people to information about their rights, opportunities, services and EU programs.

The EU strategy for youth will be implemented in two three-year periods. Their priorities and actions will be presented in the EU work plans in the field of youth. The plans should be based on the strategy priorities and address youth issues dealt with by different components of the Council and their working groups. Every three years the Commission will submit reports on the implementation of the strategy based on, *inter alia*, the information provided by the Member States and the website Youth Wiki, whereas in 2024 it will evaluate the implementation of the strategy and adjust it to new developments and needs.

The EU youth policy is implemented through a number of actions taken at local, regional and national levels. To boost the actions for the benefit of youth, the European Union allocates substantial financial resources to support such schemes as the Youth in Action Programme, Lifelong Learning Programme and the European Social Fund. Networks providing young people with access to knowledge and information are being actively developed (Eurodesk). The European youth policy has been most successful in the areas of promoting mobility and setting standards for international education exchange.

From the beginning of youth policy creation, its participatory dimension has been highlighted. “Youth policy is to serve young people and offer them optimal conditions for development and participation in the social life, while acting as a mechanism initiating young people’s social dialogue with politicians and decision makers”²⁷. All the documents relating to the EU youth policy demand that young people be included in the policy-making process and initiation of social dialogue. This is justified by the fact that young people form a highly diverse part of the society, often without a consistent set of priorities, which nevertheless possesses the knowledge essential for solving specific problems. By involving them in the policy-making process, social support can be built; a number of international documents ratified by the Member States of the EU and UN require that youth be allowed to participate in political decisions²⁸.

Youth is also dealt with in macro-regional strategies, for example the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Strategy consists of three documents: 1. the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament; 2. the Action Plan supplementing the communication, submitted to the Council and the European Parliament; 3. the Working Document of the European Commission services which set out the context, approach and content of the strategy.

²⁷ M. Sinczuch, *Dialog z młodzieżą w praktyce UE. Formy, metody i ograniczenia*, p. 6.

²⁸ F. Y. Denstad, *Youth Policy Manual. How to develop a national youth strategy*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2009, pp. 42–43. The European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003); <https://rm.coe.int/168071b4d6> [accessed: 10.06.2019].

In June 2009, the European Commission adopted a Communication on the Strategy and in October 2009 the strategy was approved by the European Council²⁹.

The Communication of June 2009 provided that the Strategy was to cover eight Member States of the European Union around the Baltic Sea: Poland, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Sweden, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania. The Baltic Sea Region is highly heterogeneous in terms of economy, environment and culture, but its countries have many shared resources and demonstrate significant interdependence. This means that the actions taken here are highly relevant for regional cooperation as they allow to test new solutions and strategies and to select best practice examples.

The European Council set three parameters for the Commission in its development of the strategy: 1. The strategy should not violate the principles of integrated maritime policy; 2. It should help address the problems related to environmental protection in the Baltic Sea Region; 3. It should set the principles of cooperation in the region based on the Northern Dimension framework. The following key challenges in the Baltic Sea region were identified: 1. To enable a sustainable environment; 2. To enhance the region's prosperity; 3. To increase the availability and attractiveness of the region; 4. To ensure safety and security in the region.

The Region has significant potential which can be better exploited with highly skilled workforce, specialist knowledge in the field of innovation, land environment rich in natural resources and a strong tradition of cooperation in the region. Networking among research funding agencies from the Baltic region countries in the EU supported by the research framework program, is the basis for cooperation in the field of research and knowledge transfer in the region³⁰.

There are three thematic pillars identified in the strategy: 1. Protection of the sea; 2. Enhancing the integration of the region; and 3. Increasing prosperity and horizontal actions³¹.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is being implemented through the Action Plan. The first such plan was adopted by the European Commission in June 2009. The Council reviewed it in October 2009, and then it was discussed in detail with the EU Member States. The Plan contains 4 main actions:

²⁹ Brussels European Council 29/30 October 2009, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/baltyk/strategia/dokumenty/ [accessed: 14.06.2019].

³⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communication/baltic/com_baltic_pl.pdf [accessed: 15.06.2019].

³¹ Obszary tematyczne i działania horyzontalne Strategii, https://www.gov.pl/documents/528248/541918/Obszary_tematyczne_i_dzia%C5%82ania_horyzontalne_Strategii.pdf/3de63523-9816-8927-9b97-92533b096834 [accessed: 16.06.2019].

1. To make the Baltic Sea Region an environmentally sustainable area;
2. To make the Baltic Sea Region a prosperous area;
3. To make the Baltic Sea Region an accessible and attractive place;
4. To make the Baltic Sea Region safe and secure and implement horizontal actions.

Young people are the focal point of item 2 of action 12 entitled “Maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region with education, youth, tourism, culture and health”. In the Baltic Sea Region quality of life is linked to a high level of education, with a high rate of completion of upper secondary qualifications and significant investment in education. The wealth of the Region is based on human capital, and a healthy society is a key factor for sustainable economic development of business and communities. The Baltic Sea Region is an area characterised by significant differences in the health status of the population of the old and new EU Member States.

The growing transboundary movement of persons should be accompanied by measures aiming to eliminate inequalities in health status and to improve health care. This priority area applies in particular to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of the Baltic Sea Region population by improving workers’ qualifications, which can help increase prosperity. The main challenge in this area is the outflow of educated young people and insufficient utilisation of student and worker exchange programmes due to lack of contacts and low awareness. Further improvement of the quality of life in the Baltic Sea Region should be achieved by shaping the education system and the development of tourism and the potential of cultural heritage. The activities undertaken in the area of education cooperation are as follows:

1. “Further development of exchange programs in the Baltic Sea Region” for pupils and students, vocational training and adult education institutions in the framework of the programmes organised by the European Union, international institutions (i.e. the Nordic Council of Ministers) or the national/regional/local authorities. These actions can also be extended to include entrepreneurs and experts;
2. “Development of direct interpersonal actions” to support day-to-day cooperation between citizens. For example, student exchanges should be increased to enhance mutual understanding and popularise language learning;
3. “Bringing local authorities closer to citizens” through the development of tools (e.g. on the basis of the LEADER programme) which would show citizens that the local authorities are addressing their problems and matters of importance to them³².

³² Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – ACTION PLAN 2009 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/.../com_baltic_pl.pdf [accessed: 17.06.2019].

In respect of the horizontal actions, the programme is financed from the available sources, such as the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund and other EU sources of funding: rural development funds, fisheries, external actions and environment, national, regional and local funds, banks and international financial institutions (in particular the European Investment Bank (EIB)), non-governmental organisations and other private sources. Cooperation between Member States is essential to achieve the desired result.

In 2011 the Commission recommended updating the Action Plan of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy³³. Therefore, new objectives, and indicators which take account of the objectives of the “Europe 2020” strategy were introduced. The Action Plan comprised 17 policy areas:

1. Bioeconomy – agriculture, forestry and fisheries;
2. Culture – culture and creative sectors;
3. Education – education, research and employability;
4. Energy – Baltic energy market interconnection plan (BEMIP Action Plan) for competitive, safe and sustainable energy;
5. Hazards – reducing the use and impact of hazardous substances;
6. Health – improving and promoting people’s health, including its social aspects;
7. Innovation – exploiting the full potential of the Region in research, innovation and SMEs, utilising the Digital Single Market as a source for attracting talents and investments;
8. Nutrients – reducing nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels;
9. Safety – attaining the leading position by the Region in maritime safety and security;
10. Security – protection from land-based emergencies, accidents and cross-border crime;
11. Shipping – becoming a model Region for clean shipping;
12. Tourism – reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-Region through tourism;
13. Transport – improving internal and external transport links.

The following horizontal actions were defined:

1. Spatial Planning – encouraging the use of maritime and land-based spatial planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and developing a common approach for cross-border cooperation;

³³ Council conclusions on the review of the European Union. Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region 3125th General Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 15 November 2011, <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/2ad312d3-465e-4c23-b7c1-18e4afee69ce:JCR> [accessed: 17.06.2019].

2. Neighbours – creating added value to the Baltic Sea cooperation by working with neighbouring countries and regions;
3. Capacity – capacity building and involvement;
4. Climate³⁴.

Youth issues are discussed in the strategy's partial goals in the 2013 plan, in the chapter on increasing prosperity in the Baltic Sea Region countries. Achieving prosperity entails providing all young citizens access to high-quality education and training, a system of social security conducive to social inclusion and properly functioning labour market offering support for geographic, professional and socio-economic mobility. In addition, implementation of the strategy should help carry out the “Education and Training 2020” programme that provides a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training and its four strategic objectives:

1. Realising the idea of lifelong learning and mobility;
2. Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training;
3. Promoting equality, social cohesion and civic engagement;
4. Increasing creativity and innovation and promoting entrepreneurship at various levels of education and training.

As to the new framework of European cooperation in the field of youth, the following objectives were set: 1. providing more equal opportunities in education and on the labour market; 2. promotion of civic engagement, social inclusion and solidarity. To ensure their implementation, it is necessary to take measures in the areas of: 1. education and training; 2. employment and entrepreneurship; 3. health and welfare; 4. participation; 5. volunteering; 6. social inclusion; 7. youth and the world; 8. creativity and culture.

Implementation of these actions is highly important due to the demographic changes in the population of the Baltic Sea Region countries: 1. decline of working age population; 2. insufficient utilisation of student and worker exchange programs due to insufficient contacts and low awareness³⁵.

The comprehensive action monitoring system established in 2013 deals with the extent of transnational cooperation in the fields of education, youth and occupational mobility, i.e. cooperation between universities, schools, vocational educa-

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, https://www.ewt.2007-2013.gov.pl/Documents/AP_SUERMB.pdf [accessed: 20.06.2019].

tion and training institutions, job centres and young people in respect of the a) number of cooperation programmes lasting two years or longer; b) number of young people participating in lifelong learning or mobility activities.

The next proposal concerning youth is to develop new methods of training in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation, prepare more graduates for setting up businesses and quick adaptation to market changes. This is extremely important because most of the Baltic Sea Region countries are small with small domestic markets. For most countries the major trade partners are their neighbours. Another action designed to combat, or at least reduce youth unemployment on the small market, involves a parallel system of vocational training and education combining tertiary education and vocational training in Denmark, Finland and Germany and serving as a model for other regions.

From the point of view of the strategic objectives it is of utmost importance to implement the idea of lifelong learning and mobility within the region. A recommendation for pupils and students of various types of schools states that it is necessary to provide support to pupils, students, teachers and instructors on financing for mobility in respect of travel, insurance, accommodation and assistance in matching foreign partners. Furthermore, the cooperation and coordination of activities between regional universities (research areas, exchange of students, professors, researchers, cooperation with enterprises) ought to be improved. To achieve this objective it is necessary to ensure close integration and cooperation in the framework of youth policy structures using the “structured dialogue” as an important instrument of youth engagement in the decision-making process, via organisation of discussion panels with local, regional and national level policy-makers to: 1. improve the knowledge about local structures and actors; 2. establish permanent structures for cooperation between municipalities/communes and to promote highly qualified workers. The following flagship projects were identified in this respect: 1. The Baltic Sea Youth Forum operating on the basis of HELCOM Youth Forum experience, covering a larger number of policy areas and organising workshops at regional and local level within the region to include broader groups of young people in the discussion on the future of the BSR³⁶; 2. Value-based leadership for young leaders in the volunteer sector. The training program features learning by doing, leadership as self-recognition and diversity as leadership question

The next action – closer integration and cooperation of youth policy structures at local level in the Member States – requires: 1. improving the knowledge base of local structures and players and 2. establishing sustainable structures for cooperation between municipalities for promoting professionals and youth exchanges in the BSR³⁷. The flagship projects under this action include: 1. creating a network of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

local youth policy structures, promoting partnerships between the different actors: employment agencies, education providers, youth workers, social services and young people themselves to help young people entering the job market; 2. stronger cooperation on the ground that can be beneficial to young people with complex life situations or who are difficult to reach by conventional methods. Youth cooperation should serve as a means for dealing with issues such as climate change, environment, home, and an attractive living environment in the region. To this end it is necessary to create a common database of the stakeholders, structures and experience in the field of regional cross-border cooperation. The action plans should be made taking into account the work carried out by the local stakeholders dealing with youth issues.

For the purpose of the strategy it is important to ensure social inclusion by preventing early school leaving, promoting social dialogue and cooperation in the field of social development in the region.

The next action plan for the Baltic Sea Region Strategy was developed in 2017. The issues relating to young people were referred to in the chapter titled “Education, research and employability”. Increased prosperity presupposes access to good education and training for all, an effective welfare system and a well-functioning labour market. EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region are struggling with a lack of balance in their labour markets. On the one hand all member states in the region have problems with high youth unemployment; on the other, many industries, in particular in SMEs, experience a shortage of skilled workforce, since education does not match the needs of the labour markets. Young people with no formal secondary education are at risk of long-term unemployment and social exclusion.

There is a need for more effective policy coordination in the area of research and higher education. Transnational use of research facilities in conjunction with closer cooperation between higher education institutions should pave the way for common education and research of the region. Economic success depends on a well-educated workforce and world-class graduates, because new jobs are generated mainly by new companies, start-ups and SMEs. The plan envisages the development of a comprehensive system for the design and monitoring of indicators of this policy area. By 2020, 10% of students should take part in an exchange or training abroad lasting at least 2 weeks; at least 10% of researchers should complete work placements in research institutions in the region³⁸. With the assumption that the area “Education” covers: a) education including primary and secondary schools,

³⁸ Commission Staff Working Document European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region ACTION PLAN {COM(2009) 248} Brussels, 20.3.2017 SWD(2017) 118 final, <https://www.ms.gov.pl/resource/966133c5-ae1e-4759-9815-28fdc36efe86:JCR> [accessed: 18.06.2019].

tertiary education, adult education and non-formal education; b) research; and c) employability of school leavers, the plan focuses on the following actions:

1. Combating early school leaving and improving the transition from education to the labour market. Approximately 12% of young people in the EU fail to complete secondary education – these early school leavers experience the greatest difficulties finding jobs. This share is lower in the Baltic Sea Region countries – less than 10% – however, steps are taken to encourage more young people to complete a secondary school. To this end, it is necessary to compile best practices, develop and test preventive measures that would motivate students to participate in education; improve counselling, and test the re-integrative measures helping young people who left school to return to education.
2. Improving the quality of education and vocational training; flexible education tailored to the needs of the labour market.
3. International excellence in tertiary education, science and research. According to a Eurostat report, the Baltic Sea Region is one of the most competitive and innovative science regions in the world, based on an excellent structure of leading universities and research institutions. In 2014, tertiary education attainment in the EU was 37.6% on average and on the rise, whereas in the Baltic Sea Region states the respective values were differing: Germany 33.6%; Denmark 43.9%; Estonia 45.3%; Finland 45.5%; Lithuania 52.6%; Latvia 40.6%; Poland 41.7%; Sweden 49.6%. International excellence can be achieved by facilitating cooperation between tertiary education, science and research policy in the region; strengthening transnational cooperation in the development and utilisation of research infrastructure; attracting students and researchers from outside the region to the tertiary education institutions; increasing the mobility of students and researchers in the region; exchanging best practices and learning from each other in the field of higher education, science and research.
4. A labour market for all, using the resources of longer lives. Labour markets are changing, e.g. as a result of more efficient and less labour intensive production processes in industries. Another fact is lifelong learning, which will become a reality as societies will be striving to adjust to labour market needs. It is therefore necessary to promote a dialogue between labour market organisations, relevant authorities and education providers; building a platform for learning and best practises in the field of adult learning; promoting labour force mobility, removing other obstacles.
5. Recognizing the potential of newly arrived immigrants. The number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU totalled 1,255,640 in 2015. In the member

states of the Baltic Sea Region the number varied significantly: Germany 441,800; Denmark 21,316 (of which 10,849 were granted residence permits); Estonia 225; Finland 32 150 (of which 6,534 were granted residence permits to date); Lithuania 275 (of which 86 were granted residence permits); Latvia 328 (of which 29 received a residence permit, 6 were granted refugee status and 23 subsidiary protection status); Poland 10,255; Sweden 156,110³⁹. At the same time, many Member States are facing the problem of population ageing that, within the next decade, will lead to a deficit of skilled workers in various sectors. Hence the need to allow well-educated asylum seekers from Syria under 40 years of age to stay in the labour market, whereas those below the age of 20 should be provided with education and vocational training. The envisaged actions are: 1. creating a knowledge platform for exchange of experiences and development of new methods for improving employability; 2. development and testing of joint trainings for key staff working with the target group of immigrants.

1.3. Youth policy and youth civic participation in Poland, Sweden and Lithuania (legislation, strategies, action plans)

Poland

In Poland there is no statute devoted solely to young people, and the legal provisions relating to youth issues are contained in numerous strategic documents: the Constitution, statutes and regulations of various ministers. Provisions concerning young Poles are contained in:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 02 April 1997⁴⁰;
2. The Act on Public Administration Branches of 4 September 1997⁴¹;
3. The Act on the Education System of 07 September 1991⁴²;

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 as adopted by the National Assembly on 2 April 1997 and approved by the Nation in the constitutional referendum on 25 May 1997, signed by the President of the Republic of Poland on 16 July 1997, Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 78, item 483.

⁴¹ The Act on Public Administration Branches of 4 September 1997, Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 141, item 943.

⁴² The Act on the Education System of 07 September 1991, promulgated on 31 July 2018, in force since 25 October 1991; history since 21 June 1996, Journal of Laws of 2018, items 1457, 1560, 1669 and 2245 and of 2019, items 730 and 761.

4. The Higher Education Act of 20 July 2018⁴³;
5. The Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 2004⁴⁴;
6. The Act on Public Benefit Organisations and Voluntary Service⁴⁵;
7. The Labour Code, Journal of Laws of 1974, No. 24, item 141⁴⁶;
8. The Act on Combating Domestic Violence of 29 July 2005⁴⁷;
9. The Act on Social Employment⁴⁸;
10. The Act on General Insurance in the National Health Fund of 23 January 2003⁴⁹.

Civic participation, including youth participation, is referred to in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 in Articles 61 – the right to obtain information on the activities of the public authorities and persons holding public functions, 62 – allows a citizen to participate in a referendum, 74 – the right to information about the status and protection of the environment, 63 – the right to file petition, requests and complaints to the public authorities, organisations and social institutions in connection with their tasks; 118 – the right to introduce bills signed by 100,000 people to the Sejm; 125 – a nationwide referendum at the request of 500,000 citizens; 170 – a local referendum on the initiative of the local government or at the request of 10% of the population entitled to vote.

Pursuant to § 36 of Resolution No. 190 of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2013, the applicant of draft legislation shall submit the draft for public consultation, including to social organisations or other bodies or institutions for review and acceptance⁵⁰.

The issues of civic participation are also referred to in the Act on Public Benefit Organisations and Voluntary Service of 24 April 2003. It concerns the cooperation of the central and local governments with non-governmental organisations

⁴³ The Higher Education Act of 20 July 2018, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668.

⁴⁴ Notice of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 07 June 2018 on the announcement of the consolidated Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265.

⁴⁵ Notice of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 07 February 2018 on the announcement of the consolidated Act on Public Benefit Organisations and Voluntary Service, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 450.

⁴⁶ The Labour Code, Journal of Laws of 1974, No. 24, item 141.

⁴⁷ The Act on Combating Domestic Violence of 29 July 2005, Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 180, item 1493. Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 180, item 1493.

⁴⁸ Notice of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 17 January 2019 on the promulgation of the consolidated Act on Social Employment, Journal of Laws of 2019, item 217.

⁴⁹ The Act on General Insurance in the National Health Fund of 23 January 2003, Journal of Laws, No. 45, item 391, as amended.

⁵⁰ Resolution No 190 of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2013; Rules of Procedure of the Council of Ministers, M.P. 2013, item 979.

and public benefit institutions⁵¹. Participation is also mentioned in § 36 of Resolution No. 190 of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2013 on the adoption of the rules of procedure of the Council of Ministers. It provides that the party submitting a legislative proposal is required to submit the proposal for public consultation, inter alia, to social organisations, other entities or institutions for review and approval⁵².

At the local government level participation may take the form of consultation, as provided in three Acts: on Commune Self-Government of 8 March 1990, on County Self-Government of 5 June 1998, and on Province Self-Government of 5 June 1998. These laws state that public consultations may be held at all levels on matters specified by law or important for the commune, county or province. A separate resolution of a specific territorial unit council should specify how such consultations are conducted.

Within communes and counties consultations may be carried out on such matters as the establishment, merger, division, abolition and designation of borders of communes, granting a city status to a municipality or town, designation of its borders, changing the names of communes and the seats of their authorities, establishment of auxiliary units, or, on the basis of the Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and development, when the spatial development study is being prepared⁵³. At province level, consultations are conducted when a province development strategy is being drawn up⁵⁴. The aim of participation is to prevent any conflicts between the government and the public. Participatory efforts are undertaken with the intention of benefiting local democracy by grassroot civil initiatives that contribute to the integration of the local environment.

Another law of great importance for participatory processes is the Act on local referendum of 15 September 2000⁵⁵. Participation of the public in the development of public policies has been provided for in the Act on the availability of information concerning the environment and its protection of 03 October 2008⁵⁶. Local communities are entitled to participate in the development of special local government programs and their consultation under the Environmental Protection

⁵¹ The Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit organisations and voluntary service, Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 96, item 873.

⁵² Resolution No 190 of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2013 – Rules of Procedure of the Council of Ministers, M.P. 2013, item 979.

⁵³ The Act on commune self-government of 08 March 1990, Journal of Laws of 1990 No. 16, item 95; the Act on county self-government of 05 June 1998, Journal of Laws of 1998, No. 91, item 578.

⁵⁴ The Act on Province Self-Government of 5 June 1998, Journal of Laws of 1998, No. 91, item 576.

⁵⁵ The Act of 15 September 2000 on local referendum, Journal of Laws of 2000, No. 88, item 985.

⁵⁶ The Act of 03 October 2008 on the availability of information concerning the environment and its protection, public participation in environmental protection and environmental impact assessment, Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 199, item 1227.

Act of 27 April 2001 and the Act on water management of 18 July 2001⁵⁷. Youth participation is also referred to by the Act on Public Administration Branches of 4 September 1997. It provides that education and upbringing include: education, schooling, upbringing, physical culture of children and young people, children's and youth organisations and their subsidy system, granting of material assistance to children and young people, as well as their international cooperation (Article 20). The state is obliged to support persons in difficult material circumstances, counteract social pathologies and create government programmes of social assistance for persons in difficult material circumstances (Article 31)⁵⁸.

Youth issues are dealt with in detail in the Act on the Education System. It ensures the right of citizens to education and the right of children and youth to upbringing and care, school assistance in the educational role of the family and aims to reduce disparities across regions of the country as well as urban and rural areas. Article 55 refers to the operation of student self-governments, which may submit their opinions to the school council and the headmaster concerning the school, review the school curricula, exercise the right to organise the school life, edit the school bulletin and organise the educational and sports life⁵⁹.

The Act on Higher Education of 12 September 1990 defines the rights of young people entering higher education. The student government as elected by students decides on the division of funds allocated for student purposes, carries on activities relating to students' social, living and cultural matters and reviews draft legislation concerning students (Article 156)⁶⁰.

Youth rights are also referred to in the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 2004. A special role was assigned to the academic career office, which is supposed to activate students and graduates, as well as supply information on the labour market and opportunities for raising professional qualifications (Article 2). Other entities tasked with youth activation include public employment services, voluntary labour corps (hereinafter: OHPs) and employment agencies, along with training, social dialogue and local partnership institutions. A special role has been assigned to OHPs (Article 6). They provide job matching services and occupational guidance and organise employment for young people who have not completed primary education or do not continue learning af-

⁵⁷ Environmental Protection Act of 27 April 2001, Journal of Laws of 2001, No. 62, item 627; Act of 18 July 2001 on water management, Journal of Laws of 2001, No. 115, item 1229.

⁵⁸ The Act of 04 September 1997 on public administration branches, Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 141, item 943.

⁵⁹ The Act on the Education System of 07 September 1991, promulgated on 31 July 2018, in force since 25 October 1991; history since 21 June 1996, Journal of Laws of 2018, items 1457, 1560, 1669 and 2245 and of 2019, items 730 and 761.

⁶⁰ The Higher Education Act of 20 July 2018, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668.

ter leaving primary school and unemployed up to the age of 25, organise mobile occupational information centres, initiate international youth cooperation and exchanges and refund the costs of salaries and social insurance contributions incurred by employers of young persons employed on the basis of a contract of employment⁶¹.

Matters of youth employment are also regulated by the Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit organisations and voluntary service⁶². This law also defines the rules of volunteer services for non-governmental organisations and establishments within the scope defined by their statute, public administration bodies and their subordinate units or organisational units supervised by those authorities.

Issues relevant to young people are dealt with at ministry level in the framework of the education, labour market, family and health care policies as well as the policy for combating social exclusion. The Acts – statutory laws – are adopted by the Sejm and the Senate (i.e. the Polish Parliament).

The first consistent document was the National Strategy for Young People for 2003–2014, adopted in 2003. Its aim was to enable young people to fulfil their life plans and help them find their place in society. When formulating the objectives of the youth policy, it was assumed to apply to a population group aged 15–25. This group includes teenagers and young adults, students, employees and unemployed; people who have already started a family and single mothers; able-bodied individuals and persons with specific disabilities; young people who have come into conflict with the law or need rehabilitation or preventive treatment, assistance programs or prophylactic, persons with different economic status; city residents and rural dwellers, active or passive in public life. Since youth is a heterogeneous group, its needs and expectations of the state policy are not uniform, and the state assistance necessary in some areas must be precisely addressed. The strategic objectives are as follows: 1) creating equal opportunities for development and self-fulfilment of the young generation by creating equal conditions of transition into adulthood. The most important aspect relating to equal opportunities is the education of the young generation; 2) creating opportunities for the development of youth activity by the participation of young people in public and social life for the development of civil society; 3) counteracting marginalisation of the young generation arising from pathological phenomena⁶³; 4) fostering international youth cooperation; 5) building a youth information system comprising data on the Polish educa-

⁶¹ Act of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions and certain other acts, Journal of Laws, item 1001.

⁶² The Act on public benefit organisations and voluntary service of 24 April 2003, Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 96, item 873.

⁶³ G. Zielińska, Rola państwa w realizacji polityki dla młodzieży, *Studia BAS*, 2009, No. 2, pp. 131–148.

tion system, cultural infrastructure for young people, youth needs and participation in culture; 6) training and professional development of adult youth workers.

Following the publication of the strategy, there were repeated attempts to create a delegation of the Polish representation. In 2003 the Polish Youth Council (PRM) was created, bringing together representatives of the national youth organisations and regional youth councils⁶⁴.

In August 2011 the Chancellery of the Prime Minister published a report titled “Youth 2011”. The main premise of the report is that youth is one of the fundamental “resources on which to base a strategy for building a modern society and state”, and also the idea of “youth’s high potential for carrying out radical reform”⁶⁵. The report consists of ten chapters devoted to a range of topics. 1. The first chapter, titled “Time for the young. The need for a generation change in Poland”, analyses the situation of young people since the political transformation; 2. What are young people like?; 3. Demography; 4. Education and new challenges; 5. Work as a source of income and satisfaction; 6. Marriage, family, alternative choices – community and intimacy spheres; 7. Consumption, leisure, new media – areas of status expression and creation of the Self; 8. Young generation and the political system – views, attitudes and presence in the public sphere; 9. Health and risky behaviour of young people; 10. Youth and social cohesion.

Following an analysis of the problems of young people, 35 recommendations were proposed (reduction of environmental differences in education, improving the quality of higher education, effective career guidance, new technologies, assistance in the form of grants, minimising the differences between regions, labour market improvement, promoting entrepreneurship, reduction of employment costs, employment flexibility, enabling women to combine work with child care, family benefits and support of higher fertility rates, care of the disabled, housing for young families, activation of the young generation, stimulation of the mechanisms of youth participation in social and political life, and stimulation of civic activity,

The document titled “Poland 2030 – Third Wave of Modernity – Long-Term National Development Strategy” was prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2013⁶⁶. The strategy was developed in participation with the council for youth, the secretariat for youth, and the team for youth social activity⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ G. Zielińska, Role of the State in the Implementation of Policy for the Youth, http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/5D2BC0D47521F9D5C1257A30003C055F/%24file/5_18.pdf [accessed: 18.06.2019].

⁶⁵ *Młodzi 2011*, Warszawa 2011, p. 23.

⁶⁶ Poland 2030 – Third Wave of Modernity – Long-Term National Development Strategy http://kigeit.org.pl/FTP/PRCIP/Literatura/002_Strategia_DSRK_PL2030_RM.pdf [accessed: 18.06.2019].

⁶⁷ Zarządzenie nr 6 Ministra Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 11 lutego 2014 r. w sprawie powołania zespołu do spraw aktywności społecznej młodzieży, Dz. U. MPiPS no. 2014 item 6.

“Active Youth” – the Government Program for Social Activity of Youth for the years 2015–2016 of 10 May 2014 defined the age group of the programme beneficiaries (13–30 years), its legal framework and compliance with strategic documents⁶⁸. It provided that the specific action proposals would depend on the programme beneficiaries – young people – and their suggestions. Following a diagnosis of the situation of young people in Poland, the following specific objectives were defined: stimulating the social and civic youth activity, increasing youth participation in taking decisions concerning the public and greater support for youth initiatives. The activities were planned to be undertaken within five priorities: I. Passions and interests, II. Social and civic activity, III. Developing competences and skills needed in the labour market, IV. Infrastructure for youth support, V. Technical support. The programme was not launched by April 2015.

Following the parliamentary elections, youth issues were given a lower priority. In the election manifesto of PiS (Law and Justice party) much attention was devoted to family policy. Stressing the wish to increase the fertility rate in Poland, the party promised support for large families in the form of monthly child benefits of PLN 500 for the second, third and subsequent child in the family. The benefit was to be paid until a child’s 18th birthday. The programme also provided for free access of children and youth to culture, sport and recreation facilities and to medical care at school. Furthermore, PiS proposed 1,200,000 new jobs for school leavers, created through the implementation of the salary increase pact, entered into by the social partners, employers and the government. The employers who choose to enter into the pact will benefit from investment bonuses guaranteed by the government side. They will also be offered support under government programmes. Entrepreneurs from economically degraded municipalities will receive financial aid to cover the costs of traineeships for school leavers from the state budget, via the municipal authorities.

For unpaid traineeships, the monthly amount of the aid will be to up to 50% of minimum wages; for the paid ones it will be up to 25%. The maximum duration of a traineeship contract will be 3 months.

The Employment Support Fund and the Youth Entrepreneurship Support Fund is to grant loans on favourable terms. The unemployed school leavers who wish to start economic activity will be given priority when receiving a loan. The applicant will be required to create a least two jobs for young people, employed full time for a period of at least 1 year. Loans can be remitted if the jobs created are stable⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Rządowy Program Aktywności Społecznej Młodzieży na lata 2015–2016: Aktywna Młodzież, http://prom.info.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/PASM_19.05.2014.pdf [accessed: 19.06.2019].

⁶⁹ Prawo i Sprawiedliwość Programme 2014, <http://old.pis.org.pl/dokumenty.php?s=partia&iddoc=164> [accessed: 19.06.2019].

In September 2017, the Institute for Integrated Prevention suggested that youth policy be included in the family policy pursued by the state. It was supported by the Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee of the Senate of the Republic of Poland on 13 February 2018 in its position on “Integrated youth policy”. The Committee pointed out that the problems of young people are related to the social threats, i.e. the crisis of marriage and family, the demographic situation, the state of public health, sexualisation, dissemination of pornography and violence. Research shows that preventing problems in the early stages of life is far less expensive than fighting them later on, which is why the Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee proposed that youth policy be included as part of family policy⁷⁰. Then the Institute for Integrated Prevention prepared a document titled “Youth at the turn of the new century of independence”, approved by the 36 organisations forming the Alliance for Integrated Youth Policy.

Sweden

The Swedish youth policy dates back to 1994. The first youth policy bill, titled “Youth policy” was submitted to the Parliament in 1994, the second one, “On youth issues – Youth Policy for democracy, justice, and confidence in the future” was introduced to the Parliament in 1999, and the third youth policy bill, “Power to decide – the right to welfare” was considered by the Swedish Parliament in 2004.

In 2009 the government presented a strategy for youth policy. The main emphasis of the document was placed on increasing the number of job offers and ensuring accommodation. The government document is a guideline, but its implementation is not mandatory for the authorities for municipalities and regional county councils because of the considerable autonomy of municipalities in Sweden.

The state Youth Policy was based on the assumption that all young people should have access to good living conditions, be given the chance to shape their own life and thus be able to influence the development of society⁷¹.

In 2014 the Swedish Parliament approved another document titled “With youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence”. It covers the following areas: education, employment, economy, accommodation, health, au-

⁷⁰ Important position of the Senate of the Republic of Poland on the „integrated youth policy” <http://ipzin.org/index.php/65-wazne-stanowisko-senatu-rp-ws-zintegrowanej-polityki-mlodziezowej> [accessed: 21.06.2019].

⁷¹ Youth policies in Sweden 2017, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdls sweden.pdf> [accessed: 24.06.2019].

thority, culture and leisure⁷². The policy will be supported by an action programme for 2014–2017 containing 40 different actions.

The government's youth policy efforts are aimed at individuals aged 13–25. In November 2015 the government presented a strategy for young people out of work, with special care being offered to young people who have not completed secondary education. Since 2015, the responsibility to keep informed about the situation of aged 16–20 who have not completed secondary education or acquired equivalent qualifications and who are not in education rests with municipalities. The funds for their education should be spent so as to motivate the people to enter or complete secondary education. Municipalities are also required to document their efforts properly and maintain a register of such persons. National statistics on the living conditions of young people are published at www.ungidag.se.

The Swedish government assumes that youth is a group of people of different origins, brought up in different conditions. It stresses that all young people should be able to influence and participate in the actions that have an impact on their rights and future.

The main priorities of the Swedish youth policy provided for in the 2017 budget proposal are:

1. transition from school to work and society, mainly relating to employment, education and housing;
2. young people's power and participation;
3. young people's leisure time in civic organisation and well-being.

One of the government's special priorities is youth in education, employment or training. One of its initiatives is preventing early school leaving. In Sweden unemployment is dealt with in two target groups divided according to the age criterion:

1. 15–25 years of age for national, regional and local efforts for young people who neither work nor study, according to Committee Directive "Coordinator for young people who neither work nor study";
2. 16–24 for local agreements and training contracts, according to the Regulation "On cooperation to reduce youth unemployment".

Other groups given special attention include young immigrants, members of ethnic minorities, young LGBT and young people with disabilities. These target groups

⁷² T. Ekman, Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Sweden, p. 4. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262376/Sweden_Country+sheet.+docx.pdf/b8429663-fa9e-44da-95ad-8107f395a2f9 [accessed: 25.06.2019].

need efforts focusing on better knowledge and addressing health, discrimination and violence prevention.

The bodies responsible for youth policy:

1. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the preparation of financial support for students, education programs, academic research and for youth policy. The main task of another entity – the Division for Youth Policy – is to coordinate and develop youth policy issues, develop youth policy objectives and measures, look into the conditions and development of youth organisations, as well as youth research and statistics on young people’s living conditions and international cooperation. The Division for Youth Policy is also responsible for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, whose tasks include:
 - a) collection of information and statistics on the living conditions, attitudes and values of young people and dissemination of such information at local, regional and national level;
 - b) developing methods that can improve the living conditions and participation of young people;
 - c) creating national reports on youth policy;
 - d) taking action to improve cooperation and coordination of government initiatives;
 - e) supporting local authorities to improve work with young people within local authorities;
 - f) ensuring inclusion of equality and non-discrimination criteria in youth policy;
 - g) international exchange of young people (the agency responsible is the National Agency for the Erasmus+: Youth in Action).

In 2015–2018 the main task of the agency was to analyse the transition of young people from school to employment, whereas in the programme implemented in 2016–2018 it was awarding government grants for young people, also with immigrant background, to start education or undertake employment.

2. The Swedish National Education Agency, which is a central administrative authority for public schools, preschools, school-age childcare facilities and adult education institutions. The agency is responsible for supporting initiatives and entities and promotion of entrepreneurship in primary and higher secondary schools.
3. The National Board of Health and Welfare under the Ministry of Health and Welfare deals with matters of health and social care.

4. The Swedish public employment service is a government agency under the Ministry of Labour, responsible for the policy towards persons seeking employment, including young people.
5. The Ombudsman for Children is a government agency under the Ministry of Health and Welfare, responsible for representing the rights of children. The Ombudsman monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Sweden and reviews all legislative proposals concerned with children.
6. The Coordinator for young people who neither work nor study develops new forms of support for young people, holds a dialogue with organisations representing young people and communicates information about the support from the public sector.
7. Parliamentary committees dealing with youth matters: Committees for culture, education, health and social care, Committee for labour market.

The Swedish entities responsible for youth matters at local level include:

1. municipal councils having/enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy. These councils appoint task committees in charge of a specific scope of field work;
2. district (county) councils are responsible for checking/verifying whether the decisions taken by the government and parliament work at county level.

Many decisions concerning young people are undertaken at municipal level. The objectives of the youth policy laid down by the parliaments in municipalities are implemented with account taken of the local conditions.

Non-public structures which deal with matters of young people include:

1. Swedish youth councils are umbrella organisations for approximately 50 various local youth councils which work to promote democratic influences of young people in municipalities and districts. The organisation is a network that acts as an intermediary between the local youth councils. Much emphasis is placed on developing the skills of their members. In many municipalities (290 altogether) there are youth councils, forums, delegations or parliaments. These structures serve as a place of dialogue between young people and urban policy makers, but their organisation and focal points vary between the municipalities. A 2010 study showed that youth participation platforms operated in 63% of Swedish municipalities. In total there were ca. 425 different youth participation platforms. Many municipalities have more than one type of youth forum (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2010)⁷³.

⁷³ Ibid.

2. The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations is a body that coordinates the efforts of 84 independent Swedish youth organisations. It aims to provide a forum of common interest in youth organisations and to establish a network of national and international organisations dealing with youth cooperation.
3. National youth knowledge networks connect all the actors in this area (decision makers, researchers, young people and their organizations, NGOs). Before 2017 no attempts were made to create a nationwide network connecting all the actors in this sphere.
4. The Youth Policy Council serves as a forum for discussion and consultation on the problems of young people at national and international level. The Council consists of representatives of youth organisations concerned with politics, religion, ethnic origin and sexuality together with experts working with young people⁷⁴.

Sweden does not have a separate law for young people and youth issues dealt with in the framework of specific laws, except for the legislation governing the financing of youth organisations by the government. Youth issues are taken into account in other areas of legislation and the age criteria are applied in different ways, e.g. in connection with criminal cases, social services, health care and compulsory education. The age of majority in Sweden is 18 years and the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 15 years. The legislation concerning children up to the age of 18 is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Sweden.

The Acts which refer to the needs and rights of young people:

1. The Act on the support and service for persons with certain functional impairments (Lagen om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade, LSS)⁷⁵;
2. The Act on aliens (Utlänningslagen)⁷⁶;
3. The Act on care of young persons (Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga)⁷⁷;
4. The Act on education (Skollagen)⁷⁸;

⁷⁴ Youth policies in Sweden 2017, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdls sweden.pdf> [accessed: 25.06.2019].

⁷⁵ Lag om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade (LSS), <http://www.fub.se/rad-och-stod/lag-och-ratt/lss-lagen-om-stod-och-service-till-vissa-funktionshindrade> [accessed: 25.06.2019].

⁷⁶ Utlänningslagen) <https://lagen.nu/2005:716> [accessed: 29.06.2019].

⁷⁷ Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var_d_sfs-1990-52 [accessed: 30.06.2019].

⁷⁸ Skollag, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800 [accessed: 02.07.2019].

5. The Act on tertiary education (Högskolelag)⁷⁹;
6. The Parents Code (Föräldrabalken)⁸⁰;
7. The Act on social services (Socialtjänstlagen)⁸¹.

National laws are complemented by international legislation, i.e. the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2010, the Parliament decided that all the provisions of the law relating to children and young people under the age of 18 must be formulated in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2017, the Swedish Government decided to submit a proposal to the Council to integrate the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into the Swedish law. The appropriate act is planned to come into force on 01 January 2020⁸².

Sweden does not have a specific strategy for youth civic participation. However, youth participation is an important part of the objectives of the Swedish youth policy, as adopted by the Parliament in 2014: “All young people should have access to good living conditions, the power to shape their own lives and an influence on the development of society”.

Initiatives have been undertaken to increase the participation of young people in the political life and published in a communication titled “Policy for a living democracy” (En politik för en levande demokrati) presenting the measures to increase the participation of young people in political life. These are:

1. A high and more equal voter turnout. According to the communication, voter turnout is an expression of the rootedness of democracy in society: a higher turnout also means a higher participation and reflection of diverse interests and views expressed in society. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is responsible for distributing funds to civil society organisations and municipalities that undertake efforts to increase turnout at elections. Such efforts should focus on youth and people who were born abroad and be undertaken in areas of low turnout in previous elections; it is recommended to hold school elections before the common elections, to develop support materials for secondary school teachers on political information management in schools and the presence of the representatives of the political parties. According to recent

⁷⁹ Högskolelag, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434_sfs-1992-1434 [accessed: 05.07.2019].

⁸⁰ Föräldrabalk, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/foraldrabalk-1949381_sfs-1949-381 [accessed: 12.07.2019].

⁸¹ Socialtjänstlag, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453_sfs-2001-453 [accessed: 12.07.2019].

⁸² T. Ekman, Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Sweden, p. 4. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262376/Sweden_Country+sheet.+docx.pdf/b8429663-fa9e-44da-95ad-8107f395a2f9 [accessed: 17.07.2019].

studies, young voter turnout has increased in the last three elections. In 2014, 82% of youth aged 18–24 voted in the parliamentary elections, compared to 89% of those aged 30–64. Nevertheless, young people are still under-represented in decision-making bodies, although the share of young people elected to local authorities increased from 2% in 2002 to 4% in 2014.

2. A broader and equal participation in elected assemblies. It is essential for democracy that there is a widespread interest in holding the elected office and participating in elected assemblies. It is important for the decision-making political assemblies to reflect the composition of the population, above all with respect to sex, age and country of birth. The government intended to undertake efforts to promote participation in representative democracy and improve social representation.
3. Increased transparency and participation between elections. It was pointed out that all individuals should be able to make their voices heard in ways other than by voting in the general elections. A continuous dialogue between decision makers and voters is an important factor in a democratic society. It is particularly important to create the opportunities for influence for those who otherwise participate to a lesser extent.
4. Increased democratic awareness. Awareness and knowledge of the rules of democracy are a prerequisite for the functioning of a democratic form of government. In 2012 a forum was held to disseminate the methods and materials designed to enhance democratic values among young people. Target group for this material are the teachers of compulsory and higher secondary schools. The government entrusted the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society with the task of dividing the funds among civil society organisations for initiatives strengthening young people's democratic values and allocated approximately SEK 6 million (EUR 626,000) to various projects.
5. Protecting democracy against violence-promoting extremism. In accordance with the communication, ideological violence directed against the society's institutions, their representatives or private citizens is a challenge for democracy and social cohesion in society. A society that does not clearly distance itself from violence promoting extremism and ideologically motivated violence is at risk of becoming polarised. The government instructed the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society to allocate funds between civil society organisations for measures to prevent violent extremism. The Swedish Media Council was assigned the task of strengthening young people's awareness as media users and thereby preventing the impact of anti-democratic and violence-promoting messages conveyed via the Internet.

The bodies responsible for implementing the strategy include the government, the Ministry of Culture (since October 2014) and the Ministry of Justice (before October 2014), within the relevant areas.

In August 2015 the government presented a communication titled “Actions to make society more resilient to violent extremism”. In January 2016, the Commission on Democracy presented the results on how to increase and broaden political engagement within a representative democracy, and how to increase the influence of individuals between elections in a publication titled “Let the future be shaped by many!” (Låt fler forma framtiden!)⁸³.

Lithuania

The Law on youth policy was adopted in 2003 (and later amended in 2005). It is the national law laying down the rules for the implementation of the youth policy⁸⁴. The age criteria for youth are specified in the Law on youth. A young person is an individual aged 14 to 29 (Article 2). In addition, the law introduced the concepts of: youth, youth initiative and youth organisation (an association where two thirds of the members are young people).

Pursuant to Article 4 of the Law on youth policy of the Republic of Lithuania, youth policy in Lithuanian legislation is defined as deliberate activity designed to solve the problems of young people and to create favourable conditions for their integration with society, as well as efforts to ensure society’s understanding and tolerance for young people⁸⁵. The youth policy in Lithuania was shaped after the dissolution of the USSR and regaining independence, in a difficult period of socio-economic transformation.

In accordance with the provisions of the Law on youth policy, statutory representatives, institutions, government and municipal agencies, associations and other natural and legal persons involved in the problems of young people are required to:

1. create conditions for young people to exercise all their rights and freedoms laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, international treaties, laws and other legal acts;
2. ensure equal rights with other young people and non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, age, nationality, race, language, religion, beliefs of their parents

⁸³ National strategy to increase youth participation, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/55-national-strategy-increase-youth-participation-sweden-0> [accessed: 17.07.2019].

⁸⁴ Law on Youth Policy Framework, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/12-national-youth-law-lithuania> [accessed: 22.07.2019].

⁸⁵ Lietuvos Respublikos Jaunomo Politikos Pagrindu Istatymas 2003 m. gruodžio 4 d. No. IX-1871, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.223790/DUGWyxGOPA> [accessed: 17.07.2019].

or other statutory representatives, social and financial standing, marital status, health status or other circumstances;

3. create a social environment suitable for the development of young people;
4. create conditions for every young person enabling them to obtain education and choose an appropriate form of participation in society⁸⁶.

The Law on youth policy framework establishes the policy directions, organisation and management of the implementation of the youth policy, principles of operation of youth organisations and their councils. It also lists the responsible institutions at national and local level. The document defines the role of municipal coordinators of youth affairs, councils of youth affairs and councils of youth organisations.

The body responsible for the development and implementation of youth policy at national level is the Commission for Youth and Sport of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. The Commission's tasks include:

1. youth education, training, science, studies, non-formal education, work with young people and addressing social and health problems of young people;
2. investigating the problems of rural youth;
3. addressing the issues of drug addiction and other forms of addiction as well as youth crime prevention;
4. dealing with the problems of youth work and employment, housing, young families, physical education for pupils, students and other population groups;
5. dealing with the issues of student sports clubs and development of university sports facilities;
6. presenting suggestions for professional development, development of sports facilities, international cooperation in the field of youth and sports etc.;
7. collaboration with parliamentary institutions for youth in other countries, and Lithuanian and foreign youth organisations;
8. presenting suggestions to the Seimas, the government, and other institutions on the adoption and improvement of legislation governing youth affairs;
9. analyses of the status of legal acts governing youth affairs and their compliance with EU requirements and international legislation.

The task of coordination of youth policy is entrusted to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The Ministry develops the policy relating to youth and organises, coordinates and monitors its implementation. The Department of Youth Af-

⁸⁶ Lietuvos Respublikos Jaunimo PolitikosvPagrindu Istatymas 2003 m. gruodžio 4 d. No. IX-1871, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.223790/DUGWyxGOPA> [accessed: 24.07.2019].

fairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour implements the objectives and measures of the national youth policy that enhance the motivation of young people to obtain education, find a job and participate in active social life. The main tasks of the department are as follows: 1. coordination of the activities of state institutions and authorities in the field of youth policy; 2. development and implementation of national youth policy programmes and measures; 3. analysis of the state of young people and youth organisations.

The Council for Youth Affairs is a public advisory body composed of representatives of state institutions, Association of Lithuanian Municipalities, Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations and the Lithuanian World Youth Association. The Ministerial Council for Social Security and Labour defines the procedure for the establishment of the Council for Youth Affairs and approves its rules and composition. The Council for Youth Affairs deals with issues related to the youth policy in the Republic of Lithuania and submits proposals concerning youth policy and its implementation, the priorities for the implementation of youth policy measures and the cooperation with Lithuanian youth organisations, as well as legislation proposals to the government, ministries and other state and municipal institutions.

The Lithuanian Youth Council is composed of representatives of youth organisations. Youth organisations, via the regional youth associations and national youth organisations, act through the Lithuanian Youth Council, to represent the interests of young people and participate in the shaping of youth policy. The Lithuanian Youth Council is the largest non-governmental youth organisation in Lithuania, whose main purpose is the unification and representation of Lithuanian youth organisations. The Council also represents the interests of young people, contributes to the development and implementation of youth policy, develops international contacts and provides information to young people and appoints youth leaders. The Council has the following functions:

1. consultations with youth organisations on current issues;
2. submitting proposals to public authorities responsible for youth and youth organisations;
3. compiling, analysing and providing information on the operation of youth organisations and public institutions in Lithuania and abroad;
4. developing international cooperation between Lithuanian and foreign youth organisations;
5. organising meetings, discussions, conferences and other events.

The public Agency of International Youth Cooperation, established by institutions and associations authorised by the Minister of Social Security and Labour, implements the youth policy and administers EU and international programs in the field

of youth policy. These functions are financed from the resources of the state budget allocated for the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and other funds. The tasks of the Agency:

1. collaboration with foreign institutions in the field of international youth cooperation;
2. initiation, organisation and implementation of long-term bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the state and non-governmental institutions and organisations;
3. promotion of closer cooperation of young people at municipal level (organisation of training courses and seminars based on the intercultural learning methodology; promotion of youth exchange and other youth activities at county and municipal level);
4. coordination of financial support for EU youth programmes, international youth cooperation projects, in particular those aimed at disadvantaged youth, as well as collection, organisation and publicising of information concerning international cooperation and its potential.

Youth policy is included in the multi-annual state development programmes. A chapter on youth policy was for the first time included as a separate part in the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2004–2008. The programme was designed to increase the coherence of youth organisation efforts with respect to youth civic engagement and also to improve the policy in the field of youth education, employment, housing, leisure and culture, social affairs and health, sports, crime prevention and youth self-government. The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2008–2012 and its next edition for 2012–2016 also included chapters on youth policy.

To implement the provisions of these programmes, in December 2010 the Lithuanian government adopted the national Youth Policy Development Programme for 2011–2019⁸⁷. Its intention is to create a sustainable environment and conditions for the development of youth policy for the period 2011–2019. The programme has the following objectives: ensuring better employment opportunities for young people, promotion of economic and social entrepreneurship, development of a non-formal education system, and supporting the youth creativity and active participation in society. In addition, the domestic youth policy for the period 2011–2019 is intended to ensure the development of social security, education and health care systems; development of informed, patriotic and mature and creative young individuals that are part of the active society; developing and coordinating a system of youth work and ensuring the development of infrastructure for youth employment; creation of favourable conditions for the high quality efforts of youth organ-

⁸⁷ Youth Policy Development Program for 2011–2019, Official Gazette, 2010, No. 142–7299.

isations and organisations working with young people and the provision of cross-institutional and cross-sectoral cooperation in developing a coherent, fact- and knowledge-based youth policy⁸⁸.

The programme's priority was to improve the social integration of young people, with particular emphasis on young people not in employment, education or training; to promote cross-sectoral collaboration as the basic principle of integral youth policy, exchange of good practice in the field of social inclusion and promotion of cooperation in the field of youth policy between young people in the European Union, Eastern European and the countries of the Caucasus⁸⁹.

The body responsible for the implementation of the Youth Programme for 2011–2019 is the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. The programme is being implemented by the implementation of action plans for 2014–2016 and for 2017–2019. The institutions responsible for the implementation of cross-sectoral action plan are: the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Drug Control Department (an agency of the Government of Lithuania), the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and the Council for Youth Affairs⁹⁰. During the revision of the 2014–2016 plan, particular attention was paid to youth employment and voluntary service, as well as the development of youth centres, regional youth policies and non-formal education.

The Law on youth policy also governs the shaping and implementation of youth policy in the municipalities. A permanent commune council for youth is selected for a specific term, whereas an ad-hoc council for youth (investigating specific issues) may be established by the decision of the commune council. A municipal youth council is established according to the principle of equal distribution of seats for the representatives of municipal institutions and agencies and youth organisations. A regional youth council may delegate representatives of youth organisations to a municipal youth council. Municipal institutions develop and implement municipal policies concerning youth at regional level.

Lithuania is successful in building a democratic state, guaranteeing its citizens political and civic freedoms and rights that enable society's participation in the political process⁹¹. A study conducted by a Lithuanian Civitas organisation

⁸⁸ National youth strategy, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/13-national-youth-strategy-lithuania> [accessed: 28/07/2019].

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Youth policies in Lithuania 2017, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdllithuania.pdf> [accessed: 28.07.2019].

⁹¹ D. Cameron, Post-communist democracy: The impact of the European Union, *Post-Soviet Affairs*,

(published by the Civil Society Institute) with a score of 34/100 in 2014 confirms a limited civic engagement of the Lithuanian society, which also applies to youth engagement in public matters. In the strategy titled “Lithuania 2030”, the government admits that, based on the score, civic participation is still relatively limited, although there has been a certain improvement⁹². According to the Civic Empowerment Index 2014, the most popular civic activity in Lithuania are donations (56%), environmental protection efforts (50%) and local community activities (33%), while contacts with public officials, demonstrations, signing petitions and boycotting are the least popular, with a participation of approximately 5–10% (Civil Society Institute, 2015). Lithuanians perceive protest campaigns as a last resort, to be undertaken only in the event of a significant impact on living conditions or a threat to the political system⁹³.

The legal basis of civic participation in Lithuania is provided in:

1. The provisions of the Constitution of the 1992: Articles 1, 25,33, 50, 68 and 73.
2. The Law on non-governmental organisation development (2013) establishes the National Non-Governmental Organisation Council as well as municipal non-governmental organisation councils acting as advisory bodies. The purpose of these councils is to facilitate the interaction between the government and civil society. The National Non-Governmental Organisation Council was formed in the summer of 2014 and held its first meeting on 11 February 2015. The National Council along with the municipal councils provide an opportunity to strengthen the engagement in public institutions and to promote the development of non-governmental organisations.
3. The Law on provision of information to the public (1996) and the Law on the right to obtain information from state and municipal institutions and agencies (2000) guarantee access to public sector information and determine the procedure for its collection and dissemination. In addition, Lithuania has signed the Council of Europe Convention on access to official documents (2015) and the United Nations Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (2015). Access to information may be restricted by law to safeguard state security, territorial integrity, public order, the constitution, impartiality of the judiciary, public health or morals, private life and dignity.

2007, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 185–217, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2747/1060-586X.23.3.185> [accessed: 28.07.2019].

⁹² Citizens’ engagement as a crucial open government practice in Lithuania, chapter 3, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/doeserver/9789264235762-8_en.pdf?expires=1565268030&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E8731839B18087354F102764ECB28340 [accessed: 29.07.2019].

⁹³ Ibid.

4. The Law on referendum (2002) lays down the procedures for the referenda guaranteed by the Constitution. Consultative referenda may be called by 300,000 citizens or the Seimas on matters of greatest importance for the state and society. For the referendum to be deemed valid, more than half of the electors must vote.
5. The Law on petitions (1999) grants citizens the right to file petitions to the parliament, the government or municipal authorities on human rights and freedoms, reform of the state or municipal institutions or on other issues of importance for the society, commune or state.
6. The Law on the local self-government (2010) sets out in detail the mechanisms of citizens' influence on shaping the policy at local level. Local residents are entitled to access the draft decision of municipal institutions and to receive public and justified replies to questions asked (Article 4.12). Municipal council meetings are open to the public and citizens may participate in an advisory capacity in the activities of municipal council committees (Articles 13–14). The authorities conduct surveys of advisory nature to evaluate certain activities.

The issues of civic participation have been taken into account in the “Lithuania 2030” strategy. The document assumes changes in the following areas:

1. Smart society: a happy society open to the ideas of every citizen, benefiting from innovation, based on the principle of solidarity, self-government and political maturity;
2. Smart economy: flexible economy, capable of competing with other countries of the world, generating a high added value based on knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and social responsibility, and sustainable growth;
3. Smart management: open and participatory management in compliance with public requirements, with the delivery of high-quality services performed by persons capable of taking responsible and creative decision⁹⁴.

The “Lithuania 2030” strategy envisages the development of social self-governance by strengthening the position of schools and grassroot initiatives presented to the administration, which will increase the participation of communities and non-governmental organisations in public life. To create a new society, it is necessary to implement a system of lifelong learning, effectively use the information and communication technologies and ensure the development of knowledge and skills required for an active society. These ideas will be implemented by: development of national programs showing the potential and talents of students, development of academic mobility, supporting non-formal academic and sporting education of

⁹⁴ Lithuania's Progress Strategy “LITHUANIA 2030”, <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-progress-strategy-lithuania-2030> [accessed: 29.07.2019].

gifted children; identifying the country's best teachers, researchers and experts in the field of culture and sport; creating an environment that is favourable for science and research, ensuring Lithuania's appeal for top researchers and scientists; increasing the interaction between business and science; enabling Lithuanian secondary school students to study at foreign universities for at least one semester, with particular focus on Scandinavian universities; development of public cultural establishments and promotion of public participation in the development of culture and international promotion of Lithuania, with focus on digitisation of cultural heritage.

The rapidly changing environment and growing need for self-governance require an appropriate model of governance, increased openness and collaboration between authorities and citizens. In the second decade of the 21st century the government regulates numerous areas of public life and, therefore, the majority of the citizens are accustomed to expect that it will solve all their problems and answer all the questions. Over time, the government should reduce the areas of intervention so that citizens and communities can take responsibility into their own hands. The role of the government should change from organiser to coordinator of actions. One of the most important aspects of civic participation is the actual inclusion of citizens in the decision-making processes that go beyond the provision of information or consultation. In the second decade of the 21st century, public participation in the processes of public governance occurs through specific pilot public-private partnership projects in the areas of health, education, social housing, public transport, environmental protection and public order.

The participation of local communities and non-governmental organisations in the management of public affairs is still insufficient. There are many reasons for that: certain communities and non-governmental organisations lack stable funding, a clear mechanism of cooperation with the state or appropriate legal regulations. In Lithuania there are not many municipalities that would engage local communities or non-governmental organisations in the provision of public services. Most local organizations are committed to pursuing artistic goals, while ignoring important issues⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 2

Project Description

Krystyna Gomółka

2.1. Project objectives, work plan, deliverables

The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) is a project financed under the Interreg V-A South Baltic Programme 2014–2020 on the basis of agreement No. STHB.05.01.00-28-0117/17, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The project is a continuation of the earlier LYC SB project – Local Youth Councils in the South Baltic Region – an Effective Way to Promote Youth Participation STHB.05.01.00-28-S066/16, which received Interreg Baltic Sea Region Seed Money funding and was implemented in the period between 01 September 2016 and 31 January 2017. The partners involved in the current project: LP (Lead Partner): Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic, PP (Project Partner): Public Establishment Samogitia Community Foundation (NGO, Lithuania), PP (project partner): Civis Polonus Foundation (NGO, Polska).

The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network is implemented in the period 31.01.2018–31.03.2020. The project will contribute to:

- Priority axis 5 of the South Baltic Programme: Increasing cooperation capacity of local actors in the South Baltic area for blue and green growth;
- Specific objective 5.1: Improve the cooperation capacity of local South Baltic area actors through participation in cross-border networks.

The overall objective of the project was to build a cooperation network between partners in the South Baltic Region that would make it possible to increase youth civic participation at the local level.

Specific objectives of the project:

1. Increasing cross-border cooperation, exchange of experience and competences of the partners on youth civic participation (learning from each other and building capacity for cooperation);

2. Increasing the capacity and competences of local government units and their representatives to engage in civil dialogue with young people, thus increasing youth civic participation;
3. Dissemination of lessons learned and experiences, and joint analysis and reflection on the future of youth participation in the South Baltic Region.

The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project aimed to raise awareness about the role of local government in shaping the lives of local communities and to increase opportunities for young residents to co-decide. Young people, thanks to planned and coordinated activities in three countries, had the opportunity to present their solutions and conduct constructive discussions with representatives of local authorities.

The involvement of young people in the decision-making process of the project took place at local and national level. At local level, thematic meetings were held in selected municipalities in the “round table” formula. The main purpose of such meetings was the debate of representatives of local authorities (political representatives, administration and subordinate units) with young people. Round table meetings were held according to a specific scenario and included workshops and a discussion part in which 20 to 70 people participated depending on the topic. So far over 600 young participants, 60 local politicians from 4 countries have participated in this type of event.

- In the workshop part of the SB YCGN project, the “World Café” participation method is used to identify problems and analyse the conclusions and ideas developed by participants working in mixed teams.
- In the debate, local authorities respond to young people’s proposals, decide and justify why some of them are feasible, some still require clarification, and some are impracticable.
- The last element of a local network meeting is a public hearing during a meeting of the municipal council or the relevant Commission, during which young people present to the decision-makers the conclusions and recommendations they developed at the Round Table. This should lead to specific actions being taken by the local government. So far, at least two meetings have been held in the formula of round tables in five Polish local governments: in Elbląg, Hława, Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Dzierżgoń, as well as in Telšiai (Lithuania) and Hässleholm (Sweden).
- Additionally, at the national level (Sweden, Lithuania, Denmark, Poland) meetings of local youth groups in the form of forums (both in Poland took place in Elbląg) in order to exchange experiences and learn about issues that proved important in a given country and required joint approaches to take similar solutions in local communities.

- A summary of each stage of the functioning of the “youth network” in a given country is a study visit.

The study conducted as part of the SB YCGN project should enable comparison of actual youth participation with the opinions held by the officials, NGO activists and teachers regarding youth civic participation in four countries of the Baltic Sea Region: Lithuania, Poland, Denmark and Sweden. According to the findings to date, the level of youth civic participation is higher in Denmark and Sweden compared to the other countries of the South Baltic Region. This is confirmed by the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Youth on the Move” of 5 September 2010, which states that the level of activity of young people in local and non-governmental organisations is more than 10% higher in Sweden than the other countries of the Southern Baltic Region¹.

The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project consortium consists of 8 main and 6 associated partners from Poland, Lithuania, Denmark and Sweden. The main project partners are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Main project partners

No.	Partner name	Country
1	Euroregion Baltic – Lead Partner	Poland
2	Civis Polonus Foundation	Poland
3	Samogitia Community Foundation	Lithuania
4	Telšiai Municipality	Lithuania
5	Køge Municipality	Denmark
6	Gdańsk University of Technology, Faculty of Management and Economics	Poland
7	Klaipeda University, Faculty of Management	Lithuania
8	Vimmerby Municipality	Sweden

Source: Authors’ compilation based on South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project data.

In addition to the partners responsible for the implementation of the tasks, a group of associated partners is also involved in the project. They are presented in Table 2.2.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Youth on the Move”. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union COM(2010) 477 final version, http://europa.eu/youthonthemove/docs/communication/youth-on-the-move_EN.pdf [accessed: 15.05.2019].

Table 2.2. Associated partners

No.	Partner name	Country
1	Hässleholm Municipality	Sweden
2	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Poland
3	Dzierzgoń Town and Commune	Poland
4	Gdynia Municipality	Poland
5	Iława Municipality	Poland
6	Elbląg Municipality	Poland

Source: Authors' compilation based on South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project data.

Project implementation is divided into 5 Work Packages (WPs), for which the individual partners are responsible.

Work Package 1: Management and Coordination

The aim of the Work Package assigned to the Lead Partner is to organise, run and implement the project in accordance with the procedures of the South Baltic Programme. The Lead Partner is responsible for representing the project, creating management structures, coordinating procedures, carrying out WP1, process management and project implementation, monitoring of progress and results, reporting the results in the network and management of the funds. The project partners are required to maintain contact with the Lead Partner via email, telephone, Skype or conference calls. Meetings of the project team, workshops and other events will enable efficient cooperation between the partners. All the partners are required to prepare action plans and monitor their implementation. Partnership documentation should be transmitted on a regular basis. The project management tools are provided by setting out the steering committee regulations, establishing the work rules for project teams, preparing a detailed plan of work, communications, monitoring and assessment, drawing up a list of potential threats and preparing evaluation questionnaires. The tasks of the Lead Partner include preparation of the project website and logo, as well as flyers in English and the partner languages. It is responsible for task coordination and monitoring in accordance with the schedule and budget. The Lead Partner is required to prepare 3 quarterly and 1 final report and submit them to SL2014, as well as conduct periodic evaluations and, after implementation, to organise a brainstorming session to analyse what went right or wrong.

Work Package 2: Communication and Dissemination

The aim of WP2, assigned to Civis Polonus Foundation, is to organise discussions between representatives of youth organisations and local politicians, training cours-

es and workshops, and to publish the project bulletin and minutes of meetings or discussions. The Foundation's tasks include drawing up a plan of communication and information dissemination for all partners, creating a project website, posting information on Facebook and maintaining it for at least five years after project completion. The Foundation will provide the promotional materials: 1 roll-up banner, handouts, posters, leaflets, promotional gadgets, e.g. pens, badges, lanyards, memory sticks etc.) and create an electronic newsletter (8 issues) and 1 video. Furthermore, it will organise 10 workshops, 1 final conference, 5 local radio shows, structured interviews, informal meetings and round-table discussions. By participating in international conferences and networks in the Baltic Sea Region, the partners will create a network of contacts in respect of the various topics related to the project. The network will be documented to facilitate further development of the project and contribute to the action plans.

Work Package 3: Building Knowledge and Expertise on Young People's Civic Participation

The tasks within WP3 have been allocated to a team of researchers representing two academic centres: Gdańsk University of Technology, Faculty of Management and Economics and Klaipeda University, Faculty of Management. The team will analyse the current status of youth civic participation and the results of the analysis will be employed in the development of a survey questionnaire. This will be based on the projects previously implemented under the South Baltic programme, inter alia CaSYPoT. An international team of researchers will prepare the quantitative and qualitative study questionnaire, taking into consideration the Associate Partners' suggestions. The questions will concern the expectations as to youth participation, the existing barriers and tools to ensure efficient work in the future. It is planned to interview about 1000 respondents – youth aged 13–24 and adult representatives of local governments, NGOs and institutions cooperating with local authorities who work with young people in the four countries covered by the project. The survey questionnaires will be posted on the e-platform of Gdańsk University of Technology, and the survey itself will be conducted by the employees of both universities, as well as Køge and Vimmerby Municipalities. The survey report (ca. 80 pages) will be posted on the project website.

The WP also includes organisation of three international conferences. At least one of them will be organised for the international academic community, whereas the other two will be held for the local politicians and youth policy makers. Overall, the three conferences are planned to gather 200 participants and include over 10 presentations.

The quantitative studies will be supplemented by individual consultations with stakeholders. As a way of formal and informal dialogue between local gov-

ernment employees and local residents, the consultations are intended to enhance the impact of the project. They will be conducted in several modes: live, by e-mail, by phone and online. It is planned to interview about 150 people in the partner countries.

The results of the studies will be published in a scientific monograph to be compiled by researchers from Klaipeda University and Gdańsk University of Technology. The 200-page publication will be released in 200 copies. Employees of the Faculty of Management and Economics of Gdańsk University of Technology will be responsible for the editing and publication of the monograph. The project will also produce scientific articles, in which the researchers will present the results of their investigation.

Another component of Work Package 3 is focus group discussions of local politicians, representatives of local governments and non-governmental organisations for young people, secondary school and academic teachers, students etc. The discussion will centre on the assessment of youth civic engagement. There will be about 130 participants in 18 groups. The parties responsible for conducting the focus group discussions are the Lithuanian partners and Civis Polonus. As a result of the investigation, 30 recommendations will be formulated, addressed to local politicians, youth NGOs, policy makers dealing with young people and EU institutions. A web portal “Youth Civic Engagement” will also be created, to serve as a valuable source of useful theoretical and practical information and studies. It will be created in the English language and translated into the languages of the partner countries. Its components and content will be as follows:

- A. The existing mechanisms of youth engagement in the decision-making process;
- B. Good practices for youth engagement in the decision-making process;
- C. Contact database of the existing groups;
- D. Analysis of the status of civic participation in the partner countries and the EU;
- E. Analysis of capabilities and support systems for youth engagement in the decision-making process;
- F. The legal basis for civil dialogue in each Member State;
- G. Bibliography of publications, good practices and analyses concerning youth civic participation;
- H. Current research on the participation and engagement of young people;
- I. Fundamental concepts relating to youth participation;
- J. Reports about the project outcomes in the municipalities covered by the project;
- K. Links to practical tools for engaging young people in politics and the work of non-governmental organisations.

Work Package 4: Expert Support to Local Governments

The aim of WP4, whose Task Leader is Civis Polonus Foundation, is to design appropriate tools to enable local authorities to engage young people in the decision-making processes of local and international scope. The purpose of these tools is to enhance the cooperation network between the partner countries. The Work Package consists of the following tasks: organisation of competitions for young people by the municipalities in each partner country with a view to selecting 5–6 committed young English speakers who could take part in the project activities at the local and cross-border levels. The selection will be made in schools, non-governmental organisations etc. Furthermore, Civis Polonus Foundation will organise one-day training sessions for municipality workers and members of youth councils (6–8 persons), relating to the processes of engaging young people in the local affairs. The project manager in each municipality will organise one-day seminars or consultation meetings with representatives of youth NGOs and employees of the local authorities. The seminars will present the methods of dialogue between the authorities and young people.

The development of youth networks in four countries: Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Denmark is one of the main objectives of the project. To accomplish it, teams of two people responsible for network activity will be appointed in each of the countries. The members of these teams will include the participants of WP4 and WP5 training sessions, local government politicians, representatives of municipalities, youth commune councils, and youth NGOs, students and teachers of primary and secondary schools. These teams will have the goal of drawing the public attention to the needs of young people and increasing their civic participation. In the framework of the cross-border networks, an agreement will be signed between the project partners and a charter of principles and standards of international cooperation will be drawn up. These arrangements will be implemented in the municipalities of Køge, Telšiai, Hässleholm, Elbląg, Gdynia, Dzierżgoń and Iława. Common cross-border standards and rules are already applied in the elections to the ERB Youth Board. The experiences of the 7 municipalities will be analysed and shared online. These experiences will consist of 3 individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the stakeholders and 2 focus interviews with young people involved in the project.

The aim of the study visits is to take note of the good practices followed in other countries and exchange ideas for future efforts. As part of this Work Package, Civis Polonus Foundation will organise public speeches of young people during town council sessions in the individual municipalities, where the speakers will highlight the issues identified in the course of the project activities and their own recommendations for addressing them.

Work Package 5: Exchange of International Civic Participation Practices and Experiences

This WP is implemented by the Samogitia Community Foundation in Lithuania and includes meetings with national and regional policy makers in each of the countries and an online discussion between 20 participants from the countries participating in the project. A 30-minute video showing the implementation of cross-border cooperation will be created. It will be a tool to educate young people involved in the decision-making process at cross-border level. A detailed action plan of the project partners within each WP is shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. A detailed action plan of the project partners within each WP

Work Package	Deliverables	LP (I)	PP2	PP3	PP4	PP5	PP6	PP7	PP8
TL – Task Leader TBI – to be involved									
WP1 – MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION		WP1 Leader: LP							
WP1.1	Project and financial management								
WP1.1.1	On-going activity on project and partner levels. Will cover project launching, execution, control and closing, financial management procedures, regulatory framework, finance performance, auditing/FLC, etc. Some issues will be discussed during meetings and some online.	TL							
WP1.1.2	Subsidy Contract – signing documents by the LP and sending out scans to participants	TL							
WP1.1.3	Partnership agreements – individual documents will be developed by the LP and distributed by e-mail and post – have to be signed by the legal representative of each partner	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.1.4	Implementation of Project Operational and Financial Management	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.2	Project meetings								
WP1.2.1	PT meetings (4 physical, 4 virtual) to discuss project status and address new team or project issues and cross-border thematic issues	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.2.2	4 SC meetings for ongoing evaluations and decisions	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.2.3	Kick-off (project overview)	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.2.4	Final Conference – project closing meetings (to summarise the results and discuss future perspectives)	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI

WP1.3	Project Management Tools								
WP1.3.1	Drafting Steering Committee (SC) Rules or Regulations	TL							
WP1.3.2	Project Team Rules	TL							
WP1.3.3	Detailed work plan	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.3.4	Communication and dissemination plan	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.3.5	Monitoring plan	TL							
WP1.3.6	Evaluation plan	TL							
WP1.3.7	Checklist of potential risks	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.3.8	Evaluation questionnaires	TL							
WP1.4	Communication								
WP1.4.1	Development of 1 project website	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.4.2	Creation of 1 project logo	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.4.3	Creation of a flyer in all partner languages and the English language	TL							
WP1.4.4	Creation of contact lists for on-line communication	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.4.5	Identification of other preferred communication methods	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.4.6	Regular sharing of information and lessons learned	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.5	Coordination and monitoring of tasks								
WP1.5.1	This activity will enable the LP to coordinate and monitor activities according to the established project milestones – work plans, timelines, and the budget.	TL							
WP1.5.2	Authorisation of people entitled to use the SL2014 application	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.5.3	Preparation of Progress Report = project payment claim	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.5.4	Regular contact with WP and WP Task Leaders and participation in partners' events	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.5.5	Implementation of Project Team and Steering Meetings and Notes	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.6	Reporting								
WP1.6.1	Drafting 3 quarterly and 1 final project reports	TL							
WP1.6.2	Submission of partial payment claims for the period of 6 consecutive months, in accordance with the 6-month reporting cycles from 1 April to 30 September and from 1 October to 31 March. First 3 months until April 15	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI

WP1.6.3	Submission to the JC. Soliciting feedback	TL							
WP1.6.4	Conducting interim and post-implementation assessment of direct action	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP1.6.5	Brainstorming what went right/wrong with the project	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2 – COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION		WP2 Leader: LP							
WP2.1	Development of a Communication Plan and a Dissemination Plan								
WP2.1.1	Development of a joint Plan for all the partners. It will include responsibilities, duties, target groups and stakeholders, measures, quantities, timelines, etc.	TL							
WP2.1.2	One action plan (to be handed out)	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.1.3	One DP (for internal use) will be produced by collecting and using all the materials developed in the project	TL							
WP2.2	Project Website and Facebook Page								
WP2.2.1	The website and Facebook page will be maintained for at least 5 years after the end of the project. Internal and external modules will be created. The LP's current website will be upgraded for the said goal.	TL							
WP2.2.2	Project logo will be created. Task Leader – LP, all the partners will contribute to the content.	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.3	Development of promotional materials								
WP2.3.1	The promotional materials will include: 1 roll-up banner, handouts, posters, leaflets or flyers (200 pcs.), promotional gadgets (200 pcs.), e.g. ball pens, badges, lanyards, memory sticks, etc.)	TL							
WP2.3.2	electronic newsletter (8 issues)	TL							
WP2.3.3	Preparation of minutes for internal use	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.3.4	Creation of 1 video	TL							
WP2.3.5	Success story – reports, presentations, articles	TL							
WP2.4	Distribution events								
WP2.4.1	Organisation of 10 workshops	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.4.2	Organisation of 1 final conference	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.4.3	5 local radio broadcasts	TL			TBI	TBI			TBI
WP2.4.4	Structured interviews	TL	TBI	TBI					
WP2.4.5	Informal meetings, round-table discussions	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI

WP2.5	Documented cross-border network								
WP2.5.1	By taking part in international conferences and networks in the Baltic Sea Region, participants will build up a network of contacts in different project-related themes.	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.5.2	This network will be documented for further project development use and for input in the action plans	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP2.6	Participation in the Programme events								
WP2.7	Cross-project activities								
WP2.8	Audiovisual materials for the Programme (i.e. photos, videos, etc.)								
WP2.9	Success story								
WP3 – BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S CIVIC PARTICIPATION		WP2 Leader: PP6, task leaders PP6 and PP7							
WP3.1	Local needs analysis and a report								
WP3.1.1	Identification of min. 20 items of information about the needs of 30 institutions from partner countries		TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.1.2	On-line data collection		TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.1.3	Data analysis		TBI				TL	TL	
WP3.1.4	Preparation of the report (min. 40 pages)		TBI				TL	TL	
WP3.1.5	Translation of the report from Polish into English – 3.1.5.1. optional translation into the other partners' languages as part of their activities and budgets		TBI				TL	TL	
WP3.1.6	Publication of the report on the project website			TL			TL		
WP3.2	Adaptation of the CASYPOT questionnaire for cross-border research								
WP3.2.1	Formulation of research assumptions		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
WP3.2.2	Analysis of the CASYPOT questionnaire in terms of the purpose and scope of cross-border research – all partners email their proposal for additional questions taking into account the country-specific issues – 3.2.2.1 Development of a coding system for the data obtained from the questionnaire						TL	TL	TBI
WP3.2.3	Data analysis, consultation, pilot studies of the questionnaire and preparation of the final version of the questionnaires						TL	TL	TBI

WP3.3	Survey and report								
WP3.3.1	Selection of the sample for the survey (expert method, children and youth aged 14–24; 1000 respondents: schools, universities, youth organisations, NGOs, youth environments). 3.3.1.1. – providing the conditions for the survey, including selection of the test sample		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
WP3.3.2	Conducting the survey in partner countries		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
WP3.3.3	Collection and compilation of results						TL	TL	
WP3.3.4	Data analysis and preparation of a report (min. 40 pages)						TL	TL	
WP3.3.5	Translation of the report from Polish into English – 3.3.5.1. optional translation into the other partners' languages as part of their activities and budgets	TBI					TL		
WP3.3.6	Publication of the report on the project website	TBI					TL		
WP3.4	Conferences								
WP3.4.1	Organisation of the 1st conference for local politicians and parties responsible for youth policy development	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP3.4.2	Organisation of the 2nd conference	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.4.3	Organisation of the 3rd conference	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI	TBI
WP3.5	Individual consultations with stakeholders								
WP3.5.1	Identification of problems to be the subject of consultations	TBI	TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.5.2	Selection of the sample for consultation (min. 64 representatives, included 40 representatives of local authorities, min. 24 respondents who do not represent institutions (including NGOs, youth organisations etc.))						TBI	TL	
WP3.5.3	Preparation of issues/questions for a detailed individual interview		TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.5.4	Conducting the survey/consultation		TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.5.5	Compilation of the consultation results		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.5.6	Publication of the report on the project website						TL	TL	
WP3.6	Publication								
WP3.6.1	Collection of materials for publication						TL	TL	
WP3.6.2	Development of the concept and structure of publications (division of issues and their elaboration)						TL	TL	

WP3.6.3	Drafting and compilation of texts and preparation of the publication (ca. 200 pages)						TL	TL	
WP3.6.4	Translation of the publication into English						TL	TL	
WP3.6.5	Editor's revision of the publication						TL	TL	
WP3.6.6	Printing of the reviewed publication in 200 copies						TL	TL	
WP3.6.7	Distribution of the publication, also by posting on the project website						TL	TL	
WP3.7	Focus group discussions								
WP3.7.1	Defining the list of problems for focus discussions, divided in 18 groups, and sample selection (130 respondents)		TBI				TBI	TL	
WP3.7.2	Selection and training of moderators		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.7.3	Providing the conditions for conducting the survey, including sample selection		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.7.4	Discussions in all partner countries		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.7.5	Preparation of a report on focus interviews		TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI
WP3.7.6	Publication of the report on the project website						TL		
WP3.8	Recommendations								
WP3.8.1	Collecting data from all the sources (survey, consultations and focus discussions, etc.)						TL	TL	
WP3.8.2	Preparation of a road map / recommendations (min. 7 pages)		TBI	TBI			TL	TL	
WP3.8.3	Distribution of recommendations (between local politicians, policy makers, youth organizations, schools, NGOs, EU institutions) – including publication on the project website	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
WP3.9	Youth portal								
WP3.9.1	Creation of the substantive concept of the portal, structure of content, functionality and layout of the presented information	TBI	TL	TBI			TBI	TBI	
WP3.9.2	Development of the visual identification of the portal: concept, graphics, individual parts, etc.	TBI	TL	TBI			TBI	TBI	
WP3.9.3	Consultation concerning the functionality and structure of the portal	TBI	TL	TBI			TL	TBI	
WP3.9.4	Choosing an IT company to build the portal	TBI	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI

WP3.9.5	Preparation of content for the portal, including language editing	TBI	TL	TBI			TBI	TBI	
WP3.9.6	Translation of content (Polish and English languages) into other partner languages	TBI	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TL	TBI	TBI
WP3.9.7	Launching the portal	TBI	TL	TBI			TBI	TBI	
WP4 – EXPERT SUPPORT TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS		WP4 Leader: PP6, task leaders PP2 and PP3							
WP4.1	Local competitions for young people								
4.1.1	Development of concepts and criteria for team recruitment		TL						
4.1.2	Local announcements about the project and team recruitment		TL	TL					
4.1.3	Creation of a list of members of individual municipality/project teams		TL	TL					
WP4.2	YCG Trainings								
4.2.1	Preparation of the training – organisational and substantive		TL						
4.2.2	Implementation of international training		TL						
WP4.3	Seminars and consultations								
4.3.1	Preparation of the first seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.2	Implementation of the seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.3	Preparation of the second seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.4	Implementation of the seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.5	Preparation of the third seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.6	Implementation of the seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.7	Preparation of the fourth seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.3.8	Implementation of the seminar in municipalities		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
WP4.4	Establishment of (Informal) Youth Core Groups								
4.4.1	Development of the concept and assumptions for the creation (recruitment) of groups and group activities		TL	TL					
4.4.2	Preparation of detailed schedules for the creation (recruitment) and operation of groups in each partner country		TL	TL					

4.4.3	Establishment of youth groups in each of the partner countries		TL	TL					
4.4.4	Development of the concept and action plans for youth groups after the completion of the project		TL	TL					
WP4.5	Development of Rules and Standards for Cross-Border Networks								
4.5.1	Development of the concept and assumptions of the charter	TL	TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
4.5.2	Working together with individual national youth groups on a set of rules and standards of international cooperation for youth participation	TL	TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
4.5.3	Adoption of the Cross-Border Charter at the last project conference (3.4.2)	TL	TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP4.6	Drafting Case Descriptions								
4.6.1	Development of IDI and FGI scenarios		TL	TL					
4.6.2	Conducting the study – IDI and FGI		TL	TL					
4.6.3	Analysis of data collected and preparation of case reports		TL	TL					
4.6.4	Dissemination of the descriptions created		TL	TL					
WP4.7	Modelling Participatory Process Examples								
4.7.1	Preparation of municipalities for the participation of young people in decision-making processes		TL	TL					
4.7.2	Conducting a local diagnosis of the needs and problems of the young people/community		TL	TL					
4.7.3	Selection of the most important issue/problem from the point of view of young people and decision makers		TL	TL					
4.7.4	Public debate in communities		TL	TL					
4.7.5	Addressing the issue – solving the problem in the process of civic participation		TL	TL					
4.7.6	Systematic support for municipalities in real inclusion of young people in making decisions in municipalities		TL	TL					
WP4.8	Monitoring Visits								
4.8.1	Preparation of the study visit in Lithuania	TBI		TL	TBI				
4.8.2	Study visit in Lithuania	TBI		TL	TBI				

4.8.3	Preparation of the study visit in Denmark	TBI				TL			
4.8.4	Study visit in Denmark	TBI				TL			
4.8.5	Preparation of the study visit in Sweden	TBI							TL
4.8.6	Study visit in Sweden	TBI							TL
4.8.7	Preparation of the study visit in Poland	TBI	TL						
4.8.8	Study visit in Poland	TBI	TL						
WP4.9	Public Hearings (Practical Participation)								
4.9.1	1st public hearing		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
4.9.2	2nd public hearing		TL	TL	TBI	TBI			TBI
WP5 – EXCHANGE OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIC PARTICIPATION PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES		WP5 Leader: PP3, task leaders PP2 and PP3							
WP5.1	Preparation for Campaign			WPL	TL				
5.1.1	Drafting a strategy and/or work plan for organising a campaign			WPL					TBI
5.1.2	Technicalities – public procurement of hardware and software needed for the planned campaign, distribution of tasks and responsibilities, finding a venue, obtaining IT and other equipment if needed			WPL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
5.1.3	Preparatory meetings with national, regional and/or local decision-makers			WPL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP5.2	Implementation of the Cross-Border Campaign			WPL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
5.2.1	Finding/contracting a moderator of the campaign (one for all partners)			WPL					
5.2.2	Inviting up to 3 people to speak at the Campaign (3 per each partner)			WPL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
5.2.3	Inviting a “supporting team” of up to 50 people per each partner			TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
5.2.4	Holding a real-time discussion (SKYPE or a similar on-line tool) on a selected topic, on the same date and at the same time in all partner countries.			TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP5.3	Lessons Learned			TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
5.3.1	Analysis of campaign results/ effectiveness			TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI

5.3.2	Drafting recommendations for future Cross-Border Campaign organisers and/or guidelines for local actors		TL	TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP5.4	Video	TL	TL	TL					
5.4.1	Identifying a goal (to present the entire process of the Campaign), choosing a direction, choosing a video style, outlining the idea, etc.)	TL		TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
5.4.2	Hiring a producer; post-production – editing, voice, music, etc.	TL		TL					
5.4.3	Making copies of the video	TL		TL	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI	TBI
WP5.5	Analysis of changes and developments on four different levels			TL			TL		
5.5.1	Collecting data from all partners and partner stakeholders about their opinion on the cooperation accomplished during the project		TBI	TL	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
5.5.2	Drafting of a report			TL			TL	TL	
WP5.6	Examination of the resources needed for increased cross-border cooperation capacity		TBI	TL	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
5.6.1	Drafting a guideline (or a questionnaire) for newcomer municipalities (partners) regarding further support in respect of working with international projects			TL	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
5.6.2	Selection of data and drafting of a report			TL	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
WP5.7	SB region youth identity portfolio	TL	TL	TL					
5.7.1	Identification of topics or issues concerning BSR youth community to be described in a BSR Youth Portfolio (on the basis of the BSR portfolio created by Adrian Solitander in 2014).			TL	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
5.7.2	Collection of information from youth around the BSR			TL	TBI	TBI	TL	TL	TBI
5.7.3	Drafting of an on-line brochure – a BSR Youth Portfolio (covering the countries participating in the SB YCGN project)			TL					

Source: SBYCGN Detailed Work Plan 2018–2019.

The above action plan was implemented with minor disruptions caused by the abandonment of the project by the Danish partners in April 2019.

2.2. Quantitative and qualitative study assumptions

2.2.1. Quantitative study assumptions

In February 2018 a research team was appointed for the purpose of conducting the quantitative studies. The following researchers became the members of the team: Prof. Krystyna Gomółka, Dr. Izabela Borucińska (Gdańsk University of Technology), Prof. Ligita Šimanskienė, Prof. Rimantas Stašys, Prof. Rasa Viederytė, Dr. Jurgita Paužuolienė (Klaipeda University). The aim of the study was to identify the local needs related to increasing civic participation of young people in public life, including making decisions about the local social, economic, cultural, ecological and political environment. The study will compare cross-border civic participation of young people in Denmark, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

In March 2018 the team held several meetings via instant messenger and determined that the study would cover young people aged 14–24.

In April 2018 the team began preparing the questions to be included in the survey questionnaires. It was decided to make two questionnaires: one designed for young respondents and the other for institutions. Instructions on how to carry out the survey were also drawn up. The questionnaires were sent for consultation in May 2018 and then a pilot study was undertaken.

The final version of the questionnaire was released in September 2018. Both questionnaires in English were published on the e-platform of the Department of Management and Economics of Gdańsk University of Technology at <https://forms.zie.pg.gda.pl/sbycgn/institution/pl/>. The questionnaires were supplemented with two instructions. The first, designed for institutions, included the research population: representatives of institutions dealing with youth problems from the 8 partner municipalities: Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława, Køge, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Telšiai, Vimmerby, and the sample size: 80 institutions from all the partner countries, each of which assigned 3 persons working with youth aged 14–24 to take part in the survey. The total number of respondents in all the municipalities was 240. The sample had to be selected so as to ensure that 50% of the respondents were women and 50% men. Finally, after the changes made in April 2019 (the Danish partner left the project consortium and there was the change of roles among Swedish partners: the municipality of Vimmerby became an associated partner, while Hässleholm became the main partner). The total number of respondents in all the municipalities was 213. The structure of the sample in the individual municipalities is shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4. Structure of the sample in the individual municipalities

Partner	Institutions
<p>Dzierzgoń 6 institutions 18 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. Youth Town Council – a Carer 4. Dzierzgoń Cultural Centre 5. Cyprian Kamil Norwid School Complex</p> <p>NGOs: 6. NGO</p>
<p>Elbląg 13 institutions 39 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. The Complex of High Schools in Elbląg and Juliusz Słowacki High School 4. The Complex of High Schools No. 2 in Elbląg and Kazimierz Jagiellończyk High School No. 2 5. The Complex of Economics Schools and High Schools in Elbląg 6. Vocational School Complex in Elbląg 7. The Complex of Technical and IT Schools in Elbląg 8. Centre for Vocational and Further Education in Elbląg 9. Hall of Residence No. 2 in Elbląg 10. Youth Culture Centre in Elbląg</p> <p>NGOs: 1. Elbląg Youth Council – a Carer Person 2. Elbląg-Europe Association 3. Polish Scouting Association in Elbląg</p>
<p>Gdynia 20 institutions 60 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. 4 Junior High Schools (selected as suggested by the Mayor) 4. 4 High Schools (selected as suggested by the Mayor) 5. “Wymiennikownia” - Youth Centre for Creative Innovation and Design 6. Gdynia Library, “Library with a passion” – youth branch 7. Gdynia City Museum 8. Culture Centre in Gdynia 9. Youth Town Council – a Carer 10. School Youth Hostel</p> <p>NGOs: 1. Youth Cooperation Centre 2. “Vitava” Association for Children and Youth 3. Polish Scouting Association in Gdynia 4. ZHR Scouting Association – Gdynia Circuit</p>
<p>Iława 8 institutions 24 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. Youth Town Council – a Carer 4. Junior High School No 1 5. S. Żeromski High School 6. Secondary Technical School of Mechanical Engineering 7. Theatre Circle at the Iława Cultural Centre</p> <p>NGOs: 8. ORKA Association</p>

<p>Nowe Miasto Lubawskie 6 institutions 18 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. Youth Town Council – a Carer 4. The Complex of Vocational Schools in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie</p> <p>NGOs: 5. “Drogowskazy” Foundation 6. Children’s Friends Association Board of the Municipal Department in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie</p>
<p>Telšiai 10 institutions 30 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. 4 schools 4. Youth Council – a Carer</p> <p>NGOs: 4. Telšiai Youth Center 5. Future of Telšiai Football 6. Tent Arts Incubator</p>
<p>Hässleholm 8 institutions 24 people 50% women and 50% men</p>	<p>Public institutions: 1. Municipal Office 2. Town Council 3. School for youth aged 14-24 4. Youth centers 5. NGOs</p>

Source: own elaboration by K. Gomółka, I. Borucińska based on statistical data provided by partners.

The study was conducted using an online questionnaire or its paper version where the survey could not be done online. The project partner responsible for conducting the survey in their municipality entered each answer in the online questionnaire and submitted the completed questionnaire to the platform. The survey questionnaire concerning youth civic participation from the institutional perspective contained the following questions:

1. Do you cooperate with young people aged

- a) 14–17 b) 18–24 c) I do not work with young people

=> *please exit the survey*

- ### 2. How often do you come across the following attitudes in cooperation with young people in matters related to their impact on their nearest environment i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, commune, local environment: please rate each statement according to the scale: 1 – Very rarely, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Hard to say, 4 – Often, 5 – Very often

No.	Statements	Very rarely	Rarely	Hard to say	Often	Very often
1.	Young people want to have an impact on matters concerning them	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Young people are eager to engage in cooperation for the benefit of their nearest environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, commune, local environment	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Young people expect adults to help solve their problems	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Only people who want to benefit their career become involved	1	2	3	4	5
5.	There is a lack of mutual understanding between young people and adults	1	2	3	4	5

3. Assess the level of youth involvement in the process of civic participation in your municipality:

a) Very high b) High c) Medium d) Low e) Very low

4. Assess the extent of influence young people in your municipality have on the decisions made in following matters: please rate each statement according to the scale: 1 – Very small, 2 – Small, 3 – Medium, 4 – Large, 5 – Very large

No.	Statements	Very small	Small	Medium	Large	Very large
1.	Election of youth representatives in local authorities	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Election of youth representatives at school/ university	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Preparation of strategic planning documents	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Education issues in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Culture initiatives in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Public transport in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Spatial development in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Social assistance in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Distribution of funds from the commune budget	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Preparation and implementation of international projects	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Other – specify the type	1	2	3	4	5

5. What would be needed to increase civic participation of youth in your municipality:

please rate each statement according to the scale: **1** – Quite unnecessary, **2** – Rather unnecessary, **3** – Neither necessary nor unnecessary, **4** – Rather necessary, **5** – Definitely necessary

No.	Statements	Quite unnecessary	Rather unnecessary	Neither necessary nor unnecessary	Rather necessary	Definitely necessary
1.	Increasing funds for activities engaging young people in public decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Increasing the competences of adults responsible for cooperation with young people	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Opportunity to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with youth	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Greater openness of decision-makers to include young people in public decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Formal cooperation with institutions that implement youth policies, also in the Baltic Sea Region	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Finding a good leader who will be able to effectively motivate and engage young people	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Other – specify the type	1	2	3	4	5

6. In your opinion, what limits the involvement of young people in the affairs of their nearest environment:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very low impact, **2** – Low impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact

No.	Barriers	Very weak impact	Weak impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	Young people's lack of interest in local life	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Lack of conviction that their (young people's) involvement would change anything	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Young people's lack of knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Unavailability of careers allowing young people to get involved in local affairs	1	2	3	4	5

5.	Lack of formal possibility for young people to participate in decisions on public matters (e.g. because of an age limit)	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Excluding young people from participating in decisions on public issues	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Adults' disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Underrating the knowledge and experience of young people by decision makers	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Lack of politicians interested in engaging youth in public affairs	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Lack of clear and understandable information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Other – specify the type	1	2	3	4	5

7. How do you assess the effectiveness of the following forms of action to increase the involvement of young people in the matters of their own environment: please rate each statement according to the scale: **1** – Very ineffective, **2** – Rather ineffective, **3** - Moderately effective, **4** – Effective, **5** – Very effective

No.	Forms	Very ineffective	Rather ineffective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective
1.	Meetings of politicians with youth	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Meetings of officials with youth in schools/universities	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Meetings of officials with youth in public institutions, outside schools	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Youth meetings with representatives of non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Opportunity for young people to express their opinion on draft decisions of school authorities	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Opportunity for young people to express their opinion on draft decisions of local government	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Creation of a list of areas where young people can co-decide	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Opportunity for young people to have a say in decisions about the allocation of commune budget funds	1	2	3	4	5

9.	Organisation of public hearings for young people	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Creation of Youth Councils in municipalities	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Organisation of "round tables" e.g. by public institutions as forms of dialogue between officials, politicians and youth	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Information in the media about opportunities for youth civic participation	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Online promotion of civic participation among young people	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Development of youth cooperation networks at local level	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Development of youth cooperation networks at cross-border (international) level	1	2	3	4	5

8. What additional knowledge or skills could facilitate your cooperation with young people in the area of their involvement in public affairs? You can choose more than one answer:

- a) pedagogical b) psychological c) sociological d) other, what kind
-

9. Your gender

- a) Female b) Male

10. You are: (please select all matching answers)

- a) a representative of the local government
- b) an employee of an educational institution (school/university/other institution)
- c) an employee of the municipal office
- d) an employee of a cultural centre
- e) an employee of a social welfare centre
- f) an employee of another public institution (specify)
-
- g) an employee/activist of a non-governmental organisation
- h) a representative of a religious institution

11. Your position in the institution:

12. Municipality: a) Dzierżgoń b) Elbląg c) Gdynia d) Iława e) Køge f) Nowe Miasto Lubawskie g) Telšiai h) Vimmerby

According to the original assumptions concerning the study of young people, also conducted by means of an online questionnaire, the calculated structure of youth population in the communes: Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława, Køge, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Telšiai and Vimmerby in the age brackets 14–17 and 18–24 in a research population of 65574 was: 1. youth aged 14–17: 22343 persons (34,07%); 2. youth aged 18–24: 43231 persons (65.93%). The sample size according to proportionate selection: 1001 persons.

In April 2019 the Danish partner left the project consortium, which resulted in a change of roles: the Swedish partner – Vimmerby Municipality – became an associated partner, whereas Hässleholm Municipality gained the status of main partner with its own budget. As a result, the sample selection had to be adjusted. The final age structure of the research population and sample in the individual municipalities is shown in Tables 2.5 and 2.6. The researchers sought to maintain an equal gender ratio in the sample.

Table 2.5. Research population – youth aged 14–24 in the partner municipalities of SB YCGN project*

Partner	The total population of partner municipalities	The number of youth aged 14–17 in the total population	The number of youth aged 18–24 in the total population	% of youth aged 14–17 in the total municipality population	% of youth aged 18–24 in the total municipality population	% of youth aged 14–17 in the research population	% of youth aged 18–24 in the research population
Dzierzgoń	9397	239	497	2.54	5.29	0.39	0.80
Elbląg	121191	4573	9033	3.77	7.45	7.39	14.60
Gdynia	246991	8115	15702	3.29	6.36	13.12	25.38
Hässleholm	52121	2361	4102	4.53	7.87	3.82	6.63
Iława	33108	1190	2300	3.59	6.95	1.92	3.72
Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	19263	816	1799	4.24	9.34	1.32	2.91
Telšiai	22,068	3418	7725	15.49	35.01	5.52	12.49
Total population	504,139	20712	41158	4.11	8.16	33.48	66.52
Total research population	61870						

Source: own elaboration by K. Gomółka, I. Borucińska based on statistical data provided by partners, retrieved from Statistics Lithuania, <https://www.stat.gov.lt/en>, Statistics Poland, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/and> Statistics Sweden, <https://www.scb.se/en/> [accessed: 12.06.2019].

The adjusted sample is presented in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Research sample structure

Partner	% of youth aged 14–17 in the research sample	% of youth aged 18–24 in the research sample	Total research sample
Dzierzgoń	4	8	12
Elbląg	74	146	220
Gdynia	131	254	385
Hässleholm	38	67	105
Łąwa	19	37	56
Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	13	29	42
Telšiai	56	125	181
Total	335	666	1001
% of youth aged 14–17 in the research sample	33.47	66.53	100

Source: own elaboration by K. Gomółka, I. Borucińska based on statistical data provided by partners, retrieved from Statistics Lithuania, <https://www.stat.gov.lt/en>, Statistics Poland, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/> and Statistics Sweden, <https://www.scb.se/en/> [accessed: 12.06.2019].

The survey questions included in the questionnaire for young respondents are presented below. The questions were preceded by the definition of participation².

1. I am interested in topics related to:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Not interested, **2** – Rather uninterested, **3** – Moderately interested, **4** – Quite interested, **5** – Very interested

No.	Statement	Not interested	Rather uninterested	Moderately interested	Quite interested	Very interested
1.	My school/university/professional work	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My immediate neighbourhood	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My friends	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My town district	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My town/municipality	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My country	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The Baltic Sea Region (Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Finland, selected regions of north-west Russia)	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are you interested in influencing matters in your municipality?

a) definitely yes b) rather yes c) difficult to say d) rather not e) definitely not

² Civic participation is the opportunity to speak and participate in activities and decisions taken by authorities, organizations, schools, etc. that affect us as citizens.

- 3. Do you have the opportunity to speak up on matters regarding your school/university:** Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – I have the opportunity and I speak up, **2** – I have the opportunity but I do not speak up, **3** – I have no opportunity and I do not speak up (*If you do not study then go to the next question*)

No.	Statement	I have the opportunity and I speak up	I have the opportunity but I do not speak up	I have no opportunity and I do not speak up
1.	About the extra classes which I can choose	1	2	3
2.	About the type of homework	1	2	3
3.	About the school timetable	1	2	3
4.	About the assessment of the teacher's/ lecturer's work	1	2	3
5.	About the school/university rules	1	2	3
6.	About the school/university canteen	1	2	3
7.	About the appearance of the school/university building	1	2	3
8.	About the leisure activities offered	1	2	3

- 4. What do you have a say in within your city/municipality?** please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – I have the opportunity and I speak up, **2** – I have the opportunity but I do not speak up, **3** – I have no opportunity and I do not speak up

No.	Statement	I have the opportunity and I speak up	I have the opportunity but I do not speak up	I have no opportunity and I do not speak up
1.	On the election of local authorities	1	2	3
2.	About the commune's development strategy	1	2	3
3.	About the distribution of funds in the commune budget	1	2	3
4.	About the spatial development of my commune	1	2	3
5.	About investment/renovation projects in my commune	1	2	3
6.	About cultural events in the commune	1	2	3
7.	About other issues such as	1	2	3

5. What do you do if you want to influence a decision in your school/town/municipality:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – No, **2** – Rather no, **3** – Difficult to say, **4** – Rather yes, **5** – Yes

No.	Statement	No	Rather no	Difficult to say	Rather yes	Yes
1.	I ask my parents for help	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I ask my teachers for help	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I ask a local government official/representative of the authorities for help	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I ask a well-known politician for help	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I ask for help someone from a non-governmental organisation	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I talking to my friends about the problem	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I write about the problem on the Internet, on a blog or Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I organise a group of young people who will work with me on the matter	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I take action through a student government at school or at university	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I take action through a youth organisation	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I participate in public social consultations					
12.	I contact local journalists	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

6. In your opinion, what limits the involvement of young people in public affairs:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very low impact, **2** – Low impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact

No.	Statement	Very low impact	Low impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	Lack of understanding of young people's needs by adults	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Lack of youth motivation to participate in decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5

3.	Lack of information on how to get involved in the decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Politicians' unwillingness to talk with young people	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Parents do not allow their children to engage in public matters	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Young people's inadequate knowledge and skills of to participate more in the decision-making at schools or in organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Lack of adequate knowledge and skills of officials, representatives of schools and non-governmental organisations in increasing youth participation in decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Young people's doubt if their ideas would be implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Not enough contact between young people and local politicians and officials	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Lack of young people's interest in participating in decision-making in schools or organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

7. What would increase your involvement in shaping the local environment:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very low impact, **2** – Low impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact.

No.	Statement	Very low impact	Low impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	Meetings with people who tell us how to get involved	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Meetings with people who actively work for the local environment	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The possibility of youth participation in meetings of local authorities	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The possibility for young people to present their opinions to local authorities	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Activity of Youth Councils in municipalities which can influence local government decisions	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The opportunity for young people to present their opinions to the school authorities or non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5

7.	Implementation of youth proposals (for example by local authorities, by schools or non-governmental organisations)	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Development of social projects for youth civic involvement	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Establishing more local youth organisations	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Creation of an international youth organisation	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Building a new model of relations between youth and public institutions/non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Raising social awareness about the importance of youth participation in public life	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Exchange of information between young people about their actions (self-promotion of young people)	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Information in the mass media showing examples of civic youth participation	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Development of cooperation between youth organisations at the local level	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Development of cooperation between youth organisations at the international level	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Wider knowledge or skills of representatives of local authorities, schools, non-governmental organisations in the field of increasing youth civic participation	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

8. What additional knowledge and skills would increase your involvement in public matters:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very weak impact, **2** – Weak impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact

No.	Statement	Very weak impact	Weak impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	On how the decisions are made at school, university, municipal office, company, non-governmental organisation	1	2	3	4	5
2.	On the possibilities and ways of influencing decisions at school, university, municipality/town office, company, non-governmental organisation	1	2	3	4	5
3.	About how to establish and develop contacts with representatives of various public institutions, organisations and enterprises	1	2	3	4	5

4.	On the methods of debating or arguing	1	2	3	4	5
5.	About how to write official letters/applications	1	2	3	4	5
6.	About the ways to motivate yourself and other people to act	1	2	3	4	5
7.	About how to organise various events	1	2	3	4	5
8.	On the creation and financing of non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5
9.	About politics	1	2	3	4	5
10.	About society functioning	1	2	3	4	5
11.	On social psychology	1	2	3	4	5
12.	On economy	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

9. Have you done any of the following activities in the last 12 months?

Mark the answers according to your experience on the scale: **1** – Yes, **2** – No

No.	Statement	No	Yes
1.	Contacting a politician or town/municipality official	No	Yes
2.	Presentation of proposals (postulates) to local politicians or local authorities regarding resident issues	No	Yes
3.	Presenting applications (postulates) to school or university authorities or teachers related to student problems	No	Yes
4.	Participation in a demonstration	No	Yes
5.	Discussions on political topics in forums or blogs on the Internet	No	Yes
6.	Sharing posts on social/political matters on the Internet	No	Yes
7.	Participation in public meetings for the local community	No	Yes
8.	Participation in a youth organisation	No	Yes
9.	Participation in a church/religious association	No	Yes

10. Your status:

- A primary school student
- A junior high school student
- A high school student
- A secondary vocational school student
- A university student
- I do not go to school or work
I work
- Other (specify)

11. Your place of residence (municipality):

- a) Dzierżgoń b) Elbląg c) Gdynia d) Hawa e) Køge f) Nowe Miasto Lubawskie
g) Telšiai h) Vimmerby

12. Your age group:

- a) 14–17 b) 18–24

13. Your gender:

- a) Female b) Male

The quantitative studies were expected to provide information on youth civic participation and the implementation of practical measures to promote a dialogue between local governments, institutions and young people. They were supposed to answer the question about the level of youth civic participation in the Baltic Sea Region countries taking part in the study. The purpose of the study was to reveal how civic participation is assessed from the perspective of young people and that of institutions, to identify the obstacles to its development and to indicate what should be done to increase the engagement of young people in the process.

2.2.2. Qualitative study assumptions

The qualitative studies were designed by Dr. Remigijus Civinskas of Vytautas Magnus University in cooperation with the research team of Klaipeda University.

The objective of the qualitative studies was to supplement and broaden the knowledge of the issues of youth civic participation at local and cross-border levels. The researchers' aim was to:

1. Show how young people perceive participation in local politics. What, in their opinion, is the meaning of being “engaged” in local policy and how they perceive the policy-making process. What are the main issues of civic participation at local level and which policy issues are of greatest importance for young people;
2. The second aim of the study was to identify the barriers in the process of youth civic participation and to increase the synergies and cooperation between young people, local authorities and various institutions.

The Lithuanian research team assigned to conduct the qualitative studies formulated four research questions:

1. What is the opinion of young people on civic participation and how involved are they in local politics and community efforts?;
2. What are the main barriers in the process of civic participation in terms of involvement of young people engagement in local politics and decision-making/participation?;

3. What are the most effective and youth-friendly forms and tools of political participation at local level?;
4. What public policy issues are most important for young people (local elections, strategic urban planning, spatial development, cultural events)?

The qualitative study covered two groups of subjects: one consisted of young people in two age brackets, and the other included persons working with young people, experts and local politicians in Lithuania and Poland.

The data for quantitative studies were obtained from structured focus group interviews with 3 groups of stakeholders and 4 youth groups. The studies were conducted in the municipalities participating in the project: Telšiai (Lithuania) and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Dzierzgoń, Iława, Elbląg (Poland). The participants were informed of the project objectives and asked to take part in the interviews. The focus group interviews with young people were planned to take about 80 minutes, and those with the stakeholders and mentors – approximately 25 minutes. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

Prior to the interviews, the participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation in the studies and of their right to leave the focus group interview at any time, if they choose to do so, without providing the reasons. At the beginning, the participants agreed to adhere to the principles of respect for the views of other persons, confidentiality and integrity. In order to ensure anonymity, the participants of focus groups were assigned numbers.

The participants were informed of the project objectives and asked to take part in the interviews. The questions were asked using simple language. The interview in each group began with general questions to reveal the views of the participants on the engagement of young people in the local policy. Then there were questions about the participants' experience of the process of civic engagement. Finally, the researchers sought to identify the main barriers to youth involvement in the decision-making process and civic participation. It is assumed that the study would be of exploratory nature rather than based on hypotheses. The focus group methodology had been selected to investigate the ideas, values and processes allowing for more thorough analysis of young people's perception of the process of civic participation. The number of young people participating in focus groups is shown in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7. Number of young people participating in focus groups

Target groups	Participants	Organisation
1	2 persons – Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; 3 persons – Gdynia; 2 persons – Iława	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie Youth Council; Iława Youth Council, Gdynia Youth Council

2	2 persons – Dzierzgoń; 3 persons – Elbląg; 1 person – Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; 1 person – Iława	Elbląg Youth Council, Iława Youth Council, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie Youth Council; Dzierzgoń Youth Council
3	1 person – Elbląg; 1 person – Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; 7 persons – Telšiai; 1 person – Iława	Lithuanian Pupils' Parliament, Elbląg Youth Council; Telšiai Youth Centre
4	9 persons – Telšiai	Lithuanian Pupils' Parliament, Telšiai Branch; Lithuanian Scouting Organisation; Lithuanian Riflemen's Union

Source: own elaboration based on SB YCGN Project Youth Political Participation and Engagement at Local Level Research report Klaipeda 2018.

Similar focus group interviews were conducted with representatives of institutions, who were asked the same questions except question 4. The duration was different in this case – the interviews continued for 25 minutes. The number of representatives of different institutions who work with young people is given in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8. Number of employees working with youth who participated in the focus groups

Target groups	Participants	Organisation
1	1 person – Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; 2 persons – Gdynia; 1 person – Iława	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie local government; Iława local government, Gdynia NGOs
2	1 person – Dzierzgoń; 2 persons – Elbląg; 2 persons – Hässleholm	Elbląg NGOs, local government, Hässleholm NGOs
3	6 persons – Telšiai	Telšiai local government, NGOs

Source: SB YCGN Project Youth Political Participation and Engagement at Local Level – research report Klaipeda 2018.

The quantitative studies will improve the knowledge of youth civic participation and the implementation of practical measures to promote a dialogue between local governments, institutions and young people. They will answer the question about the actual level of youth civic participation in the Baltic Sea Region countries taking part in the study. Finally, through direct interviews, they will reveal the barriers and other shortcomings in the process of civic participation at two levels: young people and institutions, and indicate what actions can be taken by young people and employees working with youth to increase youth civic engagement.

Chapter 3

Youth Civic Participation in Selected Communes of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in the Local Public and Non-public Institutions' Perspective

Izabela Borucińska

3.1. Introduction

Young people's civic participation should be seen as a process requiring continuous, comprehensive and integrated action, primarily from the institutional environment. The reality of young people's experience is largely created by adults as decision makers. Therefore, the role of public institutions and NGOs in shaping young people's civic attitudes is crucial for the future of local communities as well as entire societies and cross-border communities. This justifies the development of research into youth civic participation and practical actions such as international projects aimed at diagnosing the evolving situation, exchange of knowledge and experience, seeking effective ways of overcoming the existing barriers to dialogue and cooperation with young people in order to make young people's involvement in the public life more effective.

The quantitative studies as part of the SB YCGN were conducted with the aim of identifying and assessing the following main issues at local and cross-border level: the needs of public institutions and NGOs in respect of increasing youth civil participation at local and cross-border level; the current level of youth involvement in resolving local and cross-border problems, including participation in the relevant decision-making process, effective forms and methods of youth inclusion in active public life by public institutions and NGOs, and the key barriers to increasing young people's civic participation.

The diagnostic survey conducted in the framework of the SB YCGN project, carried out by means of an online survey, was sent to representatives of local pub-

lic and non-governmental institutions in five Polish communes (Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie), one Lithuanian (Telšiai) and one Swedish (Hässleholm). The respondents were selected based on expert opinion in accordance with the assumptions set out in Chapter 2. The sample consisted of 213 respondents, with persons working with young people aged 14–17 representing 51.6% of the sample and those working with young people aged 18–24 representing more than 48.4% of the sample. In all the municipalities with the exception of Elbląg and Hässleholm, a majority of those surveyed maintained contacts with youth aged 14–17. In terms of gender, women accounted for 55% of the sample, which reflects the population structure in these towns¹. With respect to the status of respondents, the majority (43.6%) were employees of educational institutions, followed by various representatives of local authorities representing 18.8% of the sample, employees of the City/Municipality constituting 13.5%, representatives of other public institutions representing 15.6% and NGO employees/activists accounting for 9.3% of the sample. The smallest groups were workers of social assistance centres (4.3%), of cultural centres (3.4%) and of religious institutions (1%). The structure of the sample is shown in Table 3.1. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics techniques.

3.2. Areas and forms of youth civic participation as an expression of its influence on decision-making processes at the commune level

Active participation of young people in different areas of the public sphere is an expression of youth's impact on the decisions concerning young people as citizens. Young people can be involved in the decision-making process at different stages and in different forms. The extent and depth of young people's involvement demonstrates the strength of their civic participation, which depends on a number of objective and subjective factors. Among the important determinants of young people's civic participation are their attitudes toward engaging in the shaping of their closest environment, such as school, neighbourhood, district, commune and local environment. In this context, it seems interesting to examine the viewpoint of local public and non-governmental institutions as important actors in the youth's environment, whose activities have a large impact on the current and future state of youth civic engagement.

¹ Population. Size and Structure and Vital Statistics in Poland by Territorial Division in 2016 as of December 31, Statistical Information and Elaborations, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2017, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/ludnosc-stan-i-struktura-oraz-ruch-naturalny-w-przekroju-terytorialnym-stan-w-dniu-31-12-2016-r,-6,21.html> [accessed: 20.05.2019].

The study of the representatives of the institutions referred to their experiences in cooperation with young people, which revealed both similarities and differences in the situation of the individual communes surveyed. Among the similarities is the fact that in all the municipalities young people often or very often want to have an impact on the issues that concern them and expect adults to help solve their problems, but frequently there is a lack of mutual understanding between young people and adults. In the opinion of the majority of respondents in all municipalities, young people are often willing to engage in cooperation for the benefit of their closest environment, but most of those surveyed found it difficult to assess whether only youth seeking career benefits become involved. The distribution of the variables is shown in Table 3.2.

According to the largest number of institution representatives from the Lithuanian municipality of Telšiai and three Polish municipalities: Dzierżgoń, Elbląg and Hława, young people want to have an impact on the issues that concern them. A majority of the persons surveyed in Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm observed this attitude among young people. This represents the potential for developing youth civic participation in the three countries. The willingness of young people to engage in cooperation for their immediate environment is of vital importance in this respect. In the municipalities of Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie the predominant opinion was that young people are often willing to become involved in such efforts. In Dzierżgoń the number of participants who often observed such attitude among youth was the same as the number of respondents unable to give a clear assessment of that matter. “Difficult to say” was the answer most frequently selected by participants from Gdynia and Hława.

A majority of those surveyed in the three countries also found it difficult to determine whether only those who want to improve their career prospects become involved. The exception in this case were the respondents from Gdynia, according to whom such situation occurs frequently.

According to the majority of respondents from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, young people often expect adults to help solve their problems. This creates the space for developing cooperation with young people and stimulating their engagement in public life. However, this must be based on mutual understanding and trust between young people and adults, which, according to a majority of respondents, is a common problem in Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish realities. Two Polish municipalities were the exceptions here: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, where the problem of mistrust is very rare, and Elbląg, where most of the respondents chose the option “difficult to say”.

Confrontation of the above conclusions indicating that young people in most of the surveyed municipalities often or very often want to have an impact on the

Table 3.1. Structure of the sample representing institutions in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample)

No.	Variable	Scale	Lithuania		Poland				Sweden		Σ
			Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Ilawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm		
1.	Youth workers working with people aged	14–17 years	16 (7.5)	11 (5.2)	18 (8.5)	32 (15)	14 (6.6)	14 (6.6)	5 (2.3)	110 (51.6)	
		18–24 years	14 (6.6)	6 (2.8)	21 (9.9)	28 (13.1)	10 (4.7)	5 (2.3)	19 (8.9)	103 (48.4)	
2.	Gender	Female	12 (5.6)	9 (4.2)	22 (10.3)	37 (17.4)	15 (7)	10 (4.7)	13 (6.1)	118 (55)	
		Male	18 (8.5)	8 (3.8)	17 (8)	23 (10.8)	9 (4.2)	9 (4.2)	11 (5.2)	95 (45)	
3.	Respondent's status ²	local government representative ³	4 (1.9) ⁴	3 (1.4) ⁵	9 (4.2) ⁶	7 (3.3) ⁷	9 (4.2) ⁸	7 (3.3) ⁹	1 (0.5)	40 (18.8)	
		employee of the Municipal/Commune Office	3 (1.4) ¹⁰	2 (0.9) ¹¹	4 (1.9) ¹²	3 (1.4) ¹³	5 (2.3) ¹⁴	2 (0.9) ¹⁵	10 (4.7) ¹⁶	29 (13.5)	
		employee of a community centre	1 (0.5) ¹⁷	1 (0.5) ¹⁸	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	2 (0.9) ¹⁹	0 (0)	1 (0.5) ²⁰	7 (3.4)	
		employee of a social assistance centre	0 (0)	1 (0.5) ²¹	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.5)	7 (3.3) ²²	9 (4.3)	
		employee of an educational institution (school/university/other institution)	15 (7) ²³	7 (3.3) ²⁴	25 (11.7) ²⁵	28 (13.1) ²⁶	11 (5.2) ²⁷	4 (1.9) ²⁸	3 (1.4) ²⁹	93 (43.6)	
		employee of another public institution	15 (7) ³⁰	4 (1.9) ³¹	1 (0.5) ³²	10 (4.7) ³³	1 (0.5) ³⁴	1 (0.5) ³⁵	1 (0.5) ³⁶	33 (15.6)	
NGO employee/activist	1 (0.5) ³⁷	2 (0.9) ³⁸	5 (2.3) ³⁹	3 (1.4) ⁴⁰	1 (0.5) ⁴¹	6 (2.8) ⁴²	2 (0.9)	20 (9.3)			
representative of a religious institution	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.5) ⁴³	1 (0.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)		

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

² The total percentage was 109.5, as some of the respondents indicated several answers corresponding to their status.

³ A representative of local authorities other than an employee referred to in the institution questionnaire.

⁴ Position – 4 specialists, 2 of which were employees of the Municipal Office.

⁵ Position – 2 employees of the Municipal Office, Chairman of The City Council.

⁶ Position – 4 employees of the Municipal Office, 2 councillors, 1 non-response.

⁷ Position – 3 employees of the Municipal Office, 2 councillors, 2 non-responses.

⁸ Position – 5 employees of the Municipal Office, 3 councillors, 1 non-response.

⁹ Position – 2 employees of the Municipal Office, 2 councillors, Youth City Council Supervisor, President of the Youth City Council, 1 non-response.

¹⁰ Position – 2 specialists, 1 teacher.

¹¹ Position – inspector, deputy mayor.

- 12 Position – project specialist, sub-inspector for secondary schools, sub-inspector, officer, NGO cooperation officer, 1 non-response.
- 13 Position – chief specialist and activity organiser working exclusively with young people, sub-inspector, 1 non-response.
- 14 Position – 3 managers, 1 inspector, 1 sub-inspector.
- 15 Position – manager, municipality secretary.
- 16 Position – 2 project managers, 2 coordinators, 2 project coordinators, 1 communication officer,
- 17 Position: director.
- 18 Position: manager.
- 19 Position: director.
- 20 Position: operational manager.
- 21 Position – educator.
- 22 Position – 2 social workers, 2 officers for maintenance support for persons aged 18–29; 1 manager.
- 23 Position – 5 teachers, 3 educationalists, 2 directors, 1 head of department, 1 non-formal education guide, 1 student self-government supervisor.
- 24 Position – 4 teachers, 1 Youth Town Council Supervisor; 4 employees of educational institutions, including 3 teachers, 1 office worker, 1 non-response.
- 25 Position – 20 teachers (including 2 head teachers, 2 deputy head teachers, 1 career counsellor), 1 school counsellor, 1 educator, 1 leader and representative of a religious institution, 2 non-responses.
- 26 Position – 11 teachers, 3 lecturers, 3 psychologists, 2 education specialists, 1 educationalist, 1 educator, 1 specialist, head of Education Centre, 5 non-responses.
- 27 Position – 5 teachers, 6 non-responses.
- 28 Position – 1 head teacher, 1 youth council supervisor, 2 teachers
- 29 Position – 2 head teachers, 1 teacher.
- 30 Position – 2 directors, 2 chairpersons, 1 assistant, 1 member of the Lithuanian Rifleman's Association, 1 project coordinator, 1 manager and trainer, 1 councillor, 1 specialist, 1 volunteer.
- 31 Position – Secretary of the Youth Town Council.
- 32 Position – administrative employee.
- 33 Institution/Position – 4 museums (including Gdynia City Museum) / education specialist, promotion specialist, educator, 1 non-response; cultural institution employee / specialist and councillor; 3 libraries (including Municipal Public Library) / managers; MIR-PIB Gdynia Aquarium / education specialist.
- 34 Institution/Position – tourist information / tourist information centre assistant.
- 35 Institution/Position – Municipal Sports and Recreation Centre / Director.
- 36 Position – 1 process manager in the culture and entertainment department.
- 37 Position: specialist.
- 38 Position – volunteer, member of the management board.
- 39 Position – commandant, activity organiser, 1 non-response.
- 40 Position – coordinator, representative of religious institution, 1 non-response.
- 41 Position – 1 non-response.
- 42 Position – 3 instructors, 1 attendant, 1 coach (“Drogowskazy” Foundation).
- 43 Position – leader and employee of an educational institution.

Table 3.2. Experiences of respondents in cooperation with young people in Lithuania. Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania		Poland				Sweden		Σ
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Itawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm		
1.	Young people want to have an impact on the issues that concern them ⁴⁴	Very rarely	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	4(1.9)	5(2.3)	
		Rarely	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	7(3.3)	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	0(0)	21(9.9)	
		Hard to say	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	4(1.9)	8(3.8)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	25(11.7)	
		Often	20(9.4)	8(3.8)	21(9.9)	20(9.4)	12(5.7)	6(2.8)	8(3.8)	95(44.6)	
2.	Young people are willing to work together for their immediate environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment	Very often	5(2.3)	4(1.9)	11(5.2)	24(11.3)	5(2.3)	8(3.8)	9(4.2)	66(31.0)	
		Very rarely	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	5(2.3)	
		Rarely	3(1.4)	1(0.5)	9(4.2)	20(9.4)	2(0.9)	4(1.9)	5(2.3)	44(20.7)	
		Hard to say	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	24(11.3)	12(5.7)	4(1.9)	8(3.8)	69(32.4)	
3.	Young people expect adults to help solve their problems ⁴⁵	Often	15(7.2)	7(3.3)	16(7.5)	13(6.1)	9(4.2)	7(3.3)	9(4.2)	76(35.7)	
		Very often	5(2.3)	2(0.9)	6(2.8)	0(0)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	1(0.5)	19(8.9)	
		Very rarely	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	
		Rarely	6(2.9)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	9(4.3)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	5(2.4)	29(13.6)	
4.	Only those who want to achieve career benefits become involved ⁴⁶	Hard to say	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	10(4.8)	8(3.8)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	6(2.9)	37(17.4)	
		Often	15(7.2)	8(3.8)	20(9.6)	25(12)	11(5.3)	7(3.3)	9(4.3)	95(44.6)	
		Very often	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	16(7.7)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	1(0.5)	44(20.7)	
		Very rarely	1(0.5)	0(0)	5(2.4)	2(0.9)	0(0)	7(3.3)	1(0.5)	16(7.5)	
5.	There is no mutual understanding between young people and adults	Rarely	6(2.9)	4(1.9)	6(2.9)	7(3.3)	4(1.9)	0(0)	7(3.3)	34(16.0)	
		Hard to say	15(7.1)	8(3.8)	15(7.1)	20(9.5)	10(4.7)	7(3.3)	11(5.2)	86(40.4)	
		Often	6(2.9)	4(1.9)	10(4.7)	23(10.9)	7(3.3)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	57(26.8)	
		Very often	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	8(3.8)	3(1.4)	1(0.5)	0(0)	18(8.5)	
5.	There is no mutual understanding between young people and adults	Very rarely	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	8(3.8)	1(0.5)	11(5.2)	
		Rarely	7(3.3)	2(0.9)	13(6.1)	6(2.8)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	43(20.2)	
		Hard to say	2(0.9)	4(1.9)	15(7)	20(9.4)	6(2.8)	3(1.4)	7(3.3)	57(26.8)	
		Often	20(9.4)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	22(10.3)	12(5.6)	2(0.9)	9(4.2)	79(37.1)	
		Very often	0(0)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	12(5.6)	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	0(0)	23(10.8)	

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁴⁴ In Dzierzgoń – 1 non-response.

⁴⁵ In Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie: 1 non-response each.

⁴⁶ In Nowe Miasto Lubawskie – 1 non-response.

immediate environment and are willing to engage in cooperation with the assessment of the level of youth involvement in the process of civic participation, does not allow for an overly optimistic interpretation. In all the municipalities surveyed, a majority of participants rated the level of youth activity as average. This demands a search for the causes of the gap between the will or interest and actual involvement of young people, followed by effective measures aimed at enhancing their civic participation. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Assessment of the level of youth involvement in the process of civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

Scale	Lithuania	Poland ⁴⁷					Sweden	Σ
	Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Ława	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm	
Very high	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	5(2.3)
High	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	8(3.8)	3(1.4)	2(1)	6(2.8)	2(1)	33(15.5)
Medium	14(6.7)	9(4.3)	17(8)	30(14.3)	14(6.7)	8(3.8)	15(7.1)	107(50.2)
Low	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	11(5.2)	19(9)	6(2.8)	3(1.4)	6(2.8)	53(24.9)
Very low	1(0.5)	0(0)	1(0.5)	7(3.3)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	12(5.6)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Although the involvement of young people in public affairs in all surveyed municipalities was rated as inadequate, the differences between municipalities indicate that the problem with the level of civic participation is more acute in Gdynia than in Elbląg or Telšiai. One-way analysis of variance shows that the municipality represented differentiates the perceived degree of youth involvement in the process of civic participation. The analysis revealed a significant intergroup effect, $F(2, 126) = 5.75$; $p < 0.01$. It was found that the assessments given by Gdynia residents were significantly lower than those obtained in Elbląg ($p < 0.1$) or Telsiai ($p < 0.01$). One-way analysis of variance demonstrated that the type of institution represented survey participants did not differentiate the assessment of the degree of youth involvement in the process of civic participation in municipalities (no significant intergroup effect, $F(2, 161) = 1.12$; ns). Similarly, the results of Student's *t*-test revealed that the gender of the institutions' representatives did not differentiate the assessment of the degree of youth involvement in the process of civic participation in municipalities (no significant inter-gender differences in this respect, $t(184) = 0.5$; ns).

The issue of youth involvement in the process of civic participation is linked to the assessment of youth's impact on the decisions taken in their municipalities

⁴⁷ In Dzierzgoń 2 non-responses; in Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie 1 non-response each.

Table 3.4. Extent of young people's influence on decisions taken in individual matters by municipalities in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland					Sweden		Σ
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Ilawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm				
1.	Election of youth representatives in local authorities	Very small	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	5(2.4)	19(9.0)	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	7(3.4)	39(18.3)			
		Small	11(5.2)	3(1.4)	13(6.1)	17(8.0)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	8(3.8)	59(27.7)			
		Medium	12(5.7)	7(3.3)	9(4.2)	16(7.5)	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	9(4.2)	66(31.0)			
		Large	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	11(5.2)	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	0(0.0)	34(16.0)			
		Very large	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	14(6.6)			
2.	Election of youth representatives at school/university	Very small	1(0.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(1.8)	1(0.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(2.8)			
		Small	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	1(0.4)	8(3.7)	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	6(2.8)	22(10.3)			
		Medium	9(4.2)	3(1.4)	9(4.2)	16(7.5)	5(2.3)	4(1.8)	10(4.7)	56(26.3)			
		Large	11(5.2)	7(3.3)	16(7.5)	21(9.9)	11(5.2)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	80(37.6)			
		Very large	7(3.3)	4(1.8)	13(6.1)	10(4.7)	5(2.3)	6(2.8)	2(0.9)	47(22.1)			
3.	Preparation of strategic documents	Very small	9(4.3)	0(0.0)	10(4.7)	27(12.8)	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	4(1.8)	56(26.3)			
		Small	13(6.2)	4(1.9)	19(9.0)	10(4.7)	5(2.4)	9(4.3)	8(3.8)	70(32.9)			
		Medium	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	19(9.0)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	3(1.4)	61(28.6)			
		Large	1(0.5)	6(2.8)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	20(9.4)			
		Very large	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	4(1.9)			
4.	Educational issues in the municipality	Very small	7(3.3)	2(0.9)	11(5.1)	23(10.8)	5(2.3)	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	49(23.0)			
		Small	14(6.6)	5(2.4)	16(7.5)	12(5.6)	10(4.7)	4(1.8)	11(5.2)	72(33.8)			
		Medium	8(3.7)	6(2.8)	10(4.7)	21(9.9)	7(3.3)	11(5.1)	9(4.2)	72(33.8)			
		Large	1(0.4)	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	1(1.4)	18(8.5)			
		Very large	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)			
5.	Culture initiatives in the municipality	Very small	3(1.4)	1(0.5)	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)	22(10.3)			
		Small	10(4.7)	2(0.9)	9(4.3)	12(5.7)	1(0.5)	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	40(18.8)			
		Medium	13(6.2)	5(2.4)	18(8.5)	23(10.9)	11(5.2)	8(3.8)	8(3.8)	86(40.4)			
		Large	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	14(6.6)	9(4.3)	6(2.9)	11(5.2)	57(26.8)			
		Very large	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	6(2.8)			

6.	Public transport in the municipality	Very small	8(3.8)	5(2.4)	20(9.5)	27(12.8)	6(2.8)	8(3.8)	3(1.4)	78(36.6)
		Small	16(7.6)	6(2.8)	12(5.7)	15(7.1)	7(3.3)	3(1.4)	10(4.8)	69(32.4)
		Medium	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	13(6.2)	10(4.7)	6(2.9)	7(3.3)	49(23.0)
		Large	10(5)	10(5)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	10(5)	0(0.0)	10(5)	10(4.7)
7.	Spatial development in the municipality	Very large	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	5(2.3)
		Very small	4(1.9)	7(3.1)	17(8.1)	21(10.0)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	68(31.9)
		Small	14(6.6)	4(1.9)	16(7.6)	18(8.5)	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	74(34.7)
		Medium	10(4.7)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	8(3.8)	56(26.3)
8.	Social assistance in the municipality	Large	2(1.0)	10(5)	10(5)	5(2.4)	10(5)	10(5)	2(1.0)	13(6.1)
		Very large	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
		Very small	4(1.9)	6(2.8)	16(7.6)	14(6.6)	9(4.3)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	58(27.2)
		Small	9(4.3)	2(0.9)	9(4.3)	10(4.7)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	7(3.3)	52(24.4)
9.	Allocation of funds from municipal budget	Medium	13(6.2)	5(2.4)	10(4.8)	19(9.0)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	11(5.2)	67(31.5)
		Large	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	15(7.1)	4(1.9)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	31(6.1)
		Very large	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	10(5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)
		Very small	14(6.5)	6(2.9)	23(10.9)	33(15.7)	7(3.3)	2(0.9)	6(2.9)	91(42.7)
10.	Preparation and implementation of international projects	Small	12(5.7)	6(2.9)	10(4.8)	10(4.8)	7(3.3)	8(3.8)	7(3.3)	60(28.2)
		Medium	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	11(5.2)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	8(3.8)	44(20.7)
		Large	0(0.0)	10(5)	2(0.9)	5(2.4)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)	13(6.1)
		Very large	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	10(5)	10(5)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)
11	Other – specify:	Very small	3(1.4)	6(2.9)	11(5.2)	12(5.7)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	43(20.2)
		Small	12(5.7)	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	16(7.6)	7(3.3)	6(2.9)	6(2.9)	60(28.2)
		Medium	13(6.2)	2(0.9)	12(5.7)	20(9.5)	10(4.7)	4(1.9)	8(3.8)	69(32.4)
		Large	2(0.9)	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	11(5.2)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	7(3.3)	36(16.9)
		Very large	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)
			2(0.9) ⁴⁸	3(1.4) ⁴⁹	6(2.8) ⁵⁰	8(3.8) ⁵¹	2(0.9)	10(5) ⁵²	2(0.9) ⁵³	24(11.3)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁴⁸ There were developed two answers by respondents: „Theoretically, young people may realize that they could or even would like to contribute to change, but neither the school nor the representatives of other governmental institutions teach them and do not encourage them to express their views, positions.” and „Issues of youth employment organization.”

⁴⁹ There was developed one answer by respondent: „cultural issues”.

⁵⁰ There were developed two answers by respondents: „Cultural events and tourism in municipality” and „Other issues of charity activities”.

⁵¹ There was developed one answer by respondent: „They could have an impact, but they don't get involved”.

⁵² There was developed one answer by respondent: „sports activities”.

⁵³ There was developed one answer by respondent: „Unfortunately many young people don't need to participate because they have everything they need.”

in various matters. Analysis demonstrated that in most cases, the capacity of young people to influence local authorities' decisions was low or very low in all municipalities. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 3.4.

The area where young people had the least impact was the distribution of resources from the municipality budget. In three of the municipalities (Gdynia, Elbląg and Telšiai) the most frequent response was that young people had very little influence on that matter. In the case of Dzierzgoń, the same number of responses pointed to very low and low impact, and in Hława, in addition to the aforementioned two, an equal number of respondents rated the impact as medium. Young people from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie also had little influence on the decisions on funds allocation in the municipality. Only in the case of Hässleholm most of those surveyed considered young people's impact to be medium in that respect. Municipal spatial planning is another area where young people participated to a very small or small extent in the decision-making process, according to most respondents from all the municipalities. A very small degree of influence was predominant in Gdynia, Elbląg, Hława and Dzierzgoń, and a small degree – in Telšiai and Hässleholm. The same numbers of respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie considered that young people had a very small, small and medium degree of influence on such decisions. The views of the dominant group of respondents were distributed in a similar way with respect to the impact of young people on public transport decisions in the municipality. According to the majority of those surveyed from Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, that influence was very small, whereas participants from Telšiai, Hässleholm and Dzierzgoń considered it to be small. Only the respondents from Hława concluded that young people had a medium impact on shaping the municipal public transport solutions. The impact of young people on the development of municipal development strategies was also critically rated by a majority of respondents. The participants from Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie found the degree of youth impact on local government decisions to be small, while in Gdynia the most frequent opinion was that youth's impact was very small. Only the respondents from Hława considered it to be medium. Youth participation in social assistance decisions was similarly rated by a majority of those surveyed in the individual municipalities: very low in Elbląg, Hława and Dzierzgoń, low in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and medium in Gdynia, Telšiai and Hässleholm.

The influence of young people on the preparation and implementation of international projects in the municipality was slightly better perceived by a majority of respondents. According to them, young people from Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Hława and Hässleholm were allowed a medium degree of leverage in decisions on issues related to international projects. Small and very small participation was observed by a majority of respondents in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń. As to the extent of young people's influence on cultural initiatives in their munic-

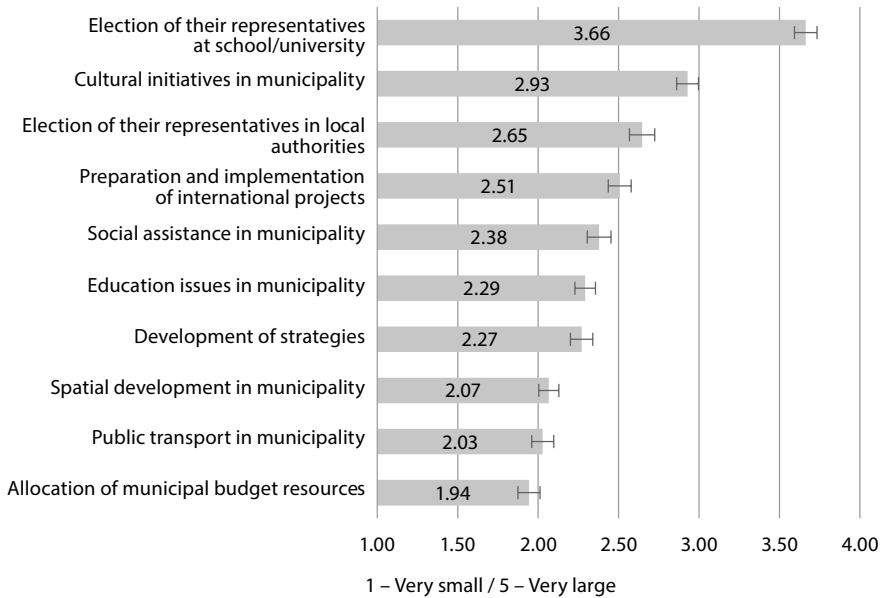
ipalities, a majority of respondents from Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie considered it to be medium, and those from Hässleholm and Dzierzgoń described it as large. According to the prevailing responses received from participants from Dzierzgoń, Hässleholm and Telšiai, young people from these three municipalities were offered a medium degree of leverage on the selection of their representatives in the local authorities. In Iława, the answers corresponding to the average and high strength of the variable were balanced. Only the respondents in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie considered that the impact of young people was large. On the other hand, young people in Gdynia had a very small influence on the election of their representatives in the local government. In the opinion of the participants from Elbląg, youth's impact on the choice of their representatives in the local authorities was small. This seems to be more problematic than in other municipalities, as a majority of respondents could have obtained the relevant knowledge during their cooperation with young people aged 18–24, i.e. having the right to vote.

The only area where young people can have a significant impact on their environment is school/university. According to most respondents from nearly all the municipalities (with the exception of Hässleholm), young people has a significant influence on the election of their representatives in those institutions. However, the ability of young people to influence educational decisions at municipal level has proved to be considerably lower. In this respect, young people had the least influence on the decisions of local authorities in Gdynia, as stated by a majority of respondents. The extent of youth influence in that area was small in four municipalities: Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Iława. A medium level of youth impact was indicated by the largest share of participants in Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie.

The above conclusions regarding the impact of young people on various decisions taken in their municipalities have also been confirmed by the variance analysis method. One-way analysis of variance demonstrated significant differences between the answers $F(7, 1425)=86.98$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.29$. The differences between the answers to the individual test questions were 29% in total. The results of analysis showed that, in the opinion of institution representatives, young people had the greatest influence on the election of their representatives at school/university and the least influence on the allocation of resources from the municipal budget. The results are shown in Figure 3.1.

In order to verify the gender-related differences in the answers to the individual test items, a two-way analysis of variance was performed. It showed a significant (at a statistical trend level) effect of interaction between the two factors, $F(7, 1423)=1.95$; $p<0.1$, $\eta=0.01$, however, multiple comparisons analysis performed with the Bonferroni correction did not reveal any significant gender-relating differ-

Figure 3.1. Differences between respondents' answers relating to their assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



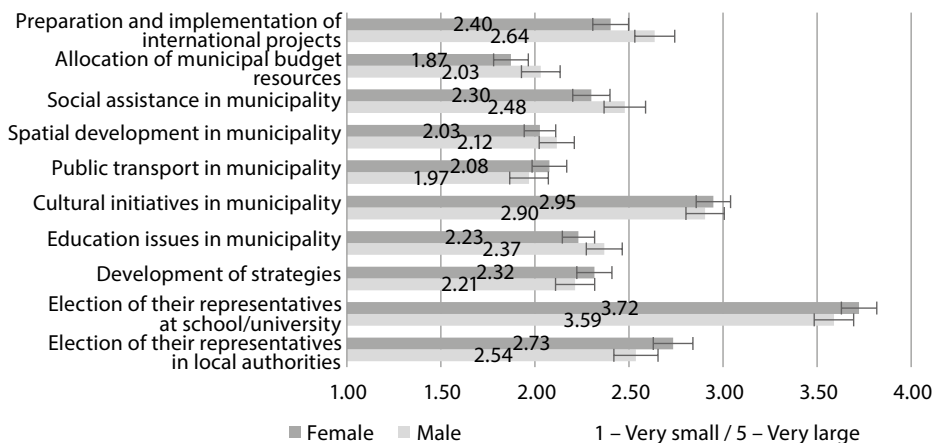
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

ences in the responses given to the individual test items. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the dependent variable. The results are shown in Figure 3.2.

It was determined on the basis of two-way analysis of variance that the municipality represented by those surveyed differentiated the assessment of the impact of young people on the decisions taken in the municipality in relation to various matters. The analysis demonstrated a significant interaction effect, $F(14, 855) = 3.11$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.05$. The interaction feature explains 5% of the variance of the dependent variable. In four test items, participants' responses differed significantly with respect to the municipality represented. This was the case in questions about the decisions concerning:

- social assistance in the municipality, where the representatives of the Elbląg institutions gave a significantly lower assessment of youth decision-making power than the respondents from Gdynia ($p < 0.05$) and Telšiai ($p < 0.1$);
- spatial development in the municipality, where the participants from Telšiai gave a significantly higher assessment of youth decision-making power than the respondents from Elbląg ($p < 0.05$);

Figure 3.2. Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



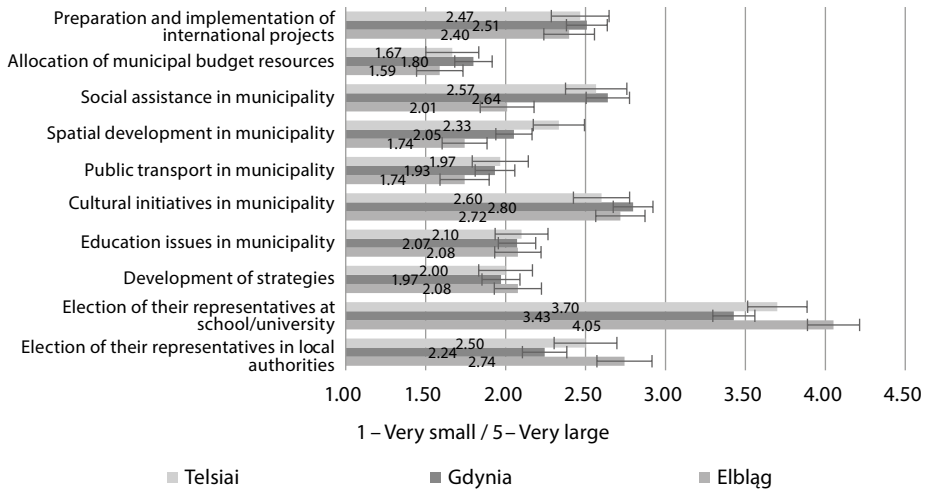
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

- election of youth representatives at school/university, where the representatives of the Elbląg institutions gave the highest ratings of the level of youth decision-making power, with slightly lower ratings from the respondents from Telšiai and the lowest ratings from the respondents from Gdynia;
- election of youth representatives in the local authorities, where the representatives of Telšiai institutions gave a significantly higher assessment of youth decision-making power than the respondents from Gdynia ($p < 0.1$).

Thus, in the opinion of the representatives of Elbląg institutions, the local youth have a significantly lower impact on social assistance decisions taken by the municipality compared to young people in Gdynia and on spatial planning decisions – compared to youth in Telšiai. On the other hand, in respect of the choice of their representatives in local authorities and at school/university, young people from Elbląg have a greater decision-making power than their peers in Gdynia and Telšiai. The results are shown in Figure 3.3.

In the remaining six cases, the representatives of institutions from different municipalities made similar assessments of the level of the decision-making power of youth decision in the individual matters. This means that opinions expressed as to the impact of young people on the allocation of resources from the municipal budget, development of strategies, educational issues in the municipality, public transport in the municipality, cultural initiatives in the municipality, and the prep-

Figure 3.3. Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs municipality represented by the respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)

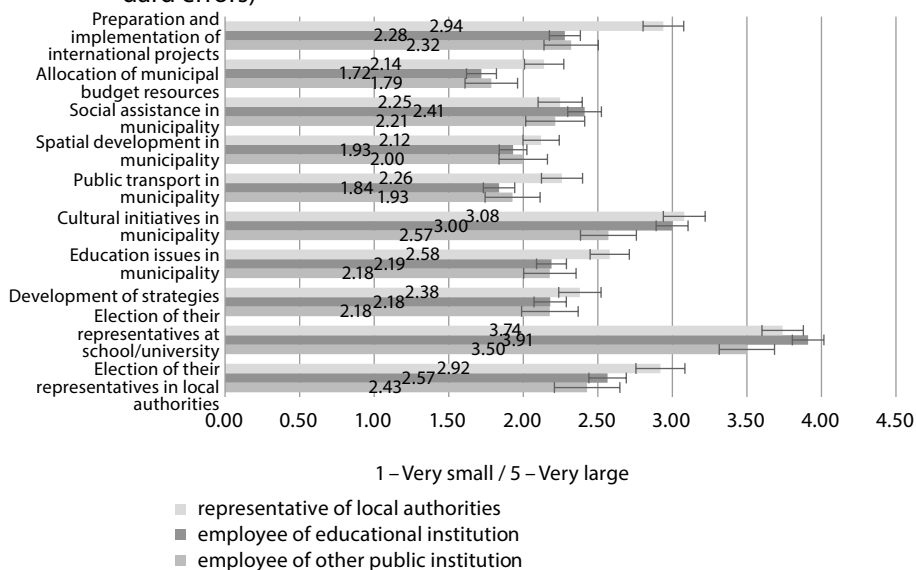


Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

aration and implementation of international projects were independent of the municipality represented by the respondents.

The assessment of young people's participation in the decision-making process in the municipalities investigated varied according to the institution represented. The results of two-way analysis demonstrated a significant interaction effect, $F(13, 1073) = 2.06$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta = 0.03$. The interaction feature explains 3% of the variance of the dependent variable. The differences were observed in half of the multiple-choice answers in that question. The local government representatives gave a significantly higher rating of youth's decision-making power than the employees of educational institutions in the following areas: distribution of resources from the municipal budget ($p < 0.05$), public transport in the municipality ($p < 0.05$), educational issues in the municipality ($p < 0.1$). The representatives of local authorities also assessed significantly more positively the impact exerted by young people on the decisions relating to the preparation and implementation of international projects compared to the employees of educational institutions ($p < 0.01$) and of other public institutions ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, the impact of young people on cultural initiatives in the municipality was rated significantly higher by the representatives of the local authorities than by members of staff of other public institutions ($p < 0.1$). In other cases, representatives of different types of institutions provided similar assessments concerning young people's capacity to influence decisions taken at municipal level. The results are shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4. Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs institution represented by the respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

In conclusion, according to the majority of the institutions, the level of youth involvement in civic participation process in all the municipalities was average. There is a gap between the diagnosed state and the existing potential. However, this does not mean that the situation and possibilities are equal in all the municipalities. According to a majority of respondents, young people from Gdynia, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie were more keen to have an influence on the issues that concern them than their peers in Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Iława and Telšiai. It seems that the potential for enhancing young people's civic participation in the first three municipalities is slightly greater than in the remaining ones. However, in Gdynia, Iława and Dzierzgoń the respondents' opinions as to young people's willingness to engage in cooperation for the closest environment were much more cautious than in Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. From the point of view of the institutional capacity to stimulate civic participation of young people, an important space for cooperation arises from the fact that young people expect adults to help them solve their problems, as confirmed by the majority of respondents in all municipalities. A sine qua non condition should be to overcome the lack of mutual understanding between young people and adults, which was indicated by a dominant group of respondents from almost all municipalities (except Elbląg) as one of the negative experiences in their work with young people.

The unsatisfactory level of youth civic participation in the selected municipalities of the three Southern Baltic region countries is also suggested by the institutions' opinions as to the impact of young people on the decisions taken in the municipality. Overall, in the opinion of institution representatives, young people had the most influence on the election of their representatives at school/university and the least influence on the allocation of resources from the municipal budget. One exception was the municipality of Hässleholm, where young people had an average impact on such issues. Generally, the choice of youth representatives at school/university is the only area where young people had a significant influence in almost all municipalities. In almost all municipalities, young people had very little or no leverage in areas such as spatial development, public transport, creation of municipal development strategies, social assistance and education. They had a slightly greater impact on decisions concerning the preparation and implementation of international projects in the municipality, cultural initiatives in the municipality and election of their representatives in the local authorities. With respect to geography, there were statistically significant differences in the responses of depending on the municipality represented by those surveyed. In the opinion of the representatives of Elbląg institutions, the local youth have a significantly lower impact on decisions in the area of social assistance compared to young people in Gdynia and on spatial planning decisions – compared to youth in Telšiai. On the other hand, when it comes to choosing their representatives in local authorities and at school/university, young people from Elbląg had a greater decision-making power than their peers in Gdynia and Telšiai.

These conclusions encourage the search for effective measures to meet the needs and expectations of young people, public institutions and NGOs wishing to develop participatory decision-making processes at local level. An important consideration here is the need to take into account the specific circumstances of each municipality, as many problems and their solutions are not of universal nature.

3.3. Barriers to youth civic participation

A key aspect of strengthening young people's civic participation is to identify the barriers whose elimination will help to unlock the civil society potential. Factors that have a negative impact from the point of view of institutions' employees also suggest the choice of methods for reducing or eliminating such barriers. In this area, it is also possible to identify similarities and differences between the municipalities of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden participating in the survey.

The prevailing opinions of representatives of the institutional environment of young people in the Lithuanian municipality of Telšiai, the Polish municipalities of Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Hława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and the Swed-

ish municipality of Hässleholm revealed a medium level of youth civic participation. There may be many reasons for this phenomenon, and the studies carried out as part of the SB YCGN project show that there are certain universal barriers as well as those specific to each municipality. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 3.5.

Taking into account the geographical distribution of responses, the most important factors that restrict youth involvement in matters concerning their immediate environment may include:

- lack of willingness on the part of politicians to engage youth in public affairs (prevailing response in Gdynia, Elbląg, Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie);
- adults' disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process (prevailing response in Gdynia and, in the case of Dzierzgoń, equal number of responses corresponding to very high and high strength of the variable);
- excluding young people from co-deciding on public issues (prevailing response in Gdynia and Hässleholm);
- young people's doubts that their participation could change anything (prevailing response in Iława and Dzierzgoń);
- young people's lack of knowledge and skills to participate fully in the decision-making process (most frequent response in Gdynia);
- underrating the knowledge and experience of youth by decision makers (prevailing response in Gdynia);
- lack of formal opportunities for young people to participate in decisions on public matters (prevailing response in Elbląg),
- lack of clear information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs (prevailing response in Gdynia and Elbląg);
- lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs (prevailing answer in Dzierzgoń).

It is noteworthy that the restrictions identified as having the greatest impact on young people's participation processes were indicated as dominant almost exclusively by the Polish respondents, the exception being Hässleholm – with respect to one of the issues. This is due to the fact that, according to employees of public and non-governmental institutions, the most and the strongest barriers to civic participation of young people were chiefly found in Polish municipalities in the following order: Gdynia, Elbląg, Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie.

According to a majority of respondents in Elbląg, Telšiai and Dzierzgoń, a strongly negative impact on young people's involvement in their immediate surroundings arises from their disinterest in local life; in Iława the numbers of answers corresponding to the average and high strength of the variable were balanced

here. By contrast, a majority of those surveyed in Gdynia, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie considered the impact of this factor as medium. The prevailing responses in Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm, and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, pointed to the strongly inhibiting effect of young people's doubts that their involvement could change anything. Lack of knowledge and skills among young people was rated as having a strong negative impact by the respondents from Elbląg and Telšiai, and as having a medium impact by those surveyed in Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. In the opinion of a majority of participants from Telšiai, Hässleholm and Dzierzgoń, the lack of formal opportunities for young people to participate in public decision-making is a major barrier. In Iława, the answers corresponding to the average and high strength of this factor were equally frequent. That issue was also seen as a restriction of medium importance by a majority of those surveyed in Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. A major part of participants from Elbląg, Telšiai and Dzierzgoń considered exclusion of youth from co-deciding on public issues to be a very restrictive factor. According to the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, that factor has a medium impact on impeding the involvement of young people in the affairs of their immediate surroundings. In Elbląg, Hässleholm and Iława, disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process was considered a strongly adverse factor in the opinion of a major part of respondents. In Telšiai, the same number of respondents indicated the strong and medium impact of that item, whereas in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie a substantial majority indicated the medium strength of that feature. A majority of those surveyed in Elbląg, Telšiai, Iława and Dzierzgoń also recognized the underestimating of the knowledge and experience of young people by decision makers as a major barrier. The respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie showed no clear preference and their opinions were divided equally between the strong and medium effect of that factor. A major group of those surveyed in Hässleholm indicated that the impact of that barrier on the involvement of young people in public life was medium. The prevailing opinion in Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg was that the lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs has a strong negative impact. The opinions of those surveyed in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie were divided equally between the strong and medium effect of that factor, whereas in Hässleholm a majority pointed to its medium impact. A major barrier in Telšiai and Iława was the lack of willingness on the part of politicians to engage youth in public affairs; in Hässleholm the respondents considered that issue to have a medium negative effect. The strongly limiting effect of the lack of clear information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs on the engagement of young people in the issues concerning their environment was identified by a majority of those surveyed in Iława, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. According to the respondents in Dzierzgoń, it had an average impact. It is difficult to assess the significance of that issue in Hässleholm due to the absence of a prevailing response – the same

number of participants indicated the strong and low impact of the factor. Broadly understood competences of institutions as well as youth are a key element of civic education. Various types of schools, in particular universities, although they appreciate the importance of this aspect of their role, in practice it is not always easy for them to unleash the potential of civic involvement of young people, which is increasingly recognized as an important feature of healthy democratic communities and cultures. The impact of educational practices and student learning on local communities seems to be one of the best ways to shape youth civic participation in the long run⁵⁴.

The issue of relatively lowest importance as a barrier to youth involvement in the affairs of their immediate environment are the bans imposed by their parents or guardians. In the opinion of a majority of respondents from Telšiai and Hässleholm, it had a medium impact on the involvement of young people in local affairs, and according to the respondents from all the Polish municipalities its influence was small or very small. However, it is worth to pay attention to the issues of relations of children and young people with parents and grandparents, which are particularly important for their civic participation. The family plays a much more important role in developing a willingness to engage in civil society than is commonly seen⁵⁵. This means that youth civic education should start in the family and be conducted in cooperation with family members of young people.

One-way analysis of variance confirmed the validity of the above conclusions and showed that there were significant differences between the responses $F(7, 1549)=37.67$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.15$. The differences between the answers to the individual test items amounted to 15% in total. According to the survey participants, the factor with the most significant limiting impact on young people's involvement in their immediate environment is politicians' reluctance to involve young people in public matters, and that with the lowest impact is the ban imposed by parents or guardians. The results are shown in Figure 3.5.

The gender of institution representatives does not differentiate their assessment of the impact of the various factors limiting the involvement of young people in the affairs of their immediate surroundings, as a two-way analysis of variance showed no significant interaction effect between the two factors, $F(7,1535) = 1.64$; ns. The lack of significant interaction was also revealed with respect to member-

⁵⁴ See: *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*, Lonnie R. Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta and Constance A. Flanagan (Eds.), 2010 Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons, p. 706; D. Watson, R. Hollister, S. E. Stroud, E. Babcock, *The engaged university: international perspectives on civic engagement*, Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 282.

⁵⁵ E. Muddiman, C. Taylor, S. Power, K. Moles, Young people, family relationships and civic participation, *Journal of Civil Society*, 2019, Vol. 15, Issue 1, pp. 82–98.

Table 3.5. Barriers to youth involvement in matters concerning their immediate environment in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania		Poland					Sweden		Σ
			Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Ilawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm			
1.	Young people's lack of interest in local life ⁶⁶	Very low impact	10(5)	0(0.0)	10(5)	20(9)	20(9)	20(9)	20(9)	0(0.0)	4(1.9)	10(4.7)
		Low impact	20(9)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	10(4.7)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	7(3.3)	3(1.4)	7(3.3)	34(16.0)
		Medium impact	7(3.3)	20(9)	11(5.2)	19(9.0)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	10(4.7)	6(2.8)	20(9)	63(29.6)
		Strong impact	15(7.1)	11(5.2)	15(7.1)	15(7.1)	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	20(9)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	71(33.3)
		Very strong impact	5(2.4)	10(5)	8(3.8)	14(6.6)	3(1.4)	20(9)	10(5)	35(16.4)		
		Very low impact	10(5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	10(5)	0(0.0)	10(5)	10(5)	4(1.9)		
		Low impact	10(5)	3(1.4)	20(9)	5(2.4)	20(9)	4(1.9)	6(2.8)	23(10.8)		
2.	Lack of conviction that their involvement would change anything ⁶⁷	Medium impact	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	49(23.0)			
		Strong impact	15(7.1)	5(2.4)	17(8.1)	22(10.3)	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	80(37.6)			
		Very strong impact	4(1.9)	5(2.4)	15(7.1)	18(8.5)	9(4.3)	20(9)	56(26.3)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	5(2.4)	10(5)	0(0.0)	20(9)	9(4.2)		
		Low impact	20(9)	6(2.8)	11(5.2)	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	20(9)	9(4.3)	42(19.7)		
		Medium impact	11(5.2)	7(3.3)	11(5.2)	15(7.1)	11(5.2)	11(5.2)	77(36.2)			
		Strong impact	14(6.6)	4(1.9)	16(7.6)	15(7.1)	7(3.3)	4(1.9)	62(29.1)			
3.	Young people's lack of knowledge and skills ⁶⁸	Very strong impact	20(9)	0(0.0)	10(5)	16(7.6)	20(9)	10(5)	22(10.3)			
		Very low impact	20(9)	6(2.8)	13(6.2)	12(5.6)	4(1.9)	6(2.8)	45(21.1)			
		Low impact	20(9)	4(1.9)	10(4.7)	24(11.3)	12(5.6)	6(2.8)	64(30.0)			
		Medium impact	13(6.2)	10(5)	7(3.3)	9(4.3)	6(2.8)	4(1.9)	52(24.4)			
		Strong impact	11(5.2)	3(1.4)	7(3.3)	11(5.2)	10(5)	10(5)	36(16.9)			
		Very strong impact	20(9)	3(1.4)	20(9)	4(1.9)	10(5)	10(5)	15(7.0)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	10(5)	20(9)	10(5)	10(5)	10(5)	9(4.2)			
4.	Banning young people from engagement in local affairs by their parents/guardians	Low impact	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	30(14.1)			
		Medium impact	10(4.7)	3(1.4)	13(6.2)	20(9.4)	8(3.8)	9(4.3)	69(32.4)			
		Strong impact	12(5.6)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	12(5.7)	8(3.8)	20(9)	57(26.8)			
		Very strong impact	3(1.4)	20(9)	14(6.6)	18(8.5)	4(1.9)	10(5)	48(22.5)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	10(5)	3(1.4)	10(5)	20(9)	20(9)	10(4.7)			
		Low impact	4(1.9)	10(5)	20(9)	7(3.3)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	28(13.1)			
		Medium impact	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	9(4.3)	15(7.1)	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	53(24.9)			
5.	Lack of formal possibility for young people to participate in decisions on public matters (e.g. because of an age limit)	Strong impact	13(6.2)	10(4.7)	16(7.6)	18(8.5)	9(4.3)	4(1.9)	73(34.3)			
		Very strong impact	3(1.4)	20(9)	9(4.3)	19(9.0)	4(1.9)	20(9)	47(22.1)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	20(9)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	10(5)	10(5)	8(3.8)			
		Low impact	10(5)	0(0.0)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	22(10.3)			
		Medium impact	11(5.2)	10(5)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	47(22.1)			
		Strong impact	11(5.2)	7(3.3)	15(7.1)	15(7.1)	10(4.7)	4(1.9)	74(34.7)			
		Very strong impact	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	13(6.2)	26(12.3)	5(2.4)	20(9)	61(28.6)			
6.	Excluding young people from co-deciding on public issues	Very strong impact	3(1.4)	20(9)	9(4.3)	19(9.0)	4(1.9)	20(9)	47(22.1)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	10(5)	3(1.4)	14(6.6)	10(5)	10(5)	8(3.8)			
		Low impact	4(1.9)	10(5)	20(9)	7(3.3)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	28(13.1)			
		Medium impact	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	9(4.3)	15(7.1)	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	53(24.9)			
		Strong impact	13(6.2)	10(4.7)	16(7.6)	18(8.5)	9(4.3)	4(1.9)	73(34.3)			
		Very strong impact	3(1.4)	20(9)	9(4.3)	19(9.0)	4(1.9)	20(9)	47(22.1)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	20(9)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	10(5)	10(5)	8(3.8)			
7.	Adults' disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process ⁶⁹	Low impact	10(5)	0(0.0)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	22(10.3)			
		Medium impact	11(5.2)	10(5)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	47(22.1)			
		Strong impact	11(5.2)	7(3.3)	15(7.1)	15(7.1)	10(4.7)	4(1.9)	74(34.7)			
		Very strong impact	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	13(6.2)	26(12.3)	5(2.4)	20(9)	61(28.6)			
		Very low impact	10(5)	10(5)	3(1.4)	14(6.6)	10(5)	10(5)	8(3.8)			
		Low impact	4(1.9)	10(5)	20(9)	7(3.3)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	22(10.3)			
		Medium impact	9(4.3)	3(1.4)	9(4.3)	15(7.1)	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	53(24.9)			

8.	Underrating the knowledge and experience of youth by decision makers ⁵⁶	Very low impact	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(2.8)	
		Low impact	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	4(1.9)	17(8.0)
		Medium impact	6(2.8)	2(0.9)	7(3.3)	12(5.7)	7(3.3)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	8(3.8)	5(2.4)	47(22.1)
		Strong impact	15(7.1)	8(3.8)	19(9.0)	20(9.4)	10(4.7)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	5(2.4)	84(39.4)
9.	Lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs ⁶¹	Very low impact	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	22(10.4)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	55(25.8)	
		Low impact	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	28(13.1)	
		Medium impact	3(1.4)	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	9(4.3)	51(23.9)	
		Strong impact	19(9.0)	3(1.4)	16(7.6)	21(9.9)	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	6(2.8)	7(3.3)	8(3.8)	80(37.6)	
10.	Lack of willingness on the part of politicians to engage youth in public affairs ⁶²	Very strong impact	7(3.3)	6(2.8)	10(4.7)	13(6.2)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	46(21.6)	
		Very low impact	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	7(3.3)	
		Low impact	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	16(7.5)	
		Medium impact	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	3(1.4)	11(5.2)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	9(4.3)	4(1.9)	41(19.2)	
11.	Lack of clear information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs ⁶³	Strong impact	13(6.2)	3(1.4)	15(7.1)	21(9.9)	10(4.7)	4(1.9)	4(1.9)	6(2.8)	6(2.8)	72(33.8)	
		Very strong impact	9(4.3)	6(2.8)	19(9.0)	25(10.9)	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	76(35.7)	
		Very low impact	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	4(1.9)	7(3.3)	
		Low impact	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	20(9.4)	
12.	Other – specify:	Medium impact	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	5(2.4)	11(5.2)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	41(19.2)	
		Strong impact	13(6.2)	5(2.4)	14(7.1)	14(7.1)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	7(3.3)	73(24.3)	
		Very strong impact	7(3.3)	2(0.9)	17(8.1)	31(14.8)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	69(32.4)	

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁵⁶ In Dzierzgoń – 1 non-response.

⁵⁷ In Dzierzgoń – 1 non-response.

⁵⁸ In Dzierzgoń – 1 non-response.

⁵⁹ In Nowe Miasto Lubawskie – 1 non-response.

⁶⁰ In Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie: 1 non-response each.

⁶¹ In Elbląg, Gdynia and Ilawa: 1 non-response each.

⁶² In Gdynia – 1 non-response.

⁶³ In Elbląg, Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie: 1 non-response each.

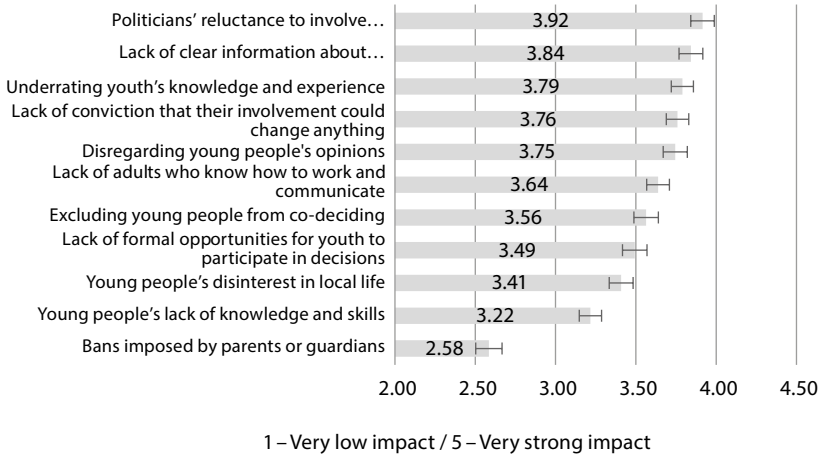
⁶⁴ “lack of this tradition”.

⁶⁵ “Upbringing in the spirit and a sense of influence over decisions, politics – low flight policy”, „Experiences – instrumental use of young people to sanction already made decisions”, I no answer.

⁶⁶ Out of 11 answers, only 4 were developed: “lack of time”, “general abnegation of young people”, “lack of proper advertising of activities in which young people can do something”, “Focus on themselves appropriate for this age and time spent at the university, at school”.

⁶⁷ “People on sport”.

Figure 3.5. Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs institution represented by the respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

ship of a specific type of institution and the assessment of the impact of the individual barriers on youth involvement in their immediate environment $F(14,1164) = 1.39$; ns. However, a significant interaction effect, $F(14, 891) = 2.93$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.05$ was identified via two-way analysis of variance in the case of the municipality represented and the opinion on the individual barriers to youth civic participation. The interaction feature explains 5% of the variance of the dependent variable. As to the absence of clear information on the opportunities for young people to engage in local affairs, representatives of Gdynia institutions rated the impact of that factor significantly higher than the respondents from Telšiai ($p < 0.1$). With regard to banning young people from engagement in local affairs by their parents/guardians, representatives of the institutions from Telšiai placed significantly more emphasis on the negative impact of that factor than those from Elbląg ($p < 0.01$) or Gdynia ($p < 0.05$). In the remaining cases, the municipality represented by the respondents did not differentiate their views: they made similar assessments of the limiting impact of those factors. This means that the lack of appropriate and accessible information on young people's opportunities to engage in local affairs is a stronger restriction for young people from Gdynia than from Telšiai, but the Lithuanian respondents, compared to those in Gdynia and Elbląg, considered that the bans on the part of parents/guardians constituted a greater barrier for young people.

In conclusion, it should be noted that a majority of the barriers to civic participation, as indicated by representatives of Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish public and non-governmental institutions, are present in all the municipalities concerned and their impact is perceived quite similarly by all respondents. The study revealed that most representatives of public and non-governmental institutions consider the following factors to be the major barriers to youth involvement in the affairs of their immediate environment:

- lack of willingness on the part of politicians to engage youth in public affairs – to the greatest extent in Gdynia, Elbląg, Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie;
- adults’ disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process – to the greatest extent in Gdynia;
- excluding young people from co-deciding on public issues – to the greatest extent in Gdynia and Hässleholm;
- young people’s doubts that their participation could change anything – to the greatest extent in Iława and Dzierzgoń;
- young people’s lack of knowledge and skills to participate fully in the decision-making process – to the greatest extent in Gdynia;
- underrating the knowledge and experience of youth by decision makers – to the greatest extent in Gdynia;
- lack of formal opportunities for young people to participate in decisions on public matters – to the greatest extent in Elbląg;
- lack of clear information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs – to the greatest extent in Gdynia and Elbląg;
- lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs – to the greatest extent in Dzierzgoń.

It might be worth noting that the restrictions identified as having the greatest impact on young people’s participation processes were highlighted almost exclusively by the Polish respondents, the exception being Hässleholm – in respect of one of the issues. The most numerous and strongest barriers were identified in the Polish municipalities in the following order: Gdynia, Elbląg, Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. This suggests that employees of public and non-governmental institutions, particularly in Poland and Sweden, should undertake intensive and large-scale measures to reduce or eliminate these barriers in order to enhance the civic participation of young people in the long term.

In the opinion of those surveyed in all the municipalities, the factor with the most significant limiting impact on young people’s involvement in their immediate environment is politicians’ reluctance to involve young people in public matters, and that with the lowest impact are bans imposed by parents or guardians. It is also worth considering such negative factors as young people’s belief that en-

gaging in public affairs is pointless, disregarding young people's opinions in the decision-making process, keeping youth from co-deciding on public affairs or the decision makers' reluctance to involve young people in public matters. They are particularly significant for civic participation of both youth and adults. Therefore, in addition to other major barriers, these issues should be addressed and minimised by decision-makers in the first place and with greatest determination.

3.4. Local institutions' needs and effective instruments for youth civic participation enhancement

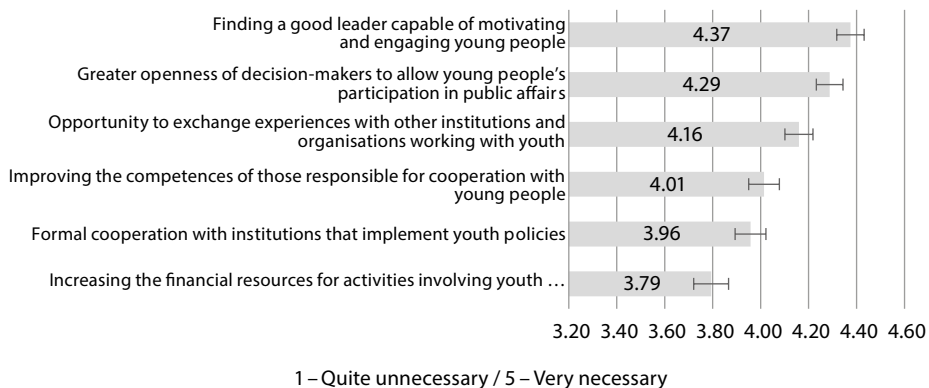
The situation in each of the municipalities surveyed is unique in terms of scope, form and barriers to civic participation. Although many problems could be described as rather universal, there are noticeable differences in the experience and capacity of the institutions in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people.

The survey conducted as part of the SB YCGN project showed that all the municipalities concerned had considerable needs that determined their ability to increase civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 3.6. The vast majority of the categories analysed were considered to be rather necessary or very necessary. The key need and at the same time one of the most serious issues in the Polish municipalities (Gdynia, Elbląg, Iława, Dzierzgoń, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie) and in the Lithuanian municipality (Telšiai) as indicated by a majority of respondents was finding a good leader who would be able to motivate and involve young people effectively. One exception was Hässleholm, where the respondents found that aspect to be indifferent. A major part of those surveyed in Gdynia, Elbląg, Iława and Dzierzgoń identified greater openness of decision-makers to involve young people in public matters as one of the most important needs. In Telšiai, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, most of the respondents stated that such an attitude was rather necessary in their municipality in order to positively influence the participatory nature of decision-making processes. According to a majority of those surveyed in Gdynia, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń, there was a pressing need to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with young people. The prevailing opinion in Telšiai, Hässleholm, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie was that it is a rather necessary instrument for engaging young people in decision-making. This aspect also entails a very strong need for increasing the competences of those responsible for cooperation with young people in Gdynia and Elbląg and, respectively a strong need in Telšiai, Hässleholm, Iława and Dzierzgoń. In Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, the opinions of the respondents were equally distributed between the options "rather necessary" and "neither necessary nor unnecessary".

A majority of participants from Gdynia and Elbląg also considered it very necessary to develop formal cooperation with youth policy institutions, including those in the Baltic Sea region, whereas the respondents from other municipalities perceived that instrument as rather necessary.

The need to increase the funds for engaging youth in decision-making concerning public affairs was confirmed by participants from all the municipalities surveyed. It was considered to be highly necessary by a majority of respondents Elbląg, while in other municipalities an increase in expenditure was seen as rather necessary in order to increase the civic participation of young people. This was also confirmed by one-factor analysis of variance, which revealed significant differences between the answers $F(4, 946)=20.78$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.09$. The least urgent need was to increase the financial resources for activities involving young people in public decision-making, whereas the most pressing one was finding a good leader able to motivate and engage young people effectively. The differences between the answers to the individual test questions were 9% in total. The results are shown in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6. Local institutions' needs in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

A two-factor analysis also confirms the existence of a significant interaction effect between the opinions of the subjects and the represented municipality, $F(9, 541) = 2.83$; $p<0.01$; $\eta=0.04$. The interaction feature explains 4% of the variance of the dependent variable. The representatives of Elbląg institutions gave augmentation of financial resources for activities involving young people in deciding on public affairs a much higher priority than their counterparts in Gdynia ($p<0.01$). No other significant inter-group differences were observed in respect of the remaining test items.

Table 3.6. Local institutions' needs in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania		Poland					Sweden		Σ
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Iława	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm			
1.	Increasing funds for activities engaging young people in public decision-making	Quite unnecessary	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(2.8)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	4(1.9)	11 (5.2)		
		Rather unnecessary	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	7(3.2)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	14 (6.6)		
		Neither necessary nor unnecessary	6(2.8)	2(0.9)	6(2.8)	13(6.1)	4(1.9)	3(1.4)	4(1.9)	38 (17.8)		
2.	Improving the competences of adults responsible for cooperation with young people	Rather necessary	14(6.6)	8(3.8)	15(7)	22(10.3)	13(6.1)	13(6.1)	10(4.7)	95 (44.6)		
		Very necessary	8(3.8)	7(3.2)	17(8)	12(5.6)	7(3.2)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)	55 (25.8)		
		Quite unnecessary	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	4 (1.9)		
3.	Opportunity to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with youth	Rather unnecessary	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(1.4)	12 (5.6)		
		Neither necessary nor unnecessary	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	10(4.7)	2(0.9)	7(3.2)	4(1.9)	31 (14.6)		
		Rather necessary	19(8.9)	10(4.7)	13(6.1)	21(9.9)	12(5.6)	7(3.2)	14(0)	96 (45.1)		
4.	Greater openness of decision-makers to include young people in public decision-making ⁶⁸	Very necessary	6(2.8)	4(1.9)	19(8.9)	25(11.8)	10(4.7)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	70 (32.9)		
		Quite unnecessary	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	3 (1.4)		
		Rather unnecessary	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	5 (2.3)		
3.	Opportunity to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with youth	Neither necessary nor unnecessary	3(1.4)	2(0.9)	6(2.8)	10(4.7)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	30 (14.1)		
		Rather necessary	15(7)	7(3.2)	15(7)	21(9.9)	12(5.6)	9(4.3)	13(6.1)	92 (43.2)		
		Very necessary	11(5.2)	8(3.8)	17(8)	28(13.1)	11(5.2)	5(2.4)	2(0.9)	83 (39)		
4.	Greater openness of decision-makers to include young people in public decision-making ⁶⁸	Quite unnecessary	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	1 (0.5)		
		Rather unnecessary	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	5 (2.3)		
		Neither necessary nor unnecessary	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	0(0.0)	6(2.8)	4(1.9)	27 (12.7)		
4.	Greater openness of decision-makers to include young people in public decision-making ⁶⁸	Rather necessary	14(6.6)	5(2.4)	13(6.1)	15(7)	10(4.7)	9(4.3)	12(5.6)	78 (36.6)		
		Very necessary	12(5.6)	10(4.7)	20(9.4)	35(16.5)	14(6.6)	2(0.9)	7(3.2)	101 (47.4)		

5.	Formal cooperation with institutions that implement youth policies, also in the Baltic Sea Region	Quite unnecessary	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	5(2.3)
		Rather unnecessary	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	2(0.9)	9(4.2)
		Neither necessary nor unnecessary	3(1.4)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	14(6.6)	3(1.4)	6(2.8)	7(3.2)	41(19.2)
		Rather necessary	20(9.4)	7(3.2)	15(7)	17(8)	15(7)	7(3.2)	12(5.6)	96(43.7)
6.	Finding a good leader capable of motivating and engaging young people effectively	Very necessary	6(2.8)	6(2.8)	18(8.5)	24(11.3)	6(2.8)	3(1.4)	1(0.5)	65(30.5)
		Quite unnecessary	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)
		Rather unnecessary	3(1.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	0(0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	5(2.3)
		Neither necessary nor unnecessary	2(0.9)	1(0.5)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(5.2)	22(10.3)
7.	Other – specify	Rather necessary	11(5.2)	6(2.8)	12(5.6)	14(6.6)	10(4.7)	6(2.8)	6(2.8)	65(30.5)
		Very necessary	14(6.6)	10(4.7)	24(11.3)	38(18)	14(6.6)	11(5.2)	5(2.4)	117(54.9)
			2(0.9) ⁶⁸	1(0.5)	4(1.9) ⁷⁰	10(4.7) ⁷¹	1(0.5)	1(0.5) ⁷²	2(0.9) ⁷³	21(9.9)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁶⁸ In Gdynia – 1 non-response.

⁶⁹ "Leaders are enough. It is more important to educate and have more than one leader, but to attract as many students as possible to innovate and convince them that they can contribute to change", "Depoliticisation of NGO leaders is much needed".

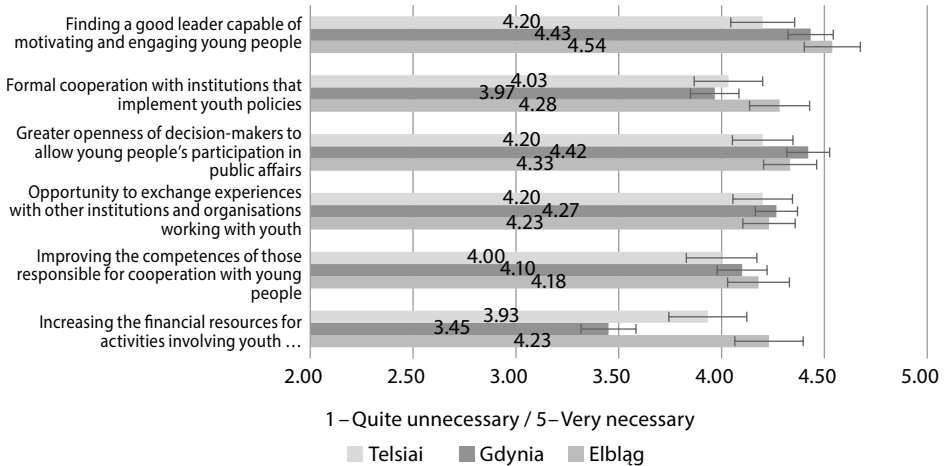
⁷⁰ Out of 4 answers, 3 were developed: "Appreciation by municipal authorities, adults who cooperate with young people, are able and willing to do it", "do not disturb, encourage promotion", "work on the issue of participation in early school years", "greater, strategic openness of the institution in providing space, space, on its own terms – building young people ability to achieve or change or do something and then an attempt to integrate in other processes."

⁷¹ Out of 10 answers, 3 were developed: "finding leaders among the youth themselves and training these leaders", "start with civic education from an early age", "can go to international exchanges and learn how to live abroad, work there ... learn".

⁷² "building a swimming pool".

⁷³ „Better working conditions among adult professionals. If they work hard where more reasonable they would be more likely to find ways to engage young people”; „More financial resources for activities involving young people in international youth issues.”

Figure 3.7. Local institutions' needs in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people vs the municipality represented (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

In the light of two-way analysis of variance, neither gender ($F(4.943) = 0.68$; ns) nor membership of a specific type of institution ($F(9.691) = 1.26$; ns) differentiates the assessment of factors that increase civic participation of young people.

Improving the competences of those responsible for cooperation with young people was identified by a major group of respondents as “rather necessary” in 5 municipalities and as “very necessary” in 2 municipalities. As a follow-up, the staff of public and non-governmental institutions were inquired about the additional knowledge and skills that would facilitate their cooperation with young people with the aim of engaging youth in public affairs. The study revealed that a majority of respondents in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden alike selected the enhancement of knowledge and skills in the area of psychology, sociology and pedagogy. Most of the participants from Gdynia, Telsiai and Iława reported the need for psychological knowledge, whereas interest in sociology was declared by a majority of those surveyed from Elbląg, Hässleholm, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierżoń. Pedagogical issues were the least frequently mentioned in all responses, which is presumably due to the training received by youth workers in this area. However, a few respondents from each municipality pointed to some existing competence gaps. The personnel of Lithuanian institutions, for example, lack theoretical knowledge of civic education and practical skills in that area, whereas teachers complain about insufficient knowledge of the principles of functioning of NGOs. In Dzierżoń and Elbląg, representatives of the institutions additionally

pointed to the need to improve their legal knowledge and coaching skills. In Sweden, there was a need for knowledge on how to motivate and inspire young people, as well as for better knowledge of social media, including effective channels for reaching to and communicating with young people. The respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie reported only the need concerning sports activities. Gdynia declared the most extensive requirements concerning the improvement of skills of representatives of the institutional environment of young people. This included additional knowledge in the field of politics, sociology, economics and philosophy. The respondents also pointed to the shortage of time to develop the forms of civic education outside school and insufficiency of additional remuneration for these responsibilities. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7. Additional knowledge and skills of institution representatives that would facilitate cooperation with young people with the aim of engaging youth in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

Area of knowledge/skills	Lithuania	Poland					Sweden	Σ
	Telšiai	Dzierżgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm	
Pedagogy	14(6.6)	6(2.8)	9(4.2)	18(8.5)	6(2.8)	13(6.1)	14(6.6)	80(37.6)
Psychology	21(9.9)	6(2.8)	19(8.9)	28(13.1)	13(6.1)	13(6.1)	8(3.8)	108(50.7)
Sociology	16(7.5)	8(3.8)	26(12.2)	27(12.7)	12(5.6)	15(7)	15(7)	120(56.3)
Other	1(0.5) ⁷⁴	2(0.9) ⁷⁵	2(0.9) ⁷⁶	10(4.7) ⁷⁷	1(0.5)	1(0.5) ⁷⁸	1(0.5) ⁷⁹	17(8.0)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁷⁴ There was developed one answer by respondent: "Both theoretical civic education knowledge and practical skills are lacking. Teachers are not familiar with the principles of non-governmental organizations".

⁷⁵ There were developed two answers by respondents: "law" and "coaching".

⁷⁶ There were developed two answers by respondents: "law" and "coaching".

⁷⁷ There were developed following answers by respondents: 4 answers regarding political science and sociology ("political science", "regarding political structures", "in the field of politics and activities of the commune, what we are allowed, in which we can decide", "political science, knowledge about society"); 2 answers regarding economics ("lectures about enterprise", "economics, business") 1 answer on "philosophy", 1 answer on "'being a coach", 1 answer "I don't need something like that", 1 answer "not so much knowledge as time at work for the kind of activity for which I will receive additional remuneration", 1 answer "more time at work to develop activities outside the curriculum, it is currently impossible".

⁷⁸ 1 answer "sports".

⁷⁹ There were developed two answers: „knowledge of how to inspire youth” and “increased knowledge of social media and through which channels to reach young people”.

Another issue investigated was the evaluation of the effectiveness of selected forms of stimulating young people's civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 3.8. In general, a majority of respondents from the three countries considered the forms examined as effective and very effective. These top grades were awarded to the following initiatives:

- promotion of youth civic participation via the Internet;
- informing of youth civic participation opportunities in the media;
- creation of youth councils in municipalities;
- organisation of “round tables”, e.g. by public institutions;
- the development of cooperation networks among young people at local level;
- the development of cooperation networks between young people at cross-border level;
- opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of local authorities;
- opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of school authorities.

The municipality was not a differentiating factor in the assessment of effectiveness of the different efforts to increase the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, as two-way analysis of variance revealed no significant interaction between the two factors, $F(17,1052) = 1.22$; ns. However, examination of the prevailing responses discloses certain differences in opinion across municipalities, due to specific local constraints and needs. Most of the respondents from Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm, Håwa and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie found that enabling young people to comment on draft decisions of school authorities and local authorities was an effective method of stimulating civic participation; according to those surveyed in Dzierzgoń these were the most effective ways in that respect. In the opinion of a majority of respondents from Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm, Håwa and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, young people can also be effectively influenced by media information about the existing opportunities for civic participation and by developing youth cooperation in networks at local level, which, according to the respondents in Gdynia and Dzierzgoń, are very powerful instruments. A majority of participants from Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm, Håwa and Dzierzgoń also highly rated the effectiveness of developing cooperation between young people via cross-border networks, while most of the respondents from Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie gave it a very important role. In respect of the ways in which young people's civic participation may be promoted, most of the people surveyed in Gdynia, Elbląg, Håwa and Dzierzgoń gave the highest ratings to Internet-based activities. In Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, the respondents' opinions were equally distributed between a high and very high effectiveness of online promotion, and the participants in Telshi and Hässleholm considered these measures to

be effective. The views of promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment were somewhat different. In Gdynia, Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie it was considered to be a very effective way of stimulating the involvement of young people in public affairs, in Iława, Telšiai and Dzierzgoń was that such an instrument was effective, and in Hässleholm a majority of the respondents deemed such a promotion formula to be of medium importance. A major part of the respondents from Gdynia, Elbląg⁸⁰, Iława, Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie found that an effective tool for informing, coaching and stimulating youth civic participation could be youth meetings with representatives of NGOs. The opportunity to work with experienced representatives of the third sector would make young people more willing and more likely to participate in public life. According to a majority of respondents from Hässleholm, that tool was moderately effective.

A successful way of involving young people in decision-making is also the establishment of youth councils in municipalities such as Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm, which most of the respondents from Iława and Dzierzgoń recognised as very effective in terms of influencing young people. As to the organisation of “round tables”, a majority of those surveyed in Gdynia, Elbląg, Iława, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, considered it to be an effective form of dialogue between officials, politicians and young people. In Telšiai and Dzierzgoń, most of the respondents stated that it was a very good formula because of its participative nature. It is also important to enable young people to influence local authorities’ decisions regarding the allocation of financial resources to meet the needs of that group of municipality population. For this reason, the participation of young people in the allocation of municipal budget resources was recognised by most of the respondents from Gdynia, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Iława as an effective way of increasing civic participation. In Dzierzgoń, opinions were divided as to whether it was an effective or very effective form, while the respondents from Elbląg had no doubts as to its high effectiveness. Only in the case of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie prevailed the opinion that youth participation in decisions concerning the municipal budget had a moderate effect on increasing their civic engagement. There was also a difference of opinion on the effectiveness of creating a list of areas where young people could co-decide. A majority of the respondents in Gdynia strongly supported that solution, in Elbląg the opinions were distributed equally between very high and high effectiveness of that form, whereas in Telšiai, Iława and Dzierzgoń dominated the view that such method of including young people in decision-making processes was highly effective. The representatives of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie institutions did not decide unanimously whether such an initiative would have a high or medium impact on increasing youth

⁸⁰ In Elbląg, the responses were equally divided between the effective and very effective option.

Table 3.8. Effectiveness of various forms of impact on increasing youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania		Poland					Sweden		Σ
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm			
1.	Politicians' meetings with youth ⁶¹	Very ineffective	2(1)	1(0.5)	6(2.9)	5(2.4)	0(0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	16(7.5)	
		Ineffective	4(1.9)	5(2.4)	9(4.3)	13(6.2)	3(1.4)	8(3.8)	5(2.4)	47(22.1)		
		Moderately effective	15(7)	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	21(9.9)	5(2.4)	1(0.5)	7(3.4)	57(26.8)		
		Effective	7(3.4)	7(3.4)	10(4.7)	10(4.7)	12(5.7)	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	57(26.8)		
2.	Meetings of officials with youth at schools/universities	Very effective	2(1)	2(1)	8(3.8)	11(5.2)	4(1.9)	2(0.9)	6(3.8)	35(16.4)		
		Very ineffective	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	4(1.9)	8(3.8)	0(0.0)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	16(7.5)		
		Ineffective	3(1.4)	7(3.8)	8(3.8)	11(5.2)	1(0.5)	4(1.9)	5(2.4)	39(18.3)		
		Moderately effective	14(6.6)	4(1.9)	6(2.9)	20(9.4)	7(3.4)	4(1.9)	6(2.9)	61(28.6)		
3.	Meetings of officials with young people in public institutions, outside the school	Effective	9(4.3)	1(0.5)	13(6.2)	14(6.6)	12(5.7)	6(2.8)	7(3.4)	62(29.1)		
		Very effective	3(1.4)	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	7(3.4)	4(1.9)	3(1.5)	5(2.4)	35(16.4)		
		Very ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	0(0.0)	2(1)	2(1)	14(6.6)		
		Ineffective	2(1)	4(1.9)	6(2.8)	14(6.6)	1(0.5)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	36(16.9)		
4.	Youth meetings with representatives of NGOs ⁶²	Moderately effective	13(6.2)	3(1.5)	12(5.7)	19(9)	8(3.8)	4(1.9)	5(2.4)	64(30.0)		
		Effective	12(5.7)	6(2.9)	9(4.3)	9(4.3)	11(5.2)	2(1)	8(3.8)	57(26.8)		
		Very effective	2(1)	5(2.4)	7(3.4)	12(5.7)	3(1.5)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	39(18.3)		
		Very ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	2(1)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(1.9)	8(3.8)		
5.	Opportunity to comment on draft decisions of school authorities	Ineffective	1(0.5)	2(1)	3(1.5)	6(2.8)	0(0.0)	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	21(9.9)		
		Moderately effective	8(3.8)	3(1.5)	4(1.9)	11(5.2)	4(1.9)	2(1)	8(3.8)	40(18.8)		
		Effective	12(5.7)	7(3.4)	15(7)	24(11.3)	13(6.2)	6(2.8)	3(1.5)	80(37.6)		
		Very effective	8(3.8)	6(2.8)	15(7)	18(8.5)	7(3.4)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	64(30.0)		
5.	Opportunity to comment on draft decisions of school authorities	Very ineffective	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(1)	3(1.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	5(2.3)		
		Ineffective	3(1.5)	3(1.5)	2(1)	5(2.4)	0(0.0)	3(1.5)	5(2.4)	21(9.9)		
		Moderately effective	8(3.8)	4(1.9)	7(3.4)	16(7.5)	7(3.4)	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	53(24.9)		
		Effective	14(6.6)	4(1.9)	18(8.5)	21(9.9)	10(4.7)	7(3.4)	10(4.7)	84(39.4)		
5.	Opportunity to comment on draft decisions of school authorities	Very effective	5(2.4)	7(3.4)	10(4.7)	15(7)	7(3.4)	3(1.5)	3(1.5)	50(23.5)		

6.	Opportunity to comment on draft decisions of local authorities	Very ineffective	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(1.5)	4(1.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	7(3.3)
		Ineffective	3(1.5)	3(1.5)	2(1)	5(2.4)	10(5)	6(2.8)	5(2.4)	25(11.7)		
		Moderately effective	10(4.7)	2(1)	9(4.3)	18(8.5)	5(2.4)	3(1.5)	7(3.4)	54(25.4)		
		Effective	13(6.1)	6(2.8)	18(8.5)	21(9.9)	12(5.7)	7(3.4)	10(4.7)	87(40.8)		
		Very effective	4(1.9)	7(3.4)	6(2.8)	12(5.7)	6(2.8)	2(1)	2(1)	39(18.3)		
7.	Creation of a list of areas where young people can co-decide ⁸³	Very ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(0.9)
		Ineffective	3(1.5)	4(1.9)	2(1)	2(1)	0(0)	3(1.5)	1(0.5)	15(7.0)		
		Moderately effective	6(2.8)	0(0.0)	2(1)	15(7)	5(2.4)	5(2.4)	12(5.7)	45(21.1)		
		Effective	13(6.1)	7(3.4)	17(8.1)	20(9.4)	10(4.7)	5(2.4)	10(4.7)	82(38.5)		
		Very effective	7(3.4)	6(2.8)	17(8.1)	23(10.9)	9(4.3)	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	67(31.5)		
8.	Opportunity for young people to co-decide about commune budget allocation ⁸⁴	Very ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0)	4(1.9)	5(2.4)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	3(1.5)	15(7.0)		
		Ineffective	2(1)	4(1.9)	3(1.5)	6(2.8)	2(1)	1(0.5)	3(1.5)	21(9.9)		
		Moderately effective	7(3.4)	2(1)	7(3.4)	18(8.5)	6(2.8)	7(3.4)	8(3.8)	55(25.8)		
		Effective	16(7.5)	6(2.8)	12(5.7)	20(9.4)	9(4.3)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	78(36.6)		
		Very effective	4(1.9)	6(2.8)	13(6.1)	11(5.2)	6(2.8)	2(1)	1(0.5)	43(20.2)		
9.	Organisation of public hearings for young people	Very ineffective	0(0)	0(0)	2(1)	3(1.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	2(1)	9(4.2)		
		Ineffective	2(1)	0(0)	4(1.9)	9(4.3)	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	16(7.5)		
		Moderately effective	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	10(4.7)	19(9)	7(3.4)	10(4.7)	7(3.4)	64(30.0)		
		Effective	14(6.6)	7(3.4)	17(8.1)	19(9)	7(3.4)	5(2.4)	11(5.2)	80(37.6)		
		Very effective	9(4.3)	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	10(4.3)	9(4.3)	2(1)	3(1.5)	44(20.7)		
10.	Creation of youth councils in municipalities	Very ineffective	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	3(1.5)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4(1.9)		
		Ineffective	2(1)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	4(1.9)	0(0)	0(0)	2(1)	10(4.7)		
		Moderately effective	3(1.5)	0(0)	8(3.8)	14(6.6)	3(1.5)	2(1)	7(3.4)	38(17.8)		
		Effective	14(6.6)	5(2.4)	16(7.5)	25(11.7)	7(3.8)	11(5.2)	9(4.3)	87(40.8)		
		Very effective	11(5.2)	11(5.2)	13(6.1)	14(6.6)	14(6.6)	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	74(34.7)		
11	Organisation of "round tables" e.g. by public institutions as a form of dialogue between officials, politicians and youth	Very ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0)	2(1)	3(1.5)	0(0)	3(1.5)	2(1)	11(5.2)		
		Ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0)	1(0.5)	6(2.8)	0(0)	4(1.9)	2(1)	14(6.6)		
		Moderately effective	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	14(6.6)	7(3.4)	2(1)	4(1.9)	47(22.1)		
		Effective	11(5.2)	4(1.9)	17(8.1)	19(9)	10(4.7)	7(3.4)	9(4.3)	77(36.2)		
		Very effective	12(5.7)	8(3.8)	10(4.7)	18(8.5)	7(3.4)	2(1)	7(3.4)	64(30.0)		

12	Information in the media about opportunities for youth civic participation ⁸⁵	Very ineffective	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(1.5)	0(0)	1(0.5)	0(0)	4(1.9)
		Ineffective	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	3(1.5)	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	0(0)	3(1.5)	13(6.1)
		Moderately effective	3(1.5)	3(1.5)	7(3.4)	8(3.8)	4(1.9)	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	38(17.8)
		Effective	15(7)	5(2.4)	16(7.6)	18(8.5)	10(4.7)	9(4.3)	11(5.2)	84(39.4)
		Very effective	11(5.2)	9(4.3)	13(6.1)	26(12.2)	9(4.3)	3(1.5)	2(1)	73(34.3)
13	Promotion of youth civic participation via the Internet ⁸⁶	Very ineffective	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0.0)
		Ineffective	3(1.5)	2(1)	0(0)	3(1.5)	0(0)	3(1.5)	1(0.5)	12(5.6)
		Moderately effective	2(1)	0(0)	9(4.3)	10(4.7)	2(1)	3(1.5)	7(3.4)	33(15.5)
		Effective	15(7)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	14(6.6)	10(4.7)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	69(32.4)
		Very effective	10(4.7)	10(4.7)	20(9.4)	33(15.6)	12(5.7)	6(2.8)	7(3.4)	98(46.0)
14	Promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment	Very ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(0.9)
		Ineffective	1(0.5)	0(0)	1(0.5)	0(0)	0(0)	3(1.5)	3(1.5)	8(3.8)
		Moderately effective	3(1.5)	3(1.5)	8(3.8)	15(7)	2(1)	3(1.5)	9(4.3)	43(20.2)
		Effective	15(7)	8(3.8)	12(5.7)	13(6.1)	15(7)	5(2.4)	7(3.4)	75(35.2)
		Very effective	10(4.7)	7(3.4)	18(8.5)	31(14.6)	7(3.4)	7(3.4)	5(2.4)	85(39.9)
15	Development of cooperation networks between young people at local level	Very ineffective	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0.0)
		Ineffective	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	2(1)	3(1.5)	0(0)	1(0.5)	3(1.5)	11(5.2)
		Moderately effective	3(1.5)	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	15(7.0)	4(1.9)	2(1)	9(4.3)	44(20.7)
		Effective	16(7.5)	4(1.9)	16(7.5)	17(8.1)	12(5.7)	11(5.2)	11(5.2)	87(40.8)
		Very effective	10(4.7)	8(3.8)	15(7)	25(11.8)	8(3.8)	4(1.9)	1(0.5)	71(33.3)
16	Development of cooperation networks between young people at cross-border (international) level ⁸⁷	Very ineffective	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(1.5)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(1.4)
		Ineffective	1(0.5)	2(1)	4(1.9)	2(1)	1(0.5)	0(0)	4(1.9)	14(6.6)
		Moderately effective	5(2.4)	4(1.9)	7(3.4)	13(6.1)	5(2.4)	6(2.8)	9(4.3)	49(23.0)
		Effective	16(7.5)	8(3.8)	17(8.1)	14(6.6)	11(5.2)	4(1.9)	11(5.2)	81(38.0)
		Very effective	8(3.8)	4(1.9)	9(4.3)	28(13.0)	6(2.8)	8(3.8)	0(0)	63(29.6)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁸¹ In Elbląg – 1 non-response.

⁸² 2 non-responses in Gdynia and 1 in Iława.

⁸³ In Dzierżoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie: 1 non-response each.

⁸⁴ In Nowe Miasto Lubawskie – 1 non-response.

⁸⁵ In Gdynia – 1 non-response.

⁸⁶ In Elbląg – 1 non-response.

⁸⁷ 2 non-responses in Elbląg and 1 in Iława.

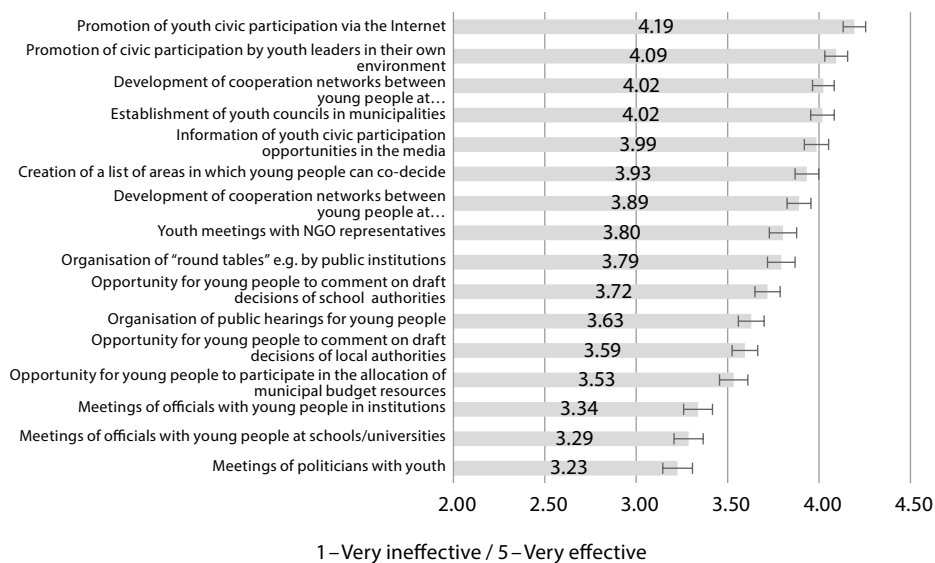
civic participation, while in Hässleholm a majority rated that issue as of average importance. Another instrument evaluated was the organisation of public hearings for young people. Meetings of that type provide an additional platform for youth dialogue with decision makers, and most of those surveyed in Iława rated them as very effective; they were considered slightly less effective by a majority of respondents from Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Dzierzgoń. The responses selected in Gdynia did not reveal a preferred option (equal frequency for high and moderate effectiveness) and the prevailing opinion in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie was that public hearings were moderately effective.

A relatively less positive impact on stimulating the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, according to a majority of respondents, was exerted by meetings of officials or politicians with young people at and outside schools/universities. Officials' meetings with young people at schools and universities were judged to be effective in Elbląg, Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm, moderately effective in Gdynia and Telšiai, and ineffective in the municipality of Dzierzgoń. Such meetings with young people outside school were considered highly attractive by a majority of those surveyed in Iława, Hässleholm and Dzierzgoń, and moderately effective by those from Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg. They were given little importance by a majority of respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, as were the meetings of politicians with young people. The positive impact of politicians was recognised by most of the survey participants in Iława, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń, but it was rated moderate in Gdynia, Telšiai and Hässleholm. Failure to exploit such potential would be to the detriment of local communities, as such tools could enable young people to acquire knowledge and develop civic skills, drawing directly on the experience of public officials and politicians, and participate in decision-making at both national and cross-border level.

Analysis of the results identified statistically significant differences in the perception of the effectiveness of the various tools and ways of stimulating youth participation in local life. Using a one-way analysis of variance, it was determined that these differences were $F(9, 1983)=31.62$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.13$. Overall, the differences between the answers to the individual test questions were 13%. The analysis demonstrated that the most effective way of increasing young people's involvement in their own environment was to promote participation via the Internet, whereas meetings of politicians with young people were considered to be the least effective. The results are shown in Figure 3.8.

The gender of the respondents and their institution were the differentiating factors. To verify the gender-related differences in the answers to the individual test items, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted. It showed an important interaction effect between both factors at a statistical trend level, $F(9, 1989) = 1.87$; $p<0.05$; $\eta = 0.01$. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the depen-

Figure 3.8. Assessment of the effectiveness of various forms of increasing the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



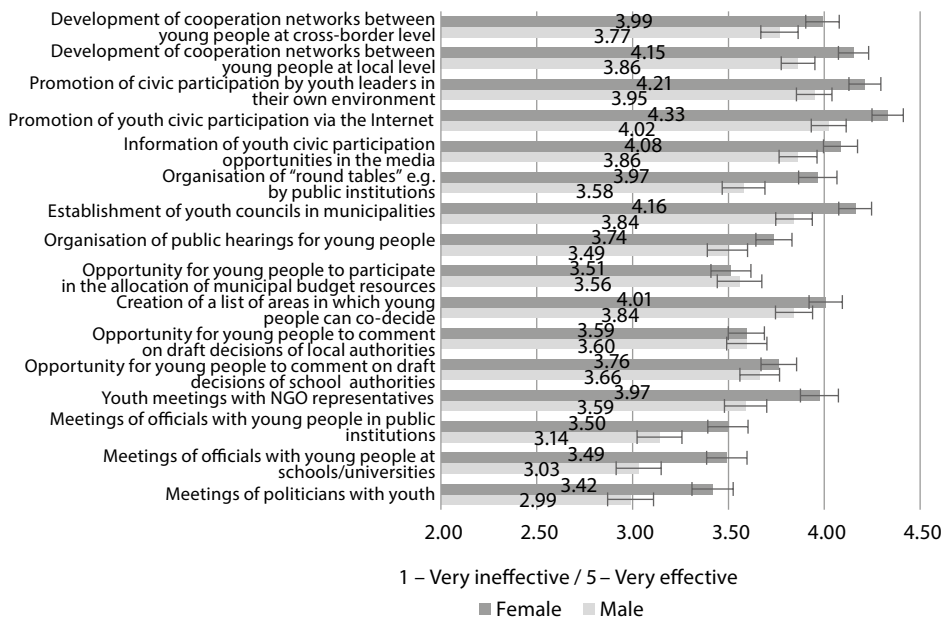
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

dent variable. The analysis revealed that female representatives of the institutions gave significantly higher ratings to the following forms of action:

- development of youth cooperation in cross-border (international) networks, $p < 0.1$;
- development of youth cooperation in networks at local level, $p < 0.05$;
- promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment, $p < 0.05$;
- promotion of youth civic participation via the Internet, $p < 0.05$;
- information on youth civic participation opportunities in the media, $p < 0.1$;
- organisation of “round tables”, e.g. by public institutions as a form of dialogue between officials, politicians and youth, $p < 0.05$;
- creation of youth councils in municipalities, $p < 0.05$;
- organisation of public hearings for young people, $p < 0.1$;
- youth meetings with NGO representatives, $p < 0.05$;
- meetings of officials with young people in public institutions, outside school, $p < 0.05$;
- meetings of officials with young people at schools/universities, $p < 0.01$;
- politicians’ meetings with young people, $p < 0.01$.

No significant gender-related differences were observed in respect of the remaining forms of action. The results are shown in Figure 3.9.

Figure 3.9. Assessment of the effectiveness of various forms of increasing the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment vs gender of respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



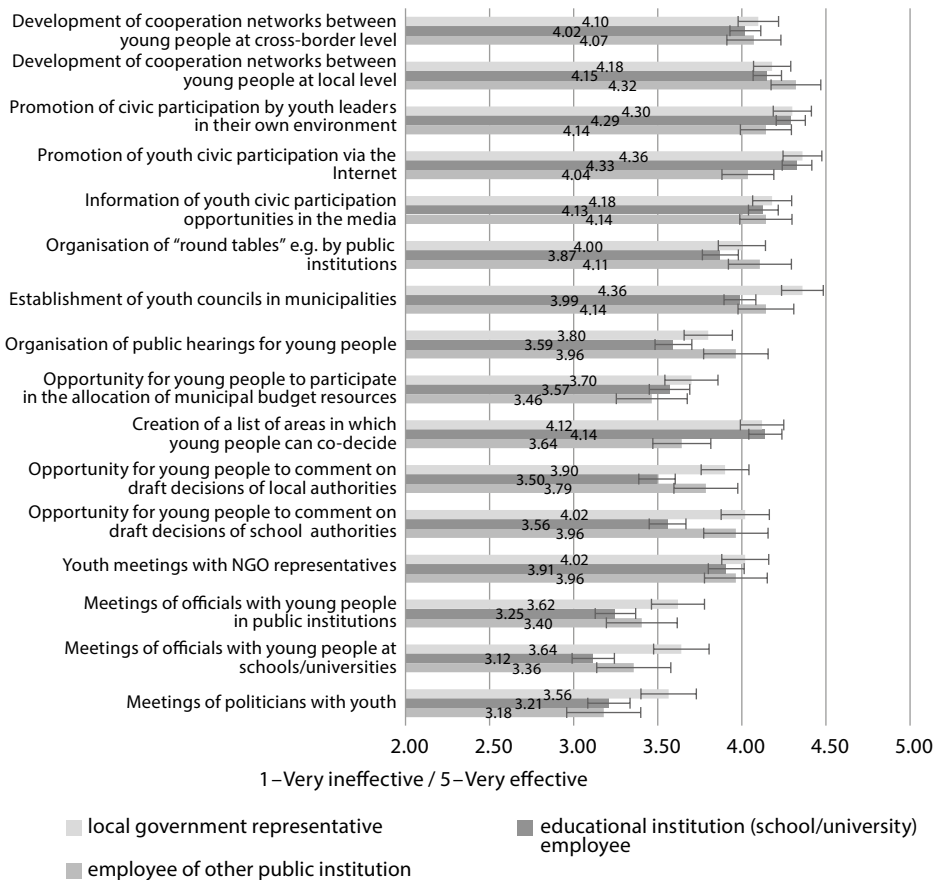
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Differences in responses were also found to exist with respect to the institution represented. A two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect of the two factors, $F(18, 1419) = 1.71; p < 0.05; \eta = 0.02$. The interaction feature explains 2% of the variance of the dependent variable. The analysis revealed that, compared to education institution employees, the representatives of local authorities had significantly higher opinions of the effectiveness of the following measures:

- creation of youth councils in municipalities ($p < 0.1$);
- opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of local authorities ($p < 0.1$);
- opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of school authorities ($p < 0.05$);
- meetings of officials with young people at schools/universities ($p < 0.05$).

The employees of other public institutions rated the effectiveness of creating a list of areas in which young people could co-decide significantly less favourably than the representatives of local authorities ($p < 0.1$) and the employees of educational institutions ($p < 0.05$). No significant differences were observed with regard to the other forms of action. The results are shown in Figure 3.10.

Figure 3.10. Assessment of the effectiveness of various forms of increasing the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment vs the institution represented (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

In conclusion, significant needs that determine the capabilities of stimulating youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden were identified in all the mu-

municipalities surveyed. The vast majority of the categories analysed were considered to be rather necessary or very necessary.

According to the representatives of all the municipalities, the least urgent need was to increase the financial resources for activities involving young people in public decision-making, whereas the most pressing one was finding a good leader capable of motivating and engaging young people effectively. The demand for increased funding was reported by respondents from all the municipalities, but in Elbląg the demand was the highest. On the other hand, the greatest need to find a good leader was observed in the following municipalities: Gdynia, Elbląg, Hława, Dzierzgoń, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Telšiai. Greater openness of decision-makers to include young people in public decision-making is among the most pressing needs in Gdynia, Elbląg, Hława and Dzierzgoń. A similar opinion was also expressed about the need to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with young people in Gdynia, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń. According to a majority of respondents from Gdynia and Elbląg, formal cooperation with institutions that implement youth policies, also in the Baltic Sea region, should be developed and the competences of those responsible for youth cooperation need to be improved in order to strengthen the capacity of institutions to promote youth civic participation. The improvement of knowledge and skills was highlighted by a majority of those surveyed in all the municipalities, particularly in the field of psychology, sociology and pedagogy. Gdynia declared the most extensive requirements concerning the improvement of skills of representatives of the institutional environment of young people. This included additional knowledge in the field of politics, sociology, economics and philosophy. In Dzierzgoń and Elbląg the respondents additionally pointed to the need to improve their legal knowledge and coaching skills. In Sweden, there was a need for knowledge of the ways to motivate and inspire young people, and of social media, including effective channels for reaching to and communicating with young people. The respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie reported only the need concerning sports activities.

The barriers and needs identified necessitated various forms of effective impact on the participatory processes. A majority of respondents from the three countries considered the forms examined as effective and very effective. These top grades were awarded to the following initiatives:

- promotion of youth civic participation via the Internet – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Hława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie;
- informing of youth civic participation opportunities in the media – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Gdynia;
- creation of youth councils in municipalities – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Hława;

- organisation of “round tables”, e.g. by public institutions – most effective according to the respondents from Telšiai and Dzierzgoń;
- development of cooperation networks among young people at local level – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Gdynia;
- development of cooperation networks between young people at cross-border level – most effective according to the respondents from Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie;
- opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of local authorities – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń;
- opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of school authorities – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń.

Furthermore, the tools considered to be the most effective means of strengthening civic participation by a majority of participants from the individual municipalities surveyed include:

- meetings of officials with young people outside school – in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie;
- youth meetings with NGO representatives – in Elbląg;
- creation of a list of areas in which young people can co-decide – in Elbląg and Gdynia;
- opportunity for young people to co-decide about commune budget allocation – in Dzierzgoń and Elbląg;
- organisation of public hearings for young people – in Iława;
- promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment – in Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie.

The knowledge obtained from research and experiences gained e.g. via the implementation of international projects help strengthen youth civic participation through the development of effective methods and tools to exploit the potential of both the institutional and youth environments. Only effective cooperation between the two groups and joint participation in decision making will make it possible to create a stable and strong civil society.

Chapter 4

Youth Civic Participation in Selected Communes of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden from Young People's Perspective

Izabela Borucińska

4.1. Introduction

The growing importance of youth civic participation can be observed in the policies of many countries and international organizations for many years¹. From a cognitive and practical point of view, an interesting issue is the differences in youth civic participation between European countries that were economically and politically separated during the Cold War. Various social changes have been observed since its completion and the acceleration of globalization processes as well as the creation and expansion of the European Union. They affect the civic participation of young people in these countries in the 21st century, but not in the same way².

The objective of the quantitative studies conducted as part of the SB YCGN project was to identify and assess the following main problems at local and cross-

¹ For example see: Youth civic participation: meeting community and youth development needs worldwide 2010, Innovation in Civic participation, <http://www.icicp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Youth-Civic-Participation-Worldwide-.pdf> [accessed: 16.07.2019]; Youth Civic Engagement: Enabling Youth Participation in Political, Social and Economic Life. Expert Group Meeting 16–17 June 2014, UNESCO, Paris, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2013/YouthDevelopmentRights/FinalConceptNoteEGMYouthCivicEngagement.pdf> [accessed: 19.08.2019]; Youth civic engagement, World Youth Report, United Nations 2016, https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf [accessed: 19.08.2019]; Robert J. Chaskin, The University of Chicago, and Caroline McGregor and Bernadine Brady Supporting Youth Civic and Political Engagement: Supranational and National Policy Frameworks in Comparative Perspective, National University of Ireland Galway, April 2018, http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescoschildandfamilyresearchcentre/J4445---58606-NUI-Engaging-Urban-Youth-Policy-Report_v6.pdf [accessed: 17.07.2019].

² P. Mirazchyski, D. H. Caro, A. Sandoval-Hernández, Youth Future Civic Participation in Europe: Differences Between the East and the Rest, *Social Indicators Research* 2014, Vol. 115, pp.1031–1055.

Table 4.1. Structure of the sample representing young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample respondents)

No.	Variable	Scale	Lithuania				Poland				Sweden		Σ (%)
			Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm				
1.	Age	14-17	56 (5.6)	4 (0.4)	74(7.4)	131(13.1)	19(1.9)	13(1.3)	38(3.8)	337(33.7)			
		18-24	125 (12.5)	8 (0.8)	146(14.6)	254(25.4)	37(3.7)	29(2.9)	67(6.7)	664(66.3)			
2.	Gender	Female	91 (9.1)	6 (0.6)	143(14.3)	192(19.2)	25(2.5)	23(2.3)	73(7.3)	513(51.2)			
		Male	90 (9.0)	6(0.6)	77(7.7)	192(19.2)	31(3.1)	19(1.9)	32(3.2)	488(48.8)			
3.	Respondent's status	Primary school pupil	3 (0.3)	2(0.2)	4(0.4)	40(4.0)	2(0.2)	11(1.1)	0(0.0)	62(6.2)			
		Lower secondary school pupil	114 (11.4)	2(0.2)	2(0.2)	16(1.6)	6(0.6)	1(0.1)	7(0.7)	148(14.8)			
		Secondary school pupil	9 (0.9)	7(0.7)	193(19.3)	250(25.0)	37(3.7)	17(1.7)	70(7.0)	584(58.3)			
		Vocational school pupil	49 (4.9)	0(0.0)	1(0.1)	13(1.3)	5(0.5)	3(0.3)	1(0.1)	72(7.2)			
		University student	2 (0.2)	0(0.0)	15(1.5)	53(5.3)	2(0.2)	6(0.6)	9(0.9)	87(8.7)			
4.	Other – specify	Neither studying nor working	1 (0.1)	0(0.0)	1(0.1)	2(0.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.1)	5(0.5)			
		Employee	3 (0.3)	1(0.1)	3(0.3)	3(0.3)	3(0.3)	3(0.3)	14(1.4)	30(3.0)			
			0 (0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.1)	7(0.7)	1(0.1)	1(0.1)	3(0.3)	13(1.3)			

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

border level: the situation with regard to civic participation in the municipalities investigated, with identification of the opportunities for and forms of youth participation in the discussion on issues related to their immediate environment, including decision-making; the key barriers to increasing the youth civic engagement; the needs of young people aged 14–24 in respect of increasing their civic participation.

A diagnostic online survey was addressed to young people aged 14–24 years representing five Polish municipalities (Dzierżoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie), one Lithuanian (Telšiai) and one Swedish (Hässleholm). The respondents were selected by the proportionate sampling method in accordance with the assumptions set out in Chapter 2. The sample consisted of 1001 respondents, with people aged 14–17 representing 33.7% of the sample and those aged 18–24 representing more than 48.4% of the sample. Respondents aged 18–24 were the largest group in all the municipalities investigated to reflect the population structure. In terms of gender, female respondents accounted for 51.2% of the sample, which corresponds to the population structure in these municipalities³. As to the status of the respondents, a majority of the sample (58.3%) were secondary school pupils, followed by lower secondary school pupils (14.8%), university students (8.7%), vocational school pupils (7.2%), and primary school pupils (6.2%). Employed persons constituted 3% of the sample. The smallest groups were those of people working and studying – 1.3% and neither studying nor working – 0.5%. The structure of the sample is shown in Table 4.1. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics techniques, as well as one-way and two-way analysis of variance.

4.2. Young people's interest in influencing decisions taken at local level and forms of their civic participation

Changes taking place in trends and patterns of civic engagement and broader civic participation of young people determine the need for constant debate and new research as well as new approaches to identified problems. Social changes in the 21st century, including those related to loosening links with institutions and structures, particularly affect young people, including their transition to adulthood. Structural transformations at the macro- and micro-level can affect young people

³ Population. Size and Structure and Vital Statistics in Poland by Territorial Division in 2016 As of December 31, Statistical Information and Elaborations, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2017, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/ludnosc-stan-i-struktura-oraz-ruch-naturalny-w-przekroju-terytorialnym-stan-w-dniu-31-12-2016-r-,6,21.html> [accessed: 20.05.2019].

Table 4.2. Level of interest of young people from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in individual issues (frequency, % of response in the sample)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm				
1.	My school/university/work	Very low	8 (0.8)	2 (0.2)	8 (0.8)	20 (2.0)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	37 (3.7)	78 (7.8)			
		Low	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	17 (1.7)	56 (5.6)	3 (0.3)	5 (0.5)	7 (0.7)	94 (9.4)			
		Medium	63 (6.3)	4 (0.4)	74 (7.4)	138 (13.8)	13 (1.3)	23 (2.3)	6 (0.6)	321 (32.1)			
		High	76 (7.6)	4 (0.4)	71 (7.2)	108 (10.8)	25 (2.5)	10 (1.0)	16 (1.6)	310 (31.0)			
		Very high	28 (2.8)	2 (0.2)	49 (4.9)	62 (6.3)	14 (1.4)	2 (0.2)	38 (3.8)	195 (19.5)			
2.	My immediate neighbourhood	Very low	19 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	27 (2.7)	48 (4.8)	8 (0.8)	7 (0.7)	33 (3.3)	142 (14.2)			
		Low	69 (6.9)	4 (0.4)	58 (5.8)	84 (8.5)	18 (1.8)	12 (1.2)	19 (1.9)	264 (26.4)			
		Medium	63 (6.3)	6 (0.6)	79 (7.9)	124 (12.5)	13 (1.3)	21 (2.1)	11 (1.1)	317 (31.7)			
		High	21 (2.1)	2 (0.2)	45 (4.5)	89 (8.9)	14 (1.4)	1 (0.1)	28 (2.8)	200 (20.0)			
		Very high	9 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	10 (1.0)	39 (3.9)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	13 (1.3)	75 (7.5)			
3.	My friends	Very low	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.3)	11 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.3)	19 (1.9)	38 (3.8)			
		Low	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	8 (0.8)	9 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	11 (1.1)	18 (1.8)	55 (5.5)			
		Medium	34 (3.4)	3 (0.3)	22 (2.2)	13 (1.3)	9 (0.9)	14 (1.4)	10 (1.0)	130 (13.0)			
		High	78 (7.9)	2 (0.2)	66 (6.6)	115 (11.6)	16 (1.6)	6 (0.6)	5 (0.5)	288 (28.8)			
		Very high	60 (6.0)	7 (0.7)	120 (12.0)	210 (21.1)	28 (2.8)	8 (0.8)	52 (5.3)	485 (48.5)			
4.	My district	Very low	7 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	17 (1.7)	35 (3.5)	5 (0.5)	3 (0.3)	24 (2.4)	91 (9.1)			
		Low	19 (1.9)	2 (0.2)	48 (4.8)	69 (6.9)	14 (1.4)	8 (0.8)	14 (1.4)	174 (17.4)			
		Medium	71 (7.1)	5 (0.5)	81 (8.3)	110 (11.0)	13 (1.3)	19 (1.9)	14 (1.4)	313 (31.3)			
		High	61 (6.1)	5 (0.5)	51 (5.1)	106 (10.7)	18 (1.8)	10 (1.0)	25 (2.5)	273 (27.3)			
		Very high	23 (2.3)	3 (0.3)	22 (2.2)	63 (6.3)	6 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	27 (2.7)	146 (14.6)			

5.	My town/commune	Very low	7 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	65 (6.5)
		Low	31 (3.4)	1 (0.1)	41 (4.4)	49 (5.3)	6 (0.7)	5 (0.5)	20 (2.2)	153 (15.3)	
		Medium	60 (6.5)	6 (0.7)	91 (9.8)	119 (12.8)	14 (1.5)	17 (1.8)	20 (2.2)	327 (32.7)	
		High	63 (6.8)	3 (0.3)	53 (5.7)	126 (13.6)	17 (1.8)	15 (1.6)	29 (3.1)	306 (30.6)	
		Very high	20 (2.0)	2 (0.2)	19 (2.0)	70 (7.5)	16 (1.7)	3 (0.3)	12 (1.3)	142 (14.2)	
6.	My country	Very low	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	7 (0.7)	23 (2.3)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	16 (1.6)	54 (5.4)	
		Low	9 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	30 (3)	45 (4.5)	5 (0.5)	4 (0.4)	17 (1.7)	111 (11.1)	
		Medium	41 (4.1)	6 (0.6)	76 (7.7)	117 (11.7)	10 (1.0)	19 (1.9)	18 (1.8)	287 (28.7)	
		High	80 (8.0)	3 (0.3)	73 (7.4)	117 (11.7)	25 (2.5)	12 (1.2)	29 (2.9)	339 (33.9)	
		Very high	45 (4.6)	2 (0.2)	32 (3.2)	81 (8.1)	13 (1.3)	6 (0.6)	24 (2.4)	203 (20.3)	
7.	The Baltic Sea region	Very low	10 (1.0)	1 (0.1)	41 (4.2)	60 (6.1)	7 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	139 (13.9)	
		Low	22 (2.2)	4 (0.4)	44 (4.5)	99 (10.0)	13 (1.3)	13 (1.3)	20 (2.0)	215 (21.5)	
		Medium	73 (7.4)	3 (0.3)	75 (7.6)	129 (13.0)	15 (1.5)	18 (1.8)	32 (3.2)	345 (34.5)	
		High	59 (6.0)	3 (0.3)	31 (3.1)	68 (6.9)	19 (1.9)	5 (0.5)	18 (1.8)	203 (20.3)	
		Very high	17 (1.7)	1 (0.1)	28 (2.8)	26 (2.6)	1 (0.1)	3 (0.3)	13 (1.3)	89 (8.9)	

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

more than older generations and influence their civic engagement. For this reason, new forms of civic engagement are constantly emerging⁴.

In order to identify the potential for increased youth civic participation of young people, the selected determinants were included in the research of Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish municipalities. The distribution of the variable of the areas of youth interest is presented in Table 4.2. A majority of young people (48.5% of responses in the sample) were most interested in matters concerning their friends. This was also the most frequent response in most municipalities, with the exception of Telšiai (where the majority of respondents indicated strong interest) and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie (where the majority of respondents indicated moderate interest). Another category which generated strong interest in a large proportion of young people (33.9% of responses in the sample), was their country. Other issues raised a moderate interest among a majority of young people in the sample. However, some differences in the geographical distribution can be observed. The young people of Telšiai and Iława generally expressed a strong, and of Hässleholm – very strong interest in their school, university or work. The Swedish respondents were the least interested in their immediate neighbourhood. In Telšiai, Elbląg and Iława these matters were not regarded as highly important. However, the young people from Iława and Dzierzgoń were very much interested in the issues concerning their district. The issues of their town or municipality of residence were significant for the largest number of respondents from Gdynia, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Iława. A moderate interest in the affairs of their country was expressed by a majority of those surveyed in four communes (except Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń, and in Gdynia, where the responses were distributed equally between strong and moderate interest). As to the the Baltic Sea Region, the respondents were generally moderately concerned with its issues, except Iława, whose representatives expressed a strong interest in that region.

Most of the respondents from the three countries are moderately interested in their municipality, but at the same time a large proportion of the sample (31.7% of the responses) declared that are rather willing to have an influence on the affairs of their municipality. This was also the attitude of a majority of respondents in five municipalities. The exceptions were Hässleholm, whose residents expressed a keen interest in influencing the issues concerning their municipality and Telšiai, whose representatives were largely hesitant in that respect. The distribution of the variable is shown in Table 4.3.

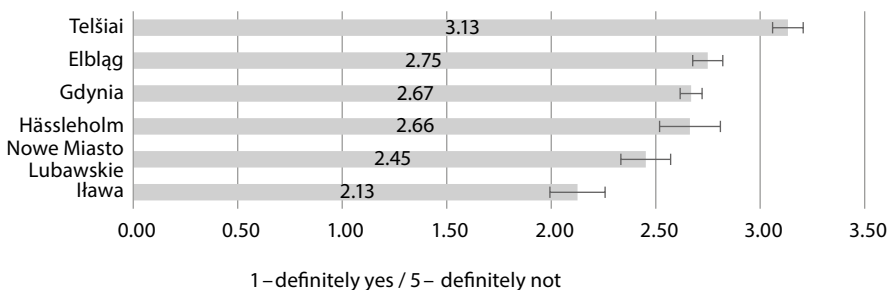
⁴ T. Lochocki, Trends, Causes and Patterns of Young People's Civic Engagement in Western Democracies. A Review of Literature, Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary sector, Oslo/Bergen 2010, Vol 5, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kud/samfunn_og_frivillighet/rapporter/trends_causes_and_patterns_of_young_people-s_civic_engagement_in_western_democracies_vr_2010_5.pdf [accessed: 20.08.2019].

Table 4.3. Young people's interest in influencing the affairs of their municipalities in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample response)

No.	Scale	Lithuania	Poland					Sweden	Σ (%)
		Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm	
1.	Definitely yes	9 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	27 (2.8)	44 (4.5)	17 (1.7)	3 (0.3)	30 (3.0)	133 (13.3)
	Rather yes	37 (3.8)	5 (0.5)	67 (6.9)	136 (13.9)	22 (2.3)	21 (2.1)	29 (3.0)	317 (31.7)
	Difficult to say	69 (7.0)	3 (0.3)	60 (6.1)	116 (11.8)	9 (0.9)	14 (1.4)	11 (1.1)	282 (28.2)
	Rather not	53 (5.4)	1 (0.1)	48 (4.9)	63 (6.4)	5 (0.5)	4 (0.4)	14 (1.4)	188 (18.8)
	Definitely not	13 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	10 (1.0)	18 (1.9)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	62 (6.2)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

The gender and age of the respondents did not differentiate the degree of their interest in civic participation in the municipality, as confirmed by Student's t-test. The analysis revealed the absence of significant gender-related differences in that respect $t(879) = -0.04$; ns; neither were there any significant differences between age groups, $t(999) = 0.12$; ns. However, the differentiating factors were the place of residence and respondent status, as shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

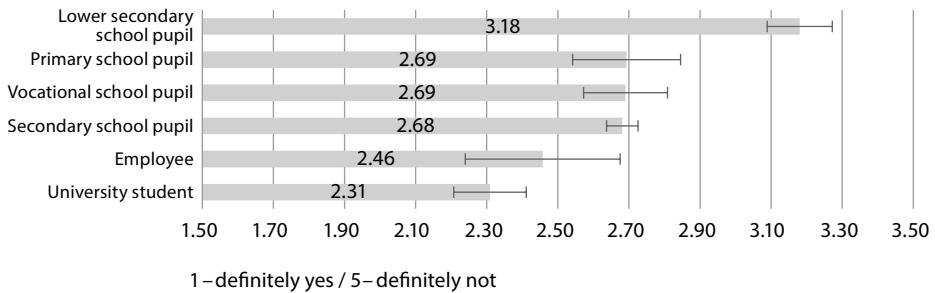
Figure 4.1. Young people's interest in influencing the affairs of their municipalities vs place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that the groups divided by place of residence showed significant differences, $F(5, 983) = 9.53$; $p < 0.001$. The residents of the municipality of Telšiai were significantly less interested in having a say in the

affairs of their commune than those of other municipalities. In contrast, the participants from Iława were considerably more interested in influencing the matters concerning their municipality than those from other municipalities, with the exception of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie.

Figure 4.2. Young people's interest in influencing the affairs of their municipalities vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

It was determined by one-way analysis of variance that the groups divided by status showed significant differences, $F(5, 977) = 8.51$; $p < 0.001$. Pupils of lower secondary schools were significantly less interested in influencing matters concerning their municipality than the respondents of a different status. In contrast, university students were significantly more interested in having such influence than primary school pupils.

Analysis of all of the results relating to youth's level of interest in their municipality leads to the conclusion that young people's willingness to participate in decision-making should be better utilised in order to increase their civic participation. Perhaps their moderate interest in municipal affairs could be increased more effectively by targeting them with information on what is happening in the municipality, what are the local government's plans and how youth can influence the course of events and decisions of local authorities. When choosing the methods of reaching and mobilising young people, one should take into account the specific characteristics of the commune in question and the status of the learner or employee. Interestingly, it is not the respondents' age that affects their views, but rather the differences in the problems faced by pupils of primary schools, lower secondary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools, or students or employees.

The declared interest and willingness to engage in decision-making processes were contrasted with the actual actions taken by young people. Table 4.4 presents young people's opinions on the opportunity to speak on different matters and taking advantage of that opportunity.

Table 4.4. Young people's opportunities to decide on matters concerning their municipalities in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland				Sweden		Σ (%)
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm			
1.	Election of local authorities	I have the opportunity and I speak	17 (1.7)	3 (0.3)	76 (7.6)	153 (15.4)	20 (2.0)	19 (1.9)	51 (5.1)	339 (33.9)		
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	49 (4.9)	2 (0.2)	67 (6.8)	80 (8.0)	13 (1.3)	12 (1.2)	33 (3.3)	256 (25.6)		
2.	On municipal development strategy	I have no opportunity and I do not speak	115 (11.5)	7 (0.7)	75 (7.6)	150 (15.0)	23 (2.3)	11 (1.1)	21 (2.8)	402 (40.2)		
		I have the opportunity and I speak	13 (1.3)	2 (0.2)	24 (2.4)	61 (6.1)	13 (1.3)	2 (0.2)	44 (4.4)	159 (15.9)		
3.	On municipal budget allocation	I have the opportunity but do not speak	54 (5.4)	3 (0.3)	81 (8.1)	106 (10.7)	17 (1.7)	5 (0.5)	38 (3.8)	304 (30.4)		
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	114 (11.4)	7 (0.7)	114 (11.4)	216 (21.7)	26 (2.6)	35 (3.5)	23 (2.3)	535 (53.5)		
4.	On land development of my municipality	I have the opportunity and I speak	7 (0.7)	2 (0.2)	33 (3.3)	89 (9.0)	12 (1.2)	1 (0.1)	39 (3.9)	183 (18.3)		
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	31 (3.1)	3 (0.3)	67 (6.7)	80 (8.0)	10 (1.0)	2 (0.2)	38 (3.8)	231 (23.1)		
4.	On land development of my municipality	I have no opportunity and I do not speak	143 (14.4)	7 (0.7)	119 (12.0)	214 (21.5)	33 (3.3)	39 (3.9)	27 (2.7)	582 (58.2)		
		I have the opportunity and I speak	5 (0.5)	2 (0.2)	30 (3.0)	76 (7.6)	10 (1.0)	2 (0.2)	39 (3.9)	164 (16.4)		
4.	On land development of my municipality	I have the opportunity but do not speak	68 (6.8)	4 (0.4)	80 (8.0)	106 (10.7)	16 (1.6)	2 (0.2)	36 (3.6)	312 (31.2)		
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	108 (10.8)	6 (0.6)	108 (10.9)	202 (20.3)	29 (2.9)	38 (3.8)	30 (3.0)	521 (52.1)		

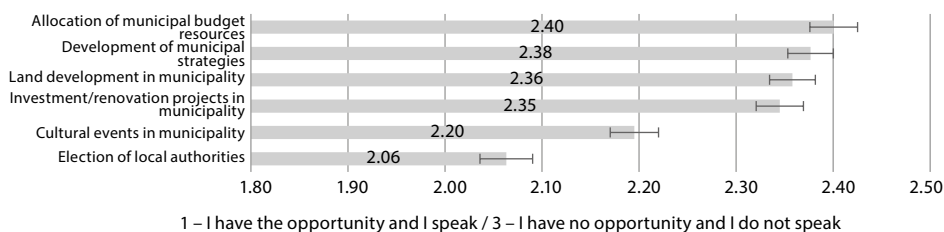
5.	On investment/renovation projects in my municipality	I have the opportunity and I speak	11 (1:1)	1 (0:1)	34 (3:4)	78 (7:8)	11 (1:1)	3 (0:3)	46 (4:6)	184 (18:4)
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	49 (4:9)	3 (0:3)	75 (7:5)	114 (11:5)	9 (0:9)	3 (0:3)	32 (3:2)	285 (28:5)
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	121 (12:2)	8 (0:8)	110 (11:0)	192 (19:3)	34 (3:4)	36 (3:6)	27 (2:7)	528 (52:8)
6.	On cultural events in my municipality	I have the opportunity and I speak	51 (5:1)	4 (0:4)	46 (4:6)	72 (7:3)	17 (1:7)	5 (0:5)	37 (3:7)	232 (23:2)
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	64 (6:4)	2 (0:2)	72 (7:3)	131 (13:2)	15 (1:5)	11 (1:1)	41 (4:1)	336 (33:6)
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	66 (6:7)	6 (0:6)	101 (10:2)	178 (17:9)	24 (2:4)	26 (2:6)	25 (2:5)	426 (42:6)
7.	About other matters (specify)	I have the opportunity and I speak	0 (0)	2 (0:4)	20 (3:9)	42 (8:0)	5 (1:0)	3 (0:6)	27 (5:2)	99 (9:9)
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	0 (0)	3 (0:6)	30 (5:8)	34 (6:6)	6 (1:1)	1 (0:2)	31 (6:0)	105 (10:5)
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	0 (0)	4 (0:8)	89 (17:1)	172 (33:1)	16 (3:1)	9 (1:7)	25 (4:8)	315 (31:5)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

In all the matters examined, the majority of respondents stated that they had no decision-making power and did not speak on those issues. As regards the election of local authorities, it was the opinion of 40.2% of the young respondents, the development strategy of the commune – 53.5%, the distribution of funds in the municipal budget – 58.2%, land development in the municipality – 52.1%, the investment/renovation projects in the municipality – 52.8%, cultural events – 42.6% and other matters – 31.5%. When analysing the distribution of responses with respect to the place of residence, one can see a significant difference between the opinions of young people in Poland or Lithuania and those in Sweden. The young people living in Hässleholm declared that they had the opportunity to speak on most issues and exercised that privilege. This applied to the election of local authorities, the development strategy of the municipality, the distribution of resources in the municipality's budget, land development and investment/renovation projects in the municipality. On the other hand, the Swedish youth stated that they had the decision-making power but did not use it with respect to cultural events and other matters in their municipality. Apart from the young people from Hässleholm, only a majority of respondents from Iława declared that they had the opportunity to co-decide on the election of local authorities. What is interesting, 40.2% of the respondents stated that they were unable to participate in the election of local authorities. This cannot be explained solely by the lack of voting rights for minors, as 66.3% of the sample were 18 to 24 years old. These opinions show limited knowledge of the opportunities for young people to influence local government decisions on various issues.

One-way analysis of variance demonstrated significant differences between the answers $F(4, 3955)=57.86$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.06$. The differences between the answers to the individual test questions were 6% in total. The respondents declared that they had some opportunities to speak when local authorities were elected, but they were unable to influence the decisions concerning the allocation of funds in the municipality's budget.

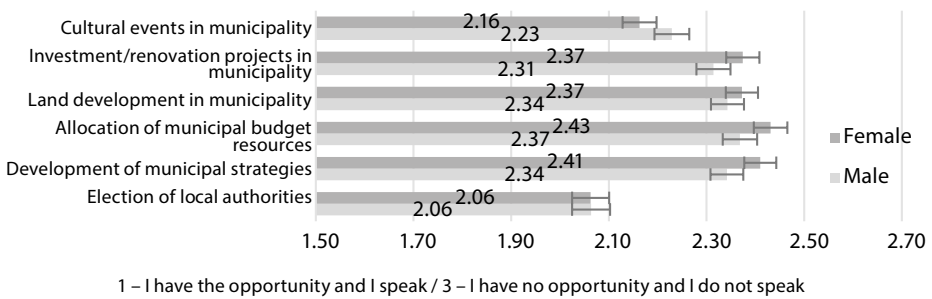
Figure 4.3. Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

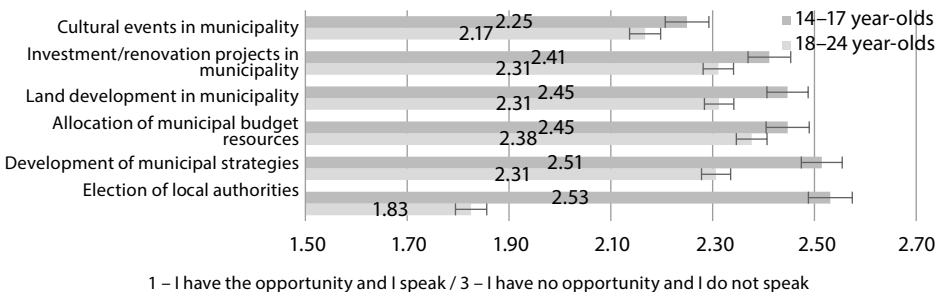
Gender is not a factor that differentiated the survey responses to that question. Two-way analysis of variance showed a significant (at a statistical trend level) effect of interaction between the two factors, $F(4, 3948)=2.23$; $p<0.1$, $\eta=0.002$, however, multiple comparisons analysis performed with the Bonferroni correction did not reveal any significant gender-relating differences in the responses given to the individual test items. The interaction feature explains 0.2% of the variance of the dependent variable.

Figure 4.4. Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Figure 4.5. Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality vs respondents' age (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

However, the respondents' age had an effect on their views. A two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect between the two factors, $F(4, 4143) = 45.95$; $p<0.001$; $\eta = 0.04$. The interaction feature explains 4% of the variance of the dependent variable. This means that individuals aged 14–17 signifi-

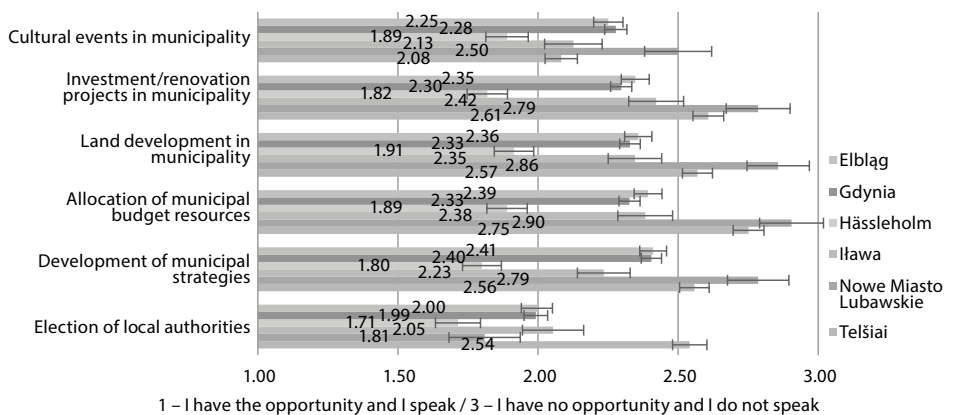
cantly more frequently stated their inability to speak on all the municipality-related matters mentioned above, with the exception of decisions on cultural events and the distribution of funds in the municipality’s budget.

Another important factor differentiating the opinions of respondents was the place of residence. The results of two-way analysis of variance revealed a significant interaction effect, $F(20, 3973) = 9.66; p < 0.001; \eta^2 = 0.05$. The interaction feature explains 5% of the variance of the dependent variable.

In the individual areas, young people’s level of participation in the decision-making process across the municipalities was as follows, arranged in increasing order:

- cultural events in the municipality – the lowest: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia, Elbląg, Iława and Telšiai, slightly higher: Hässleholm;
- investment/renovation projects in the municipality – the lowest: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Telšiai and Iława, slightly higher: Elbląg and Gdynia, and the highest: Hässleholm;
- land development in the municipality – the lowest: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Telšiai, slightly higher: Elbląg, Iława and Gdynia, and the highest: Hässleholm;
- municipal budget allocation – the lowest: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Telšiai, slightly higher: Elbląg, Iława and Gdynia, and the highest: Hässleholm;
- municipality development strategy – the lowest: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Telšiai, slightly higher: Elbląg, Iława and Gdynia, and the highest: Hässleholm;
- election of local authorities – the lowest: Telšiai, slightly higher: Iława, Elbląg, Gdynia, and the highest: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm.

Figure 4.6. Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality vs respondents’ place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Table 4.5. Young people's opportunities to speak on matters concerning their school/university in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample responses)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania					Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łwawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm						
1.	About the choice of extra subjects	I have the opportunity and I speak	75 (7.9)	4 (0.4)	120 (12.7)	158 (16.7)	24 (2.5)	25 (2.7)	37 (3.9)	463 (46.3)					
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	84 (8.9)	5 (0.5)	55 (5.8)	113 (12.0)	12 (1.3)	8 (0.9)	32 (3.4)	322 (32.2)					
2.	About the type of homework	I have no opportunity and I do not speak	18 (1.9)	2 (0.2)	37 (3.9)	99 (10.5)	16 (1.7)	4 (0.4)	17 (1.8)	204 (20.4)					
		I have the opportunity and I speak	76 (8.0)	2 (0.2)	27 (2.9)	63 (6.7)	11 (1.2)	4 (0.4)	33 (3.5)	236 (23.6)					
3.	About the school timetable	I have the opportunity and I do not speak	60 (6.3)	5 (0.5)	62 (6.6)	78 (8.3)	14 (1.5)	2 (0.2)	29 (3.0)	259 (25.9)					
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	41 (4.3)	4 (0.4)	123 (13.0)	229 (24.2)	27 (2.9)	31 (3.3)	25 (2.6)	495 (49.5)					
4.	About the assessment of teacher's work	I have the opportunity and I speak	61 (6.5)	1 (0.1)	23 (2.4)	56 (5.9)	17 (1.8)	2 (0.2)	27 (2.9)	200 (20.0)					
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	66 (7.0)	2 (0.2)	44 (4.7)	50 (5.3)	6 (0.6)	3 (0.3)	33 (3.5)	215 (21.5)					
4.	About the assessment of teacher's work	I have no opportunity and I do not speak	49 (5.2)	8 (0.8)	146 (15.5)	263 (27.8)	29 (3.0)	32 (3.4)	27 (2.9)	573 (57.3)					
		I have the opportunity and I speak	54 (5.7)	1 (0.1)	42 (4.4)	106 (11.2)	11 (1.2)	10 (1.0)	32 (3.4)	271 (27.1)					
4.	About the assessment of teacher's work	I have the opportunity but do not speak	83 (8.8)	5 (0.5)	78 (8.3)	97 (10.3)	14 (1.5)	5 (0.5)	32 (3.4)	329 (32.9)					
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	40 (4.2)	5 (0.5)	93 (9.9)	167 (17.7)	26 (2.8)	21 (2.2)	23 (2.4)	389 (38.9)					

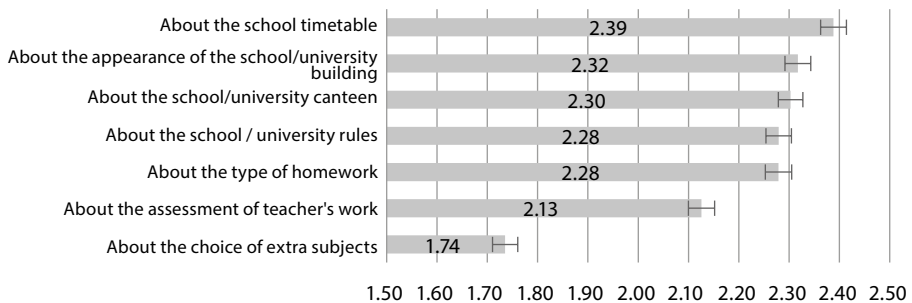
5.	About the school/ university rules	I have the opportunity and I speak	76 (8.0)	1 (0.1)	27 (2.9)	51 (5.4)	11 (1.2)	5 (0.5)	25 (2.7)	210 (21.0)
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	76 (8.0)	3 (0.3)	66 (7.0)	88 (9.3)	8 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	45 (4.8)	307 (30.7)
6.	About the school/ university canteen	I have no opportunity and I do not speak	25 (2.6)	7 (0.7)	120 (12.7)	230 (243)	32 (3.4)	29 (3.1)	17 (1.8)	472 (47.2)
		I have the opportunity and I speak	50 (5.3)	1 (0.1)	23 (2.4)	51 (5.4)	11 (1.2)	5 (0.5)	29 (3.1)	188 (18.8)
7.	About the appearance of the school/ university building	I have the opportunity but do not speak	80 (8.5)	1 (0.1)	70 (7.4)	12 (11.9)	9 (1.0)	10 (1.1)	33 (3.5)	327 (32.7)
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	47 (5.0)	8 (0.9)	119 (12.7)	205 (21.8)	30 (3.2)	22 (2.3)	24 (2.6)	469 (46.9)
8.	About the leisure activities offered	I have the opportunity and I speak	84 (8.9)	1 (0.1)	22 (2.3)	47 (5.0)	12 (1.3)	2 (0.2)	29 (3.1)	208 (20.8)
		I have the opportunity but do not speak	74 (7.8)	1 (0.1)	51 (5.4)	76 (8.0)	6 (0.6)	8 (0.9)	35 (3.7)	268 (26.8)
8.	About the leisure activities offered	I have no opportunity and I do not speak	19 (2.0)	9 (1.0)	139 (14.7)	246 (26.0)	34 (3.6)	27 (2.9)	23 (2.4)	513 (51.3)
		I have the opportunity and I speak	0 (0)	6 (0.8)	61 (8.0)	120 (15.7)	20 (2.6)	14 (1.8)	28 (3.7)	269 (26.9)
8.	About the leisure activities offered	I have the opportunity but do not speak	0 (0)	4 (0.5)	89 (11.6)	136 (17.8)	19 (2.5)	10 (1.3)	41 (5.3)	313 (31.3)
		I have no opportunity and I do not speak	0 (0)	1 (0.1)	61 (8.0)	113 (14.8)	12 (1.6)	13 (1.7)	17 (2.2)	223 (22.3)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

In respect of most of the issues examined, the young people from the seven municipalities generally felt that they were not able to decide on the type of homework, the school timetable, the assessment of the teacher's work, the school/university rules, the school/university canteen or the appearance of school/university buildings. As to the leisure activities offered, 31.3% of respondents in the sample stated that while they had the opportunity to express their opinion on that matter, they did not exercise that privilege. This is further proof that the determinants of youth civic participation lie both on the side of the institutional environment and on the side of young people. In the opinion of the majority of respondents in the sample (46.3% of responses), they have the opportunity and speak only on one issue – concerning the choice of additional subjects.

One-way analysis of variance demonstrated significant differences between the answers $F(5, 4561)=124.58$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.12$. These differences across the individual test questions totalled 12%, as shown in Figure 4.7. A one-way analysis of variance demonstrated that respondents declared the ability to comment on the choice of extra subjects, but had no decision-making power with respect to the school timetable. These opinions indicate a relatively low awareness and initiative among young people in terms of the issues they may influence if they wish to do so. In addition, young people have the opportunity to influence the various decisions made by the school or university authorities through their representatives in pupil or student self-government. In particular, compared to secondary or primary schools, decision-making processes at universities are much more participatory, allowing young people to decide on many important issues not only for students, but also for academic staff and universities as a whole.

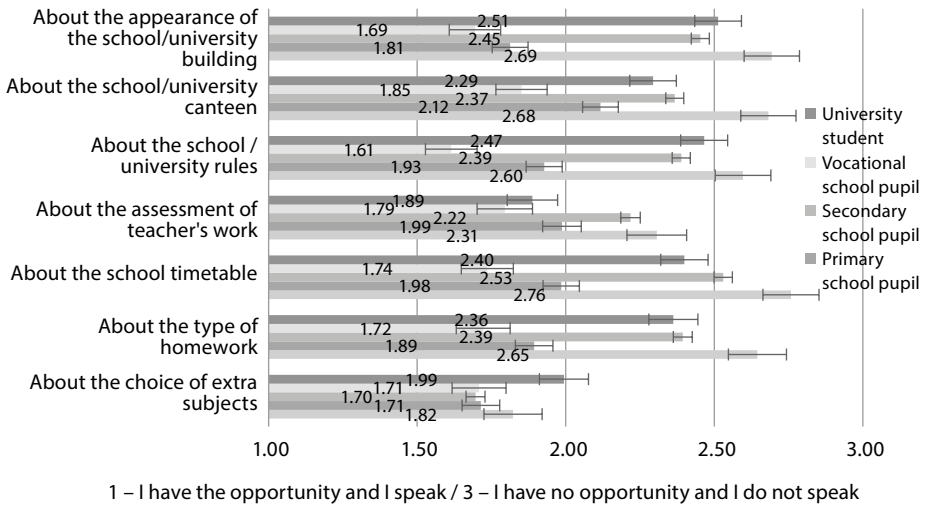
Figure 4.7. Differences between respondents' answers relating to their assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters concerning school/university (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



1 – I have the opportunity and I speak / 3 – I have no opportunity and I do not speak

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Figure 4.8. Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters at school/university vs respondents' status (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

A two-way analysis of variance revealed no significant effect of interaction between respondents' opinion and age, $F(5,4560) = 1,54$; ns. This means that young people's age does not differentiate their ability to speak about school/university issues and participate in decision-making processes. In this case, the situation is similar to that of young people's decision-making power in respect of municipal matters. The age of respondents did not differentiate their opinions, but their status did have an effect. The results of two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect, $F(20, 4634) = 9.51$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.04$. The interaction feature explains 4% of the variance of the dependent variable. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.8. Youth participation in decision-making varied according to their status as follows:

- the appearance of school/university building – the lowest level of participation was observed among primary school pupils, university students and secondary school pupils, and the highest level among lower secondary school and vocational school pupils;
- school/university canteen – the lowest level of participation was declared by primary school pupils, slightly higher by secondary school pupils and university students, and the highest level of participation – by lower secondary and vocational school pupils;

- school/university rules – the lowest level of participation was reported among primary school pupils, university students and secondary school pupils, slightly higher among lower secondary school pupils and the highest among vocational school pupils;
- teacher's work assessment – the lowest level of participation among primary and secondary school pupils, and the highest among lower secondary school pupils, university students and vocational school pupils;
- school timetable – the lowest decision-making power was declared by primary and secondary school pupils, and university students, and the highest by lower secondary school students and vocational school students;
- type of homework – primary and secondary school pupils and university students had the least influence, while secondary and vocational school pupils had the largest impact on such decisions;
- the choice of additional subjects – the lowest level of participation was declared by university students, and slightly by primary, lower secondary, secondary and vocational school students.

These results are surprising on at least a few points. In Poland, Lithuania and Sweden, university students can choose additional subjects to suit their individual interests. It is also difficult to explain the differences in the opinions of primary, lower secondary, vocational and secondary school pupils and university students on the other matters investigated. In addition, educational practices at universities and many lower-level schools are used to develop young people's inclinations and abilities to engage in public matters as aware citizens. In particular, learning within the local communities is a good way to shape youth civic participation⁵. These youth opinions suggest serious weaknesses in civic education.

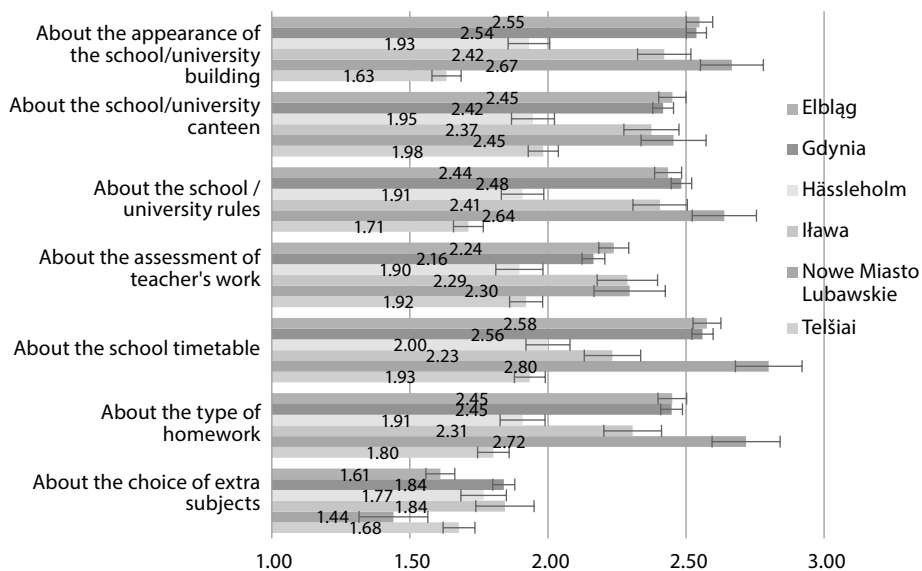
Another factor that differentiates young people's opinions on participation in decision-making at school/university is the respondents' place of residence. The results of two-way analysis of variance revealed a significant interaction effect, $F(25, 4620) = 9.95$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.05$. The interaction feature explains 5% of the variance of the dependent variable. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.9. Youth participation in decision-making varied depending on their status as follows:

- the appearance of the school/university building – the least involved in decision-making were the residents of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg, Gdynia and Iława, slightly more the young people from Hässleholm and the most involved were the respondents from Telšiai;

⁵ See more: Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth, L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ 2010; D. Watson, R. Hollister, S. E. Stroud, E. Babcock, The engaged university: international perspectives on civic engagement, Routledge, New York 2011.

- school/university canteen – respondents living in the municipalities of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg, Gdynia and Iława had the least to say, while the youth from Hässleholm and Telšiai reported the highest level of participation in such decisions;
- school/university rules – the lowest level of participation in decision-making was declared by the residents of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia, Elbląg and Iława, and the highest by the respondents from Hässleholm and Telšiai;
- teachers’ work assessment – the lowest level of participation in decision-making was reported by the residents of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Iława, Elbląg and Gdynia, slightly higher by the young people from Telšiai and the highest by the respondents from Hässleholm;
- school timetable – respondents living in the municipalities of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg and Gdynia had the least influence on the decisions, while the respondents from Hässleholm and Telšiai had the strongest impact;
- type of homework – the lowest level of participation in decision-making was declared by the residents of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg, Gdynia and Iława, and the highest by the respondents from Hässleholm and Telšiai;

Figure 4.9. Assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters at school/university vs respondents’ place of residence (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



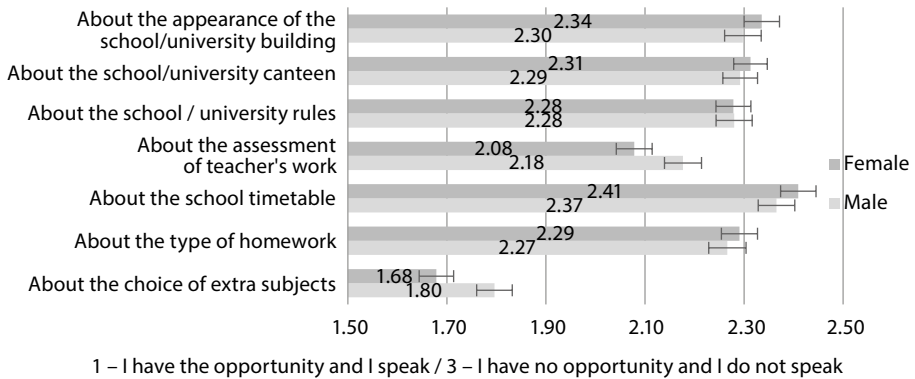
1 – I have the opportunity and I speak / 3 – I have no opportunity and I do not speak

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

- choice of additional subjects – the lowest level of participation in decision-making was reported by the residents of Itawa, Gdynia, Hässleholm, Telšiai and Elbląg, and the highest by the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie.

Certain gender-related differences in the answers to the individual test items were revealed by two-way analysis of variance. There was a significant interaction effect of the two factors, $F(5, 4564) = 2.84$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta = 0.003$. The interaction feature explained 0.3% of the variance of the dependent variable. Indeed, male respondents were more likely to declare that they had the opportunity to speak on issues relating to the evaluation of teacher’s work ($p < 0.1$) and on the choice of additional subjects ($p < 0.05$). No other significant gender-related differences were observed with respect to the remaining test items. The results are shown in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10. Assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs respondents’ gender (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

In view of the belief held by a majority of the young people surveyed of their inability to decide on different issues concerning them in the municipality or at school/university, it was intriguing to look at the efforts undertaken by young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in order to influence matters in their school, town or municipality. The study included selected activities appropriate to the age of respondents and possible forms of civic participation. In a majority of the cases examined, a large proportion of respondents reported that they did not take steps such as requesting assistance from a local government official/representative (57.8% of responses), a known politician (67.5% of responses) or a NGO representative (57.6% of responses); organising a group of young people who would work together on a particular issue; acting in a pupil/student self-government at a school or university or in a youth organisation; participating in public consultations or con-

tacting local journalists. Although the Internet is a particularly important area for youth activity today, including their civic activation⁶, most of the young respondents (46.8% responses) did not share their problems with other Internet users, e.g. on a blog or Facebook. The vast majority of respondents from seven municipalities talk about their problems with friends (“rather yes” – 32.2% of responses, “yes” – 32.1% of responses). A large proportion of the sample were undecided when responding to the questions about requesting assistance from parents (25.1% of responses) and teachers (23.6% of responses). The results are shown in Table 4.6.

The most frequent responses to the questions under consideration varied considerably between the municipalities, with the exception of the opinions of the respondents from Telšiai, which coincided with the prevailing responses throughout the sample. A very similar response structure was also observed in Elbląg, except that most of the respondents there denied asking for teachers’ assistance. Teachers’ support is not sought, either, by a majority of young people from Gdynia who wish to have an influence on the affairs of their school, city or municipality. In Dzierzgoń and Iława the variable distribution was balanced, with the same frequency of “no” and “difficult to say” responses. Similarly, a majority of respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie failed to provide a definitive response. However, in this case, the opinions on requesting teacher assistance were equally divided between the neutral and “rather yes” responses. The young people from Hässleholm had relatively the greatest trust in teachers, with a majority of them stating that if they wanted to have a say in matters concerning their school/town/municipality, they usually asked their teacher/parents for help. Meanwhile, a large proportion of respondents from Gdynia, Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń definitely did not turn to their parents for assistance. Relations between young people and their family members are important and should not be underestimated in developing the capacity of young people to participate fully in citizenship⁷.

The majority of young people from six municipalities never requested assistance from a local government official/government representative in order to have a say in a decision; only in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie the prevailing response was “rather not” and in Hässleholm “difficult to say”. The Swedish respondents also opted for the neutral response as to requesting assistance from a well-known politician, while the young people from the other municipalities strongly denied using such a solution. A certain group of young people – from Hässleholm and Iława – said that to some extent they themselves in youth groups are acting to promote

⁶ S. Banaji, D. Buckingham, Young people, the Internet, and civic participation: an overview of key findings from the CivicWeb Project, *International Journal of Learning and Media* 2010, No. 2, pp. 15–24.

⁷ See more: E. Muddiman, C. Taylor, S. Power, K. Moles, Young people, family relationships and civic participation, *Journal of Civil Society* 2019, Vol. 15, Issue 1, pp. 82–98.

Table 4.6. Steps taken by young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden to have a say in matters concerning their school/town/ municipality (frequency, % of responses in the sample)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łwawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm	Hässelholm			
1.	I ask my parents for help	No	17 (1.7)	4 (0.4)	55 (5.6)	107 (10.8)	17 (1.7)	11 (1.2)	25 (2.5)	236 (23.6)			
		Rather not	40 (4.0)	1 (0.1)	37 (3.8)	68 (6.9)	8 (0.8)	9 (0.9)	13 (1.3)	176 (17.6)			
		Difficult to say	78 (7.9)	3 (0.3)	52 (5.3)	78 (7.9)	11 (1.2)	10 (1.0)	19 (1.9)	251 (25.1)			
		Rather yes	31 (3.1)	3 (0.3)	47 (4.8)	84 (8.5)	11 (1.2)	9 (0.9)	30 (3.0)	215 (21.5)			
		Yes	15 (1.5)	1 (0.1)	26 (2.6)	47 (4.8)	9 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	18 (1.8)	119 (11.9)			
2.	I ask my teachers for help	No	23 (2.3)	4 (0.4)	57 (5.8)	119 (12.0)	14 (1.4)	9 (0.9)	20 (2.0)	246 (24.6)			
		Rather not	45 (4.5)	2 (0.2)	38 (3.9)	71 (7.2)	10 (1.0)	11 (1.1)	15 (1.5)	192 (19.2)			
		Difficult to say	64 (6.5)	4 (0.4)	44 (4.5)	79 (8.0)	14 (1.4)	11 (1.1)	20 (2.0)	236 (23.6)			
		Rather yes	40 (4.0)	1 (0.1)	54 (5.5)	90 (9.0)	13 (1.3)	8 (0.8)	28 (2.8)	234 (23.4)			
		Yes	9 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	22 (2.2)	23 (2.3)	5 (0.5)	5 (0.5)	21 (2.1)	84 (8.4)			
3.	I ask a local government official/representative of the authorities for help	No	117 (11.8)	6 (0.6)	103 (10.4)	230 (23.1)	20 (2.0)	10 (1.0)	22 (2.2)	508 (50.8)			
		Rather not	35 (3.6)	1 (0.1)	39 (3.9)	54 (5.5)	12 (1.2)	16 (1.6)	10 (1.0)	167 (16.7)			
		Difficult to say	23 (2.3)	3 (0.3)	39 (3.9)	55 (5.6)	6 (0.6)	10 (1.0)	32 (3.2)	168 (16.8)			
		Rather yes	3 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	24 (2.4)	29 (2.9)	8 (0.8)	5 (0.5)	30 (3.0)	99 (9.9)			
		Yes	3 (0.3)	2 (0.2)	11 (1.1)	15 (1.5)	9 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	11 (1.1)	52 (5.2)			
4.	I ask a well-known politician for help	No	152 (15.3)	7 (0.7)	148 (14.9)	289 (29.1)	35 (3.5)	16 (1.6)	28 (2.8)	675 (67.5)			
		Rather not	18 (1.8)	1 (0.1)	19 (1.9)	39 (4.0)	10 (1.0)	10 (1.0)	19 (1.9)	116 (11.6)			
		Difficult to say	8 (0.8)	3 (0.3)	23 (2.3)	36 (3.7)	6 (0.6)	13 (1.3)	30 (3.0)	119 (11.9)			
		Rather yes	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	14 (1.4)	13 (1.3)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	22 (2.2)	55 (5.5)			
		Yes	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	12 (1.2)	6 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	6 (0.6)	29 (2.9)			
5.	I ask for help someone from a non-governmental organisation	No	127 (12.9)	6 (0.6)	124 (12.5)	260 (26.2)	19 (1.9)	14 (1.4)	26 (2.6)	576 (57.6)			
		Rather not	28 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	33 (3.3)	39 (4.0)	9 (0.9)	11 (1.1)	25 (2.5)	145 (14.5)			
		Difficult to say	18 (1.8)	3 (0.3)	27 (2.7)	43 (4.4)	11 (1.1)	10 (1.0)	24 (2.4)	136 (13.6)			
		Rather yes	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	16 (1.6)	31 (3.1)	8 (0.8)	6 (0.6)	19 (1.9)	83 (8.3)			
		Yes	6 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	16 (1.6)	10 (1.0)	7 (0.7)	1 (0.1)	11 (1.1)	53 (5.3)			
6.	I talk to my friends about the problem	No	11 (1.1)	1 (0.1)	23 (2.3)	40 (4.0)	3 (0.3)	4 (0.4)	12 (1.2)	94 (9.4)			
		Rather not	17 (1.7)	1 (0.1)	17 (1.7)	19 (1.9)	8 (0.8)	10 (1.0)	6 (0.6)	78 (7.8)			
		Difficult to say	47 (4.7)	4 (0.4)	30 (3.0)	64 (6.5)	7 (0.7)	9 (0.9)	16 (1.6)	177 (17.7)			
		Rather yes	61 (6.1)	1 (0.1)	74 (7.5)	122 (12.3)	14 (1.4)	15 (1.5)	35 (3.6)	322 (32.2)			
		Yes	45 (4.6)	5 (0.5)	73 (7.4)	136 (13.7)	24 (2.4)	4 (0.4)	34 (3.5)	321 (32.1)			

7.	I write about the problem online, on a blog or Facebook	No	100 (10.1)	6 (0.6)	107 (10.8)	191 (19.2)	22 (2.2)	14 (1.4)	28 (2.8)	468 (46.8)
		Rather not	43 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	34 (3.4)	66 (6.7)	6 (0.6)	11 (1.1)	19 (1.9)	174 (17.4)
		Difficult to say	20 (2.0)	5 (0.5)	41 (4.1)	61 (6.2)	18 (1.8)	10 (1.0)	14 (1.4)	174 (17.4)
8.	I organise a group of young people to work with me on the matter	Rather yes	11 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	23 (2.3)	41 (4.1)	7 (0.7)	6 (0.6)	26 (2.6)	114 (11.4)
		Yes	7 (0.7)	1 (0.1)	12 (1.2)	25 (2.5)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	18 (1.8)	65 (6.5)
		No	102 (10.3)	4 (0.4)	93 (9.4)	199 (20.0)	15 (1.5)	15 (1.5)	24 (2.4)	452 (45.2)
9.	I take action through the student government at school or at university	Rather not	40 (4.0)	1 (0.1)	38 (3.8)	57 (5.8)	8 (0.8)	6 (0.6)	8 (0.8)	158 (15.8)
		Difficult to say	24 (2.4)	4 (0.4)	38 (3.8)	63 (6.4)	12 (1.2)	16 (1.6)	29 (2.9)	186 (18.6)
		Rather yes	9 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	31 (3.1)	49 (5.0)	15 (1.5)	5 (0.5)	30 (3.0)	140 (14.0)
10.	I take action through a youth organisation	Yes	6 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	16 (1.6)	14 (1.4)	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	14 (1.4)	58 (5.8)
		No	109 (11.0)	4 (0.4)	118 (11.9)	257 (25.9)	24 (2.4)	21 (2.1)	23 (2.3)	556 (55.6)
		Rather not	28 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	28 (2.9)	40 (4.0)	5 (0.5)	11 (1.1)	17 (1.7)	129 (12.9)
11	I participate in public social consultations	Difficult to say	18 (1.8)	3 (0.3)	25 (2.5)	42 (4.3)	8 (0.8)	6 (0.6)	28 (2.9)	130 (13.0)
		Rather yes	15 (1.5)	0 (0.0)	18 (1.8)	22 (2.2)	8 (0.8)	4 (0.4)	27 (2.7)	94 (9.4)
		Yes	11 (1.1)	5 (0.5)	27 (2.7)	22 (2.2)	9 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	9 (0.9)	83 (8.3)
12	I contact local journalists	No	79 (8.0)	3 (0.3)	110 (11.1)	257 (26.0)	17 (1.7)	22 (2.2)	23 (2.3)	511 (51.1)
		Rather not	34 (3.5)	0 (0.0)	27 (2.8)	34 (3.5)	3 (0.3)	7 (0.7)	18 (1.8)	123 (12.3)
		Difficult to say	28 (2.9)	3 (0.3)	31 (3.2)	45 (4.6)	10 (1.0)	6 (0.6)	30 (3.0)	153 (15.3)
13	Other – specify:	Rather yes	24 (2.4)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.1)	14 (1.4)	5 (0.5)	4 (0.4)	24 (2.4)	93 (9.3)
		Yes	16 (1.6)	5 (0.5)	26 (2.6)	30 (3.0)	19 (1.9)	3 (0.3)	10 (1.0)	109 (10.9)
		No	68 (6.9)	6 (0.6)	117 (11.8)	255 (25.7)	22 (2.2)	20 (2.0)	26 (2.6)	514 (51.4)
11	I participate in public social consultations	Rather not	44 (4.5)	1 (0.1)	35 (3.5)	55 (5.6)	11 (1.1)	8 (0.8)	19 (1.9)	169 (16.9)
		Difficult to say	42 (4.3)	3 (0.3)	31 (3.1)	43 (4.4)	7 (0.7)	11 (1.1)	29 (2.9)	170 (17.0)
		Rather yes	20 (2.0)	1 (0.1)	19 (1.9)	18 (1.8)	9 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	24 (2.4)	92 (9.2)
12	I contact local journalists	Yes	6 (0.6)	1 (0.1)	15 (1.5)	11 (1.1)	5 (0.5)	2 (0.2)	7 (0.7)	47 (4.7)
		No	146 (14.7)	9 (0.9)	145 (14.6)	292 (29.5)	36 (3.6)	24 (2.4)	23 (2.3)	675 (67.5)
		Rather not	17 (1.7)	1 (0.1)	25 (2.6)	40 (4.1)	4 (0.4)	14 (1.4)	17 (1.7)	118 (11.8)
13	Other – specify:	Difficult to say	11 (1.1)	2 (0.2)	24 (2.4)	35 (3.6)	8 (0.8)	4 (0.4)	28 (2.8)	112 (11.2)
		Rather yes	3 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	12 (1.2)	13 (1.3)	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	25 (2.5)	59 (5.9)
		Yes	3 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	10 (1.0)	3 (0.3)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	10 (1.0)	28 (2.8)
			1 (0.1) ⁸	6 (1.4)	102 (24.1) ⁹	207 (48.9) ¹⁰	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	316 (31.6)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

⁸ “I read online how others solve similar problems” – 1 person.

⁹ The respondents gave the following answers: “I act on my own” – 1 person.

¹⁰ “I look for help online” – 1 person; “I write to the municipal office about that matter” – 1 person, “I vote in municipal elections” – 1 person.

their interests. A majority of respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie were hesitant in this respect. Activities within a pupil/student self-government at school or university were used as a form of participation in the decision-making process only by the young people from Dzierzgoń. The Hässleholm respondents most frequently chose the answer “difficult to say”. The negative opinions of young people from the other municipalities can hardly be explained, since all schools in Poland, Sweden, Lithuania have self-governments which participate in decision-making processes to a greater or lesser extent. Activity in youth organisation through which one can influence decisions in one’s school/town/municipality was the preferred answer only in Iława and Dzierzgoń. The Hässleholm respondents tended to choose the neutral response in this regard, as well as with respect to participating in public consultations and contacting local journalists. Talking to friends was the most common method of trying to influence the decisions concerning young people’s immediate environment.

The prevailing response in Gdynia, Iława and Dzierzgoń was “yes” – I talk to friends about the problem, and in the other municipalities “rather yes”. Based on the distribution of the opinions, it can be concluded that young people have more confidence in each other than in adult decision-makers representing public institutions and NGOs. Having said that, young people’s discussions do not translate into concrete action. It is worrying that respondents were reluctant to provide their own answers on civic activity, which may suggest that such activity is not undertaken in other forms, not covered by the survey.

The low level of youth civic participation in the partner municipalities of the SB YCGN project was confirmed by the responses regarding the actions taken by the respondents in the year preceding the survey. The vast majority denied having engaged in any of the forms of activity investigated during that period. A large proportion of respondents answered that they did not: submit their requests to local politicians or local authorities (82% of responses); participate in any demonstration (75% of responses); submit proposals or requests concerning pupils’/students’ problems to school authorities/university authorities/teachers (72.2% of responses); participate in public meetings for the local community (70.5% of responses); contact a politician or town/municipal official (68.9%); discuss political issues in forums or blogs on the Internet (64.4% of responses); exchange opinions on social/political issues online (58.6% of responses); act in any youth organisation (62.9% of responses) or work for any church or religious association (58.9% of responses).

Analysis of the distribution of responses across municipalities reveals differences as to the level of youth civic engagement and its preferred forms.

The only group regularly contacting politicians or town/municipality officials were the participants from Hässleholm. However, the minor difference between

Table 4.7. Civic activities undertaken by young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in the last 12 months (frequency, % of responses in the sample)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łława	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässleholm				
1.	Contacting a politician or city/municipality official	Yes	35 (3.5)	5 (0.5)	67 (6.8)	100 (10.1)	24 (2.4)	16 (1.6)	53 (5.4)	300 (30.0)			
		No	146 (14.7)	7 (0.7)	149 (15.1)	282 (28.5)	28 (2.8)	26 (2.6)	52 (5.3)	690 (68.9)			
2.	Putting forward proposals (requests) concerning residents to municipal politicians or local authorities	Yes	20 (2.0)	3 (0.3)	32 (3.2)	60 (6.1)	15 (1.5)	3 (0.3)	32 (3.2)	165 (16.5)			
		No	161 (16.3)	9 (0.9)	183 (18.6)	320 (32.5)	37 (3.8)	39 (4.0)	72 (7.3)	821 (82.0)			
3.	Putting forward proposals (requests) concerning pupils/students' problems to school authorities/university authorities/teachers	Yes	56 (5.7)	3 (0.3)	50 (5.1)	87 (8.8)	19 (1.9)	7 (0.7)	41 (4.2)	263 (26.3)			
		No	125 (12.7)	9 (0.9)	165 (16.7)	292 (29.6)	33 (3.3)	35 (3.6)	64 (6.5)	723 (72.2)			
4.	Participation in a demonstration	Yes	47 (4.8)	2 (0.2)	38 (3.8)	94 (9.5)	10 (1.0)	8 (0.8)	38 (3.8)	237 (23.7)			
		No	134 (13.6)	10 (1.0)	178 (18.0)	287 (29.0)	42 (4.3)	34 (3.5)	66 (6.7)	751 (75.0)			
5.	Political discussions online in forums or blogs	Yes	57 (5.8)	4 (0.4)	78 (7.9)	132 (13.3)	19 (1.9)	9 (0.9)	46 (4.7)	365 (36.5)			
		No	124 (12.5)	8 (0.8)	139 (14.0)	249 (25.2)	33 (3.3)	33 (3.3)	59 (6.0)	645 (64.4)			
6.	Exchange of views on social/political issues online	Yes	78 (7.9)	6 (0.6)	75 (7.6)	169 (17.0)	19 (1.9)	8 (0.8)	49 (5.0)	404 (40.4)			
		No	103 (10.4)	6 (0.6)	142 (14.3)	213 (21.5)	33 (3.3)	34 (3.4)	56 (5.7)	587 (58.6)			
7.	Participation in public meetings for the local community	Yes	64 (6.5)	6 (0.6)	59 (6.0)	95 (9.6)	18 (1.8)	5 (0.5)	35 (3.6)	282 (28.2)			
		No	117 (11.8)	6 (0.6)	156 (15.8)	287 (29.0)	34 (3.4)	36 (3.7)	70 (7.1)	706 (70.5)			
8.	Membership of a youth organization	Yes	95 (9.6)	7 (0.7)	70 (7.1)	106 (10.7)	27 (2.7)	7 (0.7)	45 (4.6)	357 (35.7)			
		No	86 (8.7)	5 (0.5)	147 (14.9)	274 (27.8)	25 (2.5)	33 (3.4)	60 (6.1)	630 (62.9)			
9.	Participation in church/religious association activities	Yes	98 (10.1)	6 (0.6)	69 (7.1)	129 (13.3)	20 (2.0)	11 (1.1)	50 (5.1)	383 (38.3)			
		No	82 (8.4)	5 (0.5)	142 (14.6)	245 (25.2)	32 (3.3)	30 (3.1)	54 (5.5)	590 (58.9)			

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

positive and negative responses makes it difficult to interpret this score clearly, as confirmed by the results shown in Table 4.7. Participation in youth organisations was preferred by the majority of young people from Dzierzgoń and Iława – the only groups active in formal youth structures among the population investigated. The young people from Dzierzgoń and Telšiai were the most likely to take part in church life or activities of religious organisations. A certain proportion of the young people from Dzierzgoń also exchanged opinions on social/political issues on the Internet and participated in public meetings for local communities. This leads to the conclusion that the youth from Dzierzgoń were relatively most active in public life, followed by the participants from Hässleholm and Telšiai, although in the case of the Lithuanian youth this included specific activity within religious communities.

In conclusion, public affairs related to the immediate environment are not among the issues of greatest interest to young people. The majority of the respondents declared only moderate interest in them, except for national-level issues, which are of high appeal to young people. School, university or work is the area of greatest interest among young people from Hässleholm and slightly less appealing to the respondents from Telšiai and Iława. The neighbourhood as part of the immediate environment was only of slight interest to young people in Telšiai, Elbląg and Iława and of least interest to the participants from Hässleholm. However, the issues of the respondent's local district respondents generated keen interest among the young people from Iława and Dzierzgoń. Meanwhile, the issues concerning the town or municipality were considered important by the young people from Gdynia, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Iława. The Baltic Sea Region, an area seen as rather remote, was highly interesting only to young people from Iława. The identified areas of interest make it possible to see the potential for the development of various forms of civic participation, taking into account the differences between their target groups. For example, a large proportion of the respondents from the seven municipalities investigated were most interested in the affairs of their friends. If these individuals were involved in public affairs, it would be possible to reach other, still inactive groups of young people through them. Considering young people's interest in school, university, work, district, municipality or Baltic Sea issues, one can utilise them to design activities engaging young people in decision-making processes. The potential to increase civic participation also exists in young people's willingness to play a role in the shaping of reality. While a majority of the young respondents from the seven municipalities surveyed were moderately interested in their municipality, the greater part of them declared that they would rather like to have influence on the affairs of the municipality in which they live. The respondents from Hässleholm were strongly interested in having a say in the issues concerning their municipality and most of the participants in Telšiai were unable to clearly state their position in that respect.

That said, the actual impact of 14–24-year-olds on the decisions affecting their immediate environment like municipality or school is very limited relative to the existing opportunities. It is the belief of the majority of young people surveyed in the seven municipalities that they are unable to have a say in all the topics examined and therefore do not take part in any discussion. These opinions indicate lack of awareness that citizens aged 14–24 may have an impact on the municipality and in what forms they can participate in decision-making processes. These forms included the opportunity to elect local authorities (except for people below the voting age), as well as participation in decisions subject to mandatory or optional public consultation, e.g. concerning municipal development strategies; the allocation of funds in the municipal budget (where e.g. a so-called participatory budget has been provided); land use planning (e.g. in respect of renaming towns and geographical objects); investment/renovation projects in the commune; cultural events and other issues such as national and ethnic minorities, public benefit activities and voluntary activities. The respondents' opinions in that regard varied depending on their place of residence, among other things. A majority of young people from Poland and Lithuania claimed that they had no influence on decisions concerning their municipality. The exception here were the young people from Hława who, unlike the other respondents from the two countries, considered that they were entitled to take part in the election of local authorities and exercised that right. The participants from Hässleholm displayed the highest level of public awareness. They declared that they had a say in decisions on most issues and exercised that privilege. This applied to the election of local authorities, the development strategy of the municipality, the distribution of resources in the municipality's budget, land development and investment/renovation projects in the municipality. On the other hand, the Swedish youth stated that they had the decision-making power but did not use it with respect to cultural events and other matters in their municipality. The majority of young people from the seven municipalities expressed similar opinions as to their inability to participate in the decisions concerning their school/university. The greater part of them said that they were able to take part in the discussion only about the choice of additional subjects and took advantage of that opportunity. As to the choice of leisure activities, the majority of respondents acknowledged their right to co-decide but admitted that they did not exercise it. The relatively largest opportunities for participation in the decision-making at schools or universities were offered to the young people from Hässleholm and Telšiai.

The average level of young people's interest and involvement in public affairs is also illustrated by the fact that the respondents engaged in hardly any of the forms of activity examined, whether formal or informal. The main manifestation of youth civic participation in the seven municipalities turned out to be conversations with friends about specific issues. In some municipalities, young people also took advantage of membership of youth organisations – Hława and Dzierzgoń; con-

tacts with politicians or town/municipality officials – Hässleholm; participation in church/religious association activities – Dzierzgoń and Telšiai; exchange of views on social/political issues on the Internet and participation in public meetings for the local community – Dzierzgoń.

The demonstrated average level of civic participation and very limited range of the forms of its exercise in the seven municipalities indicate that the existing potential is not fully exploited. Despite declaring interest and willingness to influence the matters concerning their environment, the majority of young people display low awareness of the opportunities for participation in decision-making and insufficient engagement. Moreover, young people's opinions on specific issues vary depending on their gender, age, status or place of residence, which are factors that should be taken into account when seeking effective ways of strengthening young people's civic engagement not only at local or national level but also across borders in the Baltic Sea Region.

4.3. Barriers to youth civic participation

The relatively low level of civic participation of young people in the five Polish municipalities, one Lithuanian and one Swedish municipality determines the need to identify the existing barriers and methods to overcome them, and to stimulate young people's participation in decision-making processes. The problem of barriers to youth civic participation is perceived somewhat differently by young people and by representatives of the institutional environment. However, there are also certain similarities in identification of the sources of problems of both populations under investigation.

Table 4.8 shows the distribution of young people's opinions on the different barriers to civic participation. The majority of young people in the sample identified two main barriers to their civic participation. According to 31% of young people from the seven municipalities surveyed, the chief impediment is the lack of belief among young people that their ideas can be implemented, while 29% think it is the lack of understanding of young people's needs by adults. The opinions of the respondents from Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia and Iława corresponded to those of the majority of the sample. However, from the viewpoint of most participants from Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, adults' incomprehension of the needs of young people is a highly restrictive factor for civic participation whereas young people's lack of confidence in the implementation of their ideas is a moderate hindrance. A large proportion of the respondents from Telšiai rated the impact of both these problems as average. This leads to the conclusion that one major barrier is due to young people themselves and the other is on the side of adults. Any measures aimed at reducing or eliminating these barriers must be

implemented with a different intensity and in a different scope in each of the municipalities.

A large group of respondents identified the following factors as major obstructions to youth participation in decision-making: lack of youth motivation to participate in decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities (29.4% of responses); lack of information on how to engage in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central governments (29.2% of responses) and politicians' reluctance to engage in a discussion with young people (26.3% of responses). The low level of youth motivation can arise from the difficulty in finding out how they can participate in decision-making processes at schools and in the municipality and in respect of what issues, as well as from politicians' disinclination to cooperate with young people and to involve them in decision-making processes. This necessitates systemic solutions at national or municipal level to enhance youth civic participation: beginning from well-prepared and well-implemented civic education opportunities (extending beyond the school), through various forms of civic participation, which are made easily accessible to young people the openness and engagement of adult decision makers, to involving young people through in cooperation and co-decision on issues of importance for both sides as citizens. The negative effect of the lack of motivation for young people to participate in decision-making in schools, organisations and local and central governments was considered strong by the majority of those surveyed in Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm, and very strong by those in Gdynia and Iława. In Telšiai, these factors are of medium importance. In contrast, inadequate information on how young people can become involved in decision-making has a strong negative impact in Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and a moderate effect in the other municipalities. Politicians' reluctance to speak with young people was identified as a strongly limiting factor for youth civic participation in Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. Swedish youth, despite politicians' unwillingness to cooperate, communicate with them to influence the decisions made in their municipality. This demonstrates the awareness and determination of these young people to exercise their civil rights. In Iława, the responses were equally distributed between the medium and very strong impact of that factor, making interpretation difficult. However, referring to the research results presented above, it can be assumed that some young people have the opportunity to develop a good relationship with local politicians, e.g. by acting in youth organisations or institutions such as youth town councils.

According to the majority of respondents in the three countries, factors of moderately limiting effect on youth civic engagement included young people's inadequate knowledge and skills to participate more in decision-making at school and in local and central organisations and authorities (31% of responses); lack of adequate knowledge and skills of officials, representatives of schools and non-gov-

Table 4.8. Barriers to youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses in the sample)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Ilawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm				
1.	Lack of understanding of young people's needs by adults	Very low impact	16 (1.6)	2 (0.2)	11 (1.1)	34 (3.4)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	30 (3.0)	97 (9.7)			
		Low impact	14 (1.4)	1 (0.1)	12 (1.2)	30 (3.0)	2 (0.2)	9 (0.9)	18 (1.8)	86 (8.6)			
		Medium impact	73 (7.4)	1 (0.1)	58 (5.9)	87 (8.8)	5 (0.5)	8 (0.8)	16 (1.6)	248 (24.8)			
	Lack of youth motivation to participate in decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	Strong impact	50 (5.0)	3 (0.3)	59 (6.0)	92 (9.3)	19 (1.9)	19 (1.9)	30 (3.0)	272 (27.2)			
		Very strong impact	28 (2.8)	5 (0.5)	75 (7.6)	139 (14.0)	27 (2.7)	5 (0.5)	11 (1.1)	290 (29.0)			
		Very low impact	10 (1.0)	1 (0.1)	9 (0.9)	31 (3.1)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	23 (2.3)	77 (7.7)			
2.	Lack of information on how to get involved in the decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	Low impact	23 (2.3)	2 (0.2)	17 (1.7)	41 (4.1)	7 (0.7)	6 (0.6)	23 (2.3)	119 (11.9)			
		Medium impact	59 (6.0)	2 (0.2)	49 (4.9)	88 (8.9)	11 (1.1)	13 (1.3)	22 (2.2)	244 (24.4)			
		Strong impact	51 (5.2)	5 (0.5)	72 (7.3)	111 (11.2)	12 (1.2)	16 (1.6)	27 (2.7)	294 (29.4)			
	Lack of information on how to get involved in the decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	Very strong impact	38 (3.8)	2 (0.2)	68 (6.9)	112 (11.3)	25 (2.5)	5 (0.5)	9 (0.9)	259 (25.9)			
		Very low impact	14 (1.4)	1 (0.1)	10 (1.0)	32 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.3)	19 (1.9)	79 (7.9)			
		Low impact	21 (2.1)	4 (0.4)	21 (2.1)	47 (4.7)	9 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	15 (1.5)	120 (12.0)			
3.	Medium impact at school or organisations or local and central authorities	Medium impact	61 (6.2)	5 (0.5)	72 (7.3)	97 (9.8)	9 (0.9)	12 (1.2)	28 (2.8)	284 (28.4)			
		Strong impact	51 (5.2)	0 (0.0)	59 (6.0)	122 (12.3)	19 (1.9)	18 (1.8)	23 (2.3)	292 (29.2)			
		Very strong impact	34 (3.4)	2 (0.2)	55 (5.6)	85 (8.6)	19 (1.9)	5 (0.5)	17 (1.7)	217 (21.7)			
4.	Politicians' unwillingness to talk with young people	Very low impact	10 (1.0)	1 (0.1)	22 (2.2)	38 (3.8)	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)	21 (2.1)	97 (9.7)			
		Low impact	31 (3.1)	2 (0.2)	25 (2.5)	47 (4.8)	4 (0.4)	4 (0.4)	19 (1.9)	132 (13.2)			
		Medium impact	55 (5.6)	4 (0.4)	61 (6.2)	92 (9.3)	19 (1.9)	9 (0.9)	21 (2.1)	257 (25.7)			
	Parents do not allow their children to engage in public matters	Strong impact	43 (4.4)	2 (0.2)	60 (6.0)	93 (9.4)	15 (1.5)	17 (1.7)	29 (2.9)	263 (26.3)			
		Very strong impact	42 (4.3)	3 (0.3)	49 (4.9)	112 (11.3)	19 (1.9)	9 (0.9)	13 (1.3)	243 (24.3)			
		Very low impact	94 (9.5)	3 (0.3)	48 (4.9)	98 (9.9)	8 (0.8)	9 (0.9)	21 (2.1)	281 (28.1)			
5.	Parents do not allow their children to engage in public matters	Low impact	49 (5.0)	3 (0.3)	62 (6.3)	79 (8.0)	12 (1.2)	7 (0.7)	22 (2.2)	234 (23.4)			
		Medium impact	22 (2.2)	2 (0.2)	60 (6.1)	99 (10.0)	18 (1.8)	15 (1.5)	32 (3.3)	248 (24.8)			
		Strong impact	6 (0.6)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.1)	62 (6.3)	7 (0.7)	7 (0.7)	16 (1.6)	120 (12.0)			
	Young people's inadequate knowledge and skills of to participate more in the decision-making at schools or in organisations or local and central authorities	Very strong impact	9 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	23 (2.3)	44 (4.5)	11 (1.1)	4 (0.4)	12 (1.2)	106 (10.6)			
		Very low impact	18 (1.8)	2 (0.2)	17 (1.7)	48 (4.9)	3 (0.3)	3 (0.3)	22 (2.2)	113 (11.3)			
		Low impact	39 (4.0)	4 (0.4)	26 (2.6)	56 (5.9)	6 (0.6)	12 (1.2)	21 (2.1)	166 (16.6)			
6.	Medium impact at school or in organisations or local and central authorities	Medium impact	77 (7.8)	3 (0.3)	76 (7.7)	103 (10.4)	7 (0.7)	18 (1.8)	26 (2.6)	310 (31.0)			
		Strong impact	26 (2.6)	0 (0.0)	65 (6.6)	108 (10.9)	22 (2.2)	4 (0.4)	23 (2.3)	248 (24.8)			
		Very strong impact	21 (2.1)	3 (0.3)	33 (3.3)	65 (6.6)	17 (1.7)	5 (0.5)	10 (1.0)	154 (15.4)			

7.	Lack of adequate knowledge and skills of officials, representatives of schools and non-governmental organisations in increasing youth participation in decision-making	Very low impact	14 (1.4)	2 (0.2)	8 (0.8)	36 (3.7)	12 (1.2)	1 (0.1)	24 (2.5)	85 (8.5)
		Low impact	30 (3.0)	2 (0.2)	38 (3.9)	60 (6.0)	15 (1.5)	9 (0.9)	12 (1.2)	163 (16.3)
		Medium impact	89 (9.0)	5 (0.5)	77 (7.8)	117 (11.9)	0 (0.0)	23 (2.3)	31 (3.2)	367 (36.7)
		Strong impact	30 (3.0)	1 (0.1)	59 (6.0)	103 (10.5)	16 (1.6)	5 (0.5)	24 (2.4)	238 (23.8)
8.	Young people's doubt if their ideas would be implemented	Very low impact	18 (1.8)	2 (0.2)	33 (3.4)	62 (6.3)	13 (1.3)	4 (0.4)	12 (1.2)	144 (14.4)
		Very low impact	12 (1.2)	1 (0.1)	12 (1.2)	36 (3.7)	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)	17 (1.7)	83 (8.3)
		Low impact	21 (2.1)	1 (0.1)	16 (1.6)	36 (3.7)	4 (0.4)	6 (0.6)	16 (1.6)	100 (10.0)
		Medium impact	58 (5.9)	2 (0.2)	44 (4.5)	72 (7.3)	8 (0.8)	17 (1.7)	27 (2.8)	228 (22.8)
9.	Inadequate communication between young people and local politicians and officials	Strong impact	49 (5.0)	3 (0.3)	67 (6.8)	106 (10.7)	12 (1.2)	7 (0.7)	23 (2.3)	267 (26.7)
		Very strong impact	40 (4.0)	5 (0.5)	76 (7.7)	130 (13.2)	30 (3.0)	9 (0.9)	20 (2.0)	310 (31.0)
		Very low impact	11 (1.1)	1 (0.1)	16 (1.6)	43 (4.4)	4 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	18 (1.8)	93 (9.3)
		Low impact	17 (1.7)	2 (0.2)	28 (2.8)	40 (4.0)	4 (0.4)	4 (0.4)	19 (1.9)	114 (11.4)
10.	Young people's disinterest in participating in decision-making in schools or organisations or local and central authorities	Medium impact	72 (7.3)	3 (0.3)	54 (5.4)	100 (10.1)	11 (1.1)	13 (1.3)	26 (2.6)	279 (27.9)
		Strong impact	51 (5.2)	2 (0.2)	64 (6.5)	80 (8.1)	17 (1.7)	18 (1.8)	25 (2.5)	257 (25.7)
		Very strong impact	30 (3.0)	4 (0.4)	54 (5.4)	119 (12.0)	20 (2.0)	7 (0.7)	16 (1.6)	250 (25.0)
		Very low impact	8 (0.8)	1 (0.1)	16 (1.6)	40 (4.0)	3 (0.3)	4 (0.4)	14 (1.4)	86 (8.6)
11	Other – specify:	Low impact	22 (2.2)	1 (0.1)	30 (3.0)	43 (4.4)	4 (0.4)	7 (0.7)	22 (2.2)	129 (12.9)
		Medium impact	66 (6.7)	5 (0.5)	55 (5.6)	104 (10.5)	12 (1.2)	17 (1.7)	24 (2.4)	283 (28.3)
		Strong impact	49 (5.0)	3 (0.3)	56 (5.7)	84 (8.5)	17 (1.7)	8 (0.8)	28 (2.8)	245 (24.5)
		Very strong impact	35 (3.6)	2 (0.2)	59 (6.0)	108 (10.9)	20 (2.0)	6 (0.6)	16 (1.6)	246 (24.6)
			0 (0)	8 (0.8)	92 (9.2) ¹¹	62 (6.2) ¹²	19 (1.9)	9 (0.9)	80 (8)	270 (27)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

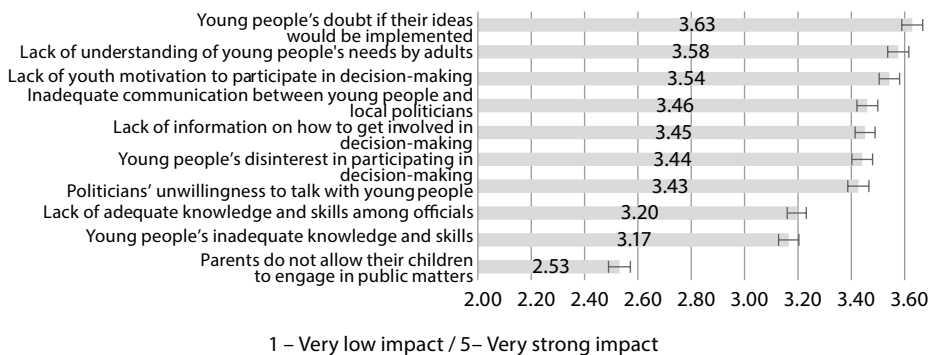
¹¹ Participants' answers: "Shortage of time" – 1 person; "No adult support for young people's decision-making" – 1 person.

¹² Participants' answers: "Lack of confidence in their actions, young people are convinced that no one will respect their opinion" – 1 person; "Nobody wants to listen to the young and often we are not taken seriously" – 1 person; "Such matters seem complicated" – 1 person; "Being below the age limit" – 1 person; "Young people are shy" – 1 person; "Lack of knowledge among children and young people" – 1 person.

ernmental organisations in increasing youth participation in decision-making (36.7%); insufficient communication between young people and local politicians and officials (27.9% of responses) and young people's disinterest in participating in decision-making in schools or organisations or local and central authorities (28.3% of responses). Civic education is clearly failing in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The skills gaps on the part of young people and decision makers alike were identified as important barriers to civic participation. The repeatedly demonstrated low level of interest among young people in public affairs is also linked to this problem, as well as to young people's motivation to become involved in decision-making.

Young people's inadequate knowledge and skills to participate more in decision-making in schools, organisations and local and central authorities proved to be a more acute problem in Gdynia and Iława than in other municipalities. However, inadequate knowledge and skills on the part of officials, school representatives and NGOs in respect of stimulating young people's participation in decision-making was assessed as a major barrier only in Iława. Meanwhile, insufficient communication between young people and local politicians and officials was considered the most important barrier to youth civic engagement by the respondents from Dzierżoń, Gdynia and Iława, and in Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie was seen as a strongly restrictive factor. The young people from Elbląg, Gdynia and Iława were the most likely to admit that the reason for not engaging in public affairs was the lack of interest in decision-making. Young Swedes declared that the above factor had a strong impact on their attitudes.

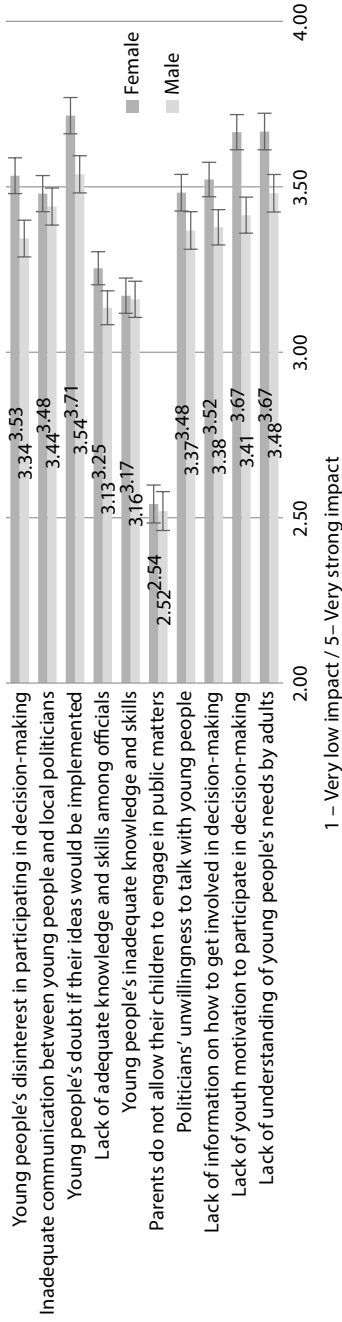
Figure 4.11. Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

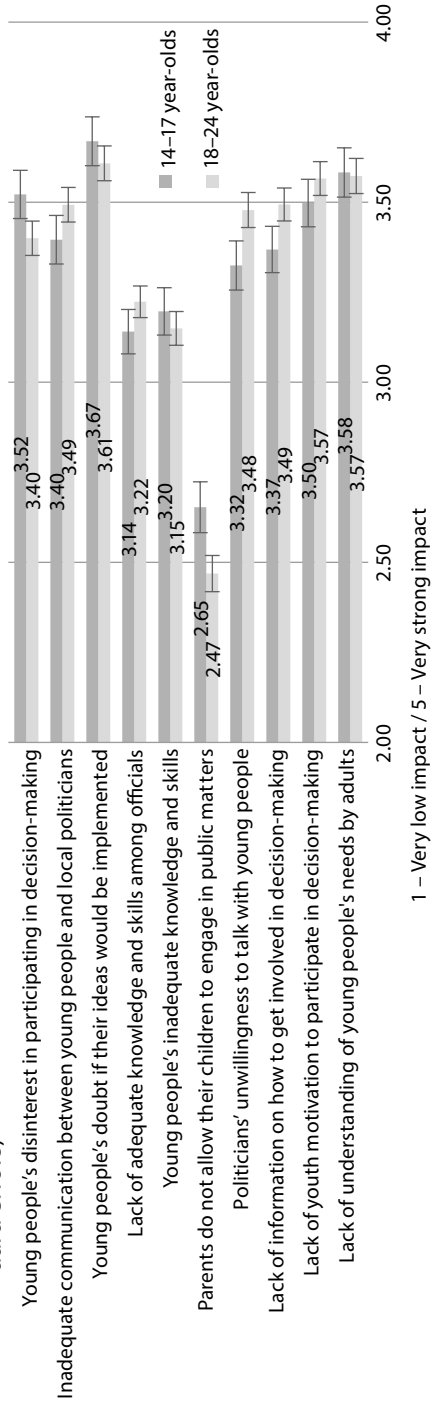
One-way analysis of variance confirmed that the factor having the most limiting effect on young people's involvement in public affairs is the lack of confidence among young people that their ideas can be implemented, while the lack of paren-

Figure 4.12. Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Figure 4.13. Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' age (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

tal consent had the least effect. The significant differences between responses were $F(8, 7831)=111.43$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.10$, overall 10%. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.11.

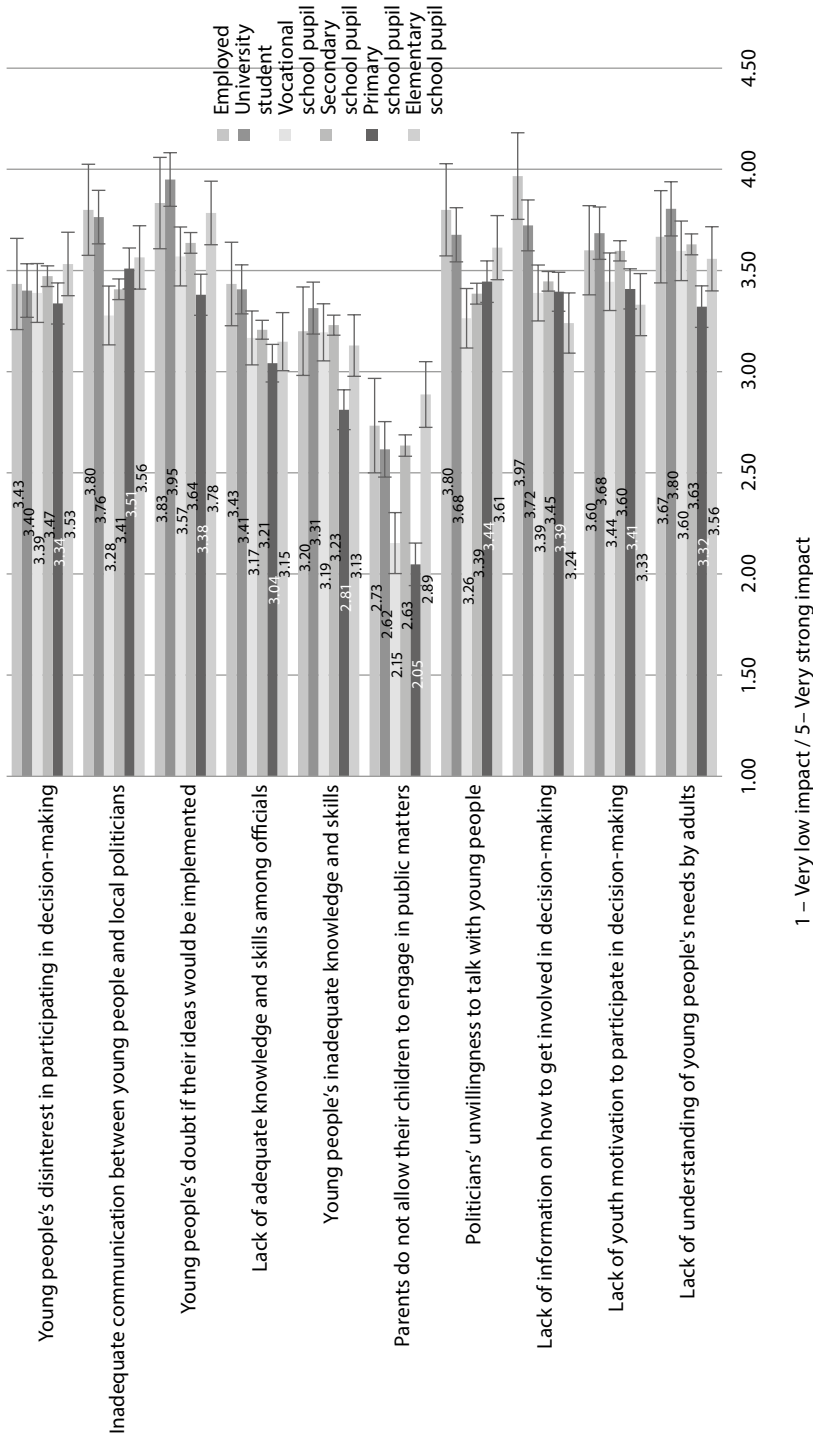
The perception of the importance of individual barriers varied depending on the gender, age, status and place of residence of the respondents, as demonstrated by a two-way analysis of variance. With respect to respondents' gender, it showed a significant (at a statistical trend level) interaction effect between both factors, $F(8, 7826) = 1.74$; $p<0.1$; $\eta = 0.002$. The interaction feature explains 0.02% of the variance of the dependent variable. Analysis revealed that, compared to male participants, female respondents rated the limiting impact of the following factors significantly higher: lack of understanding of young people's needs by adults, $p<0.05$; lack of young people's motivation to participate in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central authorities, $p<0.1$; lack of information on how to engage in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central authorities, $p<0.1$; lack of young people's confidence that their ideas can be implemented, $p<0.05$; and young people's disinterest in participation in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central authorities, $p<0.05$. With regard to other factors limiting the involvement of young people in public affairs, no significant gender-related differences were observed. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.12.

With respect to the age of respondents, a two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect of the two factors, $F(8, 7836) = 3.05$; $p<0.01$; $\eta = 0.003$. The interaction feature explains 0.3% of the variance of the dependent variable. The participants aged 14–17 gave significantly higher ratings to the impact of the lack of parental consent for civic engagement, $p<0.05$. Meanwhile, those aged 18–24 considered the impact of politicians' reluctance to engage in a dialogue with young people to be significantly greater. As to other factors limiting the engagement of young people in public affairs, no significant differences were revealed between the respective age groups. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.13. The existing relationship between age and civic knowledge and civic participation should be better taken into account in the programming of youth policy at both national and local level¹³.

The relationship between the respondents' opinions and status is illustrated by a significant interaction effect, $F(39, 7702) = 2.23$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta=0.01$. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the dependent variable. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.14.

¹³ See more: D. Hart, R. Atkins, P. Markey, J. Youniss, Youth Bulges in Communities: The Effects of Age Structure on Adolescent Civic Knowledge and Civic Participation, *Psychological Science* 2004, Vol. 15, issue 9, pp. 591–597.

Figure 4.14. Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



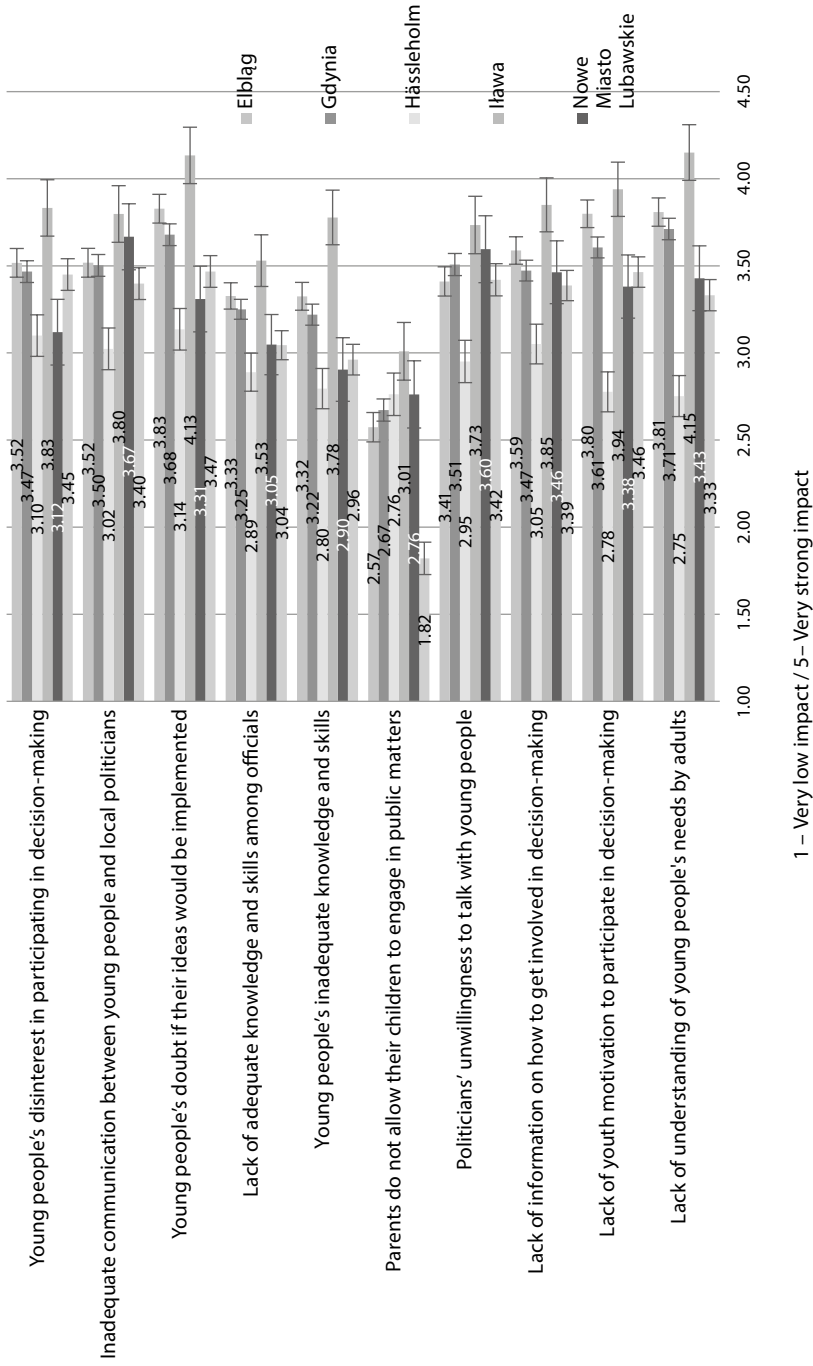
1 – Very low impact / 5 – Very strong impact

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Young people's lack of confidence in implementing their ideas was seen as a stronger negative factor by university students, workers and primary school pupils, and as a less negative effect by secondary, vocational and lower secondary school pupils. University students, employees, and secondary, vocational and primary school pupils, gave slightly higher ratings than lower secondary school pupils to the limiting effect of adults' lack of understanding of young people's needs and young people's inadequate knowledge and skills to participate more in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central governments. The negative impact of poor communication between youth and local politicians and officials on youth civic engagement was rated slightly greater by employees and secondary school pupils compared to primary, lower secondary and vocational school pupils. The limiting effect of the lack of information on how to engage in decision-making at school and in organisations or local and central authorities was seen as most serious by employees and university students, and as slightly less important by secondary, vocational, lower secondary and primary school pupils. Lack of parental consent for engaging in public affairs was seen as a greater impediment by primary school pupils, employees, secondary school pupils and university students than by vocational school and lower secondary school pupils. In the areas mentioned above, the efforts aimed at strengthening youth civic participation should take into account the diversity of opinion linked to the specific conditions of the functioning of the groups concerned in the public domain. Respondents of different status made similar assessments in relation to the following barriers: young people's lack of motivation and interest in participation in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central authorities; politicians' disinclination to speak with young people and the lack of adequate knowledge and skills among officials, school staff and NGO representatives to stimulate young people's participation in decision-making. Since the status of respondents did not have a key differentiating effect on their views on these issues, one can conclude that the corresponding barriers may be considered to be more widespread and should focus the attention of the relevant groups in a similar scope and to a similar degree.

A two-way analysis of variance showed a significant interaction effect, $F(40, 7818) = 4.67$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.02$ between the opinions on the impact of the individual barriers and respondents' place of residence. The interaction feature explains 2% of the variance of the dependent variable. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.15. Doubts as to the implementation of young people's ideas prompted the respondents from Iława, Elbląg and Gdynia to declare a greater reluctance to engage in public affairs compared to the young people from Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. Participants from these municipalities were similarly affected by the lack of adequate knowledge and skills among officials, representatives of schools and non-governmental organisations in increasing youth participation in decision-making (the highest ratings were given in Iława, Elbląg and Gdynia, and slightly lower in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Telšiai and Hässleholm).

Figure 4.15. Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



1 – Very low impact / 5 – Very strong impact

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

The lack of understanding by adults of the needs of young people and the lack of information on how to get involved in the decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities were stronger limiting factors for young people from Iława, Elbląg, Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Telšiai than for youth from Hässleholm. Insufficient motivation for young people to participate in decision-making in schools, organisations and local and central authorities was also considered a stronger constraint on engagement by the participants from Iława, Elbląg, Gdynia, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie than those from Hässleholm. The opinions were similarly distributed regarding the negative impact of inadequate communication between young people and local politicians and officials (the highest ratings were given by the residents of Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg, Gdynia and Telšiai, and the lowest by the participants from Hässleholm) and politicians' reluctance to engage in a dialogue with young people (its negative impact was rated the highest by young people from Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg, and the lowest by the respondents from Hässleholm). Young people's disinterest in participating in decision-making in schools or organisations or local and central authorities proved to be a more serious problem in Iława, Elbląg, Gdynia and Telšiai than in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie or Hässleholm. Meanwhile, the lack of adequate knowledge and skills among young people to engage more in decision-making was seen as the most important limiting factor by young people in Iława, slightly less important by the participants from Elbląg and Gdynia, and the least important by the respondents from Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. Bans on involvement in public affairs imposed by parents had the strongest inhibiting effect on young people from Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Hässleholm, Gdynia and Elbląg, and the least on the youth from Telšiai.

In conclusion, the identified key barriers to civic participation in the seven municipalities are partly due to young people and partly to their environment. This means that the obstacles can be reduced or eliminated effectively only by joint effort of young people and decision makers representing their environment.

From the point of view of young people, the greatest obstacles to their civic engagement are young people's doubts that their ideas can be put into practice and the lack of understanding by adults of the needs of young people. Both these barriers are complex and require further examination. However, one can already assume at this point that adult decision makers should play an important role in overcoming young people's apprehension. Having identified and understood the needs of young people, they could more effectively encourage youth to engage in public affairs and decision-making processes.

A majority of respondents identified the following factors as major constraints to youth participation in decision-making: lack of youth motivation to participate in decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities; lack

of information on how to engage in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central governments and politicians' reluctance to engage in a dialogue with young people. The problem of young people's poor motivation to participate in decision-making was the strongest in Polish municipalities and the Swedish municipality. The lack of information on how young people could become involved in decision-making was more problematic for young people from Gdynia, Hława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie than those from the other municipalities. The lack of political will to engage in a dialogue with young people was a strong limiting factor for the civic participation of young people in Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. The young people from Elbląg, Gdynia, Hässleholm and Hława were the most likely to admit that the reason for not engaging in public affairs was the lack of interest in decision-making. One of the important barriers was the lack of adequate knowledge and skills to participate more in decision-making – among young people (mainly in Gdynia and Hława), and among officials and representatives of schools and NGOs (especially in Hława). The views of young people on the impact of the various barriers to their active citizenship varied depending on gender, age, status of respondents and their place of residence. They should therefore be taken into account in subsequent studies and practical efforts. Moreover, it might be worth taking into account the interplay between the barriers examined, as this determines the search for systemic solutions with strong and widely available civic education, and numerous and easily accessible forms of civic participation.

4.4. Effective actions to increase civic participation as seen by young people

In connection with the clearly observing need to increase the civic involvement of young people and their civic participation in many societies, more and more diverse and innovative forms of involving them in public affairs are being implemented¹⁴. In addition to experience, a valuable source of information on the effectiveness of actions to strengthen civic participation are a dialogue with young people and primary quantitative and qualitative research.

The youth civic engagement situation in each of the municipalities surveyed was somewhat different in terms of scope, form and barriers to civic participation. The differences in the perception of the impact of the various barriers by young people depending on the sex, age, status and place of residence of respondents should be taken into account when choosing effective ways of stimulating youth

¹⁴ B. Steele, Youth civic engagement resource toolkit practical help for getting young people involved, Institute for Emerging Issues 2015, <https://iei.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CERT-Youth-electronic-bls110415v2.pdf> [accessed: 18.08.2019].

civic engagement. On the basis of the views of young people who, in the framework of the diagnostic survey carried out as part of the SB YCGN project, indicated the strength of impact of selected actions aiming to encourage greater involvement in public decision-making processes, the key determinants and the needs of young people related to their civic participation were identified.

None of the factors investigated was assessed as having a very weak or weak stimulating effect in respect of respondents' commitment to shaping their local environment.

In ten out of seventeen categories surveyed, the prevailing responses indicated strong or very strong impact on respondents' decisions concerning their civic engagement. The most important factor, in the opinion of the majority of respondents in the sample (30.6% of responses), is the implementation of young people's proposals (e.g. by local authorities, schools or NGOs). This constitutes proof that their voice is heard and taken into account in the decision-making process. In particular, young people from Gdynia, Elbląg and Iława were of this opinion. For the majority of those surveyed in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń, this is a motivator with a strong influence on their involvement in public affairs, whereas for the majority of young people in Telšiai and Hässleholm this issue is of medium importance. The survey results for this problem are shown in Table 4.9.

Among the actions that could effectively help increase youth civic participation, the majority of the respondents in the sample indicated eight. It is also worth noting that the individual issues were not equally assessed in terms of impact strength by respondents from different municipalities. These include:

- the opportunity for young people to present their views to local authorities (32.4% of the responses in the sample) – this opinion was expressed most frequently in Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; in Hässleholm, the same number of respondents rated it as having strong and medium impact, in Dzierzgoń a majority considered it of medium importance, while in Iława, the respondents tended to believe that such an opportunity would have a very significant impact on increasing the respondents' engagement in shaping their local environment;
- exchange of information among young people on their actions (31.3% of responses in the sample) – this opinion prevailed in Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; in Dzierzgoń the respondents shared their views equally between strong and medium impact of the factor, while in Hässleholm, most young people rated its importance as medium;
- the possibility for young people to present their views to school authorities and NGOs (30% of responses in the sample) – the majority of respondents from Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie shared this opinion; in Dzierzgoń a majority of respondents considered that the factor had a medium impact and in Iława a majority believed it to be very important;

- meetings with people who actively work for the local environment (29% of responses in the sample) – this course of action was preferred by the majority of young people from Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg; in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń its impact was considered large and medium, respectively, and in Hässleholm mainly as medium;
- establishment of more local youth organisations (28.9% of responses in the sample), selected by the majority of young people from Gdynia, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; in Elbląg the same number of responses indicated strong and medium impact; in Hässleholm and Dzierzgoń a majority considered it to be of medium importance, and in Iława of great importance;
- the possibility for young people to participate in meetings of local authorities (27.8% of responses in the sample) – this is a highly motivating factor for the majority of young people in Gdynia, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń, in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm it has a moderate impact, and in Iława a very strong impact;
- development of social projects for youth civic engagement (27.8% of responses in the sample) – the majority of young people from Gdynia and Hässleholm found it to have a strong impact on their activity, in Dzierzgoń the opinions were divided equally between strong and average impact, in Elbląg, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie the participants indicated an average importance of this factor, and in Iława it was seen as very important;
- meetings with people who tell youth how to get involved (27.2% of responses in the sample) – a strong need for this solution was expressed by the majority of the young people from Telšiai and Hässleholm; in Dzierzgoń and Iława, young people were very interested in such meetings, but the respondents in Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie expressed only moderate interest in them.

As regards the importance of municipal Youth Councils, which may influence local authorities' decisions, respondents' opinions were too divergent to indicate a prevailing response. The same number of respondents (28% of responses) considered that factor to have a strong and average impact on the increase in youth involvement in shaping the local environment.

The remaining issues examined were assessed by the majority as having an average impact on increasing young people's civic participation. These included the following activities:

- improving knowledge or skills of representatives of local authorities, schools, NGOs with respect to increasing the civic participation of young people (31.5% of responses in the sample) – only the young people in Iława indicated a very strong impact of this factor;

Table 4.9. Actions to increase youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses in the sample)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania		Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Telšiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Ilawa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm			
1.	Meetings with people who tell youth how to engage	Very low impact	9 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	24 (2.4)	37 (3.7)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	26 (2.6)	99 (9.9)		
		Low impact	22 (2.2)	2 (0.2)	31 (3.1)	46 (4.6)	3 (0.3)	10 (1.0)	17 (1.7)	131 (13.1)		
		Medium impact	55 (5.5)	3 (0.3)	56 (5.7)	107 (10.8)	13 (1.3)	16 (1.6)	20 (2.0)	270 (27.0)		
		Strong impact	61 (6.2)	3 (0.3)	51 (5.1)	104 (10.5)	13 (1.3)	11 (1.1)	29 (2.9)	272 (27.2)		
		Very strong impact	34 (3.4)	4 (0.4)	55 (5.5)	88 (8.9)	25 (2.5)	4 (0.4)	13 (1.3)	223 (22.3)		
2.	Meetings with people who actively work for the local environment	Very low impact	8 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	16 (1.6)	26 (2.6)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.1)	74 (7.4)		
		Low impact	22 (2.2)	1 (0.1)	36 (3.6)	57 (5.8)	5 (0.5)	8 (0.8)	23 (2.3)	152 (15.2)		
		Medium impact	53 (5.3)	4 (0.4)	56 (5.7)	98 (9.9)	11 (1.1)	13 (1.3)	28 (2.8)	263 (26.3)		
		Strong impact	59 (6.0)	4 (0.4)	57 (5.8)	124 (12.5)	11 (1.1)	13 (1.3)	22 (2.2)	290 (29.0)		
		Very strong impact	39 (3.9)	3 (0.3)	51 (5.1)	77 (7.8)	27 (2.7)	7 (0.7)	10 (1.0)	214 (21.4)		
3.	Possibility for young people to participate in meetings of local authorities	Very low impact	11 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	29 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	81 (8.1)		
		Low impact	26 (2.6)	2 (0.2)	38 (3.8)	58 (5.9)	3 (0.3)	8 (0.8)	23 (2.3)	158 (15.8)		
		Medium impact	60 (6.1)	3 (0.3)	48 (4.9)	107 (10.8)	11 (1.1)	18 (1.8)	28 (2.8)	275 (27.5)		
		Strong impact	43 (4.3)	4 (0.4)	64 (6.5)	117 (11.8)	14 (1.4)	11 (1.1)	25 (2.5)	278 (27.8)		
		Very strong impact	41 (4.1)	3 (0.3)	46 (4.6)	70 (7.1)	28 (2.8)	4 (0.4)	9 (0.9)	201 (20.1)		
4.	Opportunity for young people to present their views to local authorities	Very low impact	8 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	15 (1.5)	22 (2.2)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	18 (1.8)	67 (6.7)		
		Low impact	26 (2.6)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.1)	39 (3.9)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	20 (2.0)	111 (11.1)		
		Medium impact	42 (4.2)	5 (0.5)	51 (5.2)	81 (8.1)	11 (1.1)	7 (0.7)	28 (2.8)	225 (22.5)		
		Strong impact	66 (6.7)	2 (0.2)	73 (7.4)	120 (12.1)	14 (1.4)	21 (2.1)	28 (2.8)	324 (32.4)		
		Very strong impact	39 (4.0)	4 (0.4)	56 (5.7)	118 (11.9)	27 (2.7)	10 (1.0)	11 (1.1)	265 (26.5)		
5.	Municipal Youth Councils, which may influence local authorities' decisions	Very low impact	13 (1.3)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.1)	30 (3.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	17 (1.7)	83 (8.3)		
		Low impact	27 (2.7)	1 (0.1)	24 (2.4)	52 (5.3)	4 (0.4)	3 (0.3)	25 (2.5)	136 (13.6)		
		Medium impact	59 (6.0)	7 (0.7)	56 (5.7)	106 (10.7)	11 (1.1)	14 (1.4)	27 (2.7)	280 (28.0)		
		Strong impact	48 (4.8)	1 (0.1)	56 (5.7)	117 (11.8)	14 (1.4)	19 (1.9)	25 (2.5)	280 (28.0)		
		Very strong impact	34 (3.4)	2 (0.2)	59 (6.0)	77 (7.8)	26 (2.6)	5 (0.5)	10 (1.0)	213 (21.3)		
6.	Opportunity for young people to present their views to school authorities and non-governmental organisations	Very low impact	11 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	18 (1.8)	23 (2.3)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	19 (1.9)	73 (7.3)		
		Low impact	26 (2.6)	2 (0.2)	21 (2.1)	41 (4.1)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	23 (2.3)	117 (11.7)		
		Medium impact	49 (4.9)	4 (0.4)	57 (5.8)	99 (10.0)	12 (1.2)	15 (1.5)	21 (2.1)	257 (25.7)		
		Strong impact	58 (5.9)	3 (0.3)	66 (6.7)	115 (11.6)	11 (1.1)	19 (1.9)	28 (2.8)	300 (30.0)		
		Very strong impact	36 (3.6)	3 (0.3)	55 (5.6)	104 (10.5)	27 (2.7)	6 (0.6)	12 (1.2)	243 (24.3)		

7.	Implementation of young people's proposals (e.g. by local authorities, schools or NGOs)	Very low impact	11 (1.1)	1 (0.1)	13 (1.3)	25 (2.5)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	71 (7.1)
		Low impact	22 (2.2)	4 (0.4)	12 (1.2)	30 (3.0)	4 (0.4)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.1)	90 (9.0)
		Medium impact	64 (6.5)	0 (0.0)	54 (5.4)	87 (8.8)	12 (1.2)	12 (1.2)	26 (2.6)	259 (25.9)
		Strong impact	46 (4.7)	5 (0.5)	55 (5.6)	107 (10.8)	10 (1.0)	22 (2.2)	22 (2.2)	267 (26.7)
		Very strong impact	38 (3.8)	2 (0.2)	83 (8.4)	132 (13.3)	28 (2.8)	7 (0.7)	16 (1.6)	306 (30.6)
		Very low impact	11 (1.1)	1 (0.1)	26 (2.6)	24 (2.4)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	22 (2.2)	86 (8.6)
8.	Development of social projects for youth civic engagement	Low impact	23 (2.3)	1 (0.1)	25 (2.5)	49 (5.0)	2 (0.2)	4 (0.4)	18 (1.8)	122 (12.2)
		Medium impact	56 (5.7)	4 (0.4)	63 (6.4)	98 (9.9)	12 (1.2)	20 (2.0)	24 (2.4)	277 (27.7)
		Strong impact	52 (5.3)	4 (0.4)	50 (5.0)	116 (11.7)	11 (1.1)	14 (1.4)	31 (3.1)	278 (27.8)
		Very strong impact	39 (3.9)	2 (0.2)	53 (5.3)	95 (9.6)	27 (2.7)	4 (0.4)	10 (1.0)	230 (23.0)
		Very low impact	9 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	24 (2.4)	40 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	18 (1.8)	91 (9.1)
		Low impact	19 (1.9)	3 (0.3)	32 (3.2)	57 (5.8)	5 (0.5)	4 (0.4)	17 (1.7)	137 (13.7)
9.	Establishment of more local youth organisations	Medium impact	50 (5.0)	4 (0.4)	57 (5.8)	106 (10.7)	11 (1.1)	13 (1.3)	34 (3.4)	275 (27.5)
		Strong impact	61 (6.2)	3 (0.3)	57 (5.8)	107 (10.8)	16 (1.6)	20 (2.0)	25 (2.5)	289 (28.9)
		Very strong impact	42 (4.2)	2 (0.2)	47 (4.7)	71 (7.2)	23 (2.3)	5 (0.5)	11 (1.1)	201 (20.1)
		Very low impact	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	24 (2.4)	37 (3.8)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	18 (1.8)	86 (8.6)
		Low impact	25 (2.5)	1 (0.1)	24 (2.4)	52 (5.3)	6 (0.6)	6 (0.6)	16 (1.6)	130 (13.0)
		Medium impact	57 (5.8)	5 (0.5)	66 (6.7)	106 (10.7)	11 (1.1)	21 (2.1)	40 (4.1)	306 (30.6)
10.	Establishment of an international youth organisation	Strong impact	50 (5.1)	2 (0.2)	47 (4.8)	95 (9.6)	12 (1.2)	9 (0.9)	20 (2.0)	235 (23.5)
		Very strong impact	42 (4.2)	3 (0.3)	55 (5.6)	90 (9.1)	25 (2.5)	5 (0.5)	10 (1.0)	230 (23.0)
		Very low impact	6 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	34 (3.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (1.3)	75 (7.5)
		Low impact	27 (2.7)	1 (0.1)	23 (2.3)	54 (5.5)	3 (0.3)	7 (0.7)	25 (2.5)	140 (14.0)
		Medium impact	69 (7.0)	3 (0.3)	66 (6.7)	100 (10.1)	13 (1.3)	20 (2.0)	33 (3.3)	306 (30.6)
		Strong impact	51 (5.2)	3 (0.3)	54 (5.5)	104 (10.5)	17 (1.7)	9 (0.9)	20 (2.0)	258 (25.8)
11.	Building a new model of relations between young people and public institutions/ NGOs	Very strong impact	28 (2.8)	5 (0.5)	52 (5.3)	89 (9.0)	22 (2.2)	6 (0.6)	13 (1.3)	213 (21.3)
		Very low impact	4 (0.4)	1 (0.1)	15 (1.5)	29 (2.9)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	12 (1.2)	64 (6.4)
		Low impact	31 (3.1)	1 (0.1)	18 (1.8)	48 (4.8)	4 (0.4)	4 (0.4)	20 (2.0)	126 (12.6)
		Medium impact	55 (5.6)	3 (0.3)	67 (6.8)	106 (10.7)	9 (0.9)	21 (2.1)	31 (3.1)	292 (29.2)
		Strong impact	56 (5.7)	2 (0.2)	60 (6.1)	101 (10.2)	13 (1.3)	12 (1.2)	28 (2.8)	272 (27.2)
		Very strong impact	35 (3.5)	5 (0.5)	57 (5.8)	97 (9.8)	27 (2.7)	4 (0.4)	14 (1.4)	239 (23.9)
12.	Raising public awareness of the importance of youth participation in public life	Very low impact	4 (0.4)	1 (0.1)	15 (1.5)	29 (2.9)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	12 (1.2)	64 (6.4)
		Low impact	31 (3.1)	1 (0.1)	18 (1.8)	48 (4.8)	4 (0.4)	4 (0.4)	20 (2.0)	126 (12.6)
		Medium impact	55 (5.6)	3 (0.3)	67 (6.8)	106 (10.7)	9 (0.9)	21 (2.1)	31 (3.1)	292 (29.2)
		Strong impact	56 (5.7)	2 (0.2)	60 (6.1)	101 (10.2)	13 (1.3)	12 (1.2)	28 (2.8)	272 (27.2)
		Very strong impact	35 (3.5)	5 (0.5)	57 (5.8)	97 (9.8)	27 (2.7)	4 (0.4)	14 (1.4)	239 (23.9)

13.	Exchange of information between young people about their activities (self-promotion of young people)	Very low impact	8 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	23 (2.3)	36 (3.6)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	13 (1.3)	83 (8.3)
		Low impact	22 (2.2)	1 (0.1)	27 (2.7)	46 (4.6)	2 (0.2)	7 (0.7)	18 (1.8)	123 (12.3)
		Medium impact	57 (5.8)	4 (0.4)	54 (5.5)	108 (10.9)	10 (1.0)	14 (1.4)	35 (3.5)	282 (28.2)
		Strong impact	64 (6.5)	4 (0.4)	61 (6.2)	123 (12.4)	21 (2.1)	15 (1.5)	25 (2.5)	313 (31.3)
		Very strong impact	30 (3.0)	3 (0.3)	52 (5.3)	68 (6.9)	20 (2.0)	5 (0.5)	13 (1.3)	191 (19.1)
14.	Information in the media showing examples of civic participation of young people	Very low impact	11 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	23 (2.3)	30 (3.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	14 (1.4)	79 (7.9)
		Low impact	27 (2.7)	2 (0.2)	34 (3.4)	59 (6.0)	5 (0.5)	6 (0.6)	19 (1.9)	152 (15.2)
		Medium impact	58 (5.9)	4 (0.4)	56 (5.7)	112 (11.3)	14 (1.4)	18 (1.8)	37 (3.7)	299 (29.9)
		Strong impact	54 (5.5)	3 (0.3)	53 (5.4)	107 (10.8)	12 (1.2)	11 (1.1)	20 (2.0)	260 (26.0)
		Very strong impact	31 (3.1)	3 (0.3)	50 (5.0)	73 (7.4)	24 (2.4)	6 (0.6)	15 (1.5)	202 (20.2)
15.	Development of cooperation between youth organisations at local level	Very low impact	7 (0.7)	1 (0.1)	22 (2.2)	41 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	92 (9.2)
		Low impact	25 (2.5)	0 (0.0)	27 (2.7)	38 (3.9)	6 (0.6)	1 (0.1)	15 (1.5)	112 (11.2)
		Medium impact	57 (5.8)	4 (0.4)	54 (5.5)	110 (11.2)	9 (0.9)	14 (1.4)	39 (4.0)	291 (29.1)
		Strong impact	63 (6.4)	2 (0.2)	58 (5.9)	112 (11.4)	13 (1.3)	21 (2.1)	16 (1.6)	281 (28.1)
		Very strong impact	29 (2.9)	4 (0.4)	55 (5.6)	79 (8.0)	17 (1.7)	5 (0.5)	12 (1.2)	211 (21.1)
16.	Development of cooperation between youth organisations at international level	Very low impact	9 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	42 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	18 (1.8)	90 (9.0)
		Low impact	23 (2.3)	2 (0.2)	31 (3.1)	47 (4.8)	6 (0.6)	4 (0.4)	12 (1.2)	125 (12.5)
		Medium impact	70 (7.1)	5 (0.5)	67 (6.8)	116 (11.8)	10 (1.0)	19 (1.9)	37 (3.8)	324 (32.4)
		Strong impact	45 (4.6)	1 (0.1)	53 (5.4)	86 (8.7)	15 (1.5)	12 (1.2)	27 (2.7)	239 (23.9)
		Very strong impact	32 (3.3)	4 (0.4)	46 (4.7)	87 (8.8)	24 (2.4)	6 (0.6)	10 (1.0)	209 (20.9)
17.	Improved knowledge or skills of representatives of local authorities, schools, NGOs with respect to increasing the civic participation of young people	Very low impact	7 (0.7)	1 (0.1)	22 (2.3)	32 (3.3)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	18 (1.8)	84 (8.4)
		Low impact	28 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	28 (2.9)	41 (4.2)	1 (0.1)	6 (0.6)	13 (1.3)	117 (11.7)
		Medium impact	63 (6.4)	8 (0.8)	61 (6.2)	116 (11.8)	11 (1.1)	16 (1.6)	40 (4.1)	315 (31.5)
		Strong impact	49 (5.0)	1 (0.1)	54 (5.5)	101 (10.3)	18 (1.8)	12 (1.2)	22 (2.2)	257 (25.7)
		Very strong impact	34 (3.5)	2 (0.2)	49 (5.0)	83 (8.5)	23 (2.4)	6 (0.6)	11 (1.1)	208 (20.8)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

- establishment of an international youth organisation (30.6% of the response in the sample) – only in Iława this action was seen by a majority as having a very strong impact;
- building a new model of relations between young people and public institutions or NGOs (30.6% of responses in the sample) – in Dzierzgoń and Iława, most of the people surveyed rated its impact as very strong and in Gdynia as strong;
- raising public awareness of the importance of youth participation in public life (29.2% of responses in the sample) – in Dzierzgoń and Iława prevailed the opinion of a very strong impact, and in Telšiai of a strong impact of this solution;
- information in the media showing examples of civic youth participation (29.9% of responses in the sample) – only the majority of respondents in Iława indicated a very strong impact of this action;
- development of cooperation between youth organizations at local level (29.1% of responses in the sample) – only in Iława it was seen as having a very strong impact, in Dzierzgoń the opinions were balanced between a very strong and medium impact, whereas a large proportion of respondents in Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie considered such cooperation to be very important.

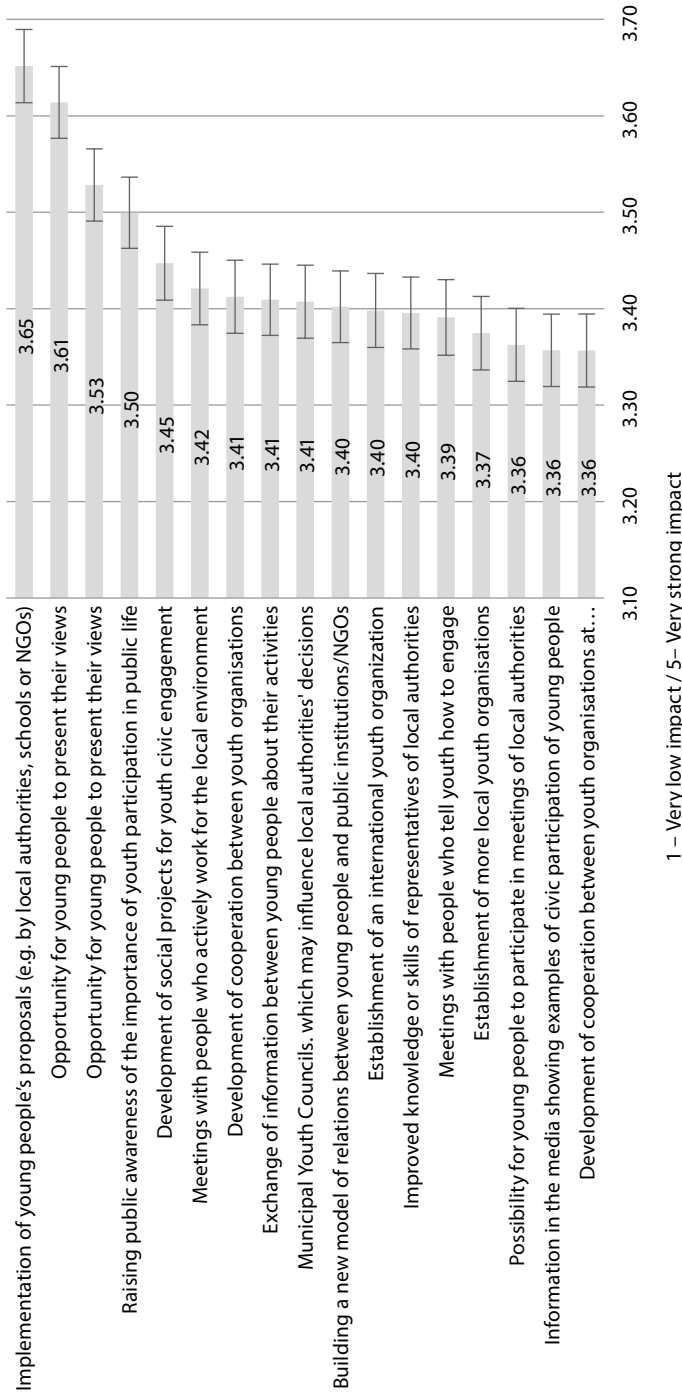
The results of a one-way analysis of variance serve to confirm the above conclusions. The analysis demonstrated that, according to those surveyed, the action having the greatest impact on the respondents' engagement in shaping the local environment would be the implementation of youth proposals, for example by local authorities, schools or organisations, whereas the development of cooperation between youth organisations at international level would have the least impact. One-way analysis of variance demonstrated significant differences between the answers $F(13, 12960)=12.94$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.01$. The differences between the answers to the individual test questions were 1% in total. The results are shown in Figure 4.16.

A two-way analysis of variance revealed that the respondents' opinions on what would increase their involvement in local environment decisions varied depending on their gender, status and place of residence¹⁵.

Results of the analysis show that the ratings given by female respondents were significantly higher than those of male respondents in the assessment of the impact of the various factors on increasing their involvement in shaping the local environment for all the factors examined, with the exception of Youth Councils' activities within municipalities. The significant interaction effect between the two factors was $F(13, 12939) = 2.03$; $p<0.05$; $\eta = 0.002$. The interaction feature explains 0.2% of the variance of the dependent variable. The analysis results are shown in Figure 4.17.

¹⁵ A two-way analysis of variance demonstrated that the age of young people does not differentiate their assessment of the impact of the various factors on increasing their involvement in shaping the local environment – there was no significant interaction effect between the two factors, $F(13, 12944) = 1.33$; ns.

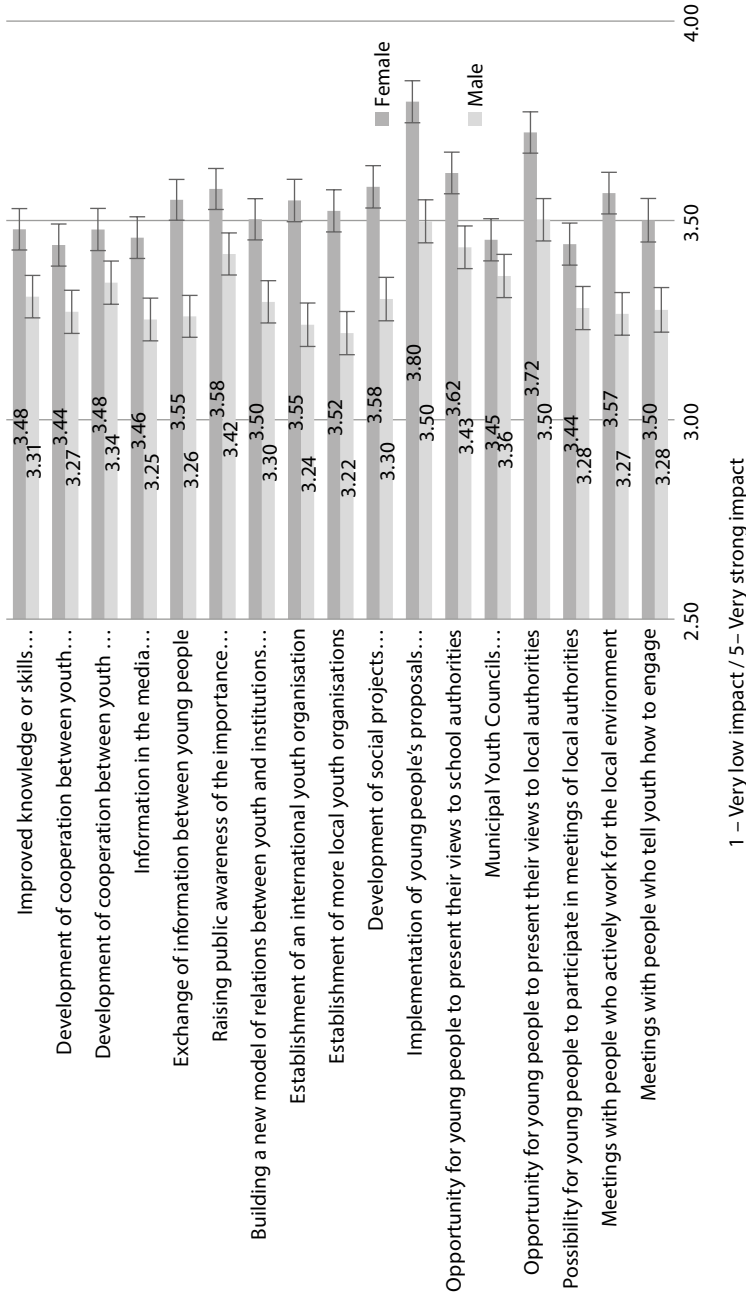
Figure 4.16. Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden(the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



1 – Very low impact / 5 – Very strong impact

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Figure 4.17. Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



1 – Very low impact / 5 – Very strong impact

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Another factor that differentiated the respondents' opinions was their status. The results of two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect, $F(65, 12686) = 2.32$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.01$. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the dependent variable. In general, the highest ratings of the potential impact of the nine factors on increasing young people's involvement in shaping the closest environment were given by university students. The implementation of youth proposals, for example by local authorities, schools or NGOs, identified by the majority of those surveyed as the most relevant factor for increasing their involvement, was the highest rated by university students, primary and secondary school pupils, employees and lower secondary school pupils, and the lowest rated by vocational school pupils. The opportunity for young people to present their opinions to local authorities, as a factor with a strong impact on young people, also received the highest ratings from university students, slightly lower ones from primary, lower secondary and secondary school pupils, and the lowest from employed respondents and vocational school pupils. Another factor strongly stimulating youth engagement that was awarded best ratings by university students was the exchange of information among young people about their activities. Slightly less favourable opinions came from lower secondary, secondary, primary and vocational school pupils and working participants. The opportunity for young people to present their opinions to school authorities and non-governmental organisations received the highest grades from university students and pupils of lower secondary, primary and secondary schools, and the lowest grades from vocational school pupils and employees. The most favourable assessments as to the development of social projects for youth civic engagement were made by university students; slightly less positive by lower secondary, secondary and primary school pupils, and the least favourable by vocational school pupils and working respondents. Meetings with people who actively work for the local environment, also highest rated by university students, and slightly lower by pupils of lower secondary, vocational, primary and secondary schools and working respondents, were also important from the point of view of young people's needs. The activities of the Youth Councils in municipalities, although not included in the group of key factors stimulating youth engagement, were highest appreciated by university students, and slightly less by primary, secondary, lower secondary and vocational school pupils and working participants. Another solution, i.e. development of cooperation between youth organisations at local level, considered to have an average impact on youth behaviour, was the highest rated by university students, lower secondary, secondary, vocational and primary school pupils, and slightly less favourably assessed by employed respondents. Meanwhile, raising public awareness of the importance of youth participation in public life, also of average impact, received the highest ratings from students of universities and working participants, and the lowest ratings from pupils of secondary, lower secondary, vocational and primary schools. Broadly understood competences of both representatives of institutions

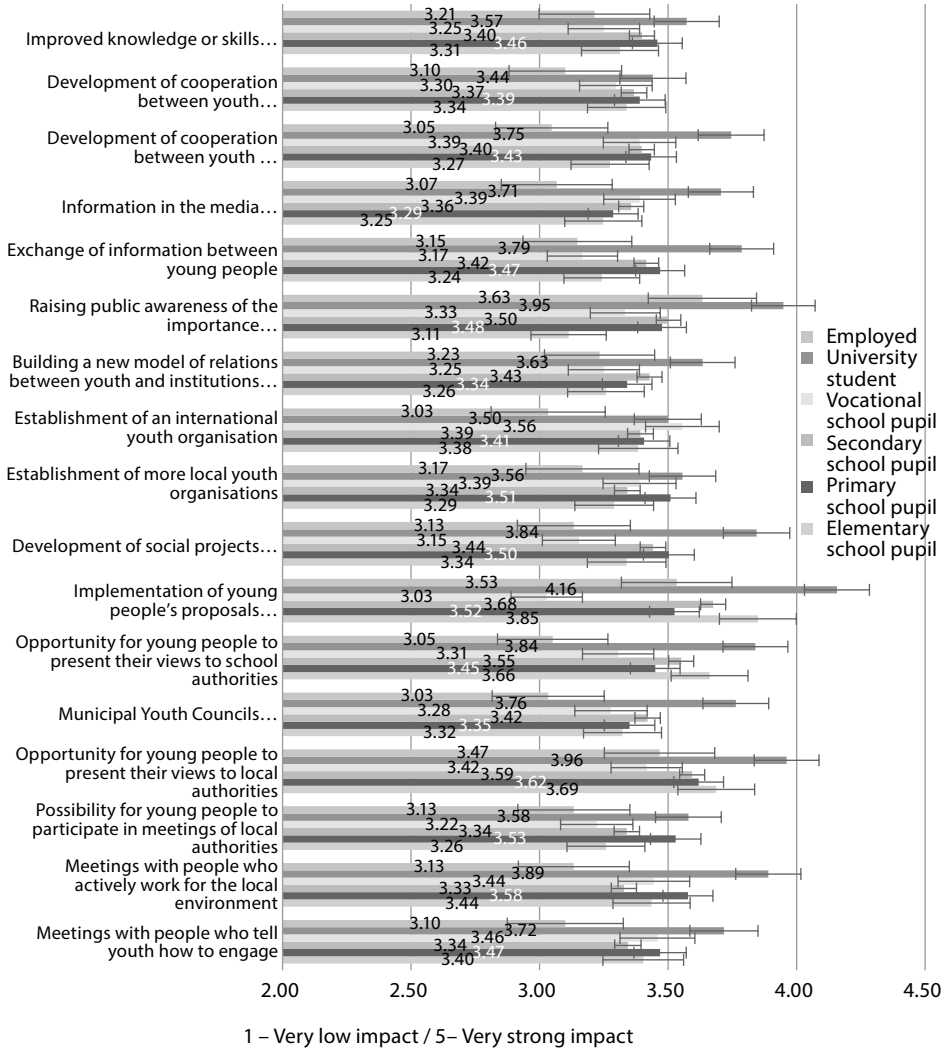
and youth are a key element of civic education. Various types of schools, in particular universities, although they appreciate the importance of this aspect of their role, in practice it is not always easy for them to unleash the potential of civic involvement of young people, which is increasingly recognized as an important feature of healthy democratic communities and cultures. The impact of educational practices and student learning on local communities seems to be one of the best ways to shape youth civic participation in the long perspective¹⁶.

As to other activities that could increase the involvement of young people in shaping the immediate environment, analysis revealed that people of different status made similar assessments. This was the case in for the following solutions: improved knowledge or skills of representatives of local authorities, schools or NGOs with respect to increasing youth civic participation; development of cooperation between youth organisations at international level; information in the media presenting examples of youth civil participation; development of a new model of relations between young people, public institutions and NGOs; establishment of an international youth organisation; establishment of more local youth organisations; opportunity for young people to participate in local authorities' meetings; meetings with people who tell young people how they can become involved. The results are shown in Figure 4.18.

Another factor differentiating the responses of young participants was their place of residence. Apparently, the strongest impact of most of the categories of responses was indicated by the respondents from Iława and the medium impact by those from Hässleholm. A more detailed picture of the variation in response was revealed by two-way analysis of variance, with a significant interaction effect of $F(65, 12755) = 2.22$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.01$. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the dependent variable. Implementation of young people's proposals by local authorities, schools or NGOs is a solution assessed most positively with respect to its potential impact on youth civic engagement stimulation by the residents of Iława, Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Gdynia, slightly less favourably by the respondents from Telšiai and the least positively by the residents of Hässleholm. The possibility for young people to present their views to local authorities was more important for the residents of Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia, Elbląg and Telšiai, and relatively less important for the residents of Hässleholm. The highest assessments of the expected impact of information exchange between young people about their efforts to increase the involvement of young people in matters affecting their environment were made by the residents of Iława, slightly lower by the inhab-

¹⁶ See: Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth, L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta and C. A. Flanagan (Eds), 2010 Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons; D. Watson, R. Hollister, S. E. Stroud, E. Babcock, The engaged university: international perspectives on civic engagement, Routledge, New York 2011; N. Mirra, A. Garcia, Civic Participation Reimagined: Youth Interrogation and Innovation in the Multimodal Public Sphere, *Review of Research in Education* 2017, Vol. 41, pp. 136–158.

Figure 4.18. Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



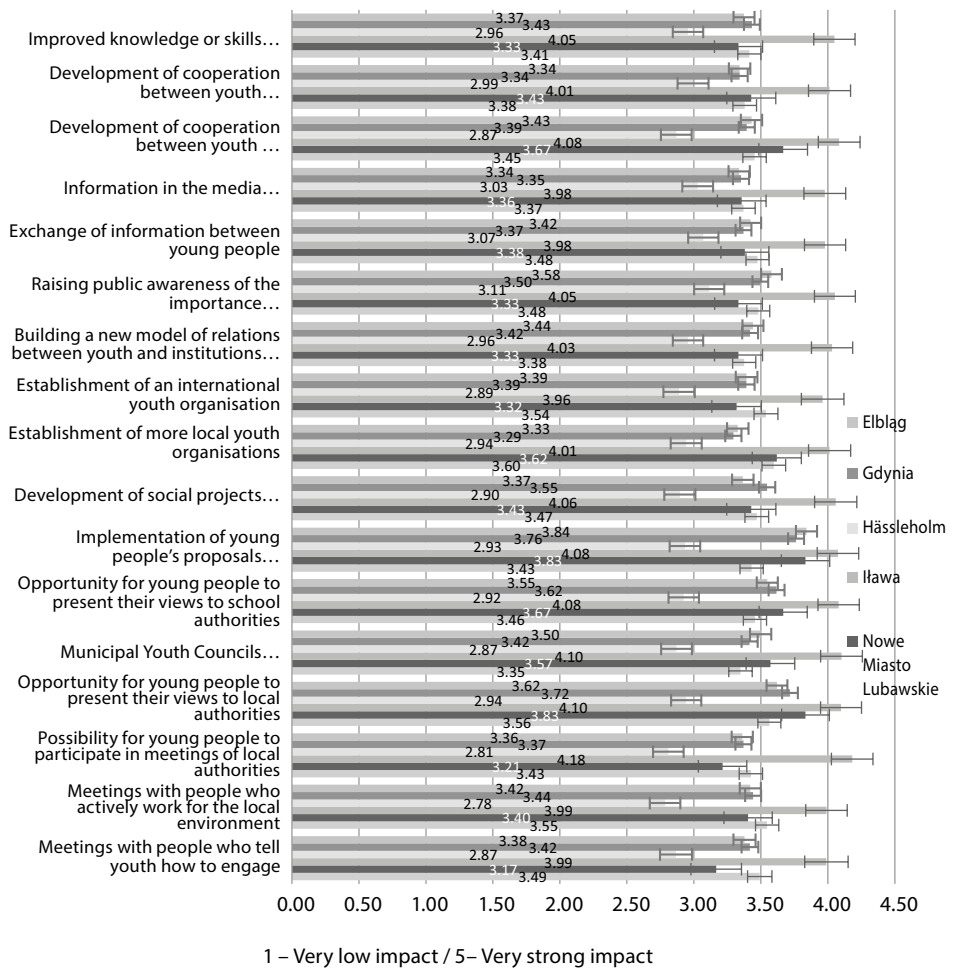
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

itants of Telšiai, Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Gdynia, and the lowest by the respondents from Hässleholm. The opportunity for young people to present their views to school authorities and NGOs was seen as the most effective by the young people from Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia, Elbląg and Telšiai, and as the least effective by the young people from Hässleholm. Meetings with people who

actively work for the local environment received the highest ratings from the young people from Iława, Telšiai, Gdynia, Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and the lowest from the respondents from Hässleholm. The establishment of more local youth organisations would be more encouraging for young people from Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Telšiai than for those from Elbląg, Gdynia or Hässleholm in terms of engagement in shaping their local environment. The possibility for young people to participate in local government meetings as a factor stimulating youth civic engagement was best assessed by the Iława respondents, slightly less so by those from Telšiai, Gdynia, Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and the least favourably by respondents from Hässleholm. The idea of developing social projects for youth civic engagement was most highly rated by the respondents from Iława, slightly lower by the inhabitants of Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and the lowest-rated by the young people from Hässleholm. As to meetings with people who would tell young people how to engage in local affairs, the highest ratings were given by young people from Iława, Telšiai, Gdynia and Elbląg, and slightly lower by the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. The activities of municipal Youth Councils which may influence local government decisions were better evaluated as a stimulant to youth civic engagement by the young people from Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg, Gdynia and Telšiai than by the inhabitants of Hässleholm. The importance of improved knowledge or skills of representatives of local authorities, schools, NGOs in increasing the civic participation of young people was most highly rated by young people from Iława, slightly lower by those from Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, while the respondents from Hässleholm gave it the lowest ratings. An important aspect for young people was also their cooperation at international and local level. The idea of establishment of an international youth organisation was the most appreciated by the people from Iława, slightly less by those from Telšiai, Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and the least by the participants from Hässleholm. Other forms of development of cooperation between youth organisations at international level received the highest ratings from the Iława respondents, slightly lower by those of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Telšiai, Elbląg and Gdynia, and the lowest from the young people from Hässleholm. The development of cooperation between youth organisations at local level was similarly evaluated, with the highest ratings awarded by those surveyed in Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, slightly lower grades given by the inhabitants of Telšiai, Elbląg and Gdynia, and the lowest by the respondents from Hässleholm. The young participants from Iława expressed the most positive opinions about building a new model of relations between young people and public institutions and NGOs, a little less favourable were the inhabitants of Elbląg, Gdynia, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, whereas the young people of Hässleholm were the least enthusiastic about that idea. Further evaluations concerned two important issues: raising public awareness of the importance of youth participation in public life, where the highest ratings were awarded by the

residents of Iława, and the lowest by the inhabitants of Elbląg, Gdynia, Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm, and the media reports on the examples of civic participation by young people, where the highest ratings were given by the young people from Iława, slightly lower by the respondents from Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia and Elbląg, and the lowest by the inhabitants of Hässleholm. The results are shown in Figure 4.19.

Figure 4.19. Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

The competence gaps in adults and young people proved to be an important issue in terms of youth civic participation. They were identified by the respondents as barriers and areas needing improvement in order to increase the participation of young people in decision-making. Although in the case of young people the lack of adequate knowledge and skills to participate more in decision-making in schools, organisations and local and central authorities was identified as a barrier of medium importance by those surveyed, a majority of respondents from Gdynia and Hława considered it to be a significant obstacle to their civic activity. In addition, in the context of project objectives concerning improvement of the skills of adults working with young people, identification of young people's needs in this area was considered an important aspect that could help design more effective methods of action in the future.

Based on the opinions of the majority of respondents, it was found that the solution having the greatest stimulating effect on youth engagement in public affairs would be the enhancement of knowledge or skills with respect to ways to motivate oneself and others to act (29.2% of responses in the sample) and of social psychology competences (27.5% of responses in the sample). Both these needs were considered the most pressing by the young people from Hława and Elbląg. In Dzierzgoń, the responses concerning motivation competence were divided equally between very strong and strong impact. In Gdynia, the opinions of young people were also distributed evenly, but between very strong and medium impact. The respondents from Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie considered this need to be important and their peers from Hässleholm assigned it medium importance. Only the young people from Elbląg declared a strong need to improve their social psychology knowledge and skills, and for the young people from other municipalities additional competences in this area were of medium importance. The survey results for this issue are shown in Table 4.10.

The measures having a strong impact on the stimulation of youth civic participation may be the enhancement of their knowledge and skills regarding the opportunities and means of influencing decisions at school, university, in the municipal office, company or NGO (29.4% of responses in the sample) and regarding the methods of discussion and reasoning (27.9% of responses in the sample). The first idea was the most important for the majority of young people from Hława, slightly less important for the respondents from Gdynia and Hässleholm, and relatively least important for the young people from Dzierzgoń. In contrast, competence in the field of eristic would make it easier to involve young people in public affairs according to the respondents from Elbląg and Hława. These competences would also be important for the young people from Gdynia and Telšiai. The respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie were not fully in agreement on this issue, and their responses were equally distributed between strong and medium impact. On the other hand, most of the young people from Dzierzgoń and Hässleholm were convinced that

Table 4.10. Additional knowledge or skills to enhance youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses in the sample)

No.	Statement	Scale	Lithuania			Poland					Sweden		Σ (%)
			Teišiai	Dzierzgoń	Elbląg	Gdynia	Łąwa	Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Hässelholm				
1.	Methods of decision-making at school, university, in municipal/town office, company, NGO	Very low impact	10 (1.0)	2 (0.2)	23 (2.3)	37 (3.7)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	28 (2.8)	103 (10.3)			
		Low impact	14 (1.4)	2 (0.2)	28 (2.8)	41 (4.1)	5 (0.5)	5 (0.5)	18 (1.8)	113 (11.3)			
		Medium impact	69 (6.9)	3 (0.3)	62 (6.2)	117 (11.8)	8 (0.8)	22 (2.2)	24 (2.4)	305 (30.5)			
		Strong impact	63 (6.3)	4 (0.4)	58 (5.8)	110 (11.1)	17 (1.7)	8 (0.8)	20 (2.0)	280 (28.0)			
		Very strong impact	25 (2.5)	1 (0.1)	48 (4.8)	77 (7.8)	24 (2.4)	5 (0.5)	15 (1.5)	195 (19.5)			
2.	Possibilities and methods of influencing decisions at school, university, in municipal/town office, company, NGO	Very low impact	8 (0.8)	2 (0.2)	15 (1.5)	28 (2.8)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	19 (1.9)	74 (7.4)			
		Low impact	13 (1.3)	4 (0.4)	33 (3.3)	44 (4.3)	6 (0.6)	9 (0.9)	25 (2.5)	134 (13.4)			
		Medium impact	71 (7.1)	2 (0.2)	62 (6.4)	114 (11.5)	10 (1.0)	13 (1.3)	16 (1.6)	288 (28.8)			
		Strong impact	58 (5.8)	3 (0.3)	58 (5.9)	121 (12.2)	14 (1.4)	12 (1.2)	28 (2.8)	294 (29.4)			
		Very strong impact	31 (3.1)	1 (0.1)	51 (5.2)	74 (7.4)	24 (2.4)	7 (0.7)	17 (1.7)	205 (20.5)			
3.	The art of establishing and developing contacts with representatives of various public institutions, organisations and businesses	Very low impact	6 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	21 (2.1)	28 (2.8)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	79 (7.9)			
		Low impact	19 (1.9)	1 (0.1)	25 (2.5)	49 (5.0)	2 (0.2)	11 (1.1)	24 (2.4)	131 (13.1)			
		Medium impact	69 (7.0)	5 (0.5)	66 (6.7)	118 (11.9)	16 (1.6)	15 (1.5)	28 (2.8)	317 (31.7)			
		Strong impact	57 (5.8)	3 (0.3)	56 (5.7)	116 (11.7)	14 (1.4)	10 (1.0)	20 (2.0)	276 (27.6)			
		Very strong impact	29 (3.0)	1 (0.1)	50 (5.0)	69 (7.0)	21 (2.1)	5 (0.5)	13 (1.3)	188 (18.8)			
4.	Methods of discussion and reasoning	Very low impact	6 (0.6)	1 (0.1)	15 (1.5)	30 (3.0)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	20 (2.0)	73 (7.3)			
		Low impact	13 (1.3)	1 (0.1)	24 (2.4)	41 (4.1)	3 (0.3)	6 (0.6)	22 (2.2)	110 (11.0)			
		Medium impact	58 (5.8)	4 (0.4)	56 (5.6)	95 (10.0)	11 (1.1)	15 (1.5)	28 (2.8)	267 (26.7)			
		Strong impact	64 (6.4)	3 (0.3)	58 (5.8)	108 (10.9)	15 (1.5)	14 (1.4)	17 (1.7)	279 (27.9)			
		Very strong impact	40 (4.0)	3 (0.3)	65 (6.5)	107 (10.8)	25 (2.5)	7 (0.7)	17 (1.7)	264 (26.4)			

5.	Writing official letters/ applications	Very low impact	9 (0.9)	1 (0.1)	23 (2.3)	38 (3.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	23 (2.3)	94 (9.4)
		Low impact	19 (1.9)	2 (0.2)	28 (2.8)	36 (3.6)	3 (0.3)	9 (0.9)	24 (2.4)	121 (12.1)
		Medium impact	59 (6.0)	4 (0.4)	54 (5.4)	108 (10.9)	9 (0.9)	10 (1.0)	24 (2.4)	268 (26.8)
		Strong impact	58 (5.8)	3 (0.3)	59 (6.0)	91 (9.1)	23 (2.3)	16 (1.6)	17 (1.7)	267 (26.7)
		Very strong impact	36 (3.6)	2 (0.2)	55 (5.5)	109 (11.0)	20 (2.0)	7 (0.7)	17 (1.7)	246 (24.6)
6.	Methods of motivating oneself and others to act	Very low impact	4 (0.4)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	30 (3.0)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	17 (1.7)	73 (7.3)
		Low impact	13 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	24 (2.4)	26 (2.6)	5 (0.5)	7 (0.7)	18 (1.8)	93 (9.3)
		Medium impact	53 (5.4)	3 (0.3)	48 (4.8)	114 (11.5)	11 (1.1)	15 (1.5)	28 (2.8)	272 (27.2)
		Strong impact	58 (5.9)	4 (0.4)	54 (5.5)	96 (9.7)	12 (1.2)	15 (1.5)	23 (2.3)	262 (26.2)
		Very strong impact	53 (5.4)	4 (0.4)	71 (7.2)	114 (11.5)	26 (2.6)	5 (0.5)	19 (1.9)	292 (29.2)
7.	Event organisation skills	Very low impact	10 (1.0)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	26 (2.6)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	80 (8.0)
		Low impact	14 (1.4)	1 (0.1)	25 (2.5)	37 (3.8)	6 (0.6)	5 (0.5)	18 (1.8)	106 (10.6)
		Medium impact	56 (5.7)	4 (0.4)	60 (6.0)	113 (11.4)	7 (0.7)	14 (1.4)	29 (2.9)	283 (28.3)
		Strong impact	51 (5.2)	3 (0.3)	60 (6.0)	106 (10.7)	14 (1.4)	16 (1.6)	23 (2.3)	273 (27.3)
		Very strong impact	49 (5.0)	3 (0.3)	52 (5.3)	98 (9.9)	26 (2.6)	6 (0.6)	14 (1.4)	248 (24.8)
8.	Establishment and financing of NGOs	Very low impact	8 (0.8)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	39 (3.9)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	16 (1.6)	87 (8.7)
		Low impact	22 (2.2)	3 (0.3)	36 (3.6)	53 (5.3)	5 (0.5)	13 (1.3)	23 (2.3)	155 (15.5)
		Medium impact	64 (6.5)	4 (0.4)	57 (5.7)	117 (11.8)	10 (1.0)	12 (1.2)	29 (2.9)	293 (29.3)
		Strong impact	54 (5.4)	2 (0.2)	63 (6.4)	87 (8.8)	17 (1.7)	8 (0.8)	23 (2.3)	254 (25.4)
		Very strong impact	33 (3.3)	2 (0.2)	42 (4.2)	86 (8.7)	22 (2.2)	7 (0.7)	14 (1.4)	206 (20.6)
9.	Politics	Very low impact	16 (1.6)	3 (0.3)	41 (4.1)	71 (7.2)	3 (0.3)	4 (0.4)	18 (1.8)	156 (15.6)
		Low impact	24 (2.4)	4 (0.4)	49 (4.9)	57 (5.8)	10 (1.0)	12 (1.2)	21 (2.1)	181 (18.1)
		Medium impact	52 (5.2)	2 (0.2)	67 (6.8)	106 (10.7)	12 (1.2)	16 (1.6)	26 (2.6)	277 (27.7)
		Strong impact	44 (4.4)	3 (0.3)	37 (3.7)	89 (9.0)	18 (1.8)	6 (0.6)	25 (2.5)	222 (22.2)
		Very strong impact	45 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	25 (2.5)	59 (5.9)	12 (1.2)	4 (0.4)	14 (1.4)	259 (25.9)

10.	The functioning of the society	Very low impact	10 (1.0)	1 (0.1)	16 (1.6)	28 (2.8)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	19 (1.9)	77 (7.7)
		Low impact	11 (1.1)	2 (0.2)	42 (4.2)	44 (4.4)	4 (0.4)	12 (1.2)	15 (1.5)	130 (13.0)
		Medium impact	65 (6.6)	3 (0.3)	65 (6.6)	128 (12.9)	10 (1.0)	13 (1.3)	31 (3.1)	315 (31.5)
		Strong impact	56 (5.7)	2 (0.2)	59 (5.9)	109 (11.0)	13 (1.3)	11 (1.1)	24 (2.4)	274 (27.4)
		Very strong impact	39 (3.9)	4 (0.4)	36 (3.6)	74 (7.4)	26 (2.6)	4 (0.4)	16 (1.6)	199 (19.9)
11.	Social psychology	Very low impact	11 (1.1)	1 (0.1)	17 (1.7)	29 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.4)	20 (2.0)	82 (8.2)
		Low impact	16 (1.6)	2 (0.2)	24 (2.4)	37 (3.7)	3 (0.3)	7 (0.7)	16 (1.6)	105 (10.5)
		Medium impact	56 (5.6)	4 (0.4)	56 (5.7)	99 (10.0)	8 (0.8)	13 (1.3)	32 (3.2)	268 (26.8)
		Strong impact	54 (5.4)	2 (0.2)	62 (6.3)	103 (10.4)	10 (1.0)	12 (1.2)	21 (2.1)	264 (26.4)
		Very strong impact	44 (4.4)	3 (0.3)	58 (5.9)	115 (11.6)	34 (3.4)	6 (0.6)	15 (1.5)	275 (27.5)
12.	Economy	Very low impact	12 (1.2)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	41 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	20 (2.0)	95 (9.5)
		Low impact	22 (2.2)	3 (0.3)	30 (3.0)	54 (5.5)	8 (0.8)	8 (0.8)	17 (1.7)	142 (14.2)
		Medium impact	50 (5.1)	6 (0.6)	68 (6.9)	111 (11.2)	16 (1.6)	19 (1.9)	27 (2.7)	297 (29.7)
		Strong impact	49 (5.0)	1 (0.1)	56 (5.7)	89 (9.0)	12 (1.2)	10 (1.0)	24 (2.4)	241 (24.1)
		Very strong impact	46 (4.7)	1 (0.1)	44 (4.5)	86 (8.7)	19 (1.9)	3 (0.3)	15 (1.5)	214 (21.4)

Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

knowledge of the methods of discussion would only moderately contribute to the increase of their civic participation. As to the other areas of knowledge which could help young people increase their participation in decision-making, the majority of respondents assigned them medium importance. Table 4.10 shows the results concerning the improvement of competences of young people.

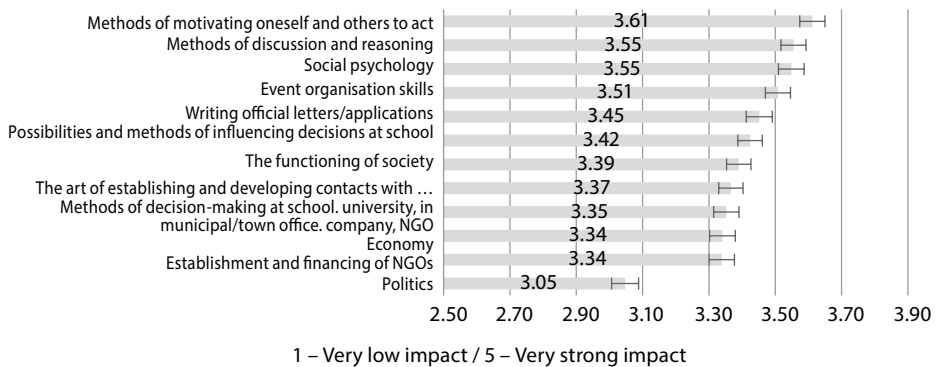
The most frequently chosen skills and areas of knowledge with a medium impact were as follows:

- the art of establishing and developing contacts with representatives of various public institutions, organizations, enterprises (31.7% of responses in the sample), the mode in all the municipalities;
- functioning of the society (31.5% of responses in the sample) – only in Iława and Dzierzgoń the majority of respondents chose a very high intensity of the feature;
- methods of making decisions at school, university, municipal/town office, company, NGO (30.5% of responses in the sample) – only the majority of young people in Iława pointed to a very strong impact of this competence and only the majority of those surveyed in Hässleholm considered it very low;
- the economy (29.7% of responses in the sample) – only the majority of young people in Iława stated that the competence is very important;
- establishment and financing of NGOs (29.3% of responses in the sample) – only the majority of young people from Iława pointed to a very strong impact of this factor on their behaviour; a large proportion of respondents from Elbląg considered its impact to be strong and those from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie thought it was of little importance;
- event organising principles (28.3% of responses in the sample) – only the majority of respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie saw this competence as very important, while in Elbląg the responses “strong impact” and “low impact” were equally distributed;
- politics (27.7% of responses in the sample) – unlike the majority of the sample, the respondents from Iława believed that it was a very important competence, and those from Dzierzgoń saw it as unimportant;
- the skill of writing official letters/applications (26.8% of responses in the sample) – a pressing need to improve their knowledge and skills in this area was declared by the respondents from Gdynia; the young people from Elbląg, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie found it had a strong impact, and in Hässleholm the same numbers of responses pointed to the average and low impact of that skill on increasing civic participation.

These conclusions are supplemented by the results of one-way analysis of variance, which revealed significant differences between the responses $F(9, 8737)=32.52$; $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.03$. The differences between the answers to the individual test ques-

tions were 3% in total. The respondents declared that their involvement in public affairs would benefit the most from additional competences in motivating themselves and others to act, and the least from the knowledge of politics. This underestimation of knowledge about politics by young people may be due to their limited awareness of what it involves and what role it plays in society, or perhaps partly due to their frustration with political conflicts. Education in this area, combined with other areas of knowledge, will be of fundamental importance in terms of the effectiveness of civic education and, as a consequence, the civic participation of all social groups. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.20.

Figure 4.20. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



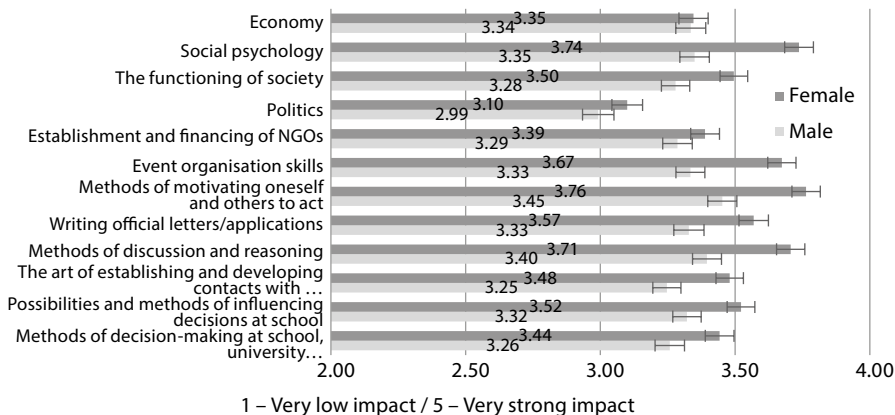
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

The opinions expressed by young people in this area varied according to gender, age, status and place of residence. This means that the above factors cannot be omitted in the course of in-depth research or when undertaking practical measures.

The effect of respondents' gender on their opinions was revealed by two-way analysis of variance – the significant interaction effect of the two factors was $F(9, 8744) = 4.48$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.004$. The interaction feature explains 0.4% of the variance of the dependent variable. In their assessment of the strength of impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased public involvement, female respondents assigned significantly higher ratings than male respondents to all of the aforementioned categories, with the exception of those relating to the economy, politics and the establishment and financing of NGOs (the gender-related difference was statistically insignificant in this case). The results are shown in Figure 4.21.

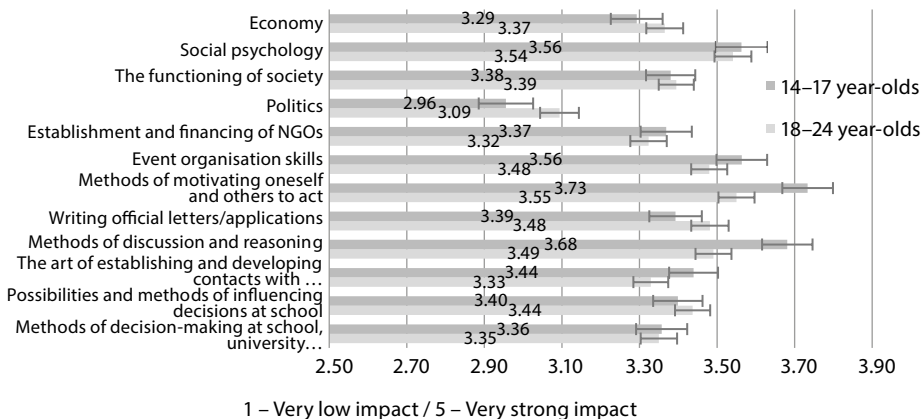
With respect to the age of respondents, a two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect of the two factors, $F(9, 8746) = 3.60$;

Figure 4.21. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Figure 4.22. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' age (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



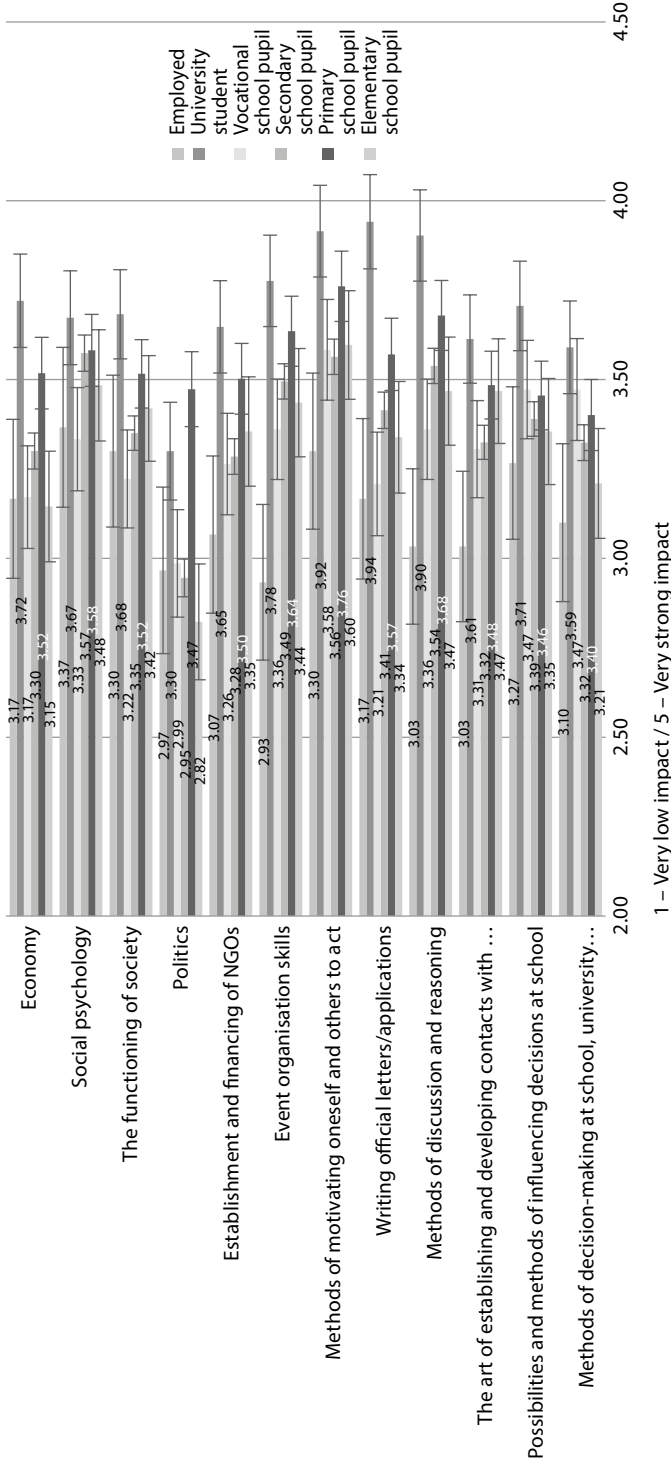
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

$p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.004$. The interaction feature explains 0.04% of the variance of the dependent variable. When assessing the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increasing their engagement in public affairs, individuals aged 14–17 gave significantly higher ratings to the motivation skills, $p < 0.05$, and to the discussion

and reasoning skills, $p < 0.05$. For the remaining test items, no statistically significant differences between age groups were demonstrated. The results are shown in Figure 4.22.

The diversification of opinions depending on the status of respondents proved to be somewhat more complex than in the case of age. The results of two-way analysis of variance demonstrated a significant interaction effect, $F(44, 8520) = 1.46$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta = 0.01$. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the dependent variable. While, due to age, the motivation and self-motivation skills and the art of eristic was more important for those aged 14–17 than for older respondents, the relevance of first competence was independent and the latter was dependent on the status of the respondents. The interest in additional knowledge and skills concerning the methods of discussion and argumentation received the highest scores from university students, and slightly lower from pupils of lower secondary, secondary, primary and vocational schools and working respondents. Similarly, the knowledge of economics was of the greatest interest to university students, while lower secondary and secondary school pupils, employees, and vocational and primary school pupils were slightly less interested in it. The greatest need for the skills of organising different events was declared by university students, followed by pupils of lower secondary, primary and vocational schools, whereas working people saw it as slightly less relevant. Additional competence in the field of political science was most appreciated by students of lower secondary schools, and slightly less so by students of universities, pupils of vocational schools, employees and secondary and primary school pupils. Might the interest in politics reported by lower secondary school pupils indicate positive changes in the future in terms of greater awareness and perhaps also political participation of the younger generation? Another area of competence, relating to the preparation of official letters/applications, was rated most highly by university students, and least highly by pupils of lower secondary, secondary, primary and vocational schools, and working respondents. This technical and practical competence was more appreciated by university students, who are increasingly facing the need to draft such letters, and less valued by employees, who often already have the necessary knowledge and experience. It is worth noting that for all dependent variables, university students awarded the highest ratings compared to respondents with a different status. Meanwhile, respondents of different status made similar assessments of the following areas of knowledge and skills: social psychology; the functioning of society; establishment and financing of NGOs; the art of making and developing contacts with representatives of various public institutions, organisations and businesses; the ability and ways of influencing decisions, as well as decision-making methods at school, university, in municipal/city office, company or NGO. The results of analysis are shown in Figure 4.23.

Figure 4.23. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



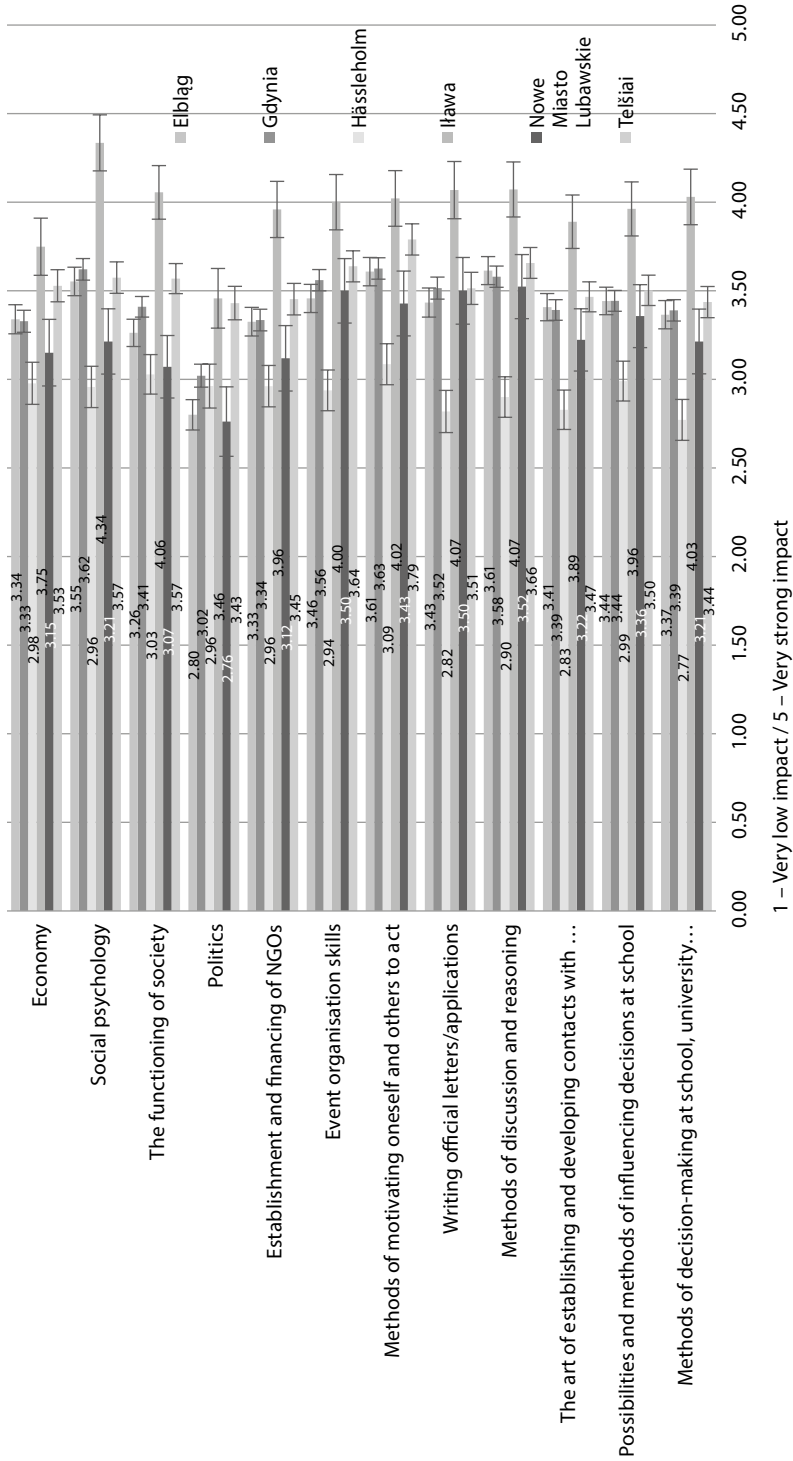
Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

The place of residence of young people aged 14–24 is another factor which differentiates the assessment of the impact of the various competences on increasing their engagement in shaping the local environment. The earlier conclusions were confirmed by two-way analysis of variance. It demonstrated a significant interaction effect, $F(44, 8624) = 2.30$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta = 0.01$. The interaction feature explains 1% of the variance of the dependent variable.

The strongest need for additional knowledge and skills relating to motivation and self-motivation was reported by the young people from Iława, Telšiai, Gdynia and Elbląg, followed by the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. Social psychology was most valued by the young people from Iława and least valued by the participants from Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. The discussion and argumentation skills were most relevant to the participants from Iława, Telšiai, Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and least important for those from Hässleholm. The young people from Iława, and to a slightly lesser extent the inhabitants of Telšiai, Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie were interested in the ways of influencing decisions at school/ university, in municipal/city office, enterprises and NGOs, which was considered the least useful by the young people from Hässleholm.

The skill of networking with representatives of various public institutions, organizations and businesses would be most helpful in becoming more involved in public affairs to the respondents from Iława, to a slightly lesser extent to the young people from Telšiai, Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and to the least extent to the young people from Hässleholm. Better knowledge of the functioning of society received the highest ratings from the young people from Iława, and the lowest ones from the representatives of Telšiai, Gdynia, Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. The methods of decision-making at school, university, in the municipal/city office, company or NGO were considered most important by the young people from Iława, slightly less important by the respondents from Telšiai, Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and the least important by the participants from Hässleholm. The young people from Iława, Telšiai, Elbląg and Gdynia underlined the importance of the knowledge about the functioning of the economy, found to be somewhat less important by the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. The competences necessary to set up and finance NGOs were most valued by the young people from Iława, and relatively less appreciated by the participants from Telšiai, Gdynia, Elbląg, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. Event-organising skills as a factor increasing young people's involvement in shaping their immediate environment received the highest ratings from the young people from Iława, Telšiai, Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Elbląg, and the lowest ones from the respondents from Hässleholm. Political knowledge was most highly rated by the young people from Iława and Telšiai, and lowest rated by those surveyed in Gdynia, Hässleholm, Elbląg and

Figure 4.24. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)



Source: own elaboration based on the results of studies conducted as part of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project between September 2018 and November 2019.

Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. The ability to draw up official letters/applications was recognized as a very important competence by the young people from Iława, a little less important by those from Gdynia, Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Elbląg, and the least important by the respondents from Hässleholm. The results are shown in Figure 4.24.

In conclusion, the identified key determinants of increased civic participation among young people aged 14–24 and their needs in this respect were assigned the top two ranks. Ten out of seventeen categories were considered to have a strong and very strong impact on respondents' decisions. The factor of the strongest impact as identified by the majority of young people from the seven municipalities investigated was the implementation of young people's proposals, for example by local authorities, schools or NGOs. This constitutes proof of attention to the opinions voiced by young people, recognition of their needs and demands, and their involvement in decision-making processes, as well as of the credibility of decision-makers talking about the participatory and inclusive nature of civil society. Implementation of young people's proposals was a very strong and strong motivating factor for the young people from Gdynia, Elbląg and Iława, followed by the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń.

The following measures can have a strong stimulating effect on the involvement of young people in public affairs: the opportunity for young people to present their views to local authorities – important in Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and very important in Iława; exchange of information between young people about their activities – important in Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; the opportunity for young people to present their views to the school authorities and NGOs – important in Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and very important in Iława; meetings with people who actively work for the local environment – important in Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg; establishment of more local youth organisations – important in Gdynia, Telšiai, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and very important in Iława; the opportunity for young people to participate in meetings of local authorities – important in Gdynia, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń, and very important in Iława; development of social projects for youth civic engagement – important in Gdynia and Hässleholm, and very important in Iława; meetings with people who tell youth how to become involved – important in Telšiai and Hässleholm, and very important in Dzierzgoń and Iława. Only the young people from Iława considered all these factors to have the strongest impact on increasing youth involvement in shaping their immediate environment, while the respondents from Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg saw them as important. The significance of Youth Councils in municipalities, through which young people can most easily influence the decisions of local authorities, was not recognised to the same degree by the majority of those surveyed from the seven municipalities. Their opinions were divided equally between the high and medium

importance. They were awarded the highest ratings by the young people from Elbląg, where the Town Youth Council was reactivated in 2019 and by the respondents from Iława, where such a council has been operating since 1997. The remaining issues examined were assessed by the majority as having an average impact on increasing young people's civic participation.

According to the majority of respondents from the seven municipalities surveyed, the development of cooperation between youth organisations at international level was the least likely to increase their involvement in decision-making processes. Such a low rank of this measure may be due to prioritisation of problems to be solved at local level before addressing the challenges of international cooperation.

Appropriate civic education is also an important issue in terms of effective mechanisms to stimulate young people's civic participation. The identified knowledge and skills gaps were seen by the young people surveyed as important barriers, which need to be addressed to increase youth participation in decision-making processes, at least at local or cross-border level. The shortage of adequate knowledge and skills to participate more fully in decision-making at schools, in organisations and local and central authorities was indicated as a barrier of medium importance by a majority of youth from the seven municipalities, but the respondents from Gdynia and Iława considered it to be a serious obstacle to their civic activity.

On the basis of the research, two areas were identified, where broader or enhanced knowledge and skills would have the strongest impact on young people's involvement in public affairs: ways to motivate oneself and others to act and social psychology. The need for these competences was felt most strongly by the young people from Iława and Elbląg. The majority of respondents from the seven municipalities considered the following areas of knowledge to be of significant importance for stimulation of civic participation: possibilities and ways of influencing decisions at school/university, in municipal/city office, enterprise or NGO – the most important for young people from Iława and methods of discussion and reasoning – most important for young people from Elbląg and Iława.

A holistic approach to the search for and implementation of effective ways to increase civic participation of young people seems to be the best solution. It allows all aspects to be taken into account and enables the development of systemic solutions which, of course, do not ignore the factors that differentiate the needs of young people, such as gender, age, status and residence. Real opportunities for young people to participate in decisions concerning them as citizens have the special dimension of building the human capital of civil society. These opportunities are provided by informing youth about the existing issues, plans and draft decisions, by listening to their voice at every stage of the decision-making process, allowing the formal possibility of commenting on draft decisions and by implementing young

people's proposals to meet their needs and to address the problems of other social groups. Without equipping young people with the appropriate professional and social competences, including those related to civic awareness, stimulation of youth civic participation will be very difficult, and may even be impossible or too strongly oriented towards non-governmental and non-formal forms of civic participation.

Chapter 5

Youth Political Participation and Engagement at Local Level in Poland, Sweden and Lithuania: A Qualitative Approach

Remigijus Civinskas, Rimantas Stašys

5.1. Introduction

Youth political participation and political engagement are understood as important conditions of democracy¹. Engagement in local politics and governance strengthens civic values, teaches democracy and creates better citizens, resulting in better communities. On the other hand, young people in Europe are often perceived as disconnected from the political and public policy processes². This phenomenon is referred to as political disengagement (mainly from traditional politics) or as the decline in youth political participation³. Moreover, according to the findings of recent empirical studies, the youth participation in Central and Eastern European

¹ A. Pontes, M. Henn, M. D. Griffiths, Towards a Conceptualization of Young People's Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study. *Societies*, Nottingham 2018, 8.1: 17, pp. 2–3; G. G. Albacette, *Young people's political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?* Palgrave Macmillan 2014, p. 2.

² N. Maggini, Young People's Voting Behaviour in Europe: A Comparative Perspective. in: *Youth Participation in Democratic Life Stories of Hope and Disillusion* (eds.) B. Cammaerts, M. Bruter, S. Banaji, S. Harrison, N. Anstead, B. Whitwell, Springer, 2016, pp. 73–74; G. Pollock, H. Pilkington, R. Franc, Introduction: Thinking Globally, Understanding Locally. In: *Understanding Youth Participation Across Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018, pp. 1–15.

³ There is a wide discussion about the differences between political 'participation' and 'engagement' (M. Barrett I. Brunton-Smith, Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 2014, 10.1, pp. 19–23; B. Zani, M. Barrett, Political and civic engagement: theoretical understandings, evidence and policies. In: *Political and Civic Engagement*. Routledge, 2014. pp. 3–6.

countries is lower in comparison to Western countries⁴. Austerity policies have not changed youth passivity patterns according to some studies⁵.

It is a widely recognised and discussed topic in the academic and political circles of Poland and Lithuania. A number of studies reveal non-participation of young people in Lithuania⁶ and Poland⁷. Lithuania seems to have the highest number of disengaged youths in comparison to other Central and Eastern European countries⁸. Empirical studies suggest rather different explanatory answers to the question of youth disengagement. Some approaches of case studies reveal the importance of local factors as an explanation of youth engagement⁹. The case study approach enables scholars to conduct unlimited research on a national level, but focuses on the local context (local socio-historical contexts, institutional framework).

Youth political participation and political engagement are understood as an important basis for civic culture and democracy¹⁰. Youth participation in local politics and municipal policy formation reinforces civic values, teaches democracy and creates better citizens, resulting in better local communities. According to research studies, these effects are evident in Sweden¹¹. Moreover, the youth civic en-

⁴ R. Soler-Marti, M. Ferrer-Fons, Youth participation in context: the impact of youth transition regimes on political action strategies in Europe. *The Sociological Review*, 2015, 63, pp. 101–105.

⁵ M. Kovacic, D. Dolenc, Youth participation in Eastern Europe in the age of austerity. In: *Young people re-generating politics in times of crises*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 375–394.

⁶ A. Dilyte, R. Lazutka, Jaunimo dalyvavimas politikoje: Lietuvos atvejis. In: *Socialinė Teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika*, 2014, pp. 89–101.

⁷ A. Diržinskaitė, Apolitiška karta: kodėl jauniems Lietuvos žmonėms neįdomi politika. *Politologija*, 2018, 92.4, pp. 3–28; V. Zuzevičiūtė, Lithuania: Between commitments and expectations: is it an eternal tension between generations or a contemporary phenomenon? In: *Young People and Active Citizenship in Post-Soviet Times. A Challenge for Citizenship Education*, eds. B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, A. M. Zalewska, K. J. Kennedy, Routledge, 2017, pp. 70–79; R. Civinskas, I. Tamutiene, A. Lazauskiene, *Lietuvos jaunimo įgalinimas: situacijos analizė*, 2014, pp. 51–63; E. Tuzaitė „Kritiški piliečiai“? Posovietinės jaunimo kartos požiūris į demokratiją, politiką ir sovietinę praeitį. *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas*, 2016, 7(2), pp. 31–47.

⁸ R. Marzęcki, How to Engage “Democratic Natives”? Political Sophistication as Important Determinant of Civic Activity of Young Citizens in New Democracies (the Case of Poland), *Romanian Journal of Political Science*. 2017, 17, 1, pp. 135–169.

⁹ H. Pilkinton, R. Franc, G. Pollock, Conclusion: What is the ‘Value Added’ of Multi-method, Transnational Research? In: *Understanding Youth Participation Across Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018, pp. 317–329.

¹⁰ A. Pontes, M. Henn, M. D. Griffiths, Towards a Conceptualization of Young People’s Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study. *Societies*, 2018, 8.1: 17, pp. 2–3; G. G. Albacette, *Young people’s political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?* Springer, 2014, p. 2.

¹¹ E. Andersson, Young People’s Political Participation: A Public Pedagogy Challenge at the Municipal Level. *Young*, 2018, 26(2), pp. 179–195; M. Ekström, M. Sveningsson, Young people’s experiences of political membership: from political parties to Facebook groups. *Information, Communication & Society*, 2019, 22(2), pp. 155–171.

agement and political participation are not only youth policy priorities, but also a part of political tradition and specific legacy¹². It is also important to note that Sweden has been described as a universalistic welfare-state type government (it is sometimes referred to as Nordic or Social-democratic)¹³. It is recognised as a very inclusive welfare state. Another feature is public service systems which are organised along generous social benefits¹⁴. The Swedish model is based on the inclusive school system with standardised educative framework, but with the flexibility in regard to the individual learning. The universalistic principles imply that issues related to youth policies are solved proactively in participatory arenas¹⁵.

The purpose of this research paper is twofold. First, it is to define (based on qualitative research) the main driving forces and barriers for youth engagement in local politics and municipal policy formation or local community issues. Also, the present research aims to determine what are the main gaps in the networks of youth political participation and how to increase the synergy and cooperation between different factors.

The second aim is to offer qualitative insights on how young people perceive and understand political participation in local politics. What does being ‘involved’ in local politics and municipal policy-making process mean to them? Would they consider engagement and participation in politics to be the same thing, or do they perceive them differently? What are the most relevant issues for political participation at municipal level? What matters are most important for young people in the perspective of public policy development (local elections, municipal strategic planning, spatial development, cultural events ...)?

The four main research questions:

- What are young people’s general perceptions of political engagement in local politics, municipal policies and community activities?
- What are the main barriers to youth engagement in local policy and in municipal decision making?
- What are the most effective and youth-friendly forms and tools for political participation at local level?
- What role do social media play in the political participation and engagement?

¹² E. Amnå, Associational life, youth, and political capital formation in Sweden: historical legacies and contemporary trends. In: *State and Civil Society in Northern Europe. The Swedish Model Reconsidered*, ed. L. Trägårdh, Berghahn Books, 2007, pp. 165–204;

¹³ A. Walther, Regimes of youth transitions: Choice, flexibility and security in young people’s experiences across different European contexts. *Young*, 2006, 14(2), pp. 119–139.

¹⁴ I. Pitti, *Youth and Unconventional Political Engagement*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham., 2018, pp. 40–41.

¹⁵ B. Andersson, M. Cuconato, N. De Luigi, S. Demozzi, T. Forkby, M. Ilardo, F. Zannoni, PARTI-SPACE. WP2–National Contexts Comparative Report, UNIBO, 2016, pp. 33–70.

The present sample includes young people and stakeholders (mentors, experts, local politicians) living in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

The research paper is based on qualitative information, obtained from semi-structured interviews in focus groups with stakeholders and young people¹⁶.

First, this report provides a brief outline of the existing conceptualisations of political participation and engagement. Second – the results from several of the four focus groups: 1. with young people and 2. three focus groups with their mentors and stakeholders. Instead of the participants' names, in order to preserve the anonymity of the informants, we have assigned them numbers. All of the participants are based in Telšiai (Lithuania), Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Dzierzgoń, Hława, Elbląg (Poland), Hässleholm (Sweden) and Vimmerby (Sweden). All of these organisations have been involved in the project network and have been involved in informal cooperation relationships. The research participants were invited after the project activities. The aims and purpose of the research were briefly presented and the young people and stakeholders were asked to participate in interviews. The focus group interviews with the young people lasted approximately 80 minutes and the focus groups with stakeholders and mentors – approximately 25 minutes. With the participants' permission, the group interviews were audio recorded.

The guide for a semi-structured focus group was prepared. The questions were conceptually based, but given in plain language. The discussion of each group began with general questions, to discover the participants' views on the topic of young people's political engagement in local politics and municipal policies. What are young people's general perceptions of political engagement in local politics, municipal policies and community activities? This was followed by other questions, including ones regarding the participants' experiences of engagement etc.

It was an exploratory rather than a hypothesis-driven study. The methodology of the focus group was selected to research ideas, values and processes allowing a deeper analysis of the youth's perceptions concerning political participation and engagement.

There were particular issues around focus groups with young people on the topic of political engagement that needed to be taken into account. First of all, the confidentiality issue was controlled by a group moderator as well as mentors – stakeholders (young people's mentors), who participated in that group.

¹⁶ The stakeholders' focus group (referred to in the text as *I focus group*), N = 10 (6 from Poland and 4 from Lithuania). The other group included Polish and Lithuanian youth (N = 11, of which 6 from Poland and 5 from Lithuania) (referred to in the text as *II focus group*). The Swedish focus groups' participants were based in Hässleholm (N=3; referred to as *III focus group*) and Vimmerby (N=3; referred to as *IV focus group*).

Prior to the focus groups, the participants in this study were informed about the voluntary nature of participation in the research and of their right to leave the focus interview at any time should they so wish, without their reasons being questioned. They were also requested to comply with the rules regarding the respect for the views of others, confidentiality and the importance of honesty.

5.2. Youth participation in local political and public policy processes: concepts and definitions

Youth participation, as noted above, is not only related to the question of participation rates or young people's transition to democratic processes. It is also critically important for the sustainability of the representative democratic model.

Political participation is a complex phenomenon. It mostly takes different, often contradictory approaches (mixing descriptive and normative) and it is very widely debated by academics. There is no agreement in literature on how best to define political participation and engagement¹⁷.

According to more recent theoretical approaches, political participation is understood as: “involvement of citizens in political processes, decision making ceremonies, as well as the citizens’ influence on the formation of political systems and institutions, their operation, drafting political decision”¹⁸. The concept of political engagement is distinguished from the notion of political participation (some researchers view them as synonymous). Political engagement means more political activities that seek a direct impact on public policy and political issues. It is understood as a form of civic engagement (participation) and making an impact on community life (forms of representation – contacting bureaucrats or politicians; participating in town, public or neighbourhood meetings)¹⁹. The most important thing is that this process could be understood as a developmental process.

Sociology and political science researchers have developed political participation (electoral, conventional/traditional vs unconventional, top-down vs bottom-up, etc.) and political engagement typologies. Some of these concepts have been adapted for the analysis of youth participation.

¹⁷ J. Van Deth, W. A conceptual map of political participation. *Acta Politica*, 2014, 49.3, pp. 349–367; A. Pontes, M. Henn, M.D. Griffiths, Towards a Conceptualization of Young People’s Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study. *Societies*, 2018, 8.1, pp. 1–17.

¹⁸ A. Pontes, M. Henn, M.D. Griffiths, Towards a Conceptualization of Young People’s Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study. *Societies*, 2018, 8.1, 17, p. 3.

¹⁹ M. Maccartney, E. Rios; E. Bennion, D. Simpson, W. *Teaching civic engagement: From student to active citizen*. Political Science Association, 2013, p. 13–14, <http://web.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement/wpcontent/uploads/sites/9/2016/10/TeachingCivicEngagementBW.pdf> [accessed: 15.07.2019].

Bart Cammaerts and others developed a typology of youth participatory practices: “1. Participation by young people in representative democracy (standing for or voting in elections, or being members of political parties); 2. Young people’s involvement in participatory structures (promoting the involvement of young people through participation in youth organisations, issue-based NGOs or community media); 3) Participation in public debates: on youth or community issues; opinion shaping through the written press, broadcasting or online; 4) Seeking information and learning about democracy: participating in mock simulations of political processes, attending training sessions or learning at school, engaging in youth organisations”²⁰. The researchers have adopted a broad view of understanding of political participation, which goes beyond partaking in political organisations or voting. These concepts connect youth as social actors to locals of the community.

Young people’s involvement in participatory structures takes many forms (issue-based NGOs, youth organisations, etc.). Some of these forms overlap, but our review focuses primarily on ‘citizen engagement/participation’ in which the basic approach is to ‘participate through formal local government institutions’. Youth councils are identified in scientific literature as one of the most notable forms based on connections to government institutions²¹. Through their participation in local youth councils, young people obtain information about politics and municipal policy and develop decision-making skills. On the other hand, this is a form of social engagement.

In this part of the report, a definite set of concepts is identified: engagement, participation, the forms and structures for participation; a number of approaches are also described. On a theoretical level, participation could be understood as the process of empowerment and representation. Subsequently, it is argued that the engagement process has some gaps and limitations.

5.3. Youth participation in Poland, Lithuania and Sweden

Youth political participation in Poland and Lithuania. This part of the report aims to raise the question about the extent and features of youth participation in democratic life on a national level. Lithuania and Poland were selected for the analysis, because they represent two European societies with very low (recent) political en-

²⁰ B. Cammaerts, M. Bruter, S. Banaji, S. Harrison, N. Anstead, B. Whitwell, *Youth participation in democratic life: Stories of hope and disillusion*. Springer, 2016, p. 4.

²¹ A. Augsberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, M. Dougher, Youth civic engagement: Do youth councils reduce or reinforce social inequality? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2018, 33(2), p. 190; A. Augsberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, *Engaging Youth in Municipal Government: Moving Toward a Youth-Centric Practice*. *Journal of Community Practice*, 2018, 26(1), pp. 41–62.

agement and participation levels as measured by election turnout (Poland, 55.92% in 2015; Lithuania, 50.67% in 2016). The situation is similar with participation in local elections in Poland: I round 54.90% and II round – 48.83% in 2018; Lithuania: 47.18% in 2016)²². The social capital has been increasing in Poland and Lithuania (in terms of participation, membership of NGOs, trust of others, volunteering)²³. Both countries demonstrate similar patterns of youth political participation and engagement.

The empirical research studies explain why participation in Poland is lower in comparison to Western European countries. According to the empirical studies conducted by the sociologist Radosław Marzęcki: 1. Young people feel frustrated with the socio-economic situation (particularly in the labour market) in Poland. The historic negative legacy (coming from post-Soviet times) still has a huge negative impact on their attitudes towards life in the country. The political parties have not been able to change it by the change discourse. The political and economic factors determine the non-participatory attitudes of young Poles²⁴; 2. The most important obstacles hindering the efficient communication between the political parties and Polish youth. Marzęcki argues that “Poland is still trying to figure out ways of dealing with the key challenges related to transformation – the (re)creation of the civil society and a new, democratic culture of political discourse”²⁵; 3. The special ‘depoliticised’ way of life (special style) determines the behaviour of Polish youth (political issues are not attractive; young people are very passive in the political arena during their free time²⁶. The Polish youth is heavily fragmented into subcultures and some subgroups are very radical, according to some research²⁷.

²² Balsavimo rezultatai Lietuvoje, 2015 m. Lietuvos Respublikos savivaldybių tarybų rinkimai, https://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/2015_savivaldybiu_tarybu_rinkimai/output_lt/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardose/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardose1turas.html. [accessed: 15.05.2019].

²³ *Badanie Diagnoza Społeczna 2015 – materiał z konferencji prasowej PAP*, 16 września 2015, https://pts.stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/pts/pl/defaultaktualnosci/36/10/1/1/ds2015_konferencja_16.09.2015.pdf

²⁴ R. Marzęcki, Młodzi wyborcy jako audytorium „dyskursu zmiany” w 2015 roku. *Przegląd Polityczny* 2017, 1, p. 59.

²⁵ R. Marzęcki, The ‘Drifting Generation’ without a Helmsman. Main obstacles in Shaping the Relations between the Political Parties and the Youth in Poland. *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences*, 2015, 15.4, p. 319.

²⁶ R. Marzęcki, Depolityzacja jako element stylu życia młodzieży. *Przegląd Polityczny* 2015, no. 1, pp. 52–72.

²⁷ D. Antonowicz, R. Kossakowski, T. Szlendak, Flaming flares, football fanatics and political rebellion: Resistant youth cultures in late capitalism. In: *Eastern European Youth Cultures in a Global Context*. Eds. M. Schwartz, H. Winkel, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. p. 135; D. Antonowicz, M. Grodecki, Missing the goal: Policy evolution towards football-related violence in Poland (1989–2012). *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 2018, 53 (4), pp. 490–511.

The Lithuanian youth is characterized by exceptionally low levels of interest in politics²⁸, as well as political engagement. The empirical studies reveal that young Lithuanians distance themselves from the political sphere for several reasons: 1. the lack of understanding (incomprehensible political and policy processes); 2. the politics and politicians irritate them and cause feelings of injustice; 3. the negative Soviet legacy determines their attitudes to democracy and politics in Lithuania²⁹.

The study of the Civil Society Institute³⁰ investigated Lithuanian youth engagement in 2016. The results of the research demonstrate low levels of civic empowerment in Lithuania. For instance, only 36% of young Lithuanians had experience in participating in NGO-provided activities³¹.

The cross-European survey data shows differences between the young generation's civic engagement in Lithuania and Poland. The Polish youth were more engaged in participating in various organisations (see Table 5.1)³². Young people in Lithuania were most likely to participate in political organisations and parties. The participation of Polish and Lithuanian youth in local organisations (aimed at improving the local community) was very low in 2017. It was significantly lower in comparison to Western European youth.

Considering local elections, respondents in Poland were much more likely to have voted in the last three years (see Table 5.1). However, they were less likely to have done so in national elections. This data demonstrates the minor differences in voting behaviour.

Youth political participation and engagement in Sweden. The youth policies are implemented by the central government and municipalities. One of the main actors in the youth policy field are municipalities³³. There are 290 municipalities

²⁸ R. Žiliukaitė, The youth electoral behaviour in the post-communist Lithuanian society. In: *Paper for presentation at the ECPR General Conference*, Bordeaux, 2013, pp. 4–7.

²⁹ E. Tuzaitė, „Kritiški piliečiai“? Posovietinės jaunimo kartos požiūris į demokratiją, politiką ir sovietinę praeitį. *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas*, 2016, 7 (2), pp. 31–47.

³⁰ This think tank organisation drew up The Civic Empowerment Index in Lithuania, consists of the following four dimensions: civic activeness, potential civic activeness, conception of civil society's influence, and civic activity risk assessment. The longitudinal study mentioned here aimed at measuring the dynamics of civic and political engagement of Lithuania (see Civic Empowerment Index of 2007–2016 <http://www.civitas.lt/en/research/civic-empowerment-index/> [accessed: 15.05.2019]).

³¹ Pagrindiniai. Lietuvos visuomenės pilietinės galios indekso rodikliai. 2016m., 2017 Vilnius, http://www.civitas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/PGI2016_pagr-rezultatai.pdf [accessed: 15.05.2019].

³² The Flash Eurobarometer was designed to research young EU citizens' participation in a range areas of life (including voluntary activities, political elections, NGO, or sports clubs). The respondents aged 15–30 were interviewed. The sample consisted of 11,000 respondents (European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 455, European youth*. TNS Political & Social, 2018, pp. 1–92).

³³ E. Wadensjö, Policy Performance and Evaluation: Sweden. *STYLE Working Paper*, 2015, WP3.3, pp. 1–32.

and 21 counties in Sweden. The youth policy process is organised in the ‘top-down’ form, i.e. the central government develops youth-related policies and municipalities are responsible for the implementation. The main distinct features of Swedish youth policies (national and municipal) are the principles linked to human rights (gender equality, rights of ethnic minorities and LGBT people).

Table 5.1. Social and civic participation of young people in activities organised by different types of groups and clubs within the past 12 months (2017; percent)

	Lithuania	Poland	EU
Local organisation aimed at improving the local community	6	7	13
Sport clubs	11	11	29
Youth clubs, NGO	8	14	20
Cultural organisations	3	13	15
Political organisation or political party activities	7	4	1
Activities of an organisation concerned with climate change or environmental issues	1	4	5
Activities of an organisation promoting human rights or global development	2	4	7
Involved in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months	28	29	31
Volunteering in local communities' activities	57	76	69
Activities or projects aimed at fostering cooperation with young people from European countries	15	21	11
Voting in political elections, at local level*	28	38	44
Voting political election, at national level*	23	20	31

* Sep. 2017–Dec. 2014

Source: European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 455, European youth*. TNS Political & Social, 2018, pp. 1–92.

The municipalities are in charge of the primary and secondary education. The municipalities have special active labour market programmes targeted at young people. The municipal policies are also focused on solving youth issues related to housing, leisure and culture areas³⁴. The Swedish central government considers youth policy to be multisectoral. It means that all the sectors concerned have a joint responsibility and a horizontal network of policy management³⁵. The Swedish

³⁴ T. Ekmann, *Country sheet on youth policy in Sweden*, European Union and the Council of Europe, 2016, pp. 1–19.

³⁵ *Sweden's youth policy, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society*, <http://eng.mucf.se/swedens-youth-policy> [accessed: 15.05.2019].

Agency for Youth and Civil Society is the main institution in the policy management networking. It supports the municipalities pursuing their local youth policy (monitoring and evaluation, training programmes and sharing knowledge).

The local policies are focused on youth engagement in participatory processes. Traditionally, Swedish municipalities have dialogue-based relations with local communities, NGOs and interest groups. In this regard, municipalities use special advisory boards or youth councils that are involved with young people³⁶. The teenagers' and young adults' engagement in the decision making or consultations with authorities is one of the prioritised areas. These policies are aimed at: 1. broader and equal participation in elected assemblies, 2. enhanced opportunities for influence, transparency and participation.

The Swedish municipalities have developed a number of models and practices for youth engagement in governance and public policies. The research conducted in 2010 revealed that there were nearly 400 different participatory activities and projects aimed at influencing municipal government decisions³⁷. It is also important to point out that the Swedish state promotes political and civic socialisation by means of special projects. For instance, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society organised school election projects and role-play games about elections for secondary school students in 2014. These projects aimed at raising young people's political awareness and interest in EU and national elections³⁸. Moreover, the Swedish government provides financial support to some NGOs and municipalities that run projects focused on suburban areas with a low voter turnout. Lastly, there are a number of initiatives and electronic participation campaigns for fostering democracy and human rights in Sweden. There is also a range of youth participation projects in municipalities starting from the use of internet networks and ending with the involvement in municipal planning processes³⁹. Swedish municipalities offer a number of meeting places (called "youth clubs" or "recreational centres") for young people with services provided by youth workers.

Young people's political participation and engagement depends on the municipalities. As it was mentioned before, youth policy is developed and coordinated by state agencies, however, its implementation depends in part on the municipalities. The cities offer more opportunities for civic engagement and political participation.

³⁶ I. Pitti, Y. Mengilli, A. Martelli, P. Loncle, Participation and everyday life. In: *Young People and the Struggle for Participation: Contested Practices, Power and Pedagogies in Public Spaces*. Eds. A. Walther, J. Batsler, P. Loncle, A. Pohl, 2019, Routledge, pp. 1–16.

³⁷ Youth policies in Sweden 2017, *The Youth Wiki*, European Commission, 2017, p. 87.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 93–94.

³⁹ Svensson, L. (2016). Empowering rural youth with Facebook: Lessons from a local Swedish case-study. *Community Development Journal*, 51(3), pp. 436–451.

For instance, the Gothenburg city municipality has several institutional forms (Open Cultural Centre, Youth Representation, City Youth Council and 11 open youth councils in districts, 33 Youth Clubs and many initiatives for youth engagement in co-decision making⁴⁰). There are several independent youth organisations for youth-oriented activities. In addition, the political parties have youth branches. The Gothenburg municipality is proactive in addressing urban youth issues and discussing them with young people. The activities of the municipality are focused on youth as the empowerment target group by using services and resources⁴¹.

On the other hand, rural youth has limited engagement or participation opportunities due to various obstacles (structural, educational, geographical, psychological etc.)⁴². In spite of everything, the municipalities attempt to listen and be responsive to the young people while offering different social, cultural and political forms of support (formal meetings with officials, petitions, volunteering projects etc.)⁴³. The participatory forms and groupings are situational and aimed at problems solving or the needs and interests of the participants⁴⁴. In rural municipalities, there are fewer forms and initiatives aimed at promoting democracy.

The dynamics of youth political participation in Sweden: from chatting in social media to activism. A number of research studies provide evidence about two specific phenomena in the Swedish political engagement. The first phenomenon is related to youth discussions in social media on political and policy issues and the second is relevant to some forms of activism as a form of unconventional political participation of youth.

The studies disclose new participatory forms of networking that change more formalised forms of political membership⁴⁵. Secondly, the complexity of youth political actions is explored in some studies. The researches explain that Swedish youth political activity is very complex (youth politics is conceptualised as mul-

⁴⁰ B. Andersson, M. Cuconato, N. De Luigi, S. Demozzi, T. Forkby, M. Ilardo, F. Zannoni, *PARTI-SPACE. WP2 – National Contexts Comparative Report*, UNIBO, 2016, pp. 33–70.

⁴¹ M. Nordenfors, *Participation – on the children's own terms?* City of Gothenburg, Tryggare och mänskligare Göteborg 2012, pp. 35–49; L. Soneryd, E. Lindh, Citizen dialogue for whom? Competing rationalities in urban planning, the case of Gothenburg, Sweden. *Urban Research & Practice*, 2019, 12(3), pp. 230–246.

⁴² A. S. Lundgren, A. Johansson, Digital rurality: Producing the countryside in online struggles for rural survival. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 2017, 51, pp. 73–82.

⁴³ A. S. Lundgren, A. Johansson, Digital rurality: Producing the countryside in online struggles for rural survival. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 2017, 51, pp. 73–82.

⁴⁴ E. Andersson, Young People's Political Participation: A Public Pedagogy Challenge at the Municipal Level. *Young*, 2018, 26(2), pp. 179–195.

⁴⁵ M. Ekström, M. Sveningsson, Young people's experiences of political membership: from political parties to Facebook groups. *Information, Communication & Society*, 2019, 22(2), pp. 155–171.

tiple processes are developed) as a process and reveals the institutionalisation of municipalities or schools' participatory forms (sometimes called formal, conventional or state-cantered) and informal (unconventional) actions and initiatives⁴⁶.

The research conducted by Ilaria Pitti has revealed how Swedish youth activists build up political platforms. The researcher has studied how youth experiences (difficulties, access to housing) become the key issue for action aimed at protecting the neighbourhood from the negative effects of gentrification and urban segregation⁴⁷.

The political scientist Erik Amna has brought critical interpretation about youth political engagement. The researcher presented empirical evidence about specific groups of young Swedes who display political passivity and classified these groups into two categories: disengaged and disillusioned citizens. Such individuals are referred to by political scientists as standby citizens. Other researchers, who tested E. Amna's research findings, found that this passivity is determined by various reasons and complex factors (family, individual characteristics, factors relating to education – political literacy, social media)⁴⁸.

In Sweden, scholars have debated about the importance of social media for youth political participation. According to research, social media have had a limited effect on local and national politics (in the elections and direct political participation campaigns during the past decade)⁴⁹. The traditional media and political parties' campaigns formed the opinions of voters in the last elections. On the other hand, social media has become an important channel for personal use in discussing political issues.

The research results show that social media plays an important role in terms of forming new participatory patterns (occasional engagement, engagement in

⁴⁶ A. Ålund, R. Rosales (2017). Becoming an Activist Citizen: Individual Experiences and Learning Processes within the Swedish Suburban Movement. *Journal of Education and Culture Studies*, 1(2), pp. 123–140; R. Rosales, A. Ålund, Renaissance from the margins: urban youth activism in Sweden., *Reimagining the nation: essays on twenty-first-century Sweden*. Eds. A. Ålund, C. Schierup, Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2017, pp. 351–374; Almqvist, M. F. (2016). Pirate Politics between Protest movement and the Parliament. *Ephemer*, 16(2), 97, pp. 95–114.

⁴⁷ I. Pitti, *Youth and Unconventional Political Engagement*. Springer, 2018, pp. 23–35.

⁴⁸ J. Ekman, Schools, democratic socialization and political participation: political activity and passivity among Swedish youths. *Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education*, 2013, 1, pp. 1–11.

⁴⁹ L. Nylander, Röstfisket har flyttat till facebook, 2018, <https://www.forskning.se/2018/03/21/rost-fisket-har-flyttat> [accessed: 15.08.2019]. D. N. Hopmann, A. Shehata, J. Strömbäck, Contagious media effects: How media use and exposure to game-framed news influence media trust. *Mass Communication and Society*, 2015 18(6), pp. 776–798. [till-facebook/](https://doi.org/10.1080/15257546.2015.1053111); Strömbäck, J. Swedish election campaigns. *The Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics*, ed. Jon Pierre, 2016, Oxford University Press, pp. 275–293.

easily accessible activities/online activism)⁵⁰. Some studies have explored the phenomenon of social media effect on passive and active (engaged in organisations or political activities) youth. For instance, the study by sociologists Elin Fjellman, Nils Gustafsson and Malena Rosén demonstrate that the participation divide between active and passive youth is not clear. The assumption that politically conscious people are more active in social media while the rest of youth remain passive was rebutted by the interpretation of qualitative research data. The results indicated “that even some of the most active young people in the study state that they refrain from participating in social media. The study also shows that politically active individuals experience social pressure to participate in social media”⁵¹.

The activism and even social movements are not a new phenomenon among Swedish youth. The legacy of collective action, dating back to 1968, is linked by historians to Vietnam, students and the environmental movements⁵². Some groups were very radicalised as in other Western European countries. However, only some of the movements had continuity with a minimal impact on local politics or municipal policies⁵³. In the early 21st century, the new wave of social movements started. According to the research, the most visible was “subaltern suburbia” youth movement as well as “racist” and “anti-racist”, gender movements or activism⁵⁴. The Swedish Pirate party’s youth branch (Swed. “Ung Pirat”, created as an independent organisation) is linked to popular protest movement organisations by some academic researchers⁵⁵. The Fridays For Future events (stimulated by Greta Thun-

⁵⁰ M. Ekström, A. Shehata, Social media, porous boundaries, and the development of online political engagement among young citizens. *New Media & Society*, 2018, 20(2), pp. 740–759; J. Ohme, When digital natives enter the electorate: Political social media use among first-time voters and its effects on campaign participation. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 2019, 16(2), pp. 119–136.

⁵¹ E. Fjellman, N. Gustafsson, M. Sundström, Ungas politiska (icke-) deltagande på sociala medierhellre offline? *Sociologisk forskning*, 2018, 55(2), pp. 293–316.

⁵² K. Östberg, Sweden and the long ‘1968’: break or continuity? *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2008, 33(4), pp. 339–352.

⁵³ U. Stahre, City in change: Globalization, local politics and urban movements in contemporary Stockholm. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2004, 28(1), pp. 68–85.

⁵⁴ O. Sernhede, Youth rebellion and social mobilisation in Sweden. *Soundings*, 2014, 56, pp. 81–91; O. Sernhede, C. Thörn, H. Thörn, The Stockholm uprising in context: Urban social movements in the rise and demise of the Swedish welfare-state city. In: *Urban uprisings*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 149–173; A. Ålund, R. Rosales, Becoming an Activist Citizen: Individual Experiences and Learning Processes within the Swedish Suburban Movement. *Journal of Education and Culture Studies*, 2017, 1(2), pp. 123–140; C. U. Schierup, A. Ålund, A. Neergaard, “Race” and the upsurge of antagonistic popular movements in Sweden. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2018, 41(10), pp. 1837–1854.

⁵⁵ M. F. Almqvist, Pirate Politics between Protest movement and the Parliament. *Ephemera*, 2016, 16(2), p. 97.

berg actions in Stockholm) led youth groups to protest on the streets in Stockholm and Malmö (15 March 2019)⁵⁶.

These facts indicate that there is a considerable variety of activism in Sweden that embraces different social organisations. Some youth movements go beyond formal organisations. According to the research, the leaders of the political organisations challenge the established Swedish model based on constant political dialogue, historical traditions and welfare state⁵⁷. The youth groups seek to voice their interest, express their cultural and gender identities, and create political solutions for social and ecological problems. Secondly, the protest movements and activists mentioned above focus their activities in the biggest Swedish cities. On the other hand, the research gives evidence that young activists use social networks for voicing their wish to have the opportunity to forge the social change⁵⁸. The fact that the activists use social networks to promote ideas via online interactions is not surprising. The studies reveal that they enable online political participation (internet-based boycotts and protests)⁵⁹. Also, this mechanism promotes political participation with some positive and negative aspects.

5.4. Findings

With regard to the aims of the research (to define the main driving forces of and barriers to youth engagement in local politics and municipal policies formation or the local community), the findings are structured in the following key themes: 1. the engagement of young people in local politics and municipal policies; 2. the cooperation between the different factors in networks. The table below includes the four main themes that emerged from qualitative data (see Table 5.2):

Table 5.2. Key themes from qualitative data

Key Themes	Sub-Theme
Importance of the theme	The field of political participation and engagement of young people. Different meanings of engagement and participation.
Social media role for youth political participation	The social media as the channel for political participation. Participatory forms of networking in the internet. The role of social media in local and national politics. Participatory patterns on social media.

⁵⁶ M. Wahlström, M. Sommer, P. Kocyba, M. de Vydt, J. de Moor, S. Davies, C. Saunders, *Protest for a future: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays For Future climate protests on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities*. Kennislink, 2019, pp. 1–121.

⁵⁷ I. Pitti, *Youth and Unconventional Political Engagement*. 2018, Springer, pp. 56–59.

⁵⁸ A. B. Coe, Practicing gender and race in online activism to improve safe public space in Sweden. *Sociological Inquiry*, 2018, 88(3), pp. 20–22.

⁵⁹ M. Ekström, J. Östman, Information, interaction, and creative production: The effects of three forms of internet use on youth democratic engagement. *Communication Research*, 2015, 42(6), pp. 811–812.

Activities: engagement of young people in the local political decision-making process	Transparent, sustainable and collaborative structures. Wide-ranging areas for participation and engagement at local level. The need for more relevant information for young people. The culture that makes young people feel more important/accepted.
The networks and key players	The platform for effective and sustainable collaboration between all relevant stakeholders/key players. Cross-institutional/sectoral communication at all levels.
Relevant issues and policies at a local level	Local strategies/programmes for young people's participation in decision making. The field for young people's involvement in spatial and housing planning and development of public services.
Cooperation between different factors in networks	Listening to the people involved, consultations with youth organisations, collaboration on local, national and international levels.
Development of youth-friendly tools for participation	The development of "youth-friendly" and "accessible" tools for participation. Instruments, that recognise young people's participation and sustain their involvement in local governance processes. Online tools for youth political/policy making, to be complemented by offline methods and have a follow-up phase, in which decision-makers reflect on how young people's contributions were taken into account. Better consultation and platforms for meeting with organisations.

Cooperation between the different factors in networks

Importance of the issue. This research found, that young people are interested in local politics. This interest is based not only on the personal interest in learning or socialisation, but also in the issue of representation. As noted by the Polish and Lithuanian students during focus group interviews:

Polish In my opinion the young people want to make projects by solving various issues in different areas. But they are only interested in this. And ideas should come from themselves, but not from others. And... For example, we want to help people in Gdynia. [Explains about special project] We will not force those who do not want to participate in projects. But we will empower those who can find areas of interest they are only interested in this. And we encourage them to engage in talks with commissions [city municipality commissions]. ... (1 focus group)

Barriers for participation. The focus group participants were asked to reflect on the main incentives for and barriers to engagement and participation. Upon reflection, they first noticed that the barriers are not limiting factors (*1 focus group*). The participants also mentioned that the topic was very complex (influenced by different political, government and economic factors). The informants also pointed out that youth engagement is a multifaceted challenge. The discussion started with the following question: does youth engagement essentially influence the decisions in local government? The participants were asked to reflect upon this question and share their views and examples based on their own experience. The research suggests that even young people who are active and engaged in various local activi-

ties do not always feel listened to. The participants saw problems differently and put forward different arguments (see Table 5.3)⁶⁰.

Table 5.3. Specific barriers to youth participation on a local level

Category	Quotations from interviews
Agenda setting	Lithuanian stakeholder 5. <i>Young people cannot influence all the plans or agendas. Of course, they can come to the mayor or director of the administration and bring their suggestions, but the reality is that the process is top-down.</i> (I Focus group) Lithuanian stakeholder 7. <i>There are no young people who are uninterested in political participation. However, their motivation is different [...]. Sometimes, they are manipulated by the political participation. That is a fact. For instance, they cannot understand the issues, if they come to a council meeting. They can only come where relevant issues are discussed. In any other case, they will not understand. [...] They have to be prepared for issues that are to be discussed. For instance, if they come to a meeting where questions of road development are presented, then...</i> (I Focus group)
Communication gaps	Polish stakeholder 4. <i>We do not have problems in communication between the city council and the youth in Ilawa. The problem is that adults and youth do not understand each other. The politicians do not use plain language. I remember a recent 'complicated' situation. It happened in the meeting with burmistrz (mayor) for the organisation of this project. The young people and the adults could not understand each other. That is not a simple problem.</i> (I Focus group)
Lack of interest	Lithuanian stakeholder 5. <i>There is a council which works for school decisions. But they fail to make basic decisions for schools. The politicians are more interested in talking to elderly people due to the coming elections, more than school councils, where middle school aged youngsters sit. NGOs decide for themselves; the youth council decides for themselves and there is no cooperation.</i> Polish stakeholder 2. <i>In fact, it sometimes happens that young people are considered a political tool. For instance, you can find examples when ministers or other politicians came to meet with young people [...]</i> (I Focus group)
Lack of resources	Lithuanian stakeholder 6. <i>If we take our Telšiai municipality as an example. I would say that politicians have a good approach to the active youth and the initiatives they bring or issues they raise. The problem is that they get the 'voice' of youth, but nothing happens later. That young people's ideas are not practicable.</i> Polish stakeholder 5. <i>Youth consultations are not very effective. The scheme was established several years ago, but the people responsible left and new ones came. [...] On the other hand, nobody forbids young people to come every day to the municipality, to take parts in meetings and monitor how decisions have been implemented. I think the main obstacle is the lack of time, resources and interest. And lack of trust, of course. But theoretically the mechanism is functional.</i> (I Focus group)
Barriers to different forms of participation	Lithuanian stakeholder 5. <i>I think there are a lot of online communication possibilities. At least in Lithuania. If you check the websites of all municipalities, according to the law they have to have the consultation tools. Youth can write letters to politicians [...]. But the people do not often use this channel. And there are other online possibilities. There are studies which monitor consultations. You can write to the mayor, to the conciliators, to the administrators.</i> Lithuanian stakeholder 6. <i>I can give an example. It happens that we receive emails from students. They want information and we always reply to them. It is a common practice.</i> [The moderator questioned the efficacy of the tool as limited to one way of communication]. <i>Yes, of course, it depends on the case. You cannot reply immediately; you have to find the time for this. And this is mostly limited to formal replies.</i> (I Focus group) Polish stakeholder 3. <i>The online tools depend on authority and, quite often, communication face to face in a meeting is more effective. The administrators in the municipality have to find time and show good will. And, more often than not, they do not have time for this. There is a common practice of them answering very formally, mostly when they get a formal task.</i> (I Focus group)

⁶⁰ The data was analysed using the open-coding method for identification of the number of concepts.

Manipulation of engagement	<p>Lithuanian participant 1. <i>We see the lack of friendly and sincere cooperation. We always find that adults behave with us like with small children. They think while smiling to you: Well they are young. It is not necessary to take seriously their suggestions and ideas. [...]</i> Lithuanian participant 2. <i>Of course we know how to overcome such a reaction and prepare. We think about the presentation... We are trying to read documents, we discuss and define the problems, find strong supporting arguments. And we also hope that the politicians will be friendly. [...]</i> Polish participant 1. <i>I think the competences to understand bureaucratic procedures and documents are essential. I think it is not easy. It is difficult to find information. For instance, a small mistake in the protocol could lead to misunderstandings. I think it is necessary to get this knowledge in trainings. (II Focus group). [...]</i> Polish participant 2. <i>It happened some years ago. Our youth council played a formal political role. The politicians used our council as a tool for formal representation in openings, ceremonies, ... But now, the situation is different.</i></p>
----------------------------	---

Firstly, the problem is that the agenda setting in local government institutions is organised as a top-down process with some exceptions (see Table 5.3). Some interview participants argued that it could not always reflect all the issues important for young people. Other informants argued that there are other relevant barriers related to the limited understanding of politics and municipal policies by young people. Some young people do not understand the bureaucratic language, some political rhetoric (see Table 5.3). Furthermore, they are not immersed in the law-making process or administrative procedures and are not familiar with the regulations related to municipal services etc. These are communication gaps for engagement. As noted by the Lithuanian and Polish stakeholders in the interview, the heads of municipalities do not have time for or interest in practical participation. In fact, some heads of municipalities or other participants use consultations with youth for political purposes or do not find enough time for it. Such an approach can be described as very formal or even manipulative participation. Therefore, young people (especially those who are involved in formal structures) don't always feel listened to in the consultation process. One Polish participant saw this as one of the main problems for several reasons: mistrust, limited time resources (on the part of government officials). However, it should be noted that the informants did not reach a general agreement on this topic.

The research suggests that political and cultural environment is changing in Sweden. The focus group participants were asked to reflect on the main political, social, cultural and other factor that stimulates political participation, changes behaviour etc. As noted by a Swedish stakeholder:

1 participant. *I think the answer is, my personal answer, is that. Maybe not the fact. I guess a couple of years ago, there was a political party i.e. democrats. When they got elected, a lot of votes ..., there was a lot of discussions in Sweden about [...]* You know, when people come from foreign countries. How to engage this, them and make it work. Because Sweden was always an open country, welcoming people. A long time ago we needed incoming people, immigrants to handle things. So, we built Sweden on incoming people, we built it with the help from immigrants. And the things that happened all over the world might have influenced how people interacted in the Swedish society. So,

this Swedish society has always been i.e. that you can come in Sweden with your own culture and live there. But this made some forces in Sweden think that this went too far. So, we have forgotten the Swedish culture. And, their politics and the forces they came to. Which means some forces think that we cannot take any more people who are coming to Sweden any more. We have to take care about Sweden first. And on other hand, there are a lot of old Swedish people working and not so many young people working, which means that one day when they retire, that will be no ... We will need (people ...) to work. So, there have been a lot of conflicts on political level with immigrants. How should I say... Well this is a very important question, issue. It is important for youth too.

2 participant. There is also the question of the environment. And when Donald Trump came to power, this had an even greater importance. Sweden has always been progressive in this respect as well. But now some people start to question how good are we. Because we talk about wind power, power supply by the wind. But also electrical cars, because this is good for environment. But later you try to see the bigger picture, how when you make these batteries, what the process looks like and this is not good for the environment. People start to see what is good and what is not good. And if you go this way, then is good for Sweden, but not for the world. There is a lot of confusion even in the political environment. And I think [...] I think that it is increasing. I think also there is the question about gender equality. And more and more even in private sector. They want to be a step ahead and that shows benchmarking with other countries, and other companies ...yeah. And to be a successful company in Sweden, you have to talk about equality, about the environment. You have to quite ..., well to be two or three steps ahead. Because when young people are looking for a job, they are looking for these questions from the company. Because we try to be ahead of time in Sweden. Maybe this is an explanation for panicking sometimes. Because we are worried about the future. (III focus group)

As the quotes demonstrate, the participants associated political change with the issues of immigration, environment and their social, cultural and political effects on the Swedish society. The young participants also pointed to the global environment issues and inadequate policies. Moreover, they acknowledged that gender equality questions are also an important thematic area. The participant explained that discussions about these issues depend on individuals and the contextual factors (social, political, situational). It was underlined that Sweden values human rights and equality, and it has very effective integrative policies. At the same time, they expressed increasing youth concerns.

Engagement of young people in local politics and municipal policies

The forms of youth engagement

The research gives evidence that there are multiple ways for youth engagement in local institutional politics and governance. In this part of the report, the structures and forms of institutional engagement will be analysed in terms of efficacy (influence on processes) and effects (the change in local society with respect to the relevant issues). In this section the following topics will be discussed: the approach-

es and forms of institutionalised, formal (conventional, top-down and manageable) and nonconventional (informal, bottom-up) approaches.

The practice of youth engagement in the Polish local government community, decision-making or municipal social service provision has been slow to become institutionalised. The informants reflected on these issues in the following ways:

Stakeholder 1. *The local governments could not often involve youth. The local government needs their help. They need their volunteering work, their participation in local activities. But they cannot involve them and make it interesting for them. [...] Another problem – they (local government institutions) cannot create forms of continuous youth involvement. Youth starts and drops it later, without getting support.* Stakeholder 2. *The governments do not take active youth seriously. To them, they are only children.* (1 focus group)

The informants pointed out that the process of youth engagement at municipal level poses a particular challenge to politicians. In the focus groups they discussed the application of top-down and bottom-up approaches taken by municipalities. They emphasised that these two forms of participation are mostly complementary to each other. In the same way the importance of formal political engagement was highlighted. A stakeholder from Poland addressed youth efficient engagement problem to the principle of responsibility. He brought up several arguments:

Stakeholder 3. *In my view, it is necessary to make young people more responsible and to strengthen their motivation in this way. The more responsibility for young people, the more they will be involved. So that they can feel the power. Their power, they can do something. They can change something. They can bring new ideas. They can be happy by doing something. [...] For instance, there are some young people [mentions people being mentored] with us here. They are volunteering, they're bringing new ideas. They do a lot of things. They are improving and they are attracting other youngsters.* (1 focus group)

Other stakeholders also talked about the empowerment of young people by providing them with opportunities to produce their own participatory mechanisms. This position illustrates the academic discussion about the efficacy of participative structures or tools. According to the debaters, it is necessary to find a way to make sense of a group, or a feeling of participation. Some academics formulated the concept (the so-called critical social theory of youth empowerment and special models including adolescent empowerment, youth development) as the approach for analysing youth participation⁶¹. The participation in this dimension develops while its effects on community and individual levels are assessed. The informants mentioned the importance of the formation of community partnerships, which can lead to successful programs and the development of networks.

⁶¹ B. Checkoway, Youth participation and community change: An introduction. In: *Youth participation and community change*. Routledge, 2012, p. 14.

Formal vs informal engagement

The youth understand and conceptualise participation more broadly. In the interview, they gave several suggestions or evidence of participatory activities and strategies that are taken up by young people. This statement by a Lithuanian informant explains this:

Stakeholder 1. *How are young Lithuanians involved in decision making? ... [the group members start to whisper] Lithuanian. The young people are involved differently. The young people understand that they cannot go to a municipality and say: we want to do this and this. We have a lot of ideas and ... The young people have to understand the need for partnership with adults. And adults help young people with good stuff or with some projects. I think for young people it is necessary to work with adults. They can help and explain how systems work. Because, when an adult comes to a municipality, he speaks and the result is different. When youths come to a municipality, nobody takes them seriously. So, we have to cooperate with adults.* Stakeholder 5. *Is this really a problem? Did you hear criticism? Do municipalities communicate with young people? Lithuanian. No, Please. Young people like adults. They are kind of leading persons. They could use their knowledge and experience. They have authority.* Stakeholder 5. *Young people like them. They consider them as an example. Their knowledge is important. (I focus group)*

This quote points to a central element of local engagement, namely, youth workers, i.e. adult mentors necessary to facilitate the partnership with municipalities. Youth workers perform important actions in creating engagement process for consultations and cooperation with politicians and civil servants. The interpretation of research data suggests that some of the youth workers and mentors at local level (in Polish and Lithuanian cases) are motivated to use the maximum energy and resources (however limited) in their activities. They also pointed to the necessity to invest in youth engagement structures for creating youth services.

In this interview episode, the stakeholder informant reflects on the involvement through the participatory structures in a more formal, conventional way. On the other hand, the informant points to the tension between managed participation (it is necessary to use structures and cooperate in a controlled way) and creative participation (bringing ideas, acting unconventionally). In this context, the social positioning of young people in relation to the local government institutions is very important. The interview highlights the crisis of democratic participation. The young informant has to find a compromise and take the conformist attitude for the reason that he wants to use a conventional way for acting.

Certainly, one discussion participant noted that they have a strong and very useful dialogue between the local government institutions and the youth. The Polish stakeholder argued that it is possible to overcome the ‘artificial’ rhetoric and formal cooperation with mutual recognition and trust.

Polish stakeholder 1. *We have regular meetings with the mayor (burmistrz). Young people come to the authorities with their proposals. And firstly, we have consultations and discussions about what part of their ideas could be implemented and when. Of course part of these ideas are realised during the long cooperation with the mayor. [How often are these meetings organised?] The last meeting took place last week, and the previous one two months ago. But the mayor is very open and young people or their representatives can come without prior arrangement and can ask for help or support.*

Political science research suggests that conventional or structured political engagement is focused on limited actions. This argument was voiced in the interview with the stakeholders:

Polish stakeholder 3. *In our city Elbląg is this kind of obstructive situation. I personally use my connections, knowledge and experience, but I have to use a hierarchical framework for meetings with the mayor. Firstly, I have to meet with administrators from one department and later with another. And sometimes happens, that information is not passed to the highest structures and then you have to repeat those procedures to solve the problem. Well, that is the difference between small towns and big cities. [...] Polish stakeholder 6. *In fact, everything is in the hands of municipalities. If a municipality does not care about youth, youth volunteering, then nothing will work. They will delegate somebody, for example Ms. Kristina or somebody else. And if they have a municipality friendly policy, it would be the best way to have a youth coordinator or contact person for 'meeting' young people. The municipality has to have a person, who will be really responsible for youth participation. If a municipality wants to have a youth participation model, we have to find a contact person. It could be a civil servant or another person to fulfil the tasks. ... (I focus group)**

The respondents highlighted the importance of a youth-centric policy approach which should be used by municipalities. The stakeholders considered a youth-centric policy as a precondition for participation. According to the interview data, often “the adult attitudes are the biggest barrier to effective participation” (I focus group). Polish stakeholders emphasised the importance of local youth facilitators/commissioners and their role in effective youth engagement. The interview data demonstrates that municipalities are using different formal engagement structures and procedures.

Political science research presents the concept that conventional or structured political engagement is focused on limited actions. This argument was voiced in interview with stakeholders:

Polish stakeholder 1. *We have a local council in our local government [describing a practice in northern Poland]. It works as the main structure. They have their own plans; they work together and they make some decisions. Of course, there is nothing to prevent you from working in it, but the councils are somehow not important for some youth. But of course, it is for the minority. (I focus group).*

Youth councils – regional and local – are important structures for youth representation. The advantage of this structure (model) is that it implies dialogue that deals with issues relevant to local youth. Young people’s engagement in consultations with local governments benefits both the local communities and youth. On the other hand, there is criticism of this form of engagement based on the arguments of elitism and marginalisation of some youth groups⁶².

The interview data gives mixed messages about youth participatory environment. Some Polish municipalities see potential in youth engagement but others do not. This is how the interview participants reflected on it:

Polish stakeholder 4. *I think it would be a good option to discuss youth engagement with big city conciliators. I guess the conciliators do not understand the issues and the problems faced by youth. They do not know that local youth council is active, that it is working. [...] Polish stakeholder 5. In Ilawa, the member of the city council knows that the youth council is active and some of them come to the meetings. (I focus group).*

One participant touched upon political youth engagement efficacy in local governments. He provided the examples of local politicians’ careers (who started as active members of the local council) and facts about the partnership between the municipality and himself as youth worker:

Polish stakeholder 3. *In our town there is a mayor. He is 45 years old. [...] He used to be the city council president and the leader in our youth cluster for fifteen years. He has experience of leading the council, because he had experience working in the county (“powiat”, II tier local government unit) council. And in the city council there are also two young people who worked in the youth council fifteen years ago. Recently I had a meeting with a mayor about my function in administration. And one hour’s talk specifically about youth council issues. We discussed how to empower youth. About how to help people. I also explained about our cooperation between the youth counsel and municipality on various projects. There is green light for joint efforts of the youth council and municipality. I hope for good cooperation in future (I focus group).*

This episode of the interview shed light on other important actors for the facilitation of youth engagement. The former youth council members play the role of supporters and promoters of youth initiatives. As highlighted by a stakeholder: “they have ‘opened the door’ for youth council members and youth workers” (I focus group).

The informants from Lithuania brought up the topic of mentoring and facilitation of youth development. The institutional context and procedural requirements were less important for them. They saw the potential in adult mentors:

Lithuanian stakeholder 5. *Everything depends on youth mentors. I know some enthusiastic people who are currently mentoring the youth. The management of the process*

⁶² A. Augsburg, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, M. Dougher, Youth civic engagement: Do youth councils reduce or reinforce social inequality? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2018, 33(2), pp. 187–208.

depends on them. [...] Lithuanian stakeholder 4. But this mentor's case is more like an exception. The school does not have such people. I guess some NGO has activities in this field. Lithuanian stakeholder 5. I imagine that everything depends on the school. Some schools have civic engagement projects and are organising different activities. And they have motivated teachers. There is only the need to motivate them. [...] We have had the person responsible for youth engagement in the administration department, but currently she is on parental leave (I focus group).

Although the Telšiai municipality uses various forms for youth political engagement (the main engagement institution is the Youth Council of the municipality), this study uncovered evidence that not all youth engagement support schemes are effective⁶³. The informants pointed to some gaps in the assistance schemes for youth to have an impact on the decision-making process.

In contrast, a Polish stockholder noted that they have a strong and a very useful dialogue between local government institutions and the youth. It was emphasised in the interview that municipal youth councils need some adult guidance in order to be active and effective. The participants discussed the degree of youth-adult engagement in the context of youth councils. Some stakeholders considered the 'pluralistic' form (i.e., neither controlled by youth nor adults) to be the best model. They presented arguments based on examples linked to the adult's role as resource accumulators, collaborators, supporters, connectors etc⁶⁴.

The Polish stakeholders discussed youth accountability and communication problems that are linked to the communication and support between the youth council members and young people. They debated about issues related to practical communication problems, as well as some accountability issues (I focus group). Overall, it is noted, that the communication problem for youth council member applies to bigger cities.

The participants of the youth focus group agreed that there is a traditional way of engagement in local governments through the youth council (i.e. consultations with the city council, support of youth groups' interests, awareness raising campaigns, knowledge and skill development projects). Some of the interview partic-

⁶³ The evaluation youth engagement forms provided in 2016 revealed that engagement is limited only to youth policy issues (Telšių savivaldybė, *Jaunimo politikos įgyvendinimo Telšių rajono savivaldybėje kokybės vertinimo ataskaita, 2016 m.* <http://www.telsiai.lt/go.php/Jaunimo%20politikos%20dokumentai314> [accessed: 15.06.2019]).

⁶⁴ Some research results give evidence that youth workers and mentors involvement is valued by young people (C. Clay, M. Amodeo, M. E. Collins, Youth as partners in curriculum development and training delivery: Roles, challenges, benefits, and recommendations. *Families in Society*, 2010, 91(2), pp. 135–141; S. Zeldin, B. D. Christens, J. L. Powers, The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2013, 51(3–4), pp. 385–397.

ipants emphasised the importance of these activities as a main priority. But others understood and actualised engagement more broadly in a range of activities:

Polish participant 1. *The problem is that most young people do not know about the youth council or about their responsibilities. We are implementing a number of activities for raising awareness about the youth council in our city. It is one of our main priorities [...]*

Polish participant 4. *I want to add that we are not only raising awareness of the rest of the youth. We are also trying to solve local problems. We have initiated a variety of good projects with friends from the youth councils. And we have a lot of ideas on how to solve the problems in our city. For example, recently, we have noticed, that the street lights are a bit dim in one street. And it is unsafe. We have an idea to buy new warning lights near the crosswalk. These warning lights could minimise car accidents. Of course, we hope to find the money for the implementation of this idea. So, we have ideas to solve some small problems in our city but we can't solve everything [...]* (II focus group).

The focus group participants mentioned a wide spectrum of different actions – such as youth meeting places in small towns, information tools for ticketing in buses, etc. The experience gives evidence of creative ways of participation. In addition, as discussed above, this is not a narrow understanding from within the youth council. In addition, the interview provides evidence, that young people contribute ideas and issues to the councils. (II focus group).

Polish participant 4. *We have ideas about starting projects. It is a pity that we cannot find the money for it by ourselves. This project needs some support from the municipality. And we are planning to present our project ideas in the meetings with the city president and some members of the council. We hope that we will realise this plan.* (II focus group).

Certainly, youth leaders have knowledge about the institutional youth engagement process, as pointed out in the focus group interview. And it seems that they actually have an influence on municipal policy. This involves not only the presentation of needs, interests and projects, but also – exercising influence. The interview informants made cautious reservations about the success of positive decisions.

Growing up in small Swedish city shadow

The Swedish focus groups participants were asked to reflect on the main incentives and barriers to engagement and participation. The participants stressed that there are no insoluble problems in regard to Swedish youth engagement at local level. The stakeholders pointed out that the Swedish state has effective youth policies which are successfully implemented at local level (III focus group). At the same time, the participants also pointed out that there are some challenges to youth engagement.

The participants highlighted the problem of involvement of young people living in smaller localities around the city of Hässleholm. The issue is accessibility

of some educative or organisational activities or just meeting with other young persons.

1 participant: *Yes. It happens. There are some people out in the wilderness. I guess, mostly they meet with other friends at school. They have most of their activities at weekends.*

2 participant: *Yes. If sometimes they go to the school. If school ends at 3 pm, they stay at school to meet with friends. They do not go home and meet friends or have other activities if they live far away. Because if they go home after school, then they will not come back. [...] It is a big political problem in Hässleholm, because it is big municipality with a city in the centre and a lot of communities around. So, all the communities have needs for some services.*

3 participant: *It is quite difficult to solve because I think that if you consider the aspect of the human nature of a young person, then I do not think it is not important for a person to go on the bus and go for 1,5 hours to meet with friends. I think you are lazy. You go outside and meet with the friends who live nearby (laughing). Sometimes you go together. That is not something common that you do every day. It is not always about money. It is more about laziness. It is more convenient to go outside. (IV focus group)*

The participants reflected on the structural and geographical obstacles for rural youth involvement. The informants observed that some school-age youth stay in the city after the classes finish and have their after-school activities. In spite of the limiting factors, the municipalities attempt to be responsive to young people by bringing some youth services to local communities or organising politicians' visits to youth centres to listen to young people. Specially designed places connect people and enable them to engage in a dialogue. It was mentioned that youth centres are inclusive and responsive to youth needs. According to the interview data, such a practice was typical in the Vimmerby municipality (IV focus group). The interview participants discussed the importance of social media for rural youth finding themselves in geographical exclusion. It was agreed that the internet channel partially solves the problems with regard to youth political involvement and participation (1 interview).

It is evident from the interview episode that the political, civic and social activity of rural youth depends on their interests and the level of engagement. It was mentioned that some of them are so engaged in social life and organisations that transport accessibility issues are not of primary importance. The youth from the 'wilderness' (as one young interview participant named that group) have their main activities at weekends.

Are young people listened to?

As mentioned earlier, the Swedish municipalities have developed very effective citizen engagement policies and instruments, the implementation of which is supported by the national political culture and participatory governance tradition. The

national youth policy mechanisms extend the application of these instruments by supportive programs. On the other hand, mechanism for a political and civic dialogue with youth or children have some limitations or gaps. For instance, some Swedish municipalities developed models for youth and children involvement in the spatial and infrastructure planning connected with their activities⁶⁵. But these mechanisms have some limitations. A seventeen-year-old interview participant identified several gaps in youth engagement:

1 participant: *I actually don't know the natural arenas for that. Sometimes I think that if you are going to build for young people, then sometimes politicians and older people are guessing, and spend a lot of money. I don't know young people come to say anything about their interests. [...] I know there are special meetings. But I think they sometimes forget to ask young people. And this is similar like with climate warning in Sweden. For the reason that you are young you get a sense: the politicians don't listen to me because I'm young. And then for the politicians the situation is other way around. They think there is no point in asking young people, because they don't come to us. I think this could be changed [...] I think so... Because in some municipalities, they [local politicians] understand that we have to do something else and to make it interesting for young people to be engaged in consultations. They might use some workshops. That would be interesting for youth. (III focus group)*

Firstly, for this participant, youth engagement in the planning of neighbourhood infrastructure is a key issue. The youth wish to influence the decisions which are important to them. For this reason, the participant expressed his concern about the actual lack of influence on important community issues. The participant also highlighted the problem of common perception and understanding between adults and youth as to the design and models of cooperation. In general, the issue of cooperation model and methods affects young people's interest in participation. It appears from one focus group interview that politicians used some forms of tokenism and manipulation. The youth could not be acknowledged as an important actor in decision making.

Lastly, the issue of youth participation in planning was linked to the youth friendly method. Municipal planners sometimes use methods and practices tailored to the needs of youth or children and the local context (planning case, existing practises, political support, etc.)⁶⁶. In some cases, the initiation of youth-led pro-

⁶⁵ M. Jansson, U. Ramberg, Implementation and effects of user participation in playground management: a comparative study of two Swedish municipalities. *Managing Leisure*, 2012, 17(1), pp. 1–13; M. Jansson, Children's perspectives on playground use as basis for children's participation in local play space management. *Local Environment*, 2015, 20(2), pp. 165–179; L. Soneryd, E. Lindh, Citizen dialogue for whom? Competing rationalities in urban planning, the case of Gothenburg, Sweden. *Urban Research & Practice*, 2019 12(3), pp. 230–246.

⁶⁶ S. Cele, D. Van Der Burgt, Participation, consultation, confusion: professionals' understandings of children's participation in physical planning. *Children's Geographies*, 2015, 13(1), pp. 14–29; V. Derr, E. Tarantini, "Because we are all people": outcomes and reflections from young people's participa-

cesses is very effective, but sometimes consultations are led by adults. Sociological studies reveal that Swedish youth is highly motivated to participate in social activities by play (various structured or unstructured leisure-time activities with adult leaders' support or activities for developing skills)⁶⁷. In the interview episode mentioned earlier, a participant also stressed the importance of the attractiveness of consultations with planners or politicians as well as an element of play.

In the focus group discussions, the aforementioned criticism of the young participant was continued by a youth worker. He shared with group his experience of working in youth centre planning:

2 participant: *I took part in one of, I was a member of the group whose task was to investigate how to build a building in [mentions town name]. It is a youth centre. This has been the political question for almost ten years. The politicians asked young people: 'Do we need some kind of youth centre'. And they got a positive answer. And then they said: 'We don't have any money". A couple of years later the question of building the youth centre was raised once again. The politician's rules again and they said: 'We need to make a new survey because the earlier one is old'. This repeated four times, I think. [...] Later they did it differently. A couple of people, one of those made this more youth friendly. We had to create, we made documents which describe the look of the building, who should be inside, who's working there and to do this, we have young people involved. So, we employed two young persons, I think they were 19, and they talked with friends and collected all the answers we provided. Later, they brought us the answers. It was a very interactive process. We took two days in a hotel and designed a prototype of the building together, which we gave to the politicians. Now, I think 2020 or 2021, they'll start building this youth house. There is also youth-friendly political environment around us. (III focus group).*

This interview participant identified a number of problems related to youth participation in planning processes. Firstly, he explained that planning is a very complex and dynamic process. The interview episode gives evidence that it is time consuming and different contextual factors play an important role (there was a political change during the planning process). On the other hand, the interview explains that the local council stopped planning due to the lack of financial resources. According to that, the municipality changed the decision making process with the participation of youth as stakeholder. The municipality abandoned the method where youth was a passive service user and developed a new youth-friendly and collaborative (more bottom-up) approach. Additionally, the collaborative working method suited the needs of youth (as agreed by other young participants) and politicians. It enabled the use of Arnstein's ladder model for participatory change

tion in the planning and design of child-friendly public spaces. *Local Environment*, 2016, 21(12), pp. 1534–1556.

⁶⁷ S. Geidne, I. Fredriksson, C. Eriksson, What motives are important for participation in leisure-time activities at Swedish youth centres? *Health Education Journal*, 2016, 75(8), pp. 972–985.

analysis⁶⁸. According to the interview, the municipality switched from the ‘information’ type (low degree of tokenism; planners offer limited participation to citizens; attitude surveys are the main instrument, which is often misused) to a higher ‘partnership’ type (power is redistributed between stakeholders and municipality; citizen communities receive resources for participation).

Finally, it seems that this experience of partnership and collaboration was not fully transposed to other areas. The focus group interviews with adult stakeholders indicate difficulties in finding a balance between adults’ interests to hold power and a dominant position and the idea that young people should manage everything themselves (focus group 2). A participant presented his reflections on this issue with some references to his recent experience:

I think we could be better at listening to young people, because sometimes adults think that: ‘that suggestion you have from young people will not work, because I have tried it’. And my opinion is: well you have tried, but you have tried it before. And a lot of things have happened since you tried it before. And maybe it will work this time. And maybe sometimes it is like we want to protect young people. Sometimes, we protect them too much from making mistakes. Maybe we have to let them make mistakes. And maybe sometimes there will be no mistakes or we can learn from them. [...] So, most of the time you should listen to the young people more. The challenge is ..., it is like making a big ship. It is very challenging. It takes time. But you have to start, maybe something will happen later. I think it is a long way before we have a result. We see it in our project. It is very difficult to ask young people to come with their opinions, because they probably think that nobody will listen to them anyway. So, why should they waste their time. They think: “in any case, adults will do the things their way. So, there is a kind of attitude taken by the young people that the adults should change first. (III focus group).

This interview episode demonstrates that the good intentions of adults and young people to cooperate in local development are not very comprehensive. The interviewer explained that the cooperation between a municipality and active young people encounters difficulties when the collaboration concept is not relevant to the case and context. This causes youth’s disinterest in participation. The adults have many false expectations about youth engagement, which are based on traditional norms, values or their personal experience. According to interview data, adults’ prejudices often limit youth engagement and effect youth civic passivity and disinterest in politics. The interviewers offered an idea how to solve the problem of prejudices. It involved mindful and deep listening as part of the communicative process. Another suggestion that could lead to effective civic and political engagement was to adopt a creative mindset and ensure steady and coherent efforts.

⁶⁸ S. R. Arnstein, A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 1969, 35(4), pp. 216–224.

Social media effects on youth civic engagement and political participation

According to academic studies, there is a positive relationship between political participation and the use of social media in Sweden. Furthermore, there is a particularly strong link between participation, civic engagement and the user generated content⁶⁹. As mentioned earlier, social media has become an important channel for personal use in discussing political and civic issues. According to several studies, the use of social media is negatively related to political knowledge⁷⁰. This means that social media plays an important role in forming young Swedes' civic competencies. The question about the role played by social media with respect to youth engagement in local political and policy issues in smaller cities and towns attracted only a few scholars⁷¹. They pointed out that rural civic and political activism through social media empowers young people and creates positive identities (counternarratives of lives in rural places).

A young interview participant and a youth worker reflected on the internet use as a channel for political discussions:

Participant 2: *Yes most of the young people use the internet to discuss political issues. They text each other. There are also youth centres [...] but you can also do it in schools. There are two or three subjects you can talk in schools on every political or social issue. Yeah, ... it is quite open and democratic.*

Question: *Is social media a 'safer place' due to political correctness?*

Participant 1. *Yes, absolutely ...*

Participant 2: *I think so, everybody has a smartphone in Sweden and it is very easy to use it for communication and that is a safe place.*

Participant 1: *And I think it is both a problem and an opportunity. Yeah ... If you allow, you can start other things. Because sometimes they have to be heard and not because it is correct, but because people need to react. And Swedish media, they are very good*

⁶⁹ J. Östman, Information, expression, participation: How involvement in user-generated content relates to democratic engagement among young people. *New Media & Society*, 2012, 14(6), pp. 1004–1021; M. Ekström, J. Östman, Information, interaction, and creative production: The effects of three forms of internet use on youth democratic engagement. *Communication Research*, 2015, 42(6), pp. 796–818; J. Ohme, When digital natives enter the electorate: Political social media use among first-time voters and its effects on campaign participation. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 2019, 16(2), pp. 119–136; K. Thorson, Facing an uncertain reception: Young citizens and political interaction on Facebook. *Information, Communication & Society*, 2014 17(2), pp. 203–216.

⁷⁰ M. Ekström, A. Shehata, Social media, porous boundaries, and the development of online political engagement among young citizens. *New Media & Society*, 2018 20(2), pp. 740–759.

⁷¹ L. Svensson, Empowering rural youth with Facebook: Lessons from a local Swedish case-study. *Community Development Journal*, 2016, 51(3), pp. 436–451; A. S. Lundgren, A. Johansson, Digital rurality: Producing the countryside in online struggles for rural survival. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 2017, 51, pp. 73–82.

at finding things and influencing the bottom line. So, they can talk in media in television. So, your voice can be heard.

Question: *Can young people express their radical attitudes in schools, youth centres?*

Participant 1: *Yes. I would say you can, as long as do not jump on, let's say, you want to say something on person or towards adult people. Then it is not allowed. But if you want to express your opinion, then it is always allowed and you can feel safe. But if your opinion is about other people [...] But the issue of immigration is very sensitive.*

Participant 2: *I think it is very complex in Sweden. Actually, it is ..., you are allowed to say everything freely, we have free speech rights and we value them. But you have to be very careful when someone speaks their mind, without judging. On the other hand, we also want to preserve the situation where everybody values the same qualities. If you say something provocative, this is not good. There are two sides, sometimes you are afraid to say the wrong word, if you are talking about a person with a different skin colour. There is a joke in Sweden that you are not allowed to say that they have a different colour. So, you cannot say the black person or coloured person or ..., what is the correct word. So, that is one side. But it is also influencing the internet. There you can say whatever you want. But most of the time, they are always using aliases, they are not using their real words. So, there you can say whatever you want. But then most of the time they use aliases, but not their real names. [...] Because you do not want to be judged or punished for something. (III focus group)*

This interview episode highlights several points. Firstly, the participant was quite neutral to use of social media for political communication or online activism. It was noted that everyday political exchange is an important democratic action no matter the channel or place where it happens. The participants noticed that it is becoming more popular in comparison to face-to-face communication.

The participants observed that it is the most popular place for discussing local (e.g. issues of forests littering), national (question of immigrants or refugees living in Sweden), or global (like climate warming, fires in jungles near the Amazon river, the ecological problem of the Aral Sea etc.) political, social and ecological issues. Secondly, the interview participants explicitly described the anonymity in online discussions as one of the main motives for choosing social media for political participation. Young people in Sweden choose different social media channels if they feel that one or another is becoming too public. One participant noted that online chatting or social media not only provide a secure setting, but also encourage users to expressing more radical or opposing views. It was also stressed that young people can feel more relaxed and discuss some sensitive issues more freely. It was pointed out that some young people do not want to offend others and jeopardise friendly relationships. Thirdly, the interview participants positively rated the internet as a means of voicing local social, political and other issues.

5.5. Conclusions

The most significant barriers and obstacles to youth engagement in municipality affairs arise from the top-down agenda settings in municipalities in respect of youth political and municipal policy matters, a lack of interest in actual youth engagement in the municipality, impediments to different forms of participation, and manipulation of engagement. Data analysis points to a twofold problem with engagement: broader attitudes and engagement approach issues, and narrower institutional barriers (the agenda setting, the lack of resources, gaps in the consultation process). The issues of uncooperative attitudes and manipulative practices were noted by some of the focus group participants in Lithuania and in Poland. The practice of youth engagement in the Polish and Lithuanian local government community decision-making or municipal social service provisions has been slow to institutionalise. The interview analysis reveals that the barriers have been crossed by most of the participants.

The informants emphasized the importance of a youth-centric policy approach in the municipalities. The significance of genuine and effective youth representation in municipalities was also discussed and confirmed. There were a number of ways for the youth to be engaged in the consultations of municipal governments or other activities. Having come to that conclusion, the participants shared their most effective practices as well as the main problems and gaps in the process. The stakeholders mentioned some of the key actors in the partnership network: youth workers, contact persons (responsible for the organisation and coordination of youth engagement in the municipalities), politicians (former youth council members). These participants are important for the interactions between the youth and the municipalities. In some researched cases (the Hława municipality case), they are forming social networks with a well-established youth council. Overall, such youth councils are the most effective form of youth engagement according to qualitative research data.

There were mixed insights about the managed (formal) engagement and informal participation (contributing ideas, protesting, actively criticising or acting in other ways). Some participants were aware of the needs of the youth to be guided and supported, while others argued that the youth could not engage informally in local politics without facilitation by special participants. Despite all the different views, it was agreed that formal and informal ways of engagement complement each other.

The participants of the youth focus group agreed that there is the traditional way of engagement in the local government through the youth council (i.e. consultations with the city council, support of youth groups' interests, awareness raising campaigns, knowledge and skill development projects). Some of the interview participants emphasised the importance of these activities as the main priority. However, others understood and actualised engagement more broadly through a range of activities.

This page is intentionally
left blank

Chapter 6

Youth Political Engagement at Local Level: The Role of Youth Councils and Open Youth Centres

Remigijus Civinskas, Rimantas Stašys

6.1. Introduction

Youth political participation and civic engagement are understood as important conditions for the development of local democracy¹, community governance² or community change³. However, numerous studies have shown that European youth is disengaged from local politics. This mostly concerns non-participation in local elections and membership in local youth parties⁴. The disengagement from politics is evident in Eastern and South European countries⁵, but is also noticeable in some

¹ A. Pontes, M. Henn, M. D. Griffiths, Towards a Conceptualization of Young People's Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study. *Societies*, 2018, 8(1), pp. 2–3.

² A. Augsberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, Engaging Youth in Municipal Government: Moving Toward a Youth-Centric Practice. *Journal of Community Practice*, 2018, 26(1), pp. 1–2.

³ G. G. Albacette, *Young people's political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?* Springer, 2014, p. 2; D. Campbell, N. Erbstein, Engaging youth in community change: Three key implementation principles. *Community Development*, 2012, 43 (1), pp. 64–65.

⁴ M. Barrett, I. Brunton-Smith, Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 2014, 10(1), pp. 19–23; B. Zani, M. Barret, Political and civic engagement: theoretical understandings, evidence and policies. In: *Political and Civic Engagement*. Routledge, 2014. pp. 3–6.

⁵ It is necessary to take into account recent data from Eurobarometer 'Flash survey on European Youth' (2017). It gives evidence that overall participation in a range of organisations and political activities has increased since December 2014. (N. Maggini, *Young People's Voting Behaviour in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*. Springer, 2016, pp. 73–74; V. Muniglia, The analysis of youth participation in contemporary literature: A European perspective. *Youth participation in Europe: Beyond discourses, practices and realities*, 2012, pp. 1–17; D. Pollock, H. Pilkington, R. Franc, Introduction: Thinking Globally, Understanding Locally. In: *Understanding Youth Participation Across Europe*. Eds. H. Pilkington, G. Pollock, R. Franc, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. pp. 1–15; A. Dilyte, R. Lazutka, Jaunimo dalyvavimas politikoje: Lietuvos atvejis. Socialinė teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika,

Scandinavian countries. For instance, the participation of young Danes in local elections has been decreasing since 2013⁶. This phenomenon is not marked with anti-political zeitgeist. Some research studies reveal that municipal politics, with the exception of some relevant policy issues like urban planning, ecology, or sustainability⁷, is less interesting to young Europeans. The political activism is increasing due to political crises. At the same time, there is empirical evidence that unconventional political participation and online activism (boycotting products, signing a petition, etc.) has been increasing since 2012⁸.

The youth protest movement initiated by Greta Thunberg (Swedish schoolgirl, climate activist), could be seen as the symbol of new participatory pattern⁹. Some scholars discuss that young people are not disengaged from political action, but are attracted to new modes of participation and new issues. Even old classic participatory slogan: “think globally and act locally” becomes particularly relevant when new movements can be recognised while acting bottom-up approach for change in communities. Local community-based political participation becomes limited to youth as targeted by interventional instrument (engagement of youth in special programmes and civic life) development. It could be also linked to opportunities to express authentic political engagement for voicing youth’s interests in municipal issues. Youth councils and other institutional platforms (youth centres, youth advisory boards) could be limiting or minimising the factor of “unconventional” participation.

The focus of this paper is youth participation in the form of youth councils and other organisations (youth centres, consultative platforms) affiliated with municipalities. The aim of this research is to understand the level of youth engagement and the main restraining factors in several European states. The goal of this research is to offer qualitative insights on how young workers and stakeholders (youth workers, experts, local politicians) perceive and understand political participation in form of youth councils and civic engagement in youth centres. What

2017, 14, pp. 89–101; B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, A. M. Zalewska, K. J. Kennedy, *Young People and Active Citizenship in Post-Soviet Times: A Challenge for Citizenship Education*. Routledge, 2017, pp. 15–45; R. Marzęcki, Political Sophistication as Important Determinant of Civic Activity of Young Citizens in New Democracies (the Case of Poland), *Romanian Journal of Political Science*. 2017, 17(1), pp. 135–169).

⁶ A. Pernille, Non-voting young people in conflict with the political system. *Journal of Political Power*, 2018, 11(2), pp. 230–231.

⁷ N. Kersting, Local Political Participation in Europe: Elections and Referendums. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 2015, 15, p. 330; C. A. Flanagan *Teenage citizens: The political theories of the young*. Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 109–111.

⁸ M. Grasso, Young People’s Political Participation in Europe in Times of Crisis. In: *Young People Re-Generating Politics in Times of Crises*. Eds. S. Pickard, J. Bessant, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. pp. 179–196.

⁹ A. Vaughan, Climate protest goes global. *New Scientist* 2019, 41, p. 7.

does it mean for young people to be “involved” in local politics and municipal policy making process? What are the most appropriate forms for authentic political and civic engagement? What are the most relevant issues for the political participation of youth at a municipal level? What are the main restraining factors for youth engagement?

The three main research questions:

- What are the main barriers for youth engagement in municipal decision making in the form of youth councils and other institutional settings?
- What are the most effective and youth-friendly forms and tools for political participation at a local level?
- What are the practices and the level of youth engagement within youth councils and open-access youth centres?

The present sample includes youth workers and stakeholders (youth workers, experts, local politicians, municipal administrators) living in Lithuania (Telšiai municipality), Poland (Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Iłwa, Gdynia, Elbląg municipalities), Denmark (Køge municipality) and Sweden (Vimmerby, Hässleholm municipalities)¹⁰. The research paper is based on qualitative information, obtained from semi-structured and individual interviews in focus group with stakeholders. **The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the research team during the project activities in January and March 2019 and continued for about an hour (Table 6.1). The interviews were audio recorded. An overview of the participant is presented in Table 6.1.**

Table 6.1. Sample description

Group interview	Municipalities and institutions	Number of informants	Place and date
Køge 1	Hässleholm Allaaktivitetshuset Fabriken, Sweden; Køge Tapperiet, Denmark; Vimmerby Lärcenter, Sweden	N=7	Køge Tapperiet
Køge 2	Elbląg Youth council, Dzierzgoń, Poland; Youth centre, Iłwa, Poland; Youth council Poland, Telšiai municipal council for youth affairs, Lithuania	N=8	Køge Tapperiet
Elbląg 1	Vimmerby Lärcenter, Sweden; Telšiai municipality, Lithuania; Dzierzgoń municipality, Poland	N=8	Elbląg Historic City Hall
Elbląg 2	Telšiai Youth council, Telšiai municipality	N=7	Elbląg Historic City Hall

¹⁰ Stakeholders from the municipalities participating in Project SB YCGN South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network.

The individual interviews followed the group interviews. 17 individual semi-structured interviews with the adult stakeholders were conducted. The participants were selected from the stakeholders who had taken part in the SB YCGN South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project. The sample was composed of three types of participants: 1. youth workers (working with youth in open centres / open-access youth centres or with municipal youth councils); 2. politicians and public administrators (mainly from local governments and some from regional institutions); 3. experts participating in project activities. The participants were asked to participate in the interviews due to their role (working with youth and experiences in youth, cultural and educational policies) and experience in SB YCGN project. In total 21 interviews were conducted with the stakeholders over a four-month period.

Prior to the focus groups, the participants in this study were informed about the voluntary nature of participation in the research and of their right to leave the focus interview at any time should they wish so, without their reasons being questioned. They were also requested to comply with the rules regarding the respect for the views of others, confidentiality and the importance of honesty. The informants were assured of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. The results were gathered to provide a collective view of the stakeholders' perceptions. All the group interviews and main individual interviews were conducted by the authors. 7 individual interviews were conducted by the research partners in Polish municipalities. The interviews lasted between 25 and 80 minutes. The interview guide was used with questions encompassing the youth councils' relations with municipalities (influence on policy decisions, communication), organisation, development and roles of youth workers.

6.2. Youth participation in municipal decision making: the form of youth councils and youth centres

Youth political participation. The youth political participation in local government decision making is a complex phenomenon. In practice, it mostly involves diverse approaches, contexts and activities. Therefore, scholars face conceptual and methodological challenges in conducting the research. The main academic discourse focuses on political youth actions or inactions, power relations between government institutions and organised youth groups, participative or engagement forms ('conventional' or 'unconventional'; formal or informal), or expansion of youth participation etc.¹¹ The central issue in this debate is related to the engagement framework of young people's interactions with local governments. As the

¹¹ A. B. Coe, M. Wiklund, M. Uttjek, L. Nygren, Youth politics as multiple processes: How teenagers construct political action in Sweden. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2016, 19(10), pp. 1321–1322.

empirical studies reveal, different approaches have been used by municipal governments in Western Europe to foster and strengthen youth participation¹². Most of them have been successful. However, some critical research findings reveal that the municipal consultative frameworks with youth have some weakness or are underdeveloped¹³. Indeed, there have been disagreements regarding evaluation and research criteria for the assessment of results.

The special conceptual models have been developed for research or evaluation of youth involvement in the decision making by the government. These models are based on the degree of power transfer to young people. They are defined according to different criteria such as: 1. level of power sharing with citizens (Sherry R Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation")¹⁴; 2. progress of improving children's rights and inclusion in society starting from non-participation to participation (Roger Hart's "Ladder of Participation")¹⁵. However, these models have some analytical restraints. Participation is explained as a linear process and it implies that young people are the goal in all situations. These models do not integrate activities other than organised by youth (symbolic or led by adults)¹⁶. Neither do they include the concept of adult – youth control dimension in youth participation.

¹² C. Foride, S. Martin, Children and young people's right to participate: National and local youth councils in Ireland. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 2016, 24(1): pp. 135–154; D. Feringa, E. Tonkens, How the Participation Style in Local Youth Council Contributes to The Civic Engagement of Young People. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory & Practice*, 2017, 26, pp. 46–47; E. Feldmann-Wojtachnia, A Gretschel, V. Helmisaari, T. Kiilakoski, A. L. Matthies, S. Meinhold-Henschel, P. Tasanko, *Youth participation in Finland and in Germany. Status analysis and data-based recommendations*, Research report, Helsinki, 2010, p. 27; E. Flugge, U. Wenzel, *Der 8er-Rat: ein barrierefreies Beteiligungsmodell für Jugendliche*. Springer-Verlag, 2018, pp. 2–5; P. Loncle, A. Rouyer, La participation des usagers: un enjeu de l'action publique locale. *Revue française des affaires sociales*, 2004, 4, pp. 133–135; J. Havlicek, A. Curry, F. Villalpando, Youth participation in foster youth advisory boards: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2018, 84, pp. 265–270.

¹³ The criticism is based on several arguments arising from research findings: 1. young people's decision is influenced by youth workers (that this model is too paternalistic) or they have difficulties in partnering with youth; 2. lack of legal certainty and adequate financial support; 3. limited responsibility to other youth groups; 4. part of municipalities use 'adult-led' approaches to youth participation which limits activities, initiatives, etc. (J. Moran-Ellis, H. Sunker, Childhood studies, children's politics and participation: perspectives for processes of democratisation. *International Review of Sociology*, 2018, 28(2), pp. 277–297; M. E. Collins A. Augsburg, W. Gecker, Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65, pp. 140–147; V. Cicchelli, "The Contemporary Engagement of Young People in France: Normative Injunctions, Institutional Programs, and the Multiplying Forms of Grouping." *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education* 1.2, 2009, pp. 118–119.

¹⁴ S. R. Arnstein, A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 1969, 35(4), pp. 216–224.

¹⁵ R. A. Hart, *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. UNICEF, 1992, pp. 6–19.

¹⁶ J. Havlicek, A. Curry, F. Villalpando, Youth participation in foster youth advisory boards: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2018, 84, pp. 265–270.

American researchers Naima T. Wong, Marc A. Zimmerman and Edith A. Parker proposed a youth-focused participation model, which offers some conceptual advantages over the previous models. It includes an explanation of the five youth – adult partnership types based on involvement and empowerment that can be adapted¹⁷. This model encompasses adult-driven participation types (labelled as vessel with no input from young people or symbolic with minimal input, but without impact on decisions. The “prescriptive” mentoring relationships are used). The model also covers partnership types based on reciprocal (labelled as pluralistic. The adults and young people share responsibilities in decision making) or autonomous relationships (labelled “independent”; the adults support them by providing resources and a safe place).

Hypothetically, all models have some limitations and some advantages. Empirical research cases prove that some forms have benefits in youth participation process for development¹⁸ and support in community change. On the other hand, studies reveal that even youth-led participative community projects have some constraints and barriers (youth workers “value” orientations, constraints in issue selection, etc.)¹⁹. It is important to take into account that the participative practices are fluent, responding to the needs and social or cultural environment²⁰. The latter factor affects the institutionalised framework for youth political participation at national or local level.

Municipal youth councils. Political participation in the form of municipal youth councils is one of the main mechanisms for young people’s engagement at the local level. These institutions (having a quasi-formal status) advise, consult and cooperate with municipal councils and administrative institutions²¹. The distinguished form of youth councils is generally continuing connections with municipality or affiliated institutions. Young people can promote their interests in

¹⁷ N. T. Wong, M. A. Zimmerman, E. A. Parker, A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2010, 46(1–2): pp. 100–114.

¹⁸ S. Zeldin, B. D. Christens, J. L. Powers, The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2013, 51 (3-4), p. 386.

¹⁹ J. Kim, Youth involvement in participatory action research (PAR): Challenges and barriers. *Critical social work*, 2016, 17(1), pp. 38–53; E. J. Ozer, Youth-led participatory action research: Developmental and equity perspectives. In: *Advances in child development and behaviour*. JAI, 2016, pp. 196–199.

²⁰ E. K. Tisdall, Children and young people’s participation. In: *Routledge international handbook of children’s rights studies*, Eds. W. Vandenhoe, E. Desmet, D. Reynaert, S. Lembrechts 2015, p. 185.

²¹ A. Ausgsberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, Best practices for youth engagement in municipal government. *National Civic Review*, 2017, 106 (1), p. 16; T. Nir, L. Perry-Hazan, The framed right to participate in municipal youth councils and its educational impact. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69, p. 176.

government decision-making processes, local community governance or get support for their own initiatives²². Youth councils' interactions with local government institutions are based on formal relations and the process is structured²³. Youth council members are often understood as experts on youth issues and policies²⁴. The expertise is concentrated on national umbrella organisations which support national networks and coordinate actions²⁵. On the other hand, youth councils closely cooperate with other bodies (school councils, youth NGOs, community organisations etc.)²⁶.

Considering the municipal youth councils' members, it could be noticed that the participation is valuable for them. Some studies reveal that youth councils' members have benefits in the form of civic and political socialisation²⁷ as well as personal skills and career development (valued as "something to put in the CV").

Municipal youth centres. Beside youth councils (and similar organisations like youth commissions, advisory boards, etc.) there are numerous organisational platforms for youth civic participation and youth socialisation. These organisations are affiliated with municipalities through financial and administrative assistance or owned and controlled by them. Some political sociologists refer to these organisations as civil society organisations following the social capital theory approach²⁸.

The main features of the organisation variety are formal or informal memberships (voluntary basis), voluntarism and activities oriented to civic socialisation. These organisations are working outside the schools. Most of the organisations develop youth's civic skills, while others provide youth services²⁹. Young people are building trust with community and social networks in these organisations. It is important to notice that some of the skills mentioned above are relevant for youth political partic-

²² D. Horgan, Consultations with children and young people and their impact on policy in Ireland, 2017, pp. 106–107.

²³ M. E. Collins, A. Augsberger, W. Gecker, Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65, pp. 145–147.

²⁴ J. K. Taft, H. R. Gordon, Youth activists, youth councils, and constrained democracy. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2013, 8(1), p. 91.

²⁵ D. F. Cushing, W. Van-Vliet, Children's right to the city: the emergence of youth councils in the United States. *Children's Geographies*, 2017, 15(3), pp. 10–11.

²⁶ E. Flugge, U. Wenzel, *Der 8er-Rat: ein barrierefreies Beteiligungsmodell für Jugendliche*. Springer-Verlag, 2018, pp. 6–11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

²⁸ M. Baggetta, D. M. Bredenkamp, Systematic Social Observation in the Study of Civil Society Organizations. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 2019, pp. 1–2.

²⁹ D. A. McFarland, J. T. Reuben, Bowling young: How youth voluntary associations influence adult political participation. *American Sociological Review*, 2006, 71(3), pp. 402–405; E. Quintelier, Engaging adolescents in politics: The longitudinal effect of political socialization agents. *Youth & Society*, 2015, 47(1), p. 54.

ipation. The organisations often serve youth as “schools of local democracy”. Empirical studies done in the European context prove that adolescent associational membership correlates with a higher level of political engagement in adulthood³⁰. But there is a new tendency: a longitudinal study conducted by Gema G. Albacete reveals that institutional socialisation (in the form of volunteering or NGO membership) is less effective with respect to the political participation of the 21st century’s young generation compared with the generation of their parents. On the other hand, it depends on country-specific political context and socialisation systems³¹.

Limiting factors to political participation through youth councils and youth centres. Several case studies focused on the limiting factors for youth political participation in municipality affairs through local youth councils³². According to the research, the main political barriers to participation are due to the weak ties between adult-led institutions and youth councils (i.e to the imbalance of power)³³, conformist nature of relations (“playing by the rules of the game” defined by adults)³⁴, under-representation of some youth groups (according to neighbourhoods, gender, social status)³⁵, council members’ limited knowledge of public policy by³⁶ or insufficient support for young people³⁷. A study by Tal Nir and Lotem Perry-Hazan reveals that youth council activities are confined due to framed shar-

³⁰ T. Van Der Meer, E. Van Ingen, Schools of democracy? Disentangling the relationship between civic participation and political action in 17 European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 2009, 48.2, pp. 301–302; H. Nieuwelink, G. Femke, P. Dekker, G.tem Dam, Adolescents’ experiences with democracy and collective decision-making in everyday life. Political engagement of the young in Europe. *Youth in the crucible*, 2016, pp. 174–198; G. G. Albacete, *Young people’s political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?* Springer, 2014, pp. 162–165.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 222.

³² M. E. Collins, A. Augsberber, W. Gecker, Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65, pp. 140–147; E. Sant, I. Davies, Promoting participation at a time of social and political turmoil: what is the impact of children’s and young people’s city councils? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 2018, 48(3), pp. 371–387.

³³ A. Augsberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, Best practices for youth engagement in municipal government. *National Civic Review*, 2017, 106(1), pp. 7–8; K. M. Faulkner, Presentation and representation: Youth participation in ongoing public decision-making projects. *Childhood*, 2009, 16(1), pp. 89–104.

³⁴ J. Adu-Gyamfi, Can children and young people be empowered in participatory initiatives?: Perspectives from young people’s participation in policy formulation and implementation in Ghana. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2013, (35.10), pp. 1766–1772.

³⁵ H. Matthews, M. Limb, Another white elephant? Youth councils as democratic structures. *Space and Polity*, 2003, 7.2, p. 190.

³⁶ K. Richards-Schuster, B. Checkoway, Youth participation in public policy at the local level: New lessons from Michigan municipalities. 2009, p. 30; E. H. Tonkens, D. Feringa, How the participation style in local youth councils contributes to the civic engagement of young people. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 2017, 26, p. 55.

³⁷ A. Ausberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, Best practices for youth engagement in municipal government. *National Civic Review*, 2017, 106.1, p. 19

ing of decision-making power. The youth participation scope models are determined by adults working in municipalities³⁸. The study findings prove that youth councils are operative, but not effective enough in promoting youth interests³⁹.

The studies focused on school councils' limiting factors did not cover cultural and context variables. This was due to two reasons. Firstly, the young people political participation was based mainly on the case analysis. Secondly, researchers devoted less attention to cultural (national culture, participative traditions and organisational cultures) and municipal (regulatory frameworks and institutional structures, models, characteristic, etc.) context. These limitations could be reduced by comparative research.

6.3. Findings

Substantial differences in the organisation, processes and activities of the youth centres and councils have been analysed. The collected data were analysed according to three limiting political participation and engagement frameworks: 1. level of involvement with government in decision making processes; 2. organisational and operational barriers to youth involvement in politics; 3. limitations to youth political and civic development.

Table 6.2. Key frames and themes

Key Themes	Sub-Theme
The barriers to youth involvement in public policy formation	Connection and communication. Organisational structure of youth forums for political and civic engagement. Direct institutional connections. Youth influence during decision making on youth municipal policies and other affairs. Support from politicians and municipal administrators to youth. Listening to the involved young people, consultations with youth organisations.
Limitations to youth political and civic development	Role of adults in activities. Procedures in activities, learning and sharing. Skill development. Role of municipality.
Level of involvement with government in decision making processes	The field of involvement for young people. Activities: engagement of young people in the local political decision-making process. Stakeholder perceptions regarding the significance and benefits of youth involvement. The youth empowerment framework used to identify five types of youth participation (Naima T. Wong, Marc A. Zimmerman and Edith A. Parker).
Development of youth-friendly tools for participation	Development of "youth-friendly" and "accessible" tools for participation. Instruments that recognise young peoples' participation and sustain their involvement in local governance processes. Online tools for youth political engagements. Better consultation and platforms for interaction with organisations.

³⁸ T. Nir, L. Perry-Hazan, The framed right to participate in municipal youth councils and its educational impact. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69, pp. 180–183.

³⁹ M. E. Collins, A. Augsberer, W. Gecker, Identifying Practice Components of Youth Councils: Contributions of Theory. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 2018, 35(6), pp. 607–608.

The organisational and operational barriers to youth involvement in politics

Representation of youth groups. Focus group participants were asked to reflect on the main barriers to political engagement and participation. Upon reflection, the participants mentioned that local decision making is a very complex process (*Focus group, Elblag 1*). It was also mentioned that there are organisational limitations concerning the representation of all youth groups. For instance, Telšiai municipal council for youth affairs is made up of representatives delegated by youth organisations (4 members), NGOs (2) and members of municipality institutions (council, administration and controlled public service centres)⁴⁰. The qualitative data analysis demonstrated that some young groups are misrepresented (*Focus group, Elblag 1, Individual interview 12*). However, as pointed out by one participant, this limitation by council structure is not essential and becomes important when financial support is distributed to youth organisation-initiated projects. It is also necessary to point out the static, inflexible and inertial nature of institutions⁴¹. With this kind of institution, it is difficult to share the power between the municipality and youth, because the power is municipality-centred and linked to Telšiai municipal council for youth affairs.

Organisational structure of youth forums for political and civic engagement

The participants of the focus group discussed the need to give the voice all young people in decision making through the best organisation. The participants and youth workers from two Swedish municipalities discussed the importance of youth engagement by different methods. The following quotes from youth workers exemplify the findings:

(1 participant) *In Vimerby they ask questions to politicians and the politicians come to us with questions too. The politicians say 'we want to do this or this in our municipality'. Then they put questions to the youth council and ask 'What do you think about the*

⁴⁰ This structure of all municipal youth councils is determined by state regulation. The municipal youth councils have to coordinate national youth policy implementation at local level and consult central institutions on any issues. The regulation also provides recommendations for cooperation between policy actors and youth engagement. The implementation of the national youth policy at local level and consultations with central institutions on any issues have to be coordinated by the municipal youth councils. (*Order of the Minister for Social Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania*, 2009-01-17, No. 6-201; Dėl Savivaldybių jaunimo reikalų tarybų pavyzdinių nuostatų patvirtinimo; Telšiai, 2011-03-24. No T1-124; *Telšių rajono savivaldybės jaunimo reikalų tarybos nuostatai*).

⁴¹ A. Dilyte, R. Lazutka, Jaunimo dalyvavimas politikoje: Lietuvos atvejis. Socialinė teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika, 2017, 14, p. 90; 97; Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania. *Quality improvement in municipal councils for youth affairs*, 2016, pp. 3–7.

plans? We want to hear your opinion about the plan'. So, we sit with them in the youth council and discuss different things.

(II participant, Hässleholm) We [youth centre] have a reference group with different politicians. If we have any questions, then we bring those to them. We already have them in a co-group. Sometimes we go to other politicians who are from different departments. We also have open hearings. So, the politicians can ask youth about different issues. For example, they ask what we think about the special decisions they have planned in the municipality. And it is possible to discuss and let them understand everything. And if you talk or if you want to build the group to talk with politicians it will be very understandable. [...] It is necessary to initiate an engagement collective action. (Focus group, Elbląg 1).

The youth engagement processes are based on the need and interest of Swedish municipality to hear the youth voices about public issues. The empirical data reveals that they have several forms, i.e. consultations with the responsible local conciliators (contact persons) and administrators, meetings for a review of the spatial planning proposals and of other policies. The municipality attempts to keep the organisations open, responsive and reactive. During the interviews it was stressed several times that local political and administrative actors listen more to youth needs and interests than to empty talk (*Focus group; Køge 1; Individual interview 13*).

On the other hand, consultations with youth are situational and organised in relation to the purpose of the municipality or the youth. The participants of the interview explained that the main engagement area is related to spatial planning, but other issues relevant to youth or the entire community could be included.

The collective representation of young people is the main feature of youth participation in Swedish municipalities. The participants of the interview have explained that the youth council does not have exclusive rights of youth representation. Youth centres, school-based groups and innovative youth groups can engage in the decision making of the local government. The manager of the youth centre explained the aims of the national policy and their local implementation.

In Sweden, it is a very, very important question to engage everyone. [...] We want to create equality in the society. This is what we are really good at in Sweden – to engage everyone, even those young people who are afraid to go to protest on the street, to go and talk on social media or choose other way.

Two-way approaches of the youth and municipality connections are revealed by the interview data. Generally the top-down approach is taken, but it is also combined with a voluntary bottom-up approach under the guidance of youth workers. The youth workers play the role of gatekeepers, working closely with youth in the decision-making process.

This way the multi-structured engagement process responds to the needs of youth (it is designed in relation to the purpose or problem situations) and municipality (it satisfies the need to consult the youth). The youth play the role of ambassadors in the decision making of the local government. On the other hand, the youth preferences for engagement are dominated by youth social activities (social concerts, festivals, discussions etc.).

Youth political socialisation as democratic fostering is less important in local councils or youth centres (*Focus group, Køge 1*). Young people's engagement in consultations with municipality is not narrowly understood as the training of future politicians. It is also not focused only on knowledge, skills and personal competence development or training. In comparison, in several interviews it was pointed out that some Polish and Lithuanian youth council members are too much focused on preparation "for future careers and personal CVs" (*Focus group; Køge 2; Individual interview 11*).

The empirical data reveals that *Køge* municipalities fall in the same pattern of youth civic engagement as their Swedish counterparts analysed. As interviews data reveal, the *Køge* municipality has a strong focus on youth political participation (*Focus group, Køge 1*). It is not only based on local youth-centred policies, but also on central government policies (citizenship education, national policy of integration) and political culture (*Individual interview 11; Individual interview 16*). The municipal youth councils are supposed to engage in democracy and move for vote in elections. A similar role is played by open youth centres, school councils and a wide range of NGOs working in municipalities. They are focused on youth engagement through volunteering or cultural and sport activities. Therefore, it is understandable that young Danes can acquire knowledge and civic skills through the participation in voluntary works. The interview participants observed that although very structured, youth participation is also very well-organized. Youth organisations for civic and political engagement are adult-facilitated. The youth are engaged in decision-making with the care of adults. Adults, however, maintain the final say regarding the activities of youth organisations.

Reflecting on what my colleague John has said, politicians don't know what youth want, and the youth don't know what politicians want. And I think it is difficult to sort this problem. I think it is difficult for the community. [...] In many places there are politicians who say that they want to have a youth council, because it is their way or their policy. So, they do not neglect this. But later they ask about the best ways to work on this in most constructive way then. What I think is the most interesting that it works in many places. Of course, knowing, that the best initiatives are working from the bottom. But when they come from the top? Yes, top-down process. (Focus group; Køge 1).

As the quote illustrates, the challenging problem is the organisation of youth council as the central organisation in Danish municipalities. The participants suggested that municipalities tend to focus on top-down structured youth engagement rather than prioritising youth-led initiatives. It was noted that systemic limitations within existing process were not inherited. The open youth centre in *Køge* and youth council-initiated activities have more sense of ownership in civic and political engagement (*Individual interview 16*).

On the other hand, as pointed out by the participants of the interview, youth-led projects of civic engagement with minimal control by adults have been started by young people in one of the Danish municipalities (Aarhus). Such youth-run actions left a good impression on *Køge's* youth after they had visited the Aarhus youth centre. The youth and youth workers had discussions about the importance of youth leadership, responsibilities and challenges. Later, some autonomy in organising leisure events and cultural activities was given by the youth centre volunteers (*Focus group; Køge 1*).

Young people's engagement in decision making in cooperation with Polish municipalities has a variety of institutionalised forms (municipal or communal youth councils, student organisations, school councils, open youth centres, etc.) according to research data. Municipal or communal youth councils are the main legitimate institutions in formal consultations with the government (*Focus group, Elbląg 1*). They mainly focus on youth issues like education, sport, culture, local community services, etc. The Polish youth councils are a successful form for formal consultations between young people and local government in the municipalities analysed. The participants could not point out any essential gaps in the process of youth engagement. However, as mentioned in the interview data, there are a lot of barriers, in particular due to limitations in activities between the politicians and the youth working in councils.

Firstly, the needs of municipal governments are not always aligned with the needs of youth. The politicians are focused on the engagement in volunteering initiatives and therefore they even employ youth councils as human resources. The criticism was based on the idea that youth councils have to be embedded in the municipal policy-making process. However, political engagement in policy decision making through youth councils is over formalised and perfunctory.

Another argument raised in the interviews was based on youth's motivation to engage and the attractiveness of forms and processes. The focus group participants expressed their concern in similar narratives:

The municipalities could not often involve youth. The local governments need young people's help. They need their volunteering work and their participation in local activities. But they are not motivated to involve youth in decision making. That is not inter-

esting for them. [...] Another problem is that municipalities cannot create forms of continuous youth involvement. Youth starts and drops it later, without getting support (Focus group, Elbląg 1).

Even in the commune of Dzierzgoń, this youth council has been operating for 20 years. This youth council does not attract young people either. We can see that only 6 young people come to these council meetings. Some members stopped coming. And for us [representing the city government], it is also important how the youth is represented. [...] (Individual interview 6).

The research data reveals that Polish youth councils have not completely solved the problem generally understood as the “crisis” of youth disengagement from Polish politics. The structures of formal youth engagement in decision making fail to motivate young people. The participants of the focus group discussed the possible solutions to make youth political participation more attractive. Some of them argued that it is necessary to make people more responsible by engagement through the bottom-up approach. The interview participants stressed the need for bottom-up approach for consultations between youth councils and municipalities. One participant put it this way:

From my point of view, it is necessary to make young people more responsible and to strengthen their motivation in this way. The more responsibility for young people, the more they will be involved. So that they can feel the power. Their power to do something. They can change something. They can bring new ideas. They can be happy by doing something (Focus group, Elbląg 1).

The possibilities of shifting youth councils’ work from formal consultations to youth-introduced social actions or even some activism was also discussed by other stakeholders. They pointed out that for youth it is interesting not only to advise and monitor legislative or administrative processes, but also to have real power in improving community or youth group’s life.

The youth workers and politicians put forward ideas of more open, inclusive organisations that can attract more young people and be more relevant to their needs and expectations. The open centre idea was discussed in interviews. The Polish participants mentioned that they have open or youth cultural centres in bigger city municipalities, but they are not always operative as platforms for political and civic engagement. One mayor reflected on the vision of youth engagement through a new type organisation as follows:

This youth centre must have an offer that will meet the expectations of these young people. And only with active involvement of young people can we create such an offer. They must talk about their dreams and needs, and we must talk to them. Now we have to reach differently and we have to create an offer differently. A house of culture, even if it creates certain things, it is not always what they expect. (Individual interview 6).

The open centre was discussed as an additional form of civic engagement. The participants did not question the importance of political engagement through youth councils, but stressed the importance of initiatives aimed at encouraging broader involvement. The importance of collective identities with the issues important for youth was discussed by the youth workers. The organisation of youth centres was linked to more attractive activities (wider discussion events). Based on this logic, the activities and organisation can correspond to youth identities. Also, some cultural or social activities could later lead to civic actions. One participant from the focus group interview discussed the importance of the setting for the operation of youth councils.

The youth councils of Dzierzgoń have their meeting place in the municipality building. This setting has a specific influence on their behaviour when the session starts. The children are not behaving naturally. To tell the truth, they are not very active. They are concentrating on the planned agenda, rules, but without being active and open-minded. But we are creating such places in the counties [the second-level unit of local government]. The youth are more open there and feel free. They are also more natural, spontaneous if we talk about youth visions, policy proposals. Maybe they have them in mind while sitting in more formal places, but it is difficult for all of them to express themselves. They do not feel free. I think the place is very important.

In this narrative, the open and youth-friendly structures were understood as one factor that could lead to success. The issue was based on the participant's own experience as a youth care giver for the youth council. A further issue with the place for participation was related to a relevant emotional environment of the youth.

6.4. The communication between youth and politico-administrative actors

The interview data reveals some communicative barriers to youth political and civic engagement, which are based on the inflexible nature of formal processes and the lack of knowledge about public policies and bureaucratic language used in municipalities. These concerns were brought up by the participants of Polish and Lithuanian interviews. The Scandinavian counterparts pointed out that municipalities use a plain language and youth-friendly tools in consultations with youth conciliators. In Swedish and Danish municipalities, the agendas for consultations are relevant to youth needs or expectations. Therefore, there are only some minimal gaps in communication, which are closed by introducing tools that are more appropriate for young people and based on electronic communication.

I participant. We are working on the application in order to help young people to connect with politicians through us. They could ask us questions about the municipality and we could answer them. As we have just stated, we are currently making progress. There are a lot of municipalities around Sweden which are using this application. [...]

You can have this app on the phone and use it to find information in a lot of municipalities or ask the questions. It is very important for youth to be able to do it very simply. Furthermore, politicians ask questions too. If you have an idea, you can bring it up and share it through the app. It is this platform and social media that connect youth with the politicians. However, we have heard that it is sometimes not working properly and that it is working only in some municipalities [...] (Focus group; Køge 1).

This interview episode reveals that youth virtual involvement is popular in Swedish municipalities. As the focus group participant explained, most of the municipalities are using online participatory tools for city planning in order to involve citizens. The special government engagement applications have been specially developed and introduced to youth groups. Online participatory tools were first introduced by the Hässleholm municipality. However, the interview participants were cautiously optimistic about the possible effects. It has been discussed that innovative practices and working with the youth and children are sometimes more important than formal tools and procedures.

The persistent barrier to youth political engagement is related to the miscommunication between youth and adult leaders. Interview participants criticised the existing forms of consultations, arguing that they should be made more youth-friendly (Telšiai, Elbląg cases). It was noticed that consultations between the youth and the politicians do not work as intended. As one of the participants concluded: *Well, this can be one of such communication barriers. Young people do not know about all the decisions that should be taken. Also, maybe not all of these decisions concern them. They are concerned with the youth issues that are directly related to them: communication, improper communication, lack of knowledge on given topics, and, above all, commitment (Individual interview 8).*

The quote above explains that young people are interested in decisions relevant to local youth issues. It has been discussed that youth do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of legislative procedures, administrative or legal terms and the content of municipal policies. On the other hand, communication issues are not an impassable barrier in youth political engagement process. One research interview participant shared his experience:

Difficult language of the documents might be the barrier. More... I do not know. We have an example of an active youth council where young people can really do a lot if they want to. Now we have an example of a young girl from the youth council at a city council session, so I think it worked very well. She said what she wanted to say, the councillors and politicians heard her too (Focus group, Elbląg 1).

This reflects a relatively optimistic view of how the barrier of the bureaucratic language could be overcome and how communication can function as intended. The participants also saw difficulties in the bureaucratic communicative style and supervisory cultures. As one of the participants has explained:

Last year, there was a regional youth conference in Mažeikiai [Lithuanian town]. Me and the students have been invited to a discussion on youth policy issues. But the event was prepared ineffectively. [...] It was not an adequate program and the issues selected were not suitable. [...] It is necessary to prepare such events by inviting local politicians, public administrators who can communicate adequately and properly. [...] You see, our students could not understand the technical speeches and part of activities. The language of the communication was not relevant for young people, so they left the event after the break. They feel, ..., such kind of events are too bureaucratic and "empty". (Individual interview 8)

Another problematic fact is that youth are involved through ‘projects’ and ‘activities’ rather than integrated into a common practice. This can illustrate the lack of communication related to political and administrative processes. It is important to point out issues not only in bureaucratic language and procedures. It is also about conceptions and understanding when youth views collide with political and policy approaches. The participants of the interview noted that if any imitation or manipulation in the consultation starts, the young people feel that they are being formally involved in decision making, but are not given any opportunities for influence. During individual interviews it was mentioned that the passive presence or tokenism are a well-known phenomenon in some Polish and Lithuanian municipalities (Individual interview 10; Individual interview 9).

The participants emphasised the need to make communication more youth-friendly. It was pointed out that changing the participatory processes is important for most of the municipalities (*Focus group; Køge 1; Individual interview 7, Focus group, Elbląg 1*). The interview participants indicated that the adult facilitators (youth programme coordinators or youth workers) are the essential actors for the engagement of youth in political and municipal policy decision making processes. The adult facilitators plan and organise meetings between the youth and the politicians. This includes setting the agenda with the focus on issues relevant to young people (e.g. cultural and sport activities, youth centre issues) (*Focus group, Køge 1; Focus group, Elbląg 1*). The participants concluded that issue-based (or municipal policy-based) engagement is becoming more relevant to youth interests than traditional politics. One participant from the focus group highlighted the fact that some young people tend to refuse formal engagement through local councils, political parties and tend to accept civic engagement through social, environmentalism or volunteering (*Focus group, Elbląg 1*).

The participants of the qualitative research suggested some solutions how to fulfil the gaps in the communication between adults and youth. They emphasized the importance of organisational and personal values and principles (e.g. mutual respect, attentiveness, goodwill and dialogue, creativity etc.) as well as some instruments like using plain language, more systematic consultations, agenda-setting processes during meetings with youth councils, etc. Some ex-

amples of good practice projects were shared by other participants from Telšiai municipality:

There was a good practice project organised by one school teacher. What happened? Students observed municipal council members' behaviour during sessions. Especially those councillors who are more open, use expressive communicative style and often use specific jargon. And later, they had a simulation of a municipal council session and tried to copy the behaviour models of concrete politicians. At the same time, they were imitating political procedures and had discussions. That kind of activity was very popular among students. Of course, they tried to be ethical during simulations and later had discussions about the political behaviour [...]

This demonstrates that, through the projects, young people gain not only knowledge about procedures in city councils, 'rules of the political game', but also learn about political behaviour, rhetoric and styles of communication. Lastly, political education in the form of the aforementioned project was very popular among youth. The informant stressed that the project had helped to form students' understanding about acting in the local political arena. On the other hand, the project was limited to a number of active youths. This approach has an elitist mark in comparison to other projects.

In contrast, Elbląg municipality have implemented more broad-based projects for youth political education and involvement in municipal decision-making frameworks through participatory budget⁴². The participatory budgeting became the main form of engagement of young people. As one participant mentioned:

In Elbląg, we have had the civic budget for a few years. It is visible when it comes to influence what is happening in the city and around. [...] We do questionnaires on this topic in order to understand the needs of the community or a certain group. It is one of the tasks assigned to us and we will start from that. And really, a lot depends on how media will present this initiative. It also depends on social groups and their interests. The schools are often active in this initiative and give some motivation to youth groups. The school leaders encourage them by saying that: 'If you vote for it, it will maybe be possible to win the pitch, fix this or that'. And then youth become involved. Are they deeply interested in it? – It's hard to say. (Individual interview 2).

This reflection reveals that the idea of civic budget is not popular among the general public. Nevertheless, the students are mobilised by schools and teachers to participate in deciding about city expenses. This initiative provided information

⁴² In Poland, the participatory budgets are a very popular instrument for citizen involvement. In some municipalities the focus is on some targeted groups (youth, some neighbourhoods, etc.). At the beginning of 2018, the participatory budgets were formalised in national legal acts. (D. Bednarska-Olejniczak, J. Olejniczak. *Participatory budgeting in Poland—finance and marketing selected issues*. 2017, pp. 55–67; D. Bednarska-Olejniczak Public participation of Polish Millennials — Problems of public communication and involvement in municipal affairs, In: *Proceedings of the 22th International Colloquium on Regional Sciences, Brno, Czech Republic*, 31, 2018, pp. 449-456).

and educated young people about city budget expenditures, municipal policy priorities and their school needs. The youth council and their adult guardian took part in the process as coordinators with other partners.

Municipal youth councils and open youth centres in the youth engagement process

The analysis of the qualitative research data reveals that youth organisational forms are relevant to the local context. The research has revealed that youth councils and open youth centres have been established and started their activities in various ways. In many cases, youth political engagement organisations were fostered by the instruments of national youth policies (*Individual interview 12; Focus group, Elbląg 1*). Several were started within the municipality by the mayor or council members and some youth centres have been started partly on the initiative of youth themselves (*Focus group; Køge 1*).

The qualitative data demonstrates that open youth centres and youth councils continuously develop their organisations, activities or services which are provided to the youth. In the case of youth centres, this covers not only general activities or services, but also youth political or civic engagement. This includes forms of consultation with municipalities, youth representation in the government and researching appropriate issues related to youth. One focus group participant mentioned that they had even organised a protest against the closing of one of the sport facilities (*Focus group; Køge 1*).

The interview participants reflected on the challenges arising from changes in politics (mayor and council change after elections) and crises (youth leadership change due to leaving cities to study in other towns) (*Focus group, Elbląg 1, Elbląg 2; Focus group; Køge 1*).

Regardless of the differences in organisation and activities, the open youth centres and youth councils have faced similar problems. The study has identified a wide variety of activities in which open youth centres and youth councils are engaged: educational and cultural activities, community services, holding meetings, socialisation during leisure time, etc. On the other hand, some open youth centres were operating as youth service organisations with leisure, sport and cultural facilities and infrastructure. The youth councils also had youth workers or facilitators who focused on youth political development and training, which could thereby be partially associated with services as main activity (*Focus group; Køge 1; Individual interview 13*).

The research data provides evidence that most of the youth councils and open youth centres were led by adults. The relations between youth workers or facilitators were typically based on partnerships between young people and adults.

Youth workers and facilitators had fulfilled different roles and responsibilities helping youth in councils and youth centres. The interviews provide evidence that youth workers were central to engaging youth in various civic activities and consultations with municipal government (*Focus group; Køge 1; Individual interview 13*). They often organised consultation meetings and initiated civic projects and actions. According to their accounts, they had brought up topics for consultations or helped to develop project ideas. There was some variation in the sample, however, youth workers were fully engaged in most cases while working at youth centres or with youth conciliators (cases of Polish, Danish municipalities). In some cases, youth facilitators had only given informal advice or guidance to youth councils (Telšiai municipality).

The stakeholders stressed that the role of youth workers is very important for political engagement. One mayor of a small city reflected on the importance of the roles of youth workers in facilitation:

The competences of young councillors are formed by the youth guardian. The tutor provides them with advisory assistance. This way they have full support. They learn all the time. There could be some gaps, but that's why they have guardians, so they do not have to know everything about formal procedures or specific legal regulations. (Individual interview 6).

As this episode of the interview reveals, the mentoring relation is supportive and important for young people. The question is: how do the youth workers decrease youth autonomy in the political participation and engagement? The qualitative data leaves some space for interpretations.

On the one hand, the municipality and youth get benefits in the form of participatory guidance and fulfilment of gaps in the knowledge of the political and municipal policy processes. However, the youth council members could lose some autonomy taking into account the issues, influencing policy agenda, choosing participative forms, etc. This sensitive question was addressed by one interview participant, who had overseen the local youth council for many years:

It's hard to talk about my own role. I think there is an important principle and message for youngsters that young people can do something themselves by influencing political decisions. This is an attractive idea, but the results depend on individual cases. The role of the youth guardian is important and the youth need them for shaping the political decisions. I have been fulfilling this role for many years. There have been better and worse periods in my work. Sometimes, you have to not only to inspire, to encourage young people, but also to help them. It is very important during politically sensitive and inhibit periods. (Individual interview 1)

This interview episode reveals that mentoring practices are fluent, responding to the needs of young people and the political environment. The interview data demonstrates that youth workers act partly as gatekeepers and partly as supporters in

the political engagement process. Another problem is related to the age factor. In most cases, youth council members are of secondary school age (from 14 to 18, with the exception of the municipal youth council in Telšiai, where students' organisations have their representatives). Thus, young adults are misrepresented in the local youth councils. One focus group participant referred to this issue as a common problem and concern for all the municipalities. It was explained that youth political leaders (mainly youth council members and some volunteers in open youth centres) often leave small and medium-sized cities to go to university after finishing school (*Focus group; Køge 1; Elbląg 1 Individual interview 13*).

The research reveals a lot of common patterns between the youth councils and open youth centres, but there are apparent differences in their relations to municipalities and political engagement.

Municipal youth councils

As the research data suggests, political participation in the form of municipal youth councils is one of the main mechanisms for young people to engage at the local level. These institutions (having a quasi-formal status) advise, consult and cooperate with municipal councils and administrative institutions. The distinguished form of youth council is generally continuing connections with municipality or affiliated institutions (municipal agencies, services centres, etc.). As the interview with stakeholders reveals, young people's interest in government decision making processes and local community governance can be promoted and they can receive support for their own initiatives⁴³. Youth councils' interactions with local government institutions are based on a formal relationship with a structured process. (*Focus group; Køge 1, Elbląg 1*).

Youth council members are often understood as experts on youth issues and policies⁴⁴. The expertise is concentrated under the national umbrella organisations which support national networks and coordinate actions (*Focus group; Køge 1; Individual interview 22; 26*). On the other hand, youth councils closely cooperate with other bodies (school councils, youth NGOs, community organisations etc.).

The politicians, qualitative research participants, mentioned their positive experiences regarding partnership with youth councils, mostly reflecting on their main roles in the representation of youth as the target group (*Focus group, Elbląg*

⁴³ D. Horgan, *Consultations with children and young people and their impact on policy in Ireland*. 2017, pp. 106–107; V. Muniglia, M. Cuconato, P. Loncle, A. Walther, The analysis of youth participation in contemporary literature: A European perspective. In: *Youth participation in Europe: Beyond discourses, practices and realities*, eds. P. Loncle, M. Cuconato, V. Muniglia, A. Walther, The Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2012, p. 5.

⁴⁴ J. K. Taft, H. R. Gordon, Youth activists, youth councils, and constrained democracy. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2013, 8 (1), p. 91.

1; Individual interview 6, 11, 12). They also emphasised their involvement in civic projects and teaching democracy (*Focus group; Køge 1, Elbląg 1*). In some interviews, the politicians mentioned the phenomenon of tokenism in regard to local youth councils and also pointed out the problem of over-engagement by some youth workers. As one city mayor summarised:

Sometimes ideas about the issues or changes do not come from the youth. That is the truth.... (Individual interview 6).

The criticism about constrained participation and misrepresentation was related to the politicisation (the use of youth council members for political interests by ruling parties or opposition during election periods) of some youth councils (Individual interview 10, 12).

The qualitative research data provides evidence that the process of political engagement is very structured and covers established formal procedures for consultations (agenda setting for special meetings with mayors or top administrators or voicing concerns in municipal councils or committee meetings). These formal adult-led processes have many benefits and some shortcomings. Over-formalised procedures and bureaucratic style have been generally seen as the real problem:

If the meetings [with the powerful people in the local government] are official, formalistic, they are a bit pompous, but we also meet unofficially. [...] Yes, we have dealt with a lot of things in the past several years. Shall I list a few examples? For example, we had a lot of problems with suicide attempts among young people. And then the young people said that psychological services offered to young people did not satisfy their needs. The government was too cautious about providing the supportive psychological services the youth needed. And we had made a big campaign by putting pressure on the local authorities and by using different means. And it ended successfully. A full-time psychologist was recruited. This was the example when we directly influenced decisions. (Individual interview 1)

The interview participant explained how they (youth council members with the help of a youth worker) had changed formal consultations by using informal meetings and some forms of protests. It is important to notice that the young people's campaign had brought about the change of the policy decisions. This exemplifies the ultimate aim of the engagement related to the empowerment of young people.

Considering the municipal youth councils' members, it could be noticed that the participation is valuable for them. The interview reveals that youth councils' members have benefits in the form of civic and political socialisation as well as personal skills and career development (valued as "something to put in the CV", *Focus group, Elbląg 2*).

Municipal youth centres

Beside youth councils (and similar organisations like youth commissions, advisory boards, etc.) there are numerous organisational platforms for youth civic participation and youth socialisation. These organisations are affiliated with municipalities through financial and administrative assistance or owned and controlled by them. Some political sociologists name these organisations as civil society organisations following social capital theory approach⁴⁵.

As the interview reveals, most of the municipalities have open centres as platforms (*Focus group; Køge 1, Elblåg 1*). The main features of the organisational variety are formal or informal memberships (voluntary basis), voluntarism and activities oriented to civic socialisation. These organisations operate outside the schools. Most of the open youth centres work on the development of civic skills, but some of them provide services to youth. The youth are building trust with community and social networks in these organisations. It is important to notice that some of the skills developed in the centres are relevant for youth political participation (*Focus group; Køge 1, Elblåg 1*). Thus, it is possible to claim that these organisations often serve youth as “schools of local democracy and civic engagement”. On the other hand, these centres more often function as places for youth leisure activities.

Empirical studies done in European context prove that adolescent associational membership correlates with a higher level of political engagement in adulthood⁴⁶. But there is a new tendency: a longitudinal study conducted by Gema G. Albacete reveals that institutional socialisation (in the form of volunteering or NGO membership) is less effective in terms of the political participations of the 21st century young generation compared with the generation of their parents. On the other hand, it depends on country-specific political context and socialisation systems⁴⁷.

Getting back to the qualitative research data, it is possible to note some criticism in regard to such centres:

We do know a lot about the youth centre. [...] I know that they teach how to play the guitar. I know that you can play table tennis there. Actually, only a small group of peo-

⁴⁵ M. Baggetta, D. M. Bredenkamp, Systematic Social Observation in the Study of Civil Society Organizations. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 2019, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁶ T. Van Der Meer, E. J. Van Ingen, Schools of democracy? Disentangling the relationship between civic participation and political action in 17 European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 2009, 48(2), pp. 301–302; H. Nieuwelik, G. Femke, P. Dekker, G. Ten Dam, Adolescents’ experiences with democracy and collective decision-making in everyday life. Political engagement of the young in Europe. *Youth in the crucible*, 2016, pp. 174–198; G. G. Albacete, *Young people’s political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?*. Springer, 2014, pp. 162–165.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 222.

ple are engaged in their activities. [...] It would be good if it was a kind of open space for young people. It would be nice to have a space for playing table tennis, billiard or having a coffee for a cheap price. [...] (participant 1) I have reservations about it. I guess there would be many volunteers going to this centre if it was open for all. On the other hand, it would be necessary to have a lot of marketing, special invitations, attractive activities. I guess it would be popular among proactive youth. (Focus group, Elbląg 2)

The criticism of the overemphasis on targeted youth services is evident in this interview episode. The interview participant also brought up important points about the conflicting youth identities in social spaces. Social context factors (youth culture, life styles, social status, disability etc.) are important determinants for group identity within the space of socialisation. According to sociological research, young people with different social identities face individual challenges and sometimes they need a socialisation process that supports youth⁴⁸.

Another interview participant was less critical about the activities of that open youth centre. He pointed out the great need for services to socially sensitive target groups. It was also mentioned that the centre in question is not literally open to all youth as it could be mistakenly understood (*Individual interview 10*). At the same time, arguments about the choice and the accessibility for the youth with special needs, as well as the high quality of services provided by youth workers were addressed.

The group interview participants discussed the problem of ‘openness’ of such centres. Some of them (mainly from Poland and Lithuania) argued that this is the proper approach in the light of youth policies and support provided by the local or the national government. One participant mentioned several aspects of such centres:

These centres have a specific social nature. They are minimising the risk of exclusion. Actually, the idea is that some youth groups could be socially and culturally included and they would follow the direction adults want. It happens that these centres restrict the participation of other youth groups. They are narrowly focused on leisure activities for socially excluded people. I think that it is a good approach (Focus group, Elbląg 1).

The participants of the Danish and Swedish group interviews provided different arguments. They mentioned the acceptance of open spaces (special facilities, etc.) as well as the value of relationships with youth workers, special youth services, cultural, sport and unstructured leisure-time activities etc. (*Focus group; Køge 1, Elbląg 1*). The interview participants also stressed the importance of the enhanced

⁴⁸ J. Abbott-Chapman, M. Robertson, Youth leisure, places, spaces and identity. In: *Landscapes of leisure*, eds. S. Gammon, S. Elkington, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. pp. 123–134; M. Robertson, A. Kent, T. Kaivola, L. Lee, Leisure geographies of young people: cross-cultural perspectives. In: *Regional Conference of the International Geographical Union and Commission on Geographical Education Proceedings*. 2002, pp. 1–6.

involvement, work with youth according to equality principles and the creation of supportive relationships.

In Sweden, it is more important to engage everyone. It is a very, very important question. We also work a lot to ensure the equality of rights of women and men and to make members of the society equal. This is what we are beginning to realise as the goal and are very good at it in Sweden (Individual interview 13).

The participants from Denmark and Sweden discussed alcohol policies in youth centres. The respondents from Sweden emphasised that they are focused on health-promoting settings and have no-alcohol rules for young people in their centre. On the other hand, one youth worker from Denmark noted, that young people aged 18 or older (the legal age for alcohol consumption in Denmark) can buy beer (with strict verification of age) in a coffee bar operating in the local youth centre. It was observed in the interview that such decisions depend on the different aims of national or institutional policies focused on changing youth behaviour patterns. In youth centres affiliated to Swedish municipalities, adults intend to minimise risk-taking youth behaviour and create a healthy environment. Meanwhile, in Danish municipal youth centres, youth workers aim to include a broader range of local youth groups and even this would require acceptance of potentially harmful risk-taking behaviour. It was stressed in the interview that alcohol consumption is controlled and youth presence is supervised by adult youth workers.

The role of engagement in culture or civic-political culture was also discussed in the focus group. All the participants agreed that their municipalities have diverse repertoires of young people engagement with different institutional models, political and civic socialisation systems and identities. The participants also agreed that it is difficult to find common patterns in political youth engagement (Focus group, Køge 1; Focus group, Elbląg 1). On the other hand, it was agreed that youth participation is strongly influenced by the political engagement culture of a particular country. The participants from Denmark and Sweden found some similarities between civic and political education and the forms of policies provided by municipalities (Focus group; Køge 1). However, in regard to youth engagement practices in Polish and Lithuanian municipalities, they noticed that the cultural patterns were very different from Scandinavian ones (Focus group, Køge 1).

The qualitative research data indicates that the youth engaged in civic activities have very busy lives. The interview participants pointed out that for some young people it is difficult to reconcile the participation in youth councils or in youth centres with the school and other extra-curricular activities (Individual interview 7). Young leaders find it difficult to accommodate the activities in the Køge city youth council, schools' student councils and sport training or cultural events.

Because there are so many things on offer in Køge. The youth have young political parties, sports clubs and lots and lots of things. So, what youth council can have on top of that? (Focus group; Køge 1).

During the interviews, it was stressed that the high level of youth political and civic engagement is the result of the Danish Youth Policy (Individual interview 7). The Danish government, municipalities and affiliated organisations promote political participation, engagement and civic education. Youth engagement in organisations was mentioned by research participants as a critical factor for strengthening local democracy. It was pointed out that youth's active engagement in organisations leads to a higher participation in local elections.

6.5. Discussion and conclusion

According to the series of studies, the political participation and engagement of young Europeans takes different forms and approaches⁴⁹. Another tendency is that young people participate less in elections or other traditional forms (membership in parties) and are more engaged in public policy (structured participation through institutional channels) or public activism⁵⁰. At the same time, other young people are disengaged from local politics or even apathetic. This study has explored approaches to youth participation by finding the main barriers, incentives and driving factors for the youth structured engagement at the municipal level in four countries.

The main barriers to youth political engagement. During this study a wide range of barriers to youth political engagement and activities in which youth councils are engaged have been identified. Firstly, the study participants reported a broad spectrum of approaches to youth involvement in the municipal government. They varied between the countries and municipalities. The Danish and Swedish municipalities used broad-based and diversified approaches in the communication and consultations with youth (including municipal youth council members or leaders of open youth centres). Generally, the top-down approach is taken, but it is also combined with a voluntary bottom-up approach under the guidance of youth workers, so that the multi-structured engagement process responds to the needs of youth and municipality (satisfies the interest to consult the youth). In Sweden and Denmark, the youth play the role of ambassadors in the decision making of the local government. These practices are consistent with the youth-centric approach. Some Polish and Lithuanian municipal governments chose to cooperate with the youth

⁴⁹ G. G. Albacete, *Young people's political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?* Springer, 2014; J. Sloam, Diversity and voice: The political participation of young people in the European Union. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2016, 18.3: 521–537.

⁵⁰ R. Soler-i-Martí, M. Ferrer-Fons, Youth participation in context: the impact of youth transition regimes on political action strategies in Europe. *The Sociological Review*, 2015, (63), pp. 92–117; M. Kitanova, Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2019, pp. 1–18.

councils and other organisations based on ‘a formal framework’. In the present study, it has been concluded that this approach is not always responsive and attractive for the youth engaged in political processes. The interview participants emphasised the need for the bottom-up approach to the consultations between youth councils and municipalities. These practices are consistent with the adult-centric approach. It is also important to stress that the local context has significantly influenced the relationships between municipal institutions and organised youth. According to Mary Elizabeth Collins, this model is “heavily state-centred” [...], presumes the neutrality of the state, and believes that diverse interests – including those of youth – are sufficiently represented in the democratic process⁵¹. The studies of the youth structured engagement in municipalities demonstrates that this model is viewed with distrust and criticism by some youth⁵².

The findings of this research related to the barriers to youth engagement are relevant to other researches. Firstly, there are gaps in the youth– adult (stakeholders – youth conciliators) partnership⁵³. The current study demonstrated a similar criticism towards structured (formal, institutionalised) political engagement processes (in Polish, Lithuanian and Danish municipalities). On the other hand, the analysis reveals supportive attitudes grounded on experience and strong arguments. Anna-Britt Coe’s concept of youth political actions as consisting of multiple processes makes it possible to circumvent the dichotomy of structured vs unstructured participation⁵⁴. As the present research reveals, young people construct political or civic actions by taking other participatory forms (protests on the street, complaints to the relevant authorities, etc.).

The interview data analysis reveals that youth political and civic engagement encounters some communicative barriers which are based on the inflexible nature of formal processes (Lithuanian and Polish municipalities) and the lack of knowledge about public policies and bureaucratic language used in municipalities. In Swedish and Danish municipalities, the agendas for consultations are relevant to youth needs or expectations. Therefore, there are only some minimal gaps in the communication and they are closed by introducing tools which are more appropri-

⁵¹ M. E. Collins, A. Augsberger, W. Gecker, Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65, pp. 140–147.

⁵² J. K. Taft, H. R. Gordon, Youth activists, youth councils, and constrained democracy. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2013, 8(1), pp. 87–100; M. Ronnlund, Justice in and through education? Students’ participation in decision-making. *JSSE-Journal of Social Science Education*, 2014, pp. 3–5.

⁵³ T. Nir, L. Perry-Hazan, The framed right to participate in municipal youth councils and its educational impact. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69: 174–183; A. B. Coe, M. Wiklund, M. Uttjek, L. Nygren, Youth politics as multiple processes: How teenagers construct political action in Sweden. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2016, 19(10), pp. 1321–1337.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

ate for young people and are based on electronic communication. These findings are relevant to the extensive research into youth – adults partnering difficulties. The involvement (and power of influence) of youth councils in the policy formation is limited by the paperwork and formal procedures⁵⁵. The failure to understand regulations and procedures gives rise to the disillusionment in local politics and a sense of marginalisation as a group⁵⁶.

The broad academic research and the present study reveals that some communicative gaps in youth – adult political relationships can be filled by changing culture (from adult-centric, formalistic values, organisational climate, communication styles to youth-centric based on democratic values, plain language, etc.) and development projects (youth-friendly citizen development programs, teaching participatory budgeting, role playing teaching seminars about ‘rules of the political game’). Some Polish and Danish youth workers have facilitated local youth councils’ members by using different effective and youth-friendly models (special guidance forms, special ‘spaces’ for participation) for interactions with municipal politicians and public administrators. The stakeholders expressed their concern about the impact of youth voice on the municipal government decisions. They argued that structured political participation provides youth with an opportunity to be heard, but without the empowerment.

The most effective forms of youth engagement. Most of the research on youth engagement organisations (youth councils or civic engagement organisations) are case studies or limited regional studies⁵⁷. This study, encompassing a number of councils and open youth centres within four countries, expands the empirical literature. Furthermore it compares a number of youth organisations affiliated with municipalities, discussing a variety of youth political engagement practises and problems related to them. The analysis revealed that youth engagement organisations operated in very different local frameworks with a specific institutional/organisational, political and cultural environment. These environments were not always friendly for youth engagement and development. It has also been demonstrated that all the organisations for youth political and civic engagement

⁵⁵ A. Booker, Contingent authority and youth influence: When youth councils can wield influence in public institutions. *Revista de Investigación Educativa*, 2017, 35(2), pp. 537–562; J. Havlicek, Ch. Lin, M. T. Braun, Cultivating youth voice through participation in a Foster youth advisory board: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69, pp. 1–10.

⁵⁶ H. Matthews, M. Limb, Another white elephant? Youth councils as democratic structures. *Space and Polity*, 2003, 7(2), pp. 173–192; B. Percy-Smith, Councils, consultations and community: Re-thinking the spaces for children and young people’s participation. *Children’s Geographies*, 2010, 8(2), pp. 107–122.

⁵⁷ A. Augsburg, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, Engaging Youth in Municipal Government: Moving Toward a Youth-Centric Practice. *Journal of Community Practice*, 2018, 26(1), pp. 41–62; M. E. Collins, A. Augsburg, W. Gecker, Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65, pp. 140–147.

are adult-led. The local context and national cultural, educational patterns essentially influenced the activities, organisations and status of the councils. In this study, it is argued that there is a need to deepen the conceptual understanding and obtain more empirical data concerning the forms of political participation in different countries at local level. Future studies should try to clarify why the national and local variations exist. This study offers only a basis for more detailed research on the participatory processes at local level (see⁵⁸). It could be argued that municipalities should take the youth-centric approach for working with youth (see⁵⁹). In this regard, it is necessary to create or strengthen the collaborative climate, establish a welcoming friendly environment, simplify bureaucratic procedures and use plain language for communication.

Study limitations

The study limitations are related to the research object and the comparative methodological approach. The comparison of organisations in different countries could be understood as both a strength and a big limitation of this study. Firstly, researchers were invited to participate in qualitative research by representing their municipalities and countries. However, this does not mean that the research data collected fully represents all the youth participatory practises and problems. In addition, the results of the research concerning a comparison of two different types of organisations i.e. municipal youth councils and open youth centres should be analysed cautiously. In the beginning, it was conceptualised that different youth organisations affiliated with a municipality can be perceived as a framework (institutional form) for youth political and civic engagement. The conceptualisation of youth political participation⁶⁰ and engagement was inspired by Gema M. Garcia-Albacete. It was done for several reasons. The broad definition reflects different forms of participation and young people's actions. Secondly, complex and multi-dimensional concepts provide the opportunity to observe actions (civic or cultural activities) which would not be directly related to 'conventional' participation. Future research could take advantage of this analysis of youth perspectives.

⁵⁸ T. Nir, L. Perry-Hazan, The framed right to participate in municipal youth councils and its educational impact. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69, pp. 174–183.

⁵⁹ A. Ausberger, M. E. Collins, W. Gecker, Engaging Youth in Municipal Government: Moving Toward a Youth-Centric Practice. *Journal of Community Practice*, 2018, 26.1: pp. 41–62.

⁶⁰ G. G. Albacete, *Young people's political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational change?* Springer, 2014, p. 18.

This page is intentionally
left blank

Conclusions

The importance of young people in modern society is linked, among other things, to two important issues: their future role in society and the protection of human rights. Participation of young people in the public life is crucial for social processes. Youth civic participation is connected to the engagement of young people in decision-making processes concerning issues relevant to them by the government, organisations and public services at many levels of governance. By enhancing the dialogue with young, the quality and legitimacy of public policies can be improved. Young people's active citizenship is an important factor in the development of every society and should be shaped by means of an effective multi-level youth policy.

The increasing role of youth civic participation of young people has been observed in European countries' policies for many years and in the EU policy since its very establishment. The strengthening of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, particularly on the basis of the EU macro-regional strategy, has reinforced the role of young people in policy. This has been reflected in both primary and secondary legislation. The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network project was one of the EU policy instruments. Its aim was to strengthen youth civic participation through the development of a cross-border cooperation network and improvement of the competences of institution representatives. Its implementation has made it possible to diagnose the problem under consideration through quantitative and qualitative surveys of the opinions of young people and representatives of their institutional environment, as well as the implementation of a series of practical measures intended to strengthen the cooperation between local decision-makers and young people and their participation in decision-making processes. The knowledge of youth civic participation acquired this way and the practical actions implemented have been instrumental in raising awareness among the various stakeholder groups, developing the dialogue between the institutional environment and young people in various forms and in engaging young people in decision-making and cross-border cooperation processes.

The quantitative and qualitative studies carried out as part of the SB YCGN project made it possible to confirm the research hypothesis stating that youth civic par-

ticipation is an important element of civic society that requires strengthening in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden through bottom-up actions at local community level, with the central role played by institutions. It has been demonstrated that the institutional environment offers hidden, untapped potential, exceeding that of young people, for initiating and implementing inclusive action, so that the voice of youth in decision-making processes can be heard and taken into account by decision-makers.

Youth-related issues have been addressed in various EU documents, including the Maastricht Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon. Youth policy, also relating to youth participation, was described therein as having a supporting role for EU policy. The European Commission White Paper “A new impetus for European Youth” provides for increased youth participation in public life. The European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003) included youth in sectoral policies, identified the ways of participation of young people and characterised the methods of institutional participation of young people in the local and regional life and the support offered to youth structures. The EU Strategy for Youth (2009) identified the following three main objectives of action: creating more opportunities for young people in education and employment; promoting creative and entrepreneurial attitudes; improving access and full society inclusion in terms of health, sports and participation and increasing solidarity between young people and other members of the society. The document titled European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018) identified eight priority areas to address in order to increase the active citizenship of young people. The new Strategy for Youth (2018) stresses the need to address the key areas in the youth sector: engaging, combining and strengthening the position that increases the participation of young people in the civic, economic, social, cultural and political life.

Youth is also dealt with in macro-regional strategies. One of these is the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which promoted equality, social cohesion and active citizenship of young people.

The laws of Poland, Sweden and Lithuania deal with youth affairs in different manners. The Lithuanian Law on youth policy was adopted in 2003. It enables young people to exercise all the rights laid down in the Lithuanian constitution, laws and other acts. Youth policy is included in the multi-annual state development programmes. The 2004–2008 programme for the first time called for increased involvement of young people in civil society, policy improvement in the fields of youth education, employment, housing, leisure and culture, social affairs, health, sport, crime prevention and youth participation in the work of local authorities. Similar provisions were included in later government programmes for the following years.

In Poland there is no statute devoted solely to young people, and the legal provisions relating to youth issues are contained in numerous strategic documents:

the Constitution, statutes (Act on Public Administration Branches of 4 September 1997, Act on the Education System of 07 September 1991, Higher Education Act, Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 2004, Act on Public Benefit Organisations and Voluntary Service, the Labour Code, Act of 29 July 2005 on Combating Domestic Violence, Social Employment Act, Act of 23 January 2003 on General Insurance in the National Health Fund) and in the regulations of individual ministers. Youth issues relevant are dealt with at ministry level in the framework of the education, labour market, family and health care policies as well as the policy for combating social exclusion. The need to increase youth participation in social and political life is stressed by the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit Organisations and Voluntary Service, which provides for cooperation between central and local governments with NGOs and public benefit institutions. Article 36 of Resolution No. 190 of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2013 on the adoption of the rules of procedure of the Council of Ministers stipulates that the party submitting a legislative proposal is required to submit the proposal for public consultation to social organisations and institutions for review. Another law of great importance for participatory processes is the Act on local referendum of 15 September 2000. Participation of the public in the development of public policies has been provided for in the Act on the availability of information concerning the environment and its protection of 03 October 2008. Participation opportunities for young people are also provided by the Education Act, the Higher Education Act and the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 2004.

The Swedish youth policy dates back to 1994, but the youth policy strategy was not put forward by the government until 2009. The main emphasis of the document was placed on increasing the number of job offers and ensuring accommodation. The government document is not mandatory for the authorities for municipalities and regional county councils due to the considerable autonomy of local governments in Sweden.

The main priorities of the Swedish youth policy provided for in the 2017 budget proposal are: transition from school to work; education and housing; young people's participation in various forms of action; organisation of young people's leisure time. In Sweden, there is no separate law focused on young people and youth issues are dealt with under the thematic laws: the Act on the support and service for persons with certain functional impairments, the Act on aliens, the Act on care of young persons, the Act on education, the Act on higher education, the Act on parental code and the Act on social services. Sweden does not have a specific strategy for youth civic participation, either. Youth participation is an element of the Swedish youth policy, as adopted by the Parliament in 2014: "All young people should have access to good living conditions, the power to shape their own lives and an influence on the development of society".

The quantitative and qualitative surveys revealed a medium level of civic participation of young people aged 14–24 in all the municipalities surveyed in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. However, a significant proportion of institution representatives indicated rather low levels of youth participation in public life. This situation is unsatisfactory given the needs and expectations of institution representatives and young people and suggests that there is a gap between the diagnosed state and the existing potential in both the institutional and youth environment. This problem is complex and determined by a number of factors, often difficult if not impossible to recognise together with correlations.

Despite declaring relatively strong interest and willingness to influence the matters concerning their environment, the majority of young people from the seven municipalities display low awareness of the opportunities for participation in decision-making and insufficient engagement. One of the reasons for the insufficient participation of young people in decision-making is the fact that most of them are only moderately interested in public affairs and find national problems to be far more noteworthy. The affairs concerning the immediate environment, such as school, university or work, proved to be the most important for young people from Hässleholm, but their interest in the neighbourhood was the weakest among respondents from other municipalities. However, the issues of the respondents' local district generated keen interest among youth from Iława and Dzierzgoń. The problems concerning the town or municipality were considered important mainly by the young people from Gdynia, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Iława. A large proportion of the youth surveyed were less interested in the Baltic Sea region. One exception were the young people from Iława, who reported keen interest in macro-regional and cross-border issues. The identified areas of interest make it possible to see the potential for the development of various forms of civic participation, taking into account the differences between their target groups. For example, a large proportion of the young respondents from the seven municipalities were most interested in the affairs of their friends. Young people's will to influence the shape of their immediate environment is a key factor in increasing their civic participation, as confirmed by a majority of young respondents and institution representatives confirmed in the survey. A large proportion of young people declared that they would rather like to have an influence on the affairs of their municipality, although at the same time most of those surveyed in the seven municipalities were moderately interested in the affairs of the commune in which they lived. The young people from Hässleholm showed the keenest interest in influencing their local reality. It was also the opinion of a majority of institution representatives that young people often wish to have an impact on matters relevant to them and engage in cooperation for the immediate environment. Young people from Gdynia, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie seemed more keen to have an influence on the issues that concern them than their peers in Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Iława and Telšiai. The opinions

of institutional environment representatives from Gdynia, Iława and Dzierzgoń as to young people's willingness to engage in cooperation for the immediate environment were much more cautious than in Hässleholm or Nowe Miasto Lubawskie. The capacity of the institutional environment to stimulate civic participation of young people depends on the ability to respond to the needs of young people, for example, to provide assistance in solving their problems. However, a sine qua non condition is to overcome the lack of mutual understanding between young people and adults, which was recognised by a dominant group of institutional respondents from almost all municipalities, except Elbląg.

The problem of unsatisfactory levels of youth civic participation of young people in selected municipalities of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden has also been examined based on the opinions of young respondents and representatives of public institutions and NGOs with respect to assessment of young people's impact on the decisions taken in their municipality. In the opinion of a majority of institution representatives, young people had the most influence on the election of their representatives at school or university and the least influence on the allocation of resources from the municipal budget. One exception was Hässleholm, where young people had an average impact on such issues. Generally, the choice of youth representatives at school or university is the only area where young people had a significant influence in nearly all the municipalities. On the other hand, in a vast majority of the municipalities, young people had very little or no leverage in areas such as spatial development, public transport, creation of municipal development strategies, social assistance or education. They had a somewhat greater impact on decisions concerning the preparation and implementation of international projects in the municipality, cultural initiatives in the municipality and election of their representatives in the local authorities. According to the representatives of Elbląg institutions, the local youth have a significantly lower impact on decisions in the area of social assistance compared to young people in Gdynia, and on spatial planning decisions compared to youth in Telšiai. However, when it comes to choosing their representatives in local authorities and at school or university, young people from Elbląg had a greater decision-making power than their peers in Gdynia and Telšiai. The issue of the real impact of young people on the shape of their immediate environment in the perception of young respondents appeared somewhat more problematic. In the opinion of the majority of young people surveyed in the seven municipalities, they are unable to have a say in all the topics examined and therefore do not take part in any discussion. A large proportion of young people from Poland and Lithuania held the belief that they had no influence on decisions concerning their municipality. Only the young people from Iława declared that they had the power to decide on the choice of local authorities and exercised that right. The highest level of public awareness was demonstrated by young people from Hässleholm, a majority of whom confirmed that they had the opportunity to

speak on most of the issues examined and took advantage of that opportunity. As to most school or university-related matters, the young people from seven municipalities claimed that they had no say in such matters. Only in respect of the choice of leisure activities, the majority of respondents were aware of their right to co-decide but did not exercise it. The relatively largest opportunities for participation in the decision-making at schools or universities were declared by the young people from Hässleholm and Telšiai. These opinions suggest a low level of awareness among young people aged 14–24 as to what they, as citizens, can influence at municipality level by participating in decision-making processes. They also confirm youth's limited involvement in the immediate environment, as they do not even comment on issues in which they have a say. The main manifestation of youth civic participation in the seven municipalities turned out to be conversations with friends about specific issues. In Hława and Dzierzgoń, young people also benefited from membership of youth organisations, in Hässleholm from contacts with politicians or city/municipality officials, in Dzierzgoń and Telšiai from activities in church or religious association. The young people from Dzierzgoń also exchanged their views on social/political issues on the Internet and participated in public meetings for the local community.

The quality studies carried out by representatives of institutions and young people from the Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish municipalities further confirmed the validity of the research hypothesis. The participants of qualitative interviews emphasized the importance of a youth-centric policy approach in the municipalities. The significance of genuine and effective youth representation in municipalities was also discussed and confirmed. There were a number of ways for the youth to be engaged in the consultations of municipal governments or other activities. Having come to that conclusion, the participants shared their most effective practices as well as the main problems and gaps in the process. The participants mentioned some of the key actors in the partnership network: youth workers, contact persons (responsible for the organisation and coordination of youth engagement in the municipalities), politicians (former youth council members). These participants are important for the interactions between the youth and the municipalities. In some researched cases, they are forming social networks with a well-established youth council. There were mixed insights about the managed (formal) engagement and informal participation (contributing ideas, protesting, actively criticising or acting in other ways). Some participants were aware of the needs of the youth to be guided and supported, while others argued that the youth could not engage informally in local politics without facilitation by special participants. Despite all the different views, it was agreed that formal and informal ways of engagement complement each other.

The barriers to civic participation lie both on the institutions' side and on young people's side. For this reason, effective reduction of these obstacles requires

cooperation between young people and decision-makers representing their environment. According to Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish institution representatives, the majority of the barriers examined are present in all the municipalities surveyed and they have a relatively similar impact. The majority of the institutional respondents from the seven municipalities identified the following major barriers: lack of willingness on the part of politicians to engage youth in public affairs – to the greatest extent in Gdynia, Elbląg, Dzierzgoń and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; adults' disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process – to the greatest extent in Gdynia; excluding young people from co-deciding on public issues – to the greatest extent in Gdynia and Hässleholm; young people's doubts that their participation could change anything – to the greatest extent in Iława and Dzierzgoń; young people's lack of knowledge and skills to participate fully in the decision-making process, and underrating the knowledge and experience of youth by decision-makers – to the greatest extent in Gdynia; lack of formal opportunities for young people to participate in decisions on public matters – in particular in Elbląg; the lack of clear information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs – to the greatest extent in Gdynia and Elbląg and the lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs – this applied to Dzierzgoń in particular. It is worth noting that the restrictions identified as having the greatest impact on youth participation processes were more frequently indicated in the opinions of Polish institutional respondents than their counterparts from Lithuania or Sweden. This suggests that employees of public and non-governmental institutions, particularly in Poland, should undertake intensive and large-scale measures to reduce or eliminate these barriers in order to enhance the civic participation of young people in the long term.

The young respondents identified similar barriers to their civic participation to those mentioned by the institution representatives. However, the young participants from the seven municipalities surveyed pointed to the lack of confidence in the implementation of their ideas by decision-makers and adults' lack of understanding of young people's needs as the biggest obstacles. Although both aforementioned problems are on the side of young people, adult decision-makers can play a greater role in resolving them. It is the adults who, having properly recognised and understood the needs of young people, could more effectively encourage them to engage in public affairs and decision-making processes, thus demonstrating that the voice of young people is heard and taken into account. Furthermore, a majority of young respondents from the seven communes identified the following factors as major constraints to youth civic participation: lack of youth motivation to participate in decision-making at school, in organisations or local and central authorities; lack of information on how to engage in decision-making at school, in organisations and local and central governments, and politicians' disinclination

to engage in a dialogue with young people. The problem of young people's poor motivation to participate in decision-making was the strongest in Polish municipalities and the Swedish municipality. The lack of information on how young people could become involved in decision-making had a stronger negative impact on young people from Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie than those from the other municipalities. The lack of political will to engage in a dialogue with young people was a strong limiting factor for the civic participation of young people in Gdynia, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm. The young people from Elbląg, Gdynia, Hässleholm and Iława were the most likely to state that the reason for not engaging in public affairs was the lack of interest in decision-making. One of the barriers identified was the lack of adequate knowledge and skills for young people to participate more fully in decision-making. This problem was mainly emphasised by young people from Gdynia and Iława. Meanwhile, inadequate knowledge and skills of officials, school representatives and NGOs was particularly highlighted in Iława.

According to the qualitative research findings with young participants, the most significant barriers and obstacles to youth engagement in municipality affairs arise from the top-down agenda settings in municipalities in respect of youth political and municipal policy matters, lack of interest in actual youth engagement in the municipality, impediments to different forms of participation, and manipulation of engagement. The qualitative analysis points to a twofold problem with engagement: broader attitudes and engagement approach issues, and narrower institutional barriers (the agenda setting, the lack of resources, gaps in the consultation process). The issues of uncooperative attitudes and manipulative practices were noted by some of the focus group participants in Lithuania and in Poland. The practice of youth engagement in the Polish and Lithuanian local government community decision-making or municipal social service provisions has been slow to institutionalise. The interview analysis reveals that the barriers have been crossed by most of the participants. The participants of the youth focus group agreed that there is the traditional way of engagement in the local government through the youth council (i.e. consultations with the city council, support of youth groups' interests, awareness raising campaigns, knowledge and skill development projects). Some of the interview participants emphasised the importance of these activities as the main priority. However, others understood and actualised engagement more broadly through a range of activities. The qualitative research findings based on interviews with public institutions and NGOs have shown a wide range of barriers to youth political engagement as well as activities in which youth councils are engaged. Firstly, the study participants reported a broad spectrum of approaches to youth involvement in the municipal government. They varied between the countries and municipalities. The Danish and Swedish municipalities used broad-based and diversified approaches in the communication and consultations with youth

(including municipal youth council members or leaders of open youth centres). Generally, the top-down approach is taken, but it is also combined with a voluntary bottom-up approach under the guidance of youth workers, so that the multi-structured engagement process responds to the needs of youth and municipality (satisfies the interest to consult the youth). In Sweden and Denmark, the youth play the role of ambassadors in the decision making of the local government. These practices are consistent with the youth-centric approach. Some Polish and Lithuanian municipal governments chose to cooperate with the youth councils and other organisations based on ‘a formal framework’. In the present study, it has been concluded that this approach is not always responsive and attractive for the youth engaged in political processes. The interview participants emphasised the need for the bottom-up approach to the consultations between youth councils and municipalities. These practices are consistent with the adult-centric approach. It is also important to stress that the local context has significantly influenced the relationships between municipal institutions and organised youth. The findings of this research related to the barriers to youth engagement are relevant to other researches. Firstly, there are gaps in the youth – adult (stakeholders – youth conciliators) partnership. The current study demonstrated a similar criticism towards structured (formal, institutionalised) political engagement processes (in Polish, Lithuanian and Danish municipalities). On the other hand, the analysis reveals supportive attitudes grounded on experience and strong arguments. The youth political action as consisting of multiple processes makes it possible to circumvent the dichotomy of structured vs unstructured participation. The present research reveals that young people construct political or civic actions by taking other participatory forms (protests on the street, complaints to the relevant authorities, etc.).

The interview data (from interviews with NGOs and public institutions) analysis reveals that youth political and civic engagement encounters some communicative barriers which are based on the inflexible nature of formal processes (Lithuanian and Polish municipalities) and the lack of knowledge about public policies and bureaucratic language used in municipalities. In Swedish and Danish municipalities, the agendas for consultations are relevant to youth needs or expectations. Therefore, there are only some minimal gaps in the communication and they are closed by introducing tools which are more appropriate for young people and based on electronic communication. These findings are relevant to the extensive research into youth – adults partnering difficulties. The involvement (and power of influence) of youth councils in the policy formation is limited by the paperwork and formal procedures. The failure to understand regulations and procedures gives rise to disillusionment in local politics and a sense of marginalisation as a group.

The research reveals that some communicative gaps in youth – adult political relationships can be filled by changing culture (from adult-centric, formalistic values, organisational climate, communication styles to youth-centric based on dem-

ocratic values, plain language, etc.) and development projects (youth friendly citizen development programs, teaching participatory budgeting, role playing teaching seminars about ‘rules of the political game’). Some Polish and Danish youth workers have facilitated local youth councils’ members by using different effective and youth-friendly models (special guidance forms, special ‘spaces’ for participation) for interactions with municipal politicians and public administrators. The stakeholders expressed their concern about the impact of youth voice on the municipal government decisions. They argued that structured political participation provided young people with an opportunity to be heard, but without the empowerment.

Intensification of dialogue and cooperation with young people and stimulation of their civic participation at local and cross-border level requires meeting the needs of both the institutions and young people. According to institutional respondents, the vast majority of the needs examined that determine the possibilities for increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden were rather necessary or very necessary. The most pressing need for respondents from all the municipalities was to find a good leader able to motivate and engage young people effectively. That problem was identified as the most acute by youth workers from Gdynia, Elbląg, Iława, Dzierzgoń, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Telšiai. The relatively least urgent need, in the opinion of those surveyed, was increasing the funds for activities engaging young people in public decision-making. This need was the most pressing for the respondents from Elbląg. One of the major challenges in Gdynia, Elbląg, Iława and Dzierzgoń appeared to be the need for greater openness of decision-makers to involve young people in public matters. A similar opinion was also expressed about the need to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with young people in Gdynia, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń. According to a majority of respondents from Gdynia and Elbląg, formal cooperation with institutions that implement youth policies, also in the Baltic Sea region, should be developed and the competences of those responsible for youth cooperation need to be improved in order to strengthen the capacity of institutions to promote youth civic participation. The improvement of knowledge and skills was highlighted by a majority of those surveyed in all the municipalities, with psychology, sociology and pedagogy indicated as the main areas in need of enhancement. Representatives of the institutional environment of young people from Gdynia declared the most extensive requirements concerning competence improvement. This included additional knowledge in the field of politics, sociology, economics and philosophy. In Dzierzgoń and Elbląg the respondents additionally pointed to the need to improve their legal knowledge and coaching skills. In Sweden, there was a need for knowledge of the ways to motivate and inspire young people, and of social media, including effective channels for reaching to and communicating with young people. The respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie reported only the need concerning sports activities. The selected forms of influ-

ence on participatory processes were mostly rated as effective or very effective by the majority of institution representatives from the three countries. The following solutions were considered the most effective, in decreasing order: promoting civic participation among young people via the Internet – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Hława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; media information about youth civic participation opportunities – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Gdynia; establishment of youth councils in municipalities – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Hława; organisation of “round tables” by e.g. public institutions – most effective according to the respondents from Telšiai and Dzierzgoń; development of youth cooperation in networks at local level – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Gdynia; development of youth cooperation in networks at cross-border level – most effective according to the respondents from Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of local authorities – most effective according to the respondents in Dzierzgoń; opportunity for young people to comment on draft decisions of school authorities – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń; meetings of officials with young people outside the school – most effective according to the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; youth meetings with representatives of NGOs – most effective according to the respondents from Elbląg; creation of a list of areas where young people can co-decide – most effective according to the respondents from Elbląg and Gdynia; opportunity for young people to co-decide about commune budget allocation – most effective according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń and Elbląg; organization of public hearings for young people – most effective according to the respondents from Hława, and promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment – most effective according to the respondents from Elbląg, Gdynia and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie.

The views expressed by young people suggest that openness and involvement of institution representatives are key to increasing the civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. This is linked to the conviction held by the majority of young people surveyed in the seven municipalities that the most important factor in their active citizenship is the implementation of youth proposals, e.g. by local authorities, schools or NGOs. Treating young people’s proposals seriously and considering them in the decision-making process constitutes a positive proof of real civic participation. Implementation of young people’s proposals was a very strong and strongly motivating factor for the young people from Gdynia, Elbląg and Hława, followed by the respondents from Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Dzierzgoń. The following measures can also be of significant or great importance in this area: the opportunity for young people to present their views to local authorities – mainly according to the respondents from Hława, Gdynia, Elbląg,

Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; exchange of information between young people about their activities – mainly according to the respondents from Gdynia, Telšiai, Elbląg, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; the opportunity for young people to present their views to school authorities and NGOs – mainly according to the respondents from Iława, Gdynia, Elbląg, Telšiai, Hässleholm and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; meetings with people who actively work for the local environment – mainly according to the respondents from Gdynia, Telšiai and Elbląg; establishment of more local youth organisations – mainly according to the respondents from Iława, Gdynia, Telšiai and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie; the possibility for young people to participate in meetings of local authorities – mainly according to the respondents from Iława, Gdynia, Elbląg and Dzierzgoń; development of social projects for youth civic engagement – mainly according to the respondents from Iława, Gdynia and Hässleholm; meetings with people who tell youth how to become involved – mainly according to the respondents from Dzierzgoń, Iława, Telšiai and Hässleholm. Only the young respondents from Iława rated all the above solutions as having the strongest impact on the increase of their engagement in shaping their immediate environment. The significance of municipal Youth Councils, through which young people can influence the decisions of local authorities, was not recognised to the same degree by the majority of those surveyed from the seven municipalities. The same number of respondents identified their large and medium impact on the increase of youth civic participation. Youth Councils were given the highest ratings by the young people from Elbląg, where the Town Youth Council was reactivated in 2019 and by the respondents from Iława, where such a council has been operating since 1997. The remaining issues examined were assessed by the majority as having an average impact on increasing young people's civic participation.

The young respondents and institution representatives from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden recognized the need to improve their competences, the shortage of which was identified as one of the barriers to youth active citizenship. A large proportion of young people declared that their engagement in public affairs could be improved the most by knowledge and skills in the area of motivation and self-motivation, as well as social psychology. These needs were considered the most pressing by the young people from Iława and Elbląg. Young respondents, in particular those from Iława, attached much weight to the opportunity to influence decisions made in schools, universities, municipality or city offices, businesses and NGOs. Knowledge and skills in the field of discussion and reasoning methods were the most important for the young people from Elbląg and Iława.

The qualitative research was aimed at finding the most relevant institutionalised forms for youth political and civic engagement. This research, encompassing a number of councils and open youth centres within four countries, expands the empirical literature. Furthermore, it enables comparison of a number of youth

organisations affiliated with municipalities, discussing a variety of youth political engagement practices and problems related to them. Analysis revealed that youth engagement organisations operated in very different local frameworks with a specific institutional/organisational, political and cultural environment. These environments were not always friendly for youth engagement and development. It was also demonstrated that all the organisations for youth political and civic engagement are adult-led. The local context and national cultural and educational patterns had a strong effect on the activities, organisations and status of the councils. In this study, it is argued that there is a need to deepen the conceptual understanding and obtain more empirical data concerning the forms of political participation in different countries at local level. Future studies should attempt to clarify why the national and local variations exist. This study offers only a basis for more detailed research on the participatory processes at local level. It could be argued that municipalities should take the youth-centric approach for working with youth. In this regard, it is necessary to create or strengthen the collaborative climate, establish a welcoming friendly environment, simplify bureaucratic procedures and use plain language for communication and participation.

The gap revealed between the current and desired level of youth civic participation at local level, different barriers to engagement and the indicated needs and ways in which civic participation can be increased show that both institution representatives and young people are aware of the complexity of the problem. This awareness, combined with the ability to identify the existing needs and to select appropriate instruments to strengthen youth participation in decision-making, and supported by scientific knowledge and experience, should translate into the establishment and implementation of local youth policy. Its effectiveness could be significantly improved by placing greater emphasis on cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. This is supported by the opinions of the institutions and young people from Telšiai, Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Hässleholm about certain similarities between problems, which can be solved by joint efforts.

With regard to future municipal youth policy development, two main important perspectives on youth political and civic engagement can be identified: 1. young people as active participants in local community; 2. barriers to participation (civic and political) encountered by some young people. Young people as active participants in local community – it would be advisable for Lithuanian and Polish municipalities to view young people as active participants and contributors to local community. The key aim of local youth policies could be promotion of participation with focus on young people's needs. The programmes and actions could be more youth-centred. The municipalities should take a holistic view of youth policies and develop relevant holistic services. For instance, the qualitative research data revealed the need for youth centres which could be used for civic (not only

sports, educational and cultural) activities. The municipalities could move from a narrow focus to a municipality-wide response with continuum of investment. The problem of barriers to participation (civic and political) encountered by some young people could be solved if municipal policies recognised the concept that young people are subjected to paternalistic (especially in Poland and Lithuania) and regulated interventions. Municipalities have to engage youth in decision-making and dialogue more successfully. Research reveals many different communication gaps in youth – adult political relationships (in Poland, Lithuania and Sweden). The governments and administrations at local level need to try to find relevant youth-related issues for discussions with young people in order to received their input into municipal policy-making.

Improvement of youth civic participation depends to a large extent on the institutions' ability to stimulate young people's activity and to integrate them into decision-making processes at all stages, ranging from information, through hearings and dialogue, to the implementation of young people's proposals. Without providing the institutions and young people with the necessary competences, it will be very difficult to effectively stimulate the civic participation of young people. Appropriate civic education is therefore of great importance. The best way seems to be the development of systemic solutions based on multi-level governance. However, it is necessary to take into account the specific circumstances of each municipality, as many problems and their solutions are not of universal nature.

Bibliography

Legal acts and policies

- Act of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions and certain other acts, Journal of Laws of 99, item 1001.
- An EU strategy for youth. European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2010 on “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” OJ 2011/C 161 E/04.
- Balsavimo rezultatai Lietuvoje, 2015 m. Lietuvos Respublikos savivaldybių tarybų rinkimai, https://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/2015_savivaldybiu_tarybu_rinkimai/output_lt/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardose/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardoselturas.html.
- Brussels European Council 29/30 October 2009, SUE RMB, https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/baltyk/strategia/dokumenty/ [accessed: 14.06.2019].
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Youth on the Move”. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union COM(2010) 477 final version, http://europa.eu/youthonthemove/docs/communication/youth-on-the-move_EN.pdf [accessed: 15.05.2019].
- Communication from the Commission to the to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communication/baltic/com_baltic_pl.pdf [accessed: 15.06.2019].
- Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – ACTION PLAN 2009 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/.../com_baltic_pl.pdf [accessed: 17.06.2019].
- Commission Staff working Document European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region ACTION PLAN {COM(2009) 248} Brussels, 20.3.2017 SWD(2017)

- 118 final, <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/966133c5-ae1e-4759-9815-28fdc36efe86:JCR> [accessed: 18.06.2019].
- Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, https://www.ewt.2007-2013.gov.pl/Documents/AP_SUERMB.pdf [accessed: 20.06.2019].
- Council conclusions on the review of the European Union. Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region 3125th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting Brussels, 15 November 2011, <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/2ad312d3-465e-4c23-b7c1-18e4afee69ce:JCR> [accessed: 7.06.2019].
- Environmental Protection Act of 27 April 2001, Journal of Laws of 2001 No. 62, item 627; Act of 18 July 2001 on water management, Journal of Laws of 2001 No. 115, item 1229.
- European Commission White Paper. A new Impetus for European Youth (2001), http://www.mlodziejowarada.pl/files/bank_wiedzy/04.pdf [accessed: 06.06.2019].
- European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2010 on “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” (2009/2159(INI)), (2011/C 161 E/04), OJ C 161.
- Föräldrabalk, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/foraldrabalk-1949381_sfs-1949-381 [accessed: 12.07.2019].
- Högskolelag, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434_sfs-1992-1434 [accessed: 05.07.2019].
- Inwestowanie w młodzież Europy (COM(2016) 940) konkluzje Rady w sprawie strategicznych perspektywy europejskiej współpracy na rzecz młodzieży po roku 2018, maj 2017 r.; C 456/2 PL D. U. U.E. 18.12.2018.
- Important position of the Senate of the Republic of Poland on the „integrated youth policy” <http://ipzin.org/index.php/65-wazne-stanowisko-senatu-rp-ws-zintegrowanej-polityki-mlodziejowej> [accessed: 21.06.2019].
- Lag om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade (LSS), <http://www.fub.se/rad-och-stod/lag-och-ratt/lss-lagen-om-stod-och-service-till-vissa-funktionshindrade> [accessed: 25.06.2019].
- Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var_d_sfs-1990-52 [accessed: 30.06.2019].
- Law on Youth Policy Framework, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/12-national-youth-law-lithuania> [accessed: 22.07.2019].
- Lietuvos Respublikos Jaunomo Politikos Pagrindu Istatymas 2003 m. gruodžio 4 d. No. IX-1871, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.223790/DUGWyxGOPA> [accessed: 17.07.2019].

- Lithuania's Progress Strategy "LITHUANIA 2030", <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-progress-strategy-lithuania-2030> [accessed: 29.07.2019].
- Młodzi 2011, Warszawa 2011.
- Młodzież w działaniu, <http://stara.pzn.org.pl/pl/dzialania-projekty/65-europejski-program-mlodziez-w-dzialaniu/304-program-mlodziez-w-dzialaniu-2007-2013.html> [accessed: 01.06.2019].
- National strategy to increase youth participation, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/55-national-strategy-increase-youth-participation-sweden-0> [accessed: 17.07.2019].
- National youth strategy, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/13-national-youth-strategy-lithuania> [accessed: 28.07.2019].
- Notice of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 07 June 2018 on the announcement of the consolidated Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265.
- Notice of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 07 February 2018 on the announcement of the consolidated Act on Public Benefit Organisations and Voluntary Service, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 450.
- Notice of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 17 January 2019 on the promulgation of the consolidated Act on Social Employment, Journal of Laws of 2019, item 217.
- Obszary tematyczne i działania horyzontalne Strategii, https://www.gov.pl/documents/528248/541918/Obszary_tematyczne_i_dzia%C5%82ania_horyzontalne_Strategii.pdf/3de63523-9816-8927-9b97-92533b096834 [accessed: 16.06.2019].
- Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth. Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship COM(2005) 206 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52005AE1248> [accessed: 09.06.2019].
- Poland 2030 – Third Wave of Modernity – Long-Term National Development Strategy http://kigeit.org.pl/FTP/PRCIP/Literatura/002_Strategia_DSRK_PL2030_RM.pdf [accessed: 18.06.2019].
- PiS Programme 2014, <http://old.pis.org.pl/dokumenty.php?s=partia&iddoc=164> [accessed: 19.06.2019].
- Resolution No 190 of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2013; Rules of Procedure of the Council of Ministers, M.P. 2013, item 979.
- Rządowy Program Aktywności Społecznej Młodzieży na lata 2015–2016 AKTYWNA MŁODZIEŻ http://prom.info.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/PASM_19.05.2014.pdf [accessed: 19.06.2019].

- Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027 (OJ 2018/C 456/01).
- Skollag, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800 [accessed: 02.07.2019].
- Socialtjänstlag, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453_sfs-2001-453 [accessed: 12.07.2019].
- Stahre, U. (2004). City in change: Globalization, local politics and urban movements in contemporary Stockholm. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(1),
- Sweden's youth policy, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society*, 1994 <http://eng.muuf.se/swedens-youth-policy> [accessed: 12.07.2019].
- The Act on public benefit organisations and voluntary service of 24 April 2003, Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 96, item 873.
- The Act on General Insurance in the National Health Fund of 23 January 2003, Journal of Laws No. 45, item 391, as amended.
- The Act on commune self-government of 08 March 1990, Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 16, item 95; the Act on county self-government of 05 June 1998 Journal of Laws of 1998, No. 91, item 578.
- The Act on Province Self-Government of 5 June 1998, Journal of Laws of 1998, No. 91.
- The Act of 04 September 1997 on public administration branches, Journal of Laws of 1997 No. 141, item 943.
- The Act on the Education System of 07 September 1991, promulgated on 31 July 2018, in force since 25 October 1991; history since 21 June 1996, Journal of Laws of 2018, items 1457, 1560, 1669 and 2245 and of 2019, items 730 and 761.
- The Higher Education Act of 20 July 2018, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668.
- The Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52005AE1248> [accessed: 03.06.2019].
- The European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003).
- The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 as adopted by the National Assembly on 2 April 1997 and approved by the Nation in the constitutional referendum on 25 May 1997, signed by the President of the Republic of Poland on 16 July 1997, Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 78, item 483.
- The Act on the Education System of 07 September 1991, promulgated on 31 July 2018, in force since 25 October 1991; history since 21 June 1996, Journal of Laws of 2018, items 1457, 1560, 1669 and 2245 and of 2019, items 730 and 761.

- The Higher Education Act of 20 July 2018, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668.
- The Labour Code, Journal of Laws of 1974, No. 24, item 141.
- The Act on Combating Domestic Violence of 29 July 2005, Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 180, item 1493.
- Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 180, item 1493.
- The Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit organisations and voluntary service, Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 96, item 873.
- The Act of 15 September 2000 on local referendum, Journal of Laws of 2000, No. 88.
- The Act of 03 October 2008 on the availability of information concerning the environment and its protection, public participation in environmental protection and environmental impact assessment, Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 199, item 1227.
- Traktat z Maastricht (1993) Traktat o Unii Europejskiej OJ C 191, 29.7.1992, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:11992M/TXT> [accessed: 05.06.2019].
- Utlänningslagen) <https://lagen.nu/2005:716> [accessed: 29.06.2019].
- Youth Policy Development Program for 2011–2019 Official Gazette, 2010, No. 142–7299.
- Youth policies in Lithuania 2017, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdllithuania.pdf> [accessed: 28.07.2019].
- Zarządzenie nr 6 Ministra Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 11 lutego 2014 r. w sprawie powołania zespołu do spraw aktywności społecznej młodzieży, Dz. U. MPiPS No. 2014.

Books, monographs, and articles

- Adu-Gyamfi J., Can children and young people be empowered in participatory initiatives?: Perspectives from young people's participation in policy formulation and implementation in Ghana. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2013, 35.10.
- Albacette G. G., *Young people's political participation in Western Europe: Continuity or generational*, Palgrave Macmillan 2014.
- Almqvist, M. F. (2016). Pirate Politics between Protest movement and the Parliament. *Ephemera*, 16(2), 97.
- Ålund A., León Rosales, R. (2017). Becoming an Activist Citizen: Individual Experiences and Learning Processes within the Swedish Suburban Movement. *Journal of Education and Culture Studies*, 1(2).
- Amnå E., Associational life, youth, and political capital formation in Sweden: historical legacies and contemporary trends. In: ed. L. Trägårdh, *State and Civil*

- Society in Northern Europe. The Swedish Model Reconsidered*, Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Andersson, E. (2018). Young People's Political Participation: A Public Pedagogy Challenge at the Municipal Level. *Young*, 26(2).
- Andersson E., Young People's Political Participation: A Public Pedagogy Challenge at the Municipal Level. *Young*, Sage Journals 2018 26(2).
- Analiza stanu obecnego młodzieżowych rad w Polsce. Rada Dzieci i Młodzieży przy Ministrze Edukacji Narodowej, 17 April 2018, Warszawa 2018.
- Antonowicz D., Kossakowski R., Szlendak, T., Flaming flares, football fanatics and political rebellion: Resistant youth cultures in late capitalism. In: *Eastern European Youth Cultures in a Global Context*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016.
- Antonowicz D., Grodecki M., Missing the goal: Policy evolution towards football-related violence in Poland (1989–2012). *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 2018, 53.4.
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), pp. 216–224.
- Augsberger A., Collins M. E., Gecker W., Best practices for youth engagement in municipal government. *National Civic Review*, 2017, 106.1.
- Augsberger A., Collins M. E., Gecker W., Dougher M., Youth civic engagement: Do youth councils reduce or reinforce social inequality? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2018, 33.2.
- Augsberger A., Collins M. E., Gecker W., Engaging Youth in Municipal Government: Moving Toward a Youth-Centric Practice. *Journal of Community Practice*, 2018, 26.1.
- Balsavimo rezultatai Lietuvoje, 2015 m. Lietuvos Respublikos savivaldybių tarybų rinkimai, https://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/2015_savivaldybiu_tarybu_rinkimai/output_lt/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardose/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardoseIturas.html. [accessed: 15.05.2019].
- Banaji S., Buckingham D., Young people, the Internet, and civic participation: an overview of key findings from the CivicWeb Project, *International Journal of Learning and Media* 2010, No. 2, pp. 15–24.
- Barrett M., Brunton-Smith I., Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 2014, 10.1.
- Baggetta M., Bredenkamp D. M., Systematic Social Observation in the Study of Civil Society Organizations. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 2019.
- Bednarska-Olejniczak D., Olejniczak J., Participatory budgeting in Poland—finance and marketing selected issues. (2017): 55–67.
- Bednarska-Olejniczak D., Public participation of Polish Millennials – Problems of public communication and involvement in municipal affairs. In: *Proceedings*

- of the 22th International Colloquium on Regional Sciences*, Brno, Czech Republic, vol. 31, 2018.
- Bernaciak A., Rzeńca A., Sabol A., “New” public urban space: citizens’ initiatives in participatory budgeting in Katowice, Łódź and Poznań. *Miscellanea Geographica* (2018).
- Booker A., Contingent authority and youth influence: When youth councils can wield influence in public institutions. *Revista de Investigación Educativa*, 2017, 35.2.
- Cambell D., Erbstein N., Engaging youth in community change: Three key implementation principles. *Community Development*, 2012, 43.1, pp. 64–65.
- Checkoway B., Youth participation and community change: An introduction. In: *Youth participation and community change*. Routledge, 2012.
- Clay C., Amodeo M., Collins M. E., Youth as partners in curriculum development and training delivery: Roles, challenges, benefits, and recommendations. *Families in Society*, 2010, 91(2).
- Cele, S., Van Der Burgt, D. (2015). Participation, consultation, confusion: professionals’ understandings of children’s participation in physical planning. *Children’s Geographies*, 13(1), 14–29.
- Civinskas R., Tamutiene I., Lazuskiene A., *Lietuvos jaunimo įgalinimas: situacijos analizė*. 2014, pp. 51–63; Tuzaitė E. „Kritiški piliečiai”? Posovietinės jaunimo kartos požiūris į demokratiją, politiką ir sovietinę praeitį. *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas*, 2016, no. 7 (2).
- Cicchelli V., The Contemporary Engagement of Young People in France: Normative Injunctions, Institutional Programs, and the Multiplying Forms of Grouping. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education* 1.2 (2009), pp. 118–119.
- Chodubski A., *Młodzież jako przedmiot i podmiot życia publicznego* [in:] *Polityka Młodzieżowa Unii Europejskiej*, eds. M. Boryń, B. Duraj, S. Mrozowska. Toruń 2014.
- Coe, A. B. (2018). Practicing gender and race in online activism to improve safe public space in Sweden. *Sociological Inquiry*, 88(3), 1.
- Coe A. B., Wiklund A., Uttjek M., Nygren L., Youth politics as multiple processes: How teenagers construct political action in Sweden. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2016, 19.10, pp. 1321–1322.
- Collins M. E., Augsberger A., Gecker W., Youth councils in municipal government: Examination of activities, impact and barriers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 65: 140–147.
- Collins M. E., Augsberger A., Gecker W., Identifying Practice Components of Youth Councils: Contributions of Theory. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 2018, 35.6.

- Cushing D. F., Van-Vliet W., Children's right to the city: the emergence of youth councils in the United States. *Children's Geographies*, 2017, 15.3.
- Derr, V., Tarantini, E. (2016). "Because we are all people": outcomes and reflections from young people's participation in the planning and design of child-friendly public spaces. *Local Environment*, 21(12), pp. 1534–1556.
- Diržinskaitė A., Apolitiška karta: kodėl jauniems Lietuvos žmonėms neįdomi politika. *Politologija*, 2018, 92.4.
- Dilyte A., Lazutka R., Jaunimo dalyvavimas politikoje: *Lietuvos atvejis. Socialinė teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika*, 2014.
- Ekström M., Sveningsson M., Young people's experiences of political membership: from political parties to Facebook groups. *Information, Communication & Society*, 2019, 22(2).
- Ekström M., Shehata A., Social media, porous boundaries, and the development of online political engagement among young citizens, *New Media & Society*, 20(2).
- Ekström, M., Shehata, A. (2018). Social media, porous boundaries, and the development of online political engagement among young citizens. *New Media & Society*, 20(2),
- Ekström, M., Östman, J. (2015). Information, interaction, and creative production: The effects of three forms of internet use on youth democratic engagement. *Communication Research*, 42(6).
- Ekman, J. (2013). Schools, democratic socialization and political participation: political activity and passivity among Swedish youths. *Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education*, (2013-1).
- Ekmann T., *Country sheet on youth policy in Sweden*, European Union and the Council of Europe, 2016.
- Faulkner K. M., Presentation and representation: Youth participation in ongoing public decision-making projects. *Childhood*, 2009, 16.1.
- Feldmann-Wojtachnia E., Helmisaari V., Gretschel A., Kilakoski T, *Youth participation in Finland and in Germany. Status analysis and data-based recommendations*, Helsinki/München, 2010.
- Fjellman, E., Gustafsson, N., Rosén Sundström, M. (2018). Ungas politiska (icke) deltagande på sociala medier–hellre offline?. *Sociologisk forskning*, 55(2–3), 293–316.
- Flanagan C. A., *Teenage citizens: The political theories of the young*. Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 109–111.
- Foride C., Martin S., Children and young people's right to participate: National and local youth councils in Ireland. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 2016, 24.1: pp. 135–154.

- Feringa D., Tonkens E., How the Participation Style in Local Youth Council Contributes to The Civic Engagement of Young People. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory & Practice*, 2017, 26, pp. 46–47.
- Flügge E., Wenzel U., *Der 8er-Rat: ein barrierefreies Beteiligungsmodell für Jugendliche*. Springer-Verlag, 2018.
- Geidne, S., Fredriksson, I., Eriksson, C. (2016). What motives are important for participation in leisure-time activities at Swedish youth centres? *Health Education Journal*, 75(8), pp. 972–985.
- Grasso M., Young People's Political Participation in Europe in Times of Crisis. In: *Young People Re-Generating Politics in Times of Crises*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.
- Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*, L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ 2010.
- Hart D., Atkins R., Markey P., Youniss J., Youth Bulges in Communities: The Effects of Age Structure on Adolescent Civic Knowledge and Civic Participation, *Psychological Science* 2004, Vol.15, issue 9, pp. 591–597.
- Havlicek J., Curry A., Vilialpando F., Youth participation in foster youth advisory boards: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2018, 84, pp. 265–270.
- Havlicek J., Lin Ching-Hsuan, Braun M. T., Cultivating youth voice through participation in a Foster youth advisory board: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69.
- Hart R. A., Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship. UNICEF, 1992.
- Hopmann, D. N., Shehata, A., Strömbäck, J. (2015). Contagious media effects: How media use and exposure to game-framed news influence media trust. *Mass Communication and Society*, 18(6).
- Horgan D., Consultations with children and young people and their impact on policy in Ireland. 2017.
- Jansson, M., Ramberg, U. (2012). Implementation and effects of user participation in playground management: a comparative study of two Swedish municipalities. *Managing Leisure*, 17(1), pp. 1–13.
- Jansson, M. (2015). Children's perspectives on playground use as basis for children's participation in local play space management. *Local Environment*, 20(2), pp. 165–179.
- Jangmin K., Youth involvement in participatory action research (PAR): Challenges and barriers. *Critical Social Work*, 2016, 17.1: 38–53.
- Jennings L. B., Para-Medina D. M., Hilfinger-Messias D. K., Mac Loughlin K., Toward a critical social theory of youth empowerment. *Journal of Community Practice*, 2006, 14.1–2.

- Kersting N., Local Political Participation in Europe: Elections and Referendums. Croatian and Comparative. *Public Administration*. 2015, 15, p. 330.
- Kitanova M., Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2019.
- Komunikacja i partycypacja społeczna. Poradnik*, Małopolska Szkoła Administracji Publicznej Akademii Ekonomicznej, red. J. Hausner, Kraków 1999.
- Kovacic M., Dolenc D., Youth participation in Eastern Europe in the age of austerity. In: *Young people re-generating politics in times of crises*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.
- Krzyżanowska Ł., Faciejew Ł., *Partycypacja obywatelska w Polsce*, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warszawa 2009.
- Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz B., Zalewska A. M., Kennedy K. J., *Young People and Active Citizenship in Post-Soviet Times: A Challenge for Citizenship Education*. Routledge, 2017.
- Lundgren A. S., Johansson A., Digital rurality: Producing the countryside in on-line struggles for rural survival. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 2017, no. 51.
- Loncle P., Rouyer A., La participation des usagers: un enjeu de l'action publique locale. *Revue française des affaires sociales*, 2004, 4, pp. 133–135.
- Maciaszek P., *Partycypacja społeczna młodzieży na przykładzie młodzieżowych rad gmin – part II* „Rocznik Samorządowy” 2016, t. 5, pp. 171–187.
- McFarland D. A., Reuben J. T., Bowling young: How youth voluntary associations influence adult political participation. *American Sociological Review*, 2006.
- McCartney A., Bennion E., Matto E., Simpson D., *Teaching civic engagement: From student to active citizen*. Political Science Association, 2013.
- Matthews H., Limb M., Another white elephant? Youth councils as democratic structures. *Space and Polity*, 2003, 7.2, p. 190.
- Maggini N., Young People's Voting Behaviour in Europe: A Comparative Perspective. In: *Youth Participation in Democratic Life Stories of Hope and Disillusion*, (eds.) Cammaerts B., Bruter M., Banaji S., Harrison S., Anstead N., Whitwell, Byrt, Springer, 2016.
- Marzęcki R., How to Engage “Democratic Natives”? Political Sophistication as Important Determinant of Civic Activity of Young Citizens in New Democracies (the Case of Poland), *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, 2017, 17, 1.
- Marzecki R., Młodzi wyborcy jako audytorium „dyskursu zmiany” w 2015 roku., *Przegląd Politologiczny* 2017, no. 1.
- Marzęcki R., The ‘Drifting Generation’ without a Helmsman. Main obstacles in shaping the Relations between the Political Parties and the Youth in Poland. *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences*, 2015, 15.4.

- Marzęcki R., Depolityzacja jako element stylu życia młodzieży. *Przegląd Polityczny* 2015, no. 1.
- Mirazchiyski P., Caro D. H., Sandoval-Hernández A., Youth Future Civic Participation in Europe: Differences Between the East and the Rest, *Social Indicators Research* 2014, Vol. 115, pp. 1031–1055.
- Mirra N., Garcia A., Civic Participation Reimagined: Youth Interrogation and Innovation in the Multimodal Public Sphere, *Review of Research in Education* 2017, Vol. 41, pp. 136–158.
- Moran-Ellis J., Süunker, H., Childhood studies, children's politics and participation: perspectives for processes of democratisation. *International Review of Sociology*, 2018, 28.2: 277–297.
- Muddiman E., Taylor C., Power S., Moles K., Young people, family relationships and civic participation, *Journal of Civil Society* 2019, Volume 15, Issue 1.
- Muniglia V., Morena D., Loncle, P., Walther A., The analysis of youth participation in contemporary literature: A European perspective. Youth participation in Europe: Beyond discourses, practices and realities, 2012.
- Nieuwelink H., Dekker P., Geijssels H., Tem Dam G., Adolescents' experiences with democracy and collective decision-making in everyday life. In: *Political engagement of the young in Europe. Youth in the crucible*, Routledge 2016.
- Nordenfors M., Participation – on the Children's Own Terms? City of Gothenburg, Tryggare och mänskligare Göteborg, 2012.
- Ohme J., When digital natives enter the electorate: Political social media use among first-time voters and its effects on campaign participation. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, (2019), no. 16(2).
- Östberg K., Sweden and the long '1968': break or continuity? *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2008, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 339–352.
- Östman, J. (2012). Information, expression, participation: How involvement in user-generated content relates to democratic engagement among young people. *New Media & Society*, 14(6), pp. 1004–1021.
- Ozer Emily J., Youth-led participatory action research: Developmental and equity perspectives. In: *Advances in child development and behaviour*. JAI, 2016, pp. 196–199.
- Partycypacja obywatelska młodzieży. Przykład młodzieżowych rad gmin, Warszawa 2015.
- Pawliczuk W., *The definitions of the term "youth." A review of conceptions*, *Postępy Nauk Medycznych* 2000, no. 6, pp. 311–315.
- Pernille A., Non-voting young people in conflict with the political system. *Journal of Political Power*, 2018, 11.2, pp. 230–231.
- Percy-Smith B., Councils, consultations and community: Rethinking the spaces for children and young people's participation. *Children's Geographies*, 2010, 8.2.

- Pontes A., Henn M. A., Griffiths M. D., Towards a Conceptualization of Young People's Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study. *Societies*, Nottingham 2018.
- Pilkinton H., Franc R., Pollock G., Conclusion: What is the 'Value Added' of Multi-method, Transnational Research? In: *Understanding Youth Participation Across Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018.
- Pitti I., *Youth and Unconventional Political Engagement*. Springer 2018.
- Pitti I., Mengilli Y., Martelli A., Loncle P., Participation and everyday life. In: *Young People and the Struggle for Participation: Contested Practices, Power and Pedagogies in Public Spaces*. Eds. Walther A., Batsler J., Loncle P., Pohl A., 2019, Routledge.
- Pollock D., Pilkington H., Franc R., Introduction: Thinking Globally, Understanding Locally. In: *Understanding Youth Participation Across Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018.
- Rystina I., Kussainova Z., (2014). Comparative Analysis of National Youth Policy in Different Countries, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, no. 140, pp. 654–656.
- Sant E., Davies I., Promoting participation at a time of social and political turmoil: what is the impact of children's and young people's city councils? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 2018.
- Sloam J., Diversity and voice: The political participation of young people in the European Union. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2016, 18.3.
- Rosales, R. L., Ålund, A. (2017). Renaissance from the margins: urban youth activism in Sweden. In: eds. Ålund A., Schierup C., *Reimagining the nation: essays on twenty-first-century*, Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2017.
- Rönnlund M., Justice in and through education? Students' participation in decision-making. *JSSE-Journal of Social Science Education*, 2014.
- Sadowska B., Szaja M., Włodarek J., Partycypacja społeczna wehikulem rozwoju lokalnego, *Studia i Rozprawy* t. 1048, Szczecin 2019.
- Sińczuch M., Polityka młodzieżowa jako odrębny obszar działania Unii Europejskiej, *Studia BAS* (Biuro Analiz Sejmowych Kancelarii Sejmu), no. 2 (18) 2009.
- Sokalska K., Znaczenie konsultacji społecznych w demokracji partycypacyjnej. Znaczenie konsultacji społecznych w demokracji, *Opolskie Studia Administracyjno-Prawne* 2016, no. XVI /3 pp. 163–176.
- Soler-Marti R., Ferrer-Fons M., Youth participation in context: the impact of youth transition regimes on political action strategies in Europe. *The Sociological Review*, 2015.

- Svensson, L. (2016). Empowering rural youth with Facebook: Lessons from a local Swedish case-study. *Community Development Journal*, 51(3), pp. 436–451.
- Soneryd L., Lindh E. (2019). Citizen dialogue for whom? Competing rationalities in urban planning, the case of Gothenburg, Sweden. *Urban Research & Practice*, 12(3).
- Tal N., Lotem.H., The framed right to participate in municipal youth councils and its educational impact. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2016, 69.
- Taft J. K., Gordon H. R., Youth activists, youth councils, and constrained democracy. Education, *Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2013, 8.1.
- Tisdall E. K., Children and young people's participation. *Routledge international handbook of children's rights studies*, 2015, p. 185.
- Thorson, K. (2014). Facing an uncertain reception: Young citizens and political interaction on Facebook. Information, *Communication & Society*, 17(2), pp. 203–216.
- Tonkens E. H., Feringa D., How the participation style in local youth councils contributes to the civic engagement of young people. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 2017.
- Tuzaitė E., „Kritiški piliečiai”? Posovietinės jaunimo kartos požiūris į demokratiją, politiką ir sovietinę praeitį. *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas*, 2016, no. 7(2).
- Vaughan A., Climate protest goes global. *New Scientist* 2019, 41, 3221.
- Quintelier E, Engaging adolescents in politics: The longitudinal effect of political socialization agents. *Youth & Society*, 2015, 47.1.
- Van Der Meer T., Van Ingen E., Schools of democracy? Disentangling the relationship between civic participation and political action in 17 European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 2009, 48.2.
- Valkering A., Matu G., Nemcok M., Spac P., It's More than Just Debating: The Political Participation and Democratic Attitudes of Debate Programme Participants in Seven “New” Democracies. *Sociální studia/Social Studies*, 2019, 15.2.
- Wong N. T., Zimmerman M. A., Parker E., A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2010, 46.1–2.
- Walther A., Regimes of youth transitions: Choice, flexibility and security in young people's experiences across different European contexts. *Young*, SAGE Journals 2006, 14(2).
- Wadensjö E., Policy Performance and Evaluation: Sweden. *STYLE Working Paper 2015, WP3. 3 Performance Sweden*.
- Watson D., Hollister R., Stroud S. E., Babcock E., *The engaged university: international perspectives on civic engagement*, Routledge, New York 2011.

- Zani B., Barrett M., Political and civic engagement: theoretical understandings, evidence and policies. In: *Political and Civic Engagement*. Routledge, 2014.
- Zielińska G., Rola państwa w realizacji polityki dla młodzieży, *Studia BAS* 2009, No. 2.
- Zuzevičiūtė V., Lithuania: Between commitments and expectations: is it an eternal tension between generations or a contemporary phenomenon? In: *Young People and Active Citizenship in Post-Soviet Times. A Challenge for Citizenship Education*, eds. B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, A. M. Zalewska, K. J. Kennedy, Routledge, 2017.
- Žiliukaitė R., The youth electoral behaviour in the post-communist Lithuanian society. In: *Paper for presentation at the ECPR General Conference*, Bordeaux, 2013.
- Zeldin S., Christens B. D., Powers J. L., The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2013, 51.3–4, p. 386.

Internet sources

- Badanie Diagnoza Społeczna 2015 – materiał z konferencji prasowej PAP, 16 września 2015, https://pts.stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/pts/pl/defaultaktualnosci/36/10/1/1/ds2015_konferencja_16.09.2015.pdf
- Brodie E., Cowling, E., Nissen, N., et al. (2009), Understanding participation: a literature review, Pathways through Participation, file:///C:/Users/Boruta/Downloads/Understanding-participation-a-literature-review.pdf [accessed: 15.06.2019].
- Cameron D. (2007), “Post-communist democracy: The impact of the European Union”, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 185–217, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2747/1060-586X.23.3.185> [accessed: 28.07.2019].
- Chaskin R. J., McGregor C., Brady B., Supporting Youth Civic and Political Engagement: Supranational and National Policy Frameworks in Comparative Perspective, The University of Chicago and National University of Ireland Galway, April 2018, http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescoschildandfamilyresearchcentre/J4445---58606-NUI-Engaging-Urban-Youth-Policy-Report_v6.pdf [accessed: 17.07.2019].
- Citizens’ engagement as a crucial open government practice in Lithuania, chapter 3, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264235762-8_en.pdf?expires=1565268030&id=id&acname=guest&checksum=E8731839B18087354F102764ECB28340 [accessed: 29.07.2019].
- Chodasz A., Cykowski P., Partycypacja polega na podziale władzy i dorośli powinni się nią faktycznie dzielić z młodzieżą.” <http://www.dobrezycie.org/publikacje/partycypacjamlodziezy> [accessed: 2.06.2019].

- Denstad F. Y., 2009, Youth Policy Manual. How to develop a national youth strategy, Council of Europe.
- Ekman T., Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Sweden, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262376/Sweden_Country+sheet.+docx.pdf/b8429663-fa9e-44da-95ad-8107f395a2f9 [accessed: 25.06.2019].
- Lochocki T., Trends, Causes and Patterns of Young People's Civic Engagement in Western Democracies. A Review of Literature, Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary sector, Oslo/Bergen 2010, Vol. 5, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kud/samfunn_og_frivillighet/rapporter/trends_causes_and_patterns_of_young_people-s_civic_engagement_in_western_democracies_vr_2010_5.pdf [accessed: 20.08.2019].
- Nylander L., Röstfisket har flyttat till facebook, 2018, <https://www.forskning.se/2018/03/21/rostfisket-har-flyttat> [accessed: 15.08.2019].
- Pagrindiniai. Lietuvos visuomenės pilietinės galios indekso rodikliai. 2016m., 2017 Vilnius, http://www.civitas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/PGI2016_pagr-rezultatai.pdf [accessed: 12.09.2019].
- Publishing; Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship (October 2005), <https://publicystyka.ngo.pl/opinia-ekes-dotyczaca-wprowadzenia-wzycie-europejskiego-paktu-na-rzecz-mlodziezy-i-wspierania-aktywnego-obywatelstwa-pazdziernik-2005> [accessed: 10.06.2019].
- Sińczuch M., Dialog z młodzieżą w praktyce UE. Formy, metody i ograniczenia, Warszawa 2015, <https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/dialog-z-mlodzieza.pdf> [accessed: 10.06.2019].
- Skuteczna praca z młodzieżą. Przewodnik po partycypacji młodzieży http://www.mlodziemawplyw.org.pl/files/publikacje/Skuteczna_praca_z_mlodzieza.pdf [accessed: 3.06.2019].
- Steele B., Youth civic engagement resource toolkit practical help for getting young people involved, Institute for Emerging Issues 2015, <https://iei.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CERT-Youth-electronic-bls110415v2.pdf> [accessed: 18.08.2019].
- The Flash Eurobarometer was designed to research young EU citizens' participation in a range areas of life (including voluntary activities, political elections, NGO, or sports clubs). The respondents aged 15–30 were interviewed. The sample consisted of 11,000 respondents (European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 455, European youth*. TNS Political & Social, 2018, pp. 1–92).
- Youth Civic Engagement: Enabling Youth Participation in Political, Social and Economic Life. Expert Group Meeting 16-17 June 2014, UNESCO, Paris, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2013/YouthDevelopmentRights/FinalConceptNoteEGMYouthCivicEngagement.pdf> [accessed: 19.08.2019].

- Youth civic engagement, World Youth Report, United Nations 2016, https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf [accessed: 19.08.2019].
- Youth civic participation: meeting community and youth development needs worldwide 2010, Innovation in Civic participation, <http://www.icicp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Youth-Civic-Participation-Worldwide-.pdf>, [accessed: 16.07.2019].
- Youth policies in Sweden 2017, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlsweden.pdf> [accessed: 24.06.2019].
- Zielińska G., Role of the State in the Implementation of Policy for the Youth, http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/5D2BC0D47521F9D5C1257A30003C055F/%24file/5_18.pdf [accessed: 18.06.2019].

List of tables

Table 2.1. Main project partners	53
Table 2.2. Associated partners	54
Table 2.3. A detailed action plan of the project partners within each WP . . .	58
Table 2.4. Structure of the sample in the individual municipalities	69
Table 2.5. Research population – youth aged 14–24 in the partner municipalities of SB YCGN project*	75
Table 2.6. Research sample structure	76
Table 2.7. Number of young people participating in focus groups	83
Table 2.8. Number of employees working with youth who participated in the focus groups	84
Table 3.1. Structure of the sample representing institutions in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample)	88
Table 3.2. Experiences of respondents in cooperation with young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses) . . .	90
Table 3.3. Assessment of the level of youth involvement in the process of civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)	91
Table 3.4. Extent of young people’s influence on decisions taken in individual matters by municipalities in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)	92
Table 3.5. Barriers to youth involvement in matters concerning their immediate environment in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)	104
Table 3.6. Local institutions’ needs in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)	110
Table 3.7. Additional knowledge and skills of institution representatives that would facilitate cooperation with young people with the aim	

of engaging youth in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)	113
Table 3.8. Effectiveness of various forms of impact on increasing youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses)	116
Table 4.1. Structure of the sample representing young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample responses)	126
Table 4.2. Level of interest of young people from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in individual issues (frequency, % of response in the sample)	128
Table 4.3. Young people's interest in influencing the affairs of their municipalities in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample response)	131
Table 4.4. Young people's opportunities to decide on matters concerning their municipalities in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample responses)	133
Table 4.5. Young people's opportunities to speak on matters concerning their school/university in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of sample responses)	138
Table 4.6. Steps taken by young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden to have a say in matters concerning their school/town/municipality (frequency, % of responses in the sample)	146
Table 4.7. Civic activities undertaken by young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in the last 12 months (frequency, % of responses in the sample)	149
Table 4.8. Barriers to youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses in the sample)	154
Table 4.9. Actions to increase youth civic participation in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses in the sample)	166
Table 4.10. Additional knowledge or skills to enhance youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (frequency, % of responses in the sample)	178
Table 5.1. Social and civic participation of young people in activities organised by different types of groups and clubs within the past 12 months (2017; percent)	199
Table 5.2. Key themes from qualitative data	204
Table 5.3. Specific barriers to youth participation on a local level	206
Table 6.1. Sample description	225
Table 6.2. Key frames and themes	231

List of figures

Figure 3.1. Differences between respondents’ answers relating to their assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality (the error bars in the chart show standard errors) 96

Figure 3.2. Assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs respondents’ gender (the error bars in the chart show standard errors) 97

Figure 3.3. Assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs municipality represented by the respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors) 98

Figure 3.4. Assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs institution represented by the respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors) 99

Figure 3.5. Assessment of the extent of young people’s influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs institution represented by the respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors) 106

Figure 3.6. Local institutions’ needs in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 109

Figure 3.7. Local institutions’ needs in respect of stimulating the civic participation of young people vs the municipality represented (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 112

Figure 3.8. Assessment of the effectiveness of various forms of increasing the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own

	environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	120
Figure 3.9.	Assessment of the effectiveness of various forms of increasing the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment vs gender of respondents (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)	121
Figure 3.10.	Assessment of the effectiveness of various forms of increasing the involvement of young people in the affairs of their own environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, municipality, local environment vs the institution represented (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	122
Figure 4.1.	Young people's interest in influencing the affairs of their municipalities vs place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	133
Figure 4.2.	Young people's interest in influencing the affairs of their municipalities vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	132
Figure 4.3.	Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	135
Figure 4.4.	Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	136
Figure 4.5.	Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality vs respondents' age (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	136
Figure 4.6.	Ability to influence the decisions and participate in decision-making on matters concerning the municipality vs respondents' place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	137
Figure 4.7.	Differences between respondents' answers relating to their assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters concerning school/university (the error bars in the chart show standard errors) . . .	140
Figure 4.8.	Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters	

	at school/university vs respondents' status (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)	141
Figure 4.9.	Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters at school/university vs respondents' place of residence (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)	143
Figure 4.10.	Assessment of the extent of young people's influence on the decisions taken on the individual matters in the municipality vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the chart show standard errors)	144
Figure 4.11.	Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	156
Figure 4.12.	Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	157
Figure 4.13.	Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' age (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	157
Figure 4.14.	Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	159
Figure 4.15.	Barriers to young people's involvement in public affairs vs respondents' place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	161
Figure 4.16.	Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	170
Figure 4.17.	Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	171
Figure 4.18.	Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	174
Figure 4.19.	Assessment of the impact of measures likely to encourage increased civic participation of young people in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents' status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors)	176

Figure 4.20. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 182

Figure 4.21. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents’ gender (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 183

Figure 4.22. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents’ age (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 183

Figure 4.23. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents’ status (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 185

Figure 4.24. Assessment of the impact of additional knowledge and skills on increased youth engagement in public affairs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden vs respondents’ place of residence (the error bars in the graph show standard errors) 187

The authors of the monograph decided to focus their research on one of the important topics related to social involvement in political decision-making processes, namely: youth civic participation in the three countries of the South Baltic Region – Lithuania, Sweden and Poland. A valuable element of the book is the fact that the authors based their analysis on quantitative and qualitative research presenting not only a very detailed picture of civic participation of young people, but also the most important challenges facing their involvement.

Undoubtedly, the book is an important and valuable source of information for those dealing with issues of youth participation in social and political life as well as for those who want to deepen their knowledge about the most important challenges and current problems related to the involvement of youth in public life not only in Poland, Sweden and Lithuania, but also in Europe in general.

an excerpt from the review by Prof. Magdalena Musiał-Karg,
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

This book deals with the challenges of youth civic engagement and provides different practices and models to cope with this problem. Looking from the regional and local perspectives, contributing researchers raise new questions in the light of complex processes of transformation, meaning of civic engagement and ways how it is established in practice.

The results obtained are based on quantitative (two main surveys conducted in three countries) and qualitative studies (individual and group interviews with young people and important stakeholders from, among others, municipalities and NGOs).

an excerpt from the review by Prof. Tadas Sudnickas,
Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

Contributors

Krystyna Gomółka – Professor of social science: political science, administration, public policies, international relations, Gdańsk University of Technology, Faculty of Management and Economics, Department of Eastern Studies. Areas of interests: economic transformation of post-Soviet states, cross-border cooperation with Poland's eastern neighbours, public policy, public policy of Poland and post-Soviet states, economic security. Published 15 books in Polish, Russian and English as well as 220 papers in academic journals in over a dozen countries. Managed three large international research projects.

Izabela Borucińska – Ph.D., Gdańsk University of Technology, Faculty of Management and Economics. Specializes in political science, international relations, the eastern dimension of the EU and Poland's foreign and security policy, as well as in political and economic transformation of the Eastern European countries, including civic participation in democratic systems. She is an author of several dozen academic publications in Polish, English, and Russian.

Remigijus Civinskas – Associate Professor of public policy and management at the Department of Public Administration of Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania). Areas of interests: public policy studies, citizen engagement in public governance, public service management. Actively involved in citizen participatory research for the last ten years. His research focuses on participatory activities in local and national government. Prof. Civinskas can be reached at remigijus.civinskas@vdu.lt.

Rimantas Stašys – Professor of management, the Head of the Management Department at Klaipeda University (Lithuania), organiser of many international conferences and a keynote speaker, a member of editorial boards of, among others, academic journals: "Management Theory and Studies for Rural Business and Infrastructure Development", "Human Resources: The Main Factor of Regional Development", and "Regional Formation and Development Studies". Prof. Stašys is a member of the Joint Doctoral Committee of Vytautas Magnus University, Mykolas Riomeris University and Klaipeda University in management science field. He authored over 60 scientific publications and served as a coordinator of the national study project "Inovadyba" as well as a manager of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) project. Areas of interests: health care organizations management, service management, new product development.

International projects, particularly those co-financed by the European Union, have an important role to play in promoting young people's civic participation. They allow the exchange of knowledge and experience as well as the creation of new solutions to problems and their implementation at the grassroots level. This was the role of the South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) project implemented in the framework of the 2014–2020 Interreg V-A South Baltic Programme by a Polish-Lithuanian-Swedish partnership. One of its outputs is this monograph.

The aim of this study was to show youth civic participation as a social inclusion element in the South Baltic Region in need of reinforcement, based on the examples of selected municipalities from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The authors focused on the diagnosis of key elements of youth civic engagement at local and cross-border level, taking into account the context of national youth policies and the European Union policy. The problem was highlighted from the perspective of two social groups: adult decision-makers represented by employees of local institutions and young people aged 14–24 from the Lithuanian municipality of Telšiai, the Polish municipalities of Dzierzgoń, Elbląg, Gdynia, Iława and Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, and the Swedish municipality of Hässleholm.

The study consists of six chapters written by four authors, two from Poland and two from Lithuania.



SB YCGN
South Baltic Youth Core
Groups Network



European
Regional
Development
Fund

