



# From informing to empowerment – How to improve the participation of the children

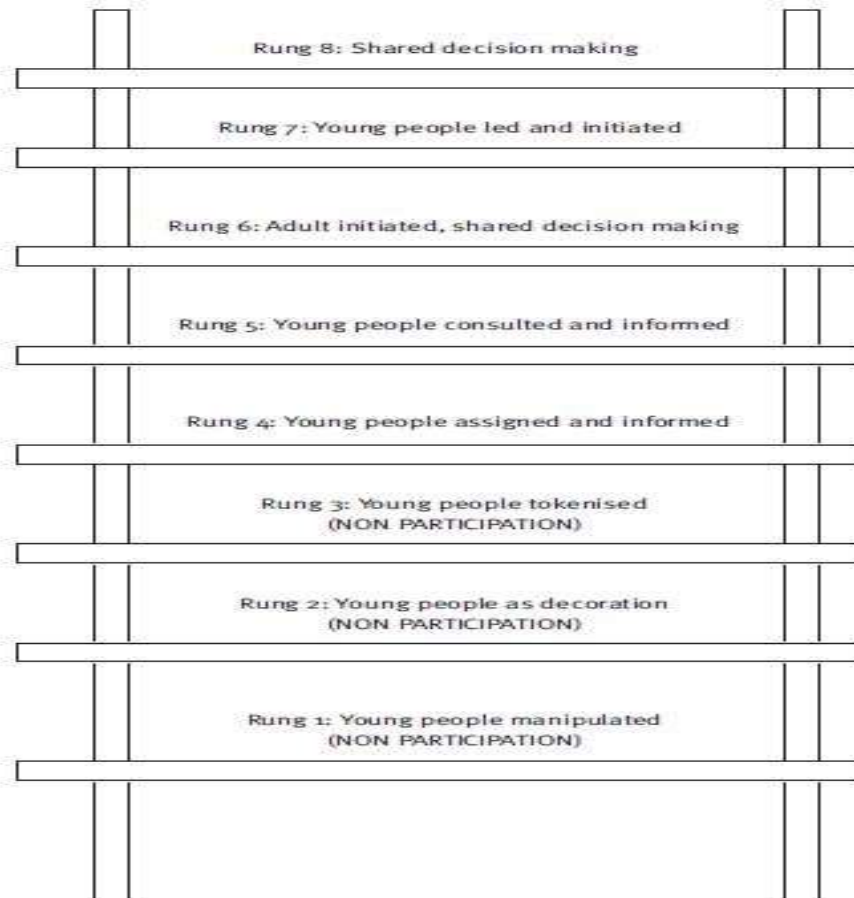
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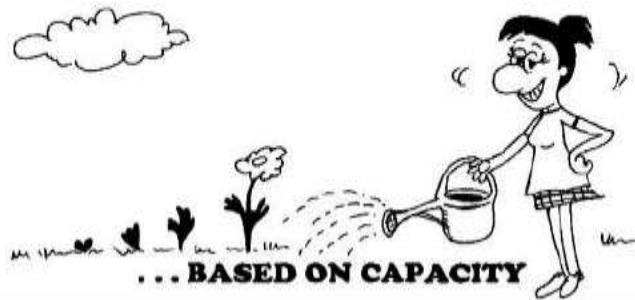


**“Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.”**

*The revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe*



PARTICIPATION IS...



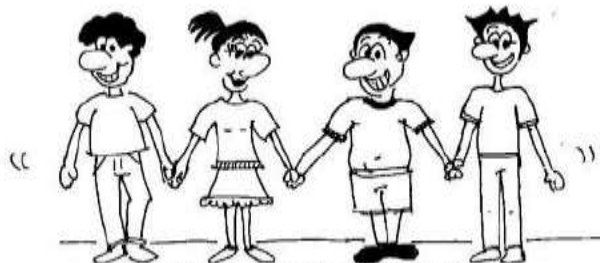
... BASED ON CAPACITY

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... BASED ON A CHALLENGE

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... BASED ON CONNECTION

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# In Turku

- In Turku three main elements: communication, cooperation and interaction between citizens, city officials and decision-makers.
- The key is appreciating the knowledge and experience of the citizen side-by-side with the expertise of the city officials. City is a partner and provider of possibilities
- Coordination "unit" of participation in the Central administration: general coordinator, neighbourhood participation, accessibility ombudsman, volunteer work.
- Each department supports and promotes participation, eg. there is interaction designer in the museum services

# Influence Groups

- The six influence Groups are important actors of participation in Turku.
- One of the roles is to act as experience experts of the group they represent. They have a massive amount of voluntary organizations at their background.
- In practice, the Influential Groups make initiatives, give statements, organize seminars and follow-up decision-making. Their role is important in providing information of the current and future needs and concerns of their target group.
- The “semi-formal” role includes that some members of the groups are invited to participate in the Political Boards of the city, e.g. the Board of Culture.
- City provides them a small amount of funding for the activities and by providing a person for preparation and maintain the work



## Parliament of Children & Council of Youth

- Meetings at City Council meeting hall, a 2-year term for both, elections
- Learning the important skills for meetings, debate, listening to others, advocate their own cases
- A good sense of taking in consideration their fellows and a wider responsibility of the society
  - establish in each school a box for “silent voices” to empower the quiet pupils
  - the money allocated to the meeting fees will be used to organise more activities to all organising events and raising money to support the Baltic Sea environment



## Council of Immigrants & Council of Gender Equality

- Council of immigrants is the latest member in the family
- In Turku 9% of the population speaks other than Finnish or Swedish as the mother tongue and there is more than 100 different nationalities in Turku
- The main task is to provide a discussion table between the immigrant groups and the officials in order to support integration



All Influence groups promote equity and equal opportunities, therefore it has been discussed if there is a need for a separate Gender Equality group





## Council of Elderly & Council of Disabled

- Both are statutory by law – different focus groups
- Members represent strongly the NGO's of elderly/pensioners and disabled
- Nominated political representatives are also members
- Accessibility ombudsman a permanent member
- Organise events and hearings on topical issues
- Strong will to participate more in the planning phase of the topics
- New national Accessibility Act requires to take accessibility in consideration in a wide sense (clear language, font size, most of information is on the internet etc.)

# Achievements

- The Influence Groups have increasingly worked together during the last two years.
- They see as their common task to promote health and well-being of Turku citizens.
- The co-operation takes the forms of common planning meetings and events, which offer platforms to share good experiences.
- The new co-operative models are also tools in tackling the inequalities.
- They have participated actively eg. in developing the Health and Wellbeing plan of Children and Youth and the Accessibility Plan of the city.

# Conclusion

- Promoting participation and empowerment of people in planning and decision making is many times more a question of will than skills.
- The city officials need tools, encouragement, training and motivation to take people as part of the planning and decision-making.
- All activities require co-operation between the departments of the city, NGO's and residents.
- The questions to be considered in the future are is the family of the Influential Groups in Turku as versatile as possible? Do we need new groups?



## Universal Children's Day 20 November

13 years old youngsters wishes to their parents:

I wish that You:

- spend more time with our family
- spend more time with me
- come to watch my hobbies
- help me when I need You
- talk the truth
- ask my opinion in the matters that involves me









CITY OF  
TURKU













” Old town,  
but pretty  
funky! ”