

**SCHOOL OF
POLITICS**
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

SITRA

OULU | *Educational and
Cultural Services*

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Foreword

This material, compiled to support democracy education, is targeted at teachers, youth workers and other parties working with young people or otherwise interested in the subject. The material can be implemented in education to support a teaching module. All activities, workshops, and visitation discussed in the material can be carried out in schools, youth centres, youth clubs, young people's influential groups or other groups for young people. The workshops included in the material are designed for group work, but the topics can be implemented also individually one on one with a young person.

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What is the School of Politics for Young People?

The School of Politics for Young People is a Sitra and the City of Oulu funded project (2/2020-3/2021), one object of which is to spark young people's interest in influencing and to achieving relevant knowledge and abilities required for making a difference and acting in society.

The project had three focus areas: intergenerational learning, enhancement of young people's societal knowledge and skills as well as to support and deepen young people's democracy education. The activities were planned and developed further during the project in cooperation between young people, city workers and elected officials.

Objective

The objective of the School of Politics for Young People is to enhance young people's skills for inclusion, their societal skills and knowledge, and to find meaningful ways of participation and influencing for young people. In the course of the project, young people were encouraged to point out drawbacks and enabled to find solutions. Following this project, young people will know how to present their comments and views on societal issues and have the courage to do so. One of the aims of the project was to increase and enhance interaction between decision-makers and young people and thus promote

intergenerational learning. Young people learn from adults and adults learn from young people respectively. The objective of the project was also to improve democracy education skills of those working with children and young people.

Democracy Trials 2020

Democracy Trials 2020 is a part of Sitra's Updating Democracy project. The objective of democracy trials is to find various democracy-enhancing, innovative cross-sectoral joint undertakings, which promote democratic inclusion, participation and dialogue. The School of Politics for Young People project, which was carried out in Oulu, was one of the Democracy Trials 2020 projects funded by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra.

Supported by research

Research was undertaken through the project of the School of Politics for Young People and will yield new scientific information about young people's opportunities for inclusion and participation in connection to various events and functions based on interaction and people-to-people encounters. Moreover, the research provides information on how the young create opportunities for participation and how active influencing can increase young people's participation and inclusion.



What is inclusion and influencing

The concepts of inclusion and influencing are often used when talking about children and young people's role in the society and decision-making. Inclusion can be defined as an individual's need and opportunity to belong to communities which are relevant to his or her being, and contribute to them. Inclusion does not regard an individual only, but also the community and society. Therefore, when talking about the inclusion of children or young people, we need to consider not only the needs and experiences of an individual for inclusion, but also the respective support provided by adults active in the society. Inclusion can be supported both in day-to-day activities and by creating structures where influencing is possible.

The starting point for inclusion is the understanding of an individual as an active participant in the life and the environments they live in (Suorsa & Huotari, 2014). Individuals are social beings, who live and act in continuous interaction with other individuals and their environment. An individual is constantly developing through the interaction, while developing their environment unavoidably through their actions (Gadamer, 2004). In other words, an individual is always involved in the changes in their environment, either by active choices or passively, living their everyday routines. Children and young people conduct their inclusion when they are engaged in their communities, family, school, hobbies or more extensively in society (Golombek, 2006). Inclusion is participation in the development of the common environment in a manner meaningful from an individual's perspective. Inclusion is thus tightly associated with an individual's influence in their circumstances. (Dreier, 2011.) Inclusion as a concept, however, is closely linked with various ethical policies, which allow inclusion

to be seen as a responsible and socially constructive resource. Empowered individuals take the responsibility not only for their own activities but also commits to improving common issues and looks after and shoulders responsibility for their community. (Kiilakoski 2007, 12–14.)

Inclusion can be reviewed through an individual's relationship to society: an individual's right to his or her identity and value as a member of a family, community or other similar group. Society, on the other hand, has to provide an opportunity for this and create a framework for effective participation. (Kiilakoski, 2007.) In other words, inclusion is both an individual's experience and a state of society. Influencing, on the other hand, is usually seen as a conscious change of circumstances enabled by inclusion. What matters, is the fact that people are included in the societal processes, not only to have an experience of inclusion but that their actions are actually considered effective (Dreier, 2011). Therefore inclusion can be defined in democratic society through influencing as opportunities for children and young people to participate and be active citizens, present their views in their communities and the entire society, and participate in the processes and decisions affecting them (Alanko 2013, 43).

Inclusion and influencing are broad concepts which may be used also with incorrect meaning (Kiilakoski, Gretschel & Nivala, 2012; Rytioja & Kallio, 2018). Ostensible participation refers to such form of participation where young people are provided opportunities to be involved in discussions and decision-making processes even if it makes no difference to the final outcomes (Kiilakoski, Gretschel & Nivala 2012, 14). In such a case, temporary experiences of participation may be offered, but on the



long run this kind of arrangement undermines the trust and separates young people from the societal processes (Lepola & Kokko, 2015). Different systems created in the municipality for hearing young people's voice is not enough, either - young people have to feel that they are appreciated and their opinions really matter (Kiilakoski, 2007).

Achievement of and support for inclusion in society

The attainment of children and young people's inclusion and its support has been discussed a lot over the past decades. Democracy education targets at providing children and young people knowledge and skills required for societal participation. Supporting young people's inclusion can actually begin by raising young people's awareness of their rights and encourage them to request action for the enforcement of these rights (Hart, 1997). Approaches and structures have been developed in Finland to involve young people in decision-making by various consultation methods and developing youth council activities and regional participation groups (Lepola & Kokko, 2015). Such procedures begin with the idea of inclusivity mentioned earlier: young people have a natural wish to understand the world around them and have their say, while adults have to find the ways in which to encourage young people to develop their environment (Hart, 1997).

Young people's participation in decision-making in society can be approached from two different perspectives: through formal democratic institutions and structures or by paying attention to young people's own, often informal modes of participation and influencing (Lepola & Kokko, 2015). Children and young people are the best experts of their own life and environment; therefore by developing the channels of dialogue and influencing, their knowledge and skills are best made available for the whole society to use. Support for inclusion can be seen as listening to what children and young people have to say and considering their opinion in different stages of decision-making (Pajulammi 2014, 141–142). In other words, different forms of participation in democratic decision-making can be created for young people, including youth councils, other influencer and participation groups and student association activities. Young people's voice in decision-making is enhanced also by creating methods for decision-making processes where young people's views are being heard before actually making the decisions.

Many young people, however, find official decision-making bodies distant and unfamiliar. Often young people think that the best way of influencing is by their day-to-day choices, for instance making decisions about purchases or using social media channels to

express their views. (Lepola & Kokko, 2015.) Lepola and Kokko in their research (2015) on the influencing options of Finnish adolescents discovered that the most common method of influencing for young people was to sign an initiative or petition. The second most common way was voting and the third discussing societal themes through social media or the Internet. Also an individual's artistic activities, participation in discussions, volunteering and participation in associations as well as training and education were considered effective ways of influencing in society. However, young people often found influencing in the actual political decision-making difficult (Lepola & Kokko, 2015).

The methods described in this educational material are based on the fairly multifaceted and broad view of inclusion and influencing. The School of Politics for Young People developed methods to help young people to see their opportunities to act in society and make choices, influence societal processes, express themselves, get information, help and support if needed (Thomas, 2007). When planning activities which support youth inclusion, due consideration is to be given also to the fulfilment of these aspects, and influencing has to be seen in a broad sense as functioning in both official and unofficial structures. One of the foundations of the School of Politics for Young People is the thought that youth inclusion can be developed by promoting interaction between young people and other parties. In that case, the development of opportunities for young people's activities and interaction is essential - as is the way how young people act under the circumstances. Moreover, how young people and decision-makers meet in various everyday and official decision-making settings is another relevant thing. One has to be willing to challenge and change the existing space and structures when promoting young people's opportunities for influencing.



Inclusion and influencing in the curriculum

The national core curriculum (2014) discusses the significance and emphasis of value education in a world where the flow of information is enormous and social media and peer relationships shape children and young people's value systems. The curriculum discusses the debate on values, the target of which is to guide pupils into recognising and identifying the values they encounter and also to think about them critically. The aim of education is to encourage pupils to build their personal value systems. The joint reflection on values and cooperation between home and school creates security and promotes pupils' well-being. The school staff's open-minded and respectful approach to different religions, beliefs, traditions and views on rearing children is essential. In other words, these different conceptions lay the foundation for constructive interaction. (OPS 2014, 15)

The aim of basic education is to support a pupil's growth to humanity, manifested by the pursuit of truth, goodness, beauty, justice and peace (OPS 2014, 15) According to the curriculum, the ability to address conflicts ethically and sympathetically and to have the courage to stand up for what is good are part of general knowledge and ability. General knowledge and ability means that individuals and communities are capable of making decisions based on ethical reflection, putting themselves in the place of another person, and knowledge-based consideration (OPS 2014, 16). General knowledge and ability manifest themselves in individuals' attitudes to themselves, other people, the environment and information, and in the ways they do and wish to act.

Educated persons strive to do what is right, show respect for themselves, other people and the environment. An educated person is able to use information critically. An effort towards self-regulation and accepting responsibility are also part of general knowledge and ability. Basic education is built on respect for life and human rights, which directs the pupils to defend these values and to appreciate the inviolability of human dignity. Basic education promotes well-being, democracy and active agency in civil society. Basic education is continuously developed by the extensive principles of equality and equity. The purpose of education is to contribute to promoting economic, social, regional and gender equality. (OPS 2014, 16)

The School of Politics for Young People is a comprehensive entity, but if it should be integrated in one subject, it would naturally fall under Social Studies. As a school subject, Social Studies support pupils' growth into active, responsible and entrepreneurial citizens. Adults are to guide pupils to take action in a society where diversity is understood, human rights as well as equity and equality are respected in line with the values and principles of democracy. Through their studies in the subject, pupils learn to understand the functions and operations of a society and how they as citizens they can make a difference. Just as important is to encourage young people to develop into spontaneous members of society. (OPS, 2014)

Both Social Studies education and the School of Politics for Young People aim at directing the young to follow



present-day politics and other current issues and events. Young people need to learn to understand how the changes in society impact their personal life. Young people need to learn to obtain and assess information produced, for instance, by different media and to apply that information in varying situations they encounter. Young people have to be encouraged to engage and take part actively and constructively in different situations. Young people are guided towards the understanding that societal decision-making is based on choices, which have to be made between different options in order to reach consensus. (OPS, 2014)

The School of Politics for Young People concentrates on the principles and procedures of a democratic society and the rule of law, including practices by which young people can personally make a difference in their environment. The content covers, among other things, societal structures and exertion of power. The workshops at the School of Politics for Young People reflect on how opinions and ideas materialise through individuals, different organisations, media and decision-makers. Both the workshops and the guidebook, *Make a Difference*, published by the School of Politics for Young People, address various channels and means of societal influencing. We practise the skills necessary for

societal participation and by way of school visits create active, responsible and constructive opportunities for influencing in cooperation with city decision-makers and the youth council.

In compliance with the curriculum, young people need to be shown their own potential for influencing and need to understand principals of decision-making in society and democratic practices on local and international level. Young people should be encouraged to be active citizens who develop their immediate community because everybody's opinion matters. After completing basic education, young people should be able to think about ethical questions in relation to democracy, their personal opinions and the ethical scope of activities. They should understand how laws and regulations affect their personal life plans and be able to notice and reflect on changes in society Pupils are instructed to observe and increase their knowledge of society, considering also source and media criticism. Opportunities for active agency have to be created for young people - the School of Politics for Young People provides them opportunities for participation, influencing and their opinions to be heard. Young people are directed to think critically about their points of view and conceptions of the background and histories. The School of Politics for Young People helps to get closer to these goals.



The School of Politics for Young People in practice

The goal of the School of Politics for Young People is to find and try meaningful ways of participation and influencing for young people, enhance readiness for inclusion and societal skills and knowledge, promote intergenerational learning, increase and deepen interaction between decision-makers and young people, and improve engagement and democracy education capabilities of persons who work with children and young people. The goal is to encourage young people to point out drawbacks and find solutions for them, thus spurring them on to develop their municipality. One of the goals is also to support young people in organising voluntary activities. Moreover, a natural objective in connection with all the activities is to intensify cooperation between municipal actors. The School of Politics for Young People is not about party politics but the subject is addressed on a general level.

The School of Politics for Young People has three focus areas:

1. Intergenerational learning
2. Enhancement of young people's knowledge and abilities regarding the society
3. Supporting and deepening democracy education.

Intergenerational learning

Intergenerational learning will gain depth in the dialogue between a member of the local council (adult) and a member of the youth council (young person) and regular meetings. With the School of Politics for Young People this procedure will be put to practice in educational institutions thus making a connection with a larger number of young people. The listeners are interactively told about societal influencing, influencing opportunities, youth council activities and city decision-making. Young people are challenged to voice their views on current issues to be decided.

Enhancement of young people's knowledge and abilities regarding the society

The School of Politics for Young People provides information about various opportunities of influencing for instance at workshops held at school, youth councils, regional children and young people's participation groups

and to youth workers, who circulate that information to young people in their area in many different ways. Young people are also encouraged to talk about drawbacks and together find solutions to them.

The School of Politics for Young People took place from February 2020 to March 2021 in Oulu with two communication channels www.ouka.fi/nuortenpolitiikkakoulu and the Instagram account @nuortenpolitiikkakoulu which was actively updated during the project. The channels were exhibition forums for various influencing channels and methods. The webpage contains information about democracy education for young people and persons working with them. It is a compilation of materials and tips on useful links to other websites on democracy education, which will be useful also after the project.

The School of Politics for Young People project published Make a Difference guidebook directed at young people. The guidebook may well be used also by those working with young people and it works well as an icebreaker both in one on one and group sessions. The online version is on the School of Politics webpage. We also printed a limited number of booklets, which have been handed out to Oulu Youth Service units, pilot schools of the project and various educational institutions and youth groups.

Supporting and deepening democracy education.

Five local schools piloted in the School of Politics for Young People project, three middle schools and two upper secondary schools: Kaakkuri, Laanila and Rajakylä middle schools, Kiiminki general upper secondary school 1st year students and OSAO Services / Kaukovainio Unit / Entrepreneurship Path students. Pilot schools have organised workshops and hosted decision-maker visits. We implemented our experience gained from these events to put together the practices in this material. The compiled material supports also the competence and capabilities of teachers and other individuals working with young people to provide conditions and support young people in active citizenship.



Workshops

The idea of the workshops is to guide young people to thinking about their personal ways of influencing the environment. Next, we will be reflecting together on our influence in society and what does young people's participation mean to societal functioning. In the following piece, we will be discussing the goals and targets of a workshop and how it can be implemented.

Workshop 1: I participate

The purpose of the first workshop is to encourage young persons to think about the ways they can influence at present. How to make a difference at home, in school, or at hobbies. What things young persons can influence by their actions and why. At the same time, young persons are encouraged to reflect on the societal aspects, in other words, what effect do e.g. their hobbies have on the functioning and existence of the community.

Objective

- Young people are aware of their opportunities for influencing.
- Young people realise how their personal contribution can have an effect on their environment and develop it.
- Young people are more aware of different ways to influence.

Evaluation

- Evaluation of one's own participation and participation in small group discussion.

Implementation

Workshop 1, duration 60 minutes

Equipment:

- pen and paper for each participant
- lots of Post-It notes, sticky tape and large cardboard sheets (1 pc for each group) OR an electronic platform where the notes by different groups can be entered.
- Make a Difference word cards (Appendix 1)

1. Warm-up exercise: any activity-based exercise, where everyone can talk a little. Duration 5 minutes
2. To start with, participants will think about words for influencing, decision-making and inclusion by themselves, without talking to anybody. Write the words down, no censoring or evaluating in any way. This assignment tunes participants into the theme. The teacher can collect the words from the pupils and read few out as an example. 5 minutes
3. The class or group is divided into smaller groups (4 to 5 young people). 5 minutes
4. The groups are instructed to think and talk about matters they can currently influence at home, school, free time, hobbies etc. (bed time, home-coming time, food, home assignments, effort they put into their studies, friends, their looks, recreational activities, hobbies and interests, screentime, outdoor activities, exercise, health etc.) Groups will write the items on Post-It notes (one item per note) and then stick them onto the large cardboard they have. Or, everything will be entered on the group's own page on an electronic platform. 15 minutes
5. The groups will then introduce their input and discuss it together with others. The same topics may come up in a number of groups and do not need to be discussed repeatedly, unless they give rise to new thoughts. 15 minutes
6. Discussion about the Make a Difference word cards (Appendix 1). The teacher picks the cards up, one at a time, and explains its meaning, if necessary. If a young person has participated in the respective activity or acted accordingly, they will either give a thumbs up or shouts "YUP". 15 minutes

TIP: The teacher may prepare a compilation of the words (item 2), if they so wish, with "before" and "after". The first one in the beginning of the first workshop and the latter after the last workshop is completed. Do you see a difference?

TIP: There are quite many Make a Difference words, so the class can spend the whole lesson talking about the cards, if they are interested.

TIP: The word cards can be used like a word explanation game; use them for team work activities or do mime.

TIP: Print out word cards in A4 and attach them onto the classroom wall for everyone to see and recall also at a later stage.

Workshop 2: We participate

In this workshop we will discuss influencing - how it feels and looks. The focus of dialogue and reflection shifts from an individual to community and sharing. In the beginning of the workshop young people will answer the question "How does influencing seem to you? The question can be answered using Post-It notes or electronic platforms. The idea is for everyone to think about answers to the questions - there are no right or wrong ones. At this point, the answers are briefly discussed together.



At the next stage of the workshop, young people may share their thoughts together in small groups. Art is used as the medium of the workshop in order to express visually and verbally young people's views on influencing and inclusion. How can you make a difference and what means do you have available to do so? Sometimes verbal expression may be difficult, therefore in this workshop we take a lighter approach to the topic. Difficult issues are often more easily expressed through visual arts. The instructor can give tips on different types of engagement and contribution which may include letters to the editor and opinion pieces, demonstrations, consumer choices etc.

Once the pictures are finished, the whole group will discuss them. Young people can talk about their art pieces and listeners can ask them about the topic. The instructor plays a crucial role in this part of the workshop. The instructor should ask questions about the pictures and ask the group's and other participants' opinions and comments about the items illustrated by the pictures. All young people are encouraged to express their opinion through open discussion. Basically, opinions can be asked and answered by, for instance, raising a thumb thus everybody can contribute when they wish to do so. If a topic arouses more interest or is clearly prominent in many of the works, it is good to stop to talk about the respective topic in more detail. Enough time should be scheduled for discussion and provide young people an opportunity to talk and tell about their thoughts.

Objective

- Young people think about influencing at different levels.
- Young people work in a group and can express their opinions.
- Young people are aware of various ways of engagement and influencing as an individual and a member of a group.
- Young people pay attention to the issues requiring development or improvement for example in their neighbourhood.

Evaluation

- Working together. Consideration of others and providing an ambience where everyone feels comfortable to voice their opinions.
- An opportunity to converse and reflect together.

Implementation

Workshop 2, duration 45 to 60 minutes

Equipment:

NB. This workshop can be carried out also by drama methods.

- large sheets of paper, one for each group
 - felt-tips
1. First, we will discuss and share thoughts about what influencing, decision-making and politics feel or seem like. Are there any symbols, codes, slogans, advertisements etc. that express these topics. What kind of mental images these topics create, how do they feel? You can also reflect on issues arisen in the Workshop 1.
 2. The class or group is divided into smaller groups (4 to 5 young people). The small groups of Workshop 1 can be implemented also here.

3. Each group shares a large sheet of paper and enough felt-tips for working. The members of the group start working on a joint piece with every member of the group contributing to it one way or another. The group can decide, whether individual pieces of the work make the whole, or does every member of the group draw individual items on the paper (a lot depends on the group dynamics).
4. In the end, each group presents their piece to the other groups and discuss their work. The instructor may ask additional questions, why does the group have certain elements in their work, what does it tell or what mental images does it raise. Both the presenters and audience are welcome to contribute to the discussion.

Workshop 3: How do we participate?

In the third workshop we start to work ideas to products. In the earlier workshops young people have reflected on various ways and means of influencing. Now, the purpose is to mould the thoughts and reflections into ideas which will be further "productised", i.e. we will prepare an initiative, a development idea, a letter to the editor or a statement. In small groups, young people discuss the issues they would presently like to contribute to, for example in their school environment, neighbourhood, home town or more extensively on an ideological level (equality, equity, etc.). Is there such a current issue, coming up for decision-making, presently under preparation, on which young people would like to express their views?

Young people think about the steps to take when putting forward the things that are important to them. The purpose is to plan and prepare an initiative or a development idea, based on potential discussions earlier. Different ways and methods of putting initiatives forward are explained to the young people. Moreover, in the beginning, channels for submitting feedback to one's municipality or different authorities may be discussed, as the means of taking initiatives and proposals for action forward. Also direct contact to decision-makers or authorities may be considered, e.g. in a case where young people's initiative regards issues relating to their school, the initiative may be submitted directly to the



headmaster. Sometimes an initiative may concern more than one party and in such case the best option for the recipient can be considered in cooperation with the young people.

In the end, the initiatives are discussed together and decision made which will be processed further and which initiatives will be submitted as is. A follow-up form (Appendix 2) is to be filled in for each initiative; the respective group will fill in information regarding their initiative. The follow-up form illustrates to young people, how the initiative is progressing and it also reminds them to follow the status of their initiative.

Enter the following information in the follow-up forms:

- Initiative title (Which topic is interesting and will be selected?)
- Content of the initiative or development idea (comments, reasons, proposals for solution)
- To whom to deliver the initiative? (Name of the person or service)
- Follow-up: how is the case progressing? (Did you receive acknowledgement of receiving your initiative? What has happened since then?)
- Decision (Approved / Rejected, reasons)
- What effect does the decision have in day-to-day life? Follow-up (Decide in the group how long you are going to follow the case)

Objective

- Young people are more aware of different ways to participate and influence.
- Young people are aware of various channels for engagement in society.

Evaluation

- Sharing ideas and planning the implementation.
- Acting in a group and finding solutions, attainment of joint results.

Implementation

Workshop 3, duration 45-60 minutes

Equipment:

- internet connection to access examples
- pens, paper (the groups will write down their ideas) OR enter the ideas onto electronic platforms.

1. Discussion in the class or group about the issues pupils would personally like to influence right now. The topic may be something in their own school environment, residential area, home town or more extensively at the ideological level. The topic may be any other timely issue, or a matter under preparation, which will be subject to municipal or national decision-making in the (near) future. Discussions may be carried out also in smaller groups.
2. The instructor introduces various channels for making initiatives (national and local).
3. Small groups choose the topic of their initiative, write it down and discuss the channel through which or to whom their initiative should be delivered.
4. Completed initiatives will then be discussed with the whole class. The class will decide, whether all initiatives are forwarded or whether they choose just some.
5. Initiatives are put forward.
6. An individual follow-up form will be filled in for each forwarded initiative (Appendix 2)

Tips for arranging workshops

When planning the implementation of workshops, it is good to be aware of the fact that whether the workshops are held individually one at a time or as an entity in one day, work on the topic requires ice-breakers, warm-ups and time for discussion. If the workshops are arranged individually, a warm-up exercise should be included in the beginning as an introduction to the theme at hand. The purpose of the practise is to provide everyone an opportunity to participate, either by action or speech and thus lower the threshold for activation in the actual workshop.

An important thing in the workshops of the School of Politics for Young People is to maintain a dialogue. Reflecting on issues together and talking about them is an essential part of the process. A teacher or an instructor should not shy away from young people's questions, on the contrary, if necessary, they can look into the matter together. Young people should be challenged a little with questions and asked to explain, why they chose to do a certain drawing or picked a particular topic for their initiative, or to talk more about the topic.

The School of Politics for Young People can be used for various multidisciplinary modules, Workshops 1 to 3 can be arranged as independent units or connected to the lessons in a particular subject or carried out in cross-curricular classes. When arranging workshops, the space should be peaceful and atmosphere relaxed. The amount of minutes given for assignments in the instructions and time structure for the workshops is just a guideline.

Examples of workshops held during various lessons

- Social Studies or native language studies: prepare an initiative, statement or a letter to the editor.
- Visual arts: prepare a thought-provoking art piece or a piece illustrating how influencing feels or what it looks like; use different materials and styles.
- Native language studies and music: compose a thought-provoking song or poem. You can also make an animation or write a play using drama techniques.
- Media and communication studies or native language studies: finding news in different media, recognising fake news, media criticism, etc.



Decision-maker visits

Decision-maker visits are always attended by a member of the youth council (or other youth influencer group) together with a member of the city council. Young person / adult pair lends depth to the visits, and the audience will hear different perspectives on things. Young people (audience) are told interactively about societal influencing, influencing opportunities, youth council activities and city decision-making.

The goals and implementation methods are always discussed with both the youth and city councillors before the visits take place. Young people learn from the visiting decision-makers, but the visitors may also learn from the young people. Therefore the good achieved from the visit should be shared on personal networks. If the visitation is arranged in an educational institution as a part of the learning content, it will take place during the school day. Visits can be arranged in youth clubs also in the evening and over the weekend.

The goal of the visit is to encourage young people to participate and influence; introduce various ways of influencing; lower the threshold for contacting the youth council and city decision-makers.

The goal is to encourage young people to have their say as members of society; the guests make an excellent example. Young people can be challenged to voice their views on current issues on which a decision is to be taken. The visits are planned in advance together with a coworker.

If visitation takes place by remote access, it can be saved for later educational purposes. This, however, is to be agreed upon with the guests in advance. The visits taking place at schools can also be documented.

Duration of visits

The duration of decision-maker visits is 60 minutes.

- 5 minutes. The organiser of the function opens the event and introduces the guests
- 40 minutes. The guests will take turns speaking
- 10-15 minutes. Time for questions (The guests may, if they like, invite questions also while they speak)

Prior to a decision-maker visit

The organiser has to make sure they invite the guests in good time. Visitors can be invited either directly in person or by submitting an invitation to the youth council or city council/ local authority committee and they will designate the guest(s).

A classroom or group of young people will familiarise themselves with the visiting decision-makers (name, background information about their community, where involved, points to note, etc.) Young people will also think about questions to ask from the guests. If a lot of people are present, young people can think up questions also in smaller groups.

After a decision-maker visit

Talk about the visitors and the event with young people. What did we learn? What surprised us? Were the young people prejudiced, did anything change? If the guests mount a challenge to the young people, the respective tasks. The organiser will thank the guests also after the event.



Topics, the guest decision-makers preferably will address when visiting a school or youth club

Talk the guests through any wishes and rules regarding the visit. Ask the representative of the youth council and the city councillor to talk about their personal decision-maker path, i.e. what inspired and motivated them to engage in influencing. What steps did they take to be in the position or post they now hold (for instance city or youth council chairperson, member of a communications team or a committee etc.) Ask them to tell in their own words, what they can achieve in their position and how they can make a difference. In which ways young people in particular can make a difference? They can talk about city decision-making processes or youth council activities in general. The guests' personal experiences and stories are usually very interesting to hear. The visitors may pose a challenge to young people to voice their views on current issues on which a decision is to be taken.

Common rules for the decision-maker visits

Discuss common rules with the guests before the visit. If there are a number of guests, they can be talked through the rules at the same time. The organiser makes sure everybody is aware of the rules during the visit.

- Come as you are - as an individual and a city/youth councillor, not a representative of a political party.
- In other words, we leave party politics behind and focus on inspiring young people in the field of influencing.
- If someone wants to know whether you are or why you are a member of a certain political party, you can answer the question very briefly.
- Answer the questions appropriately, be respectful to the person asking a question but also to your audience.
- Forget jargon and talk intelligibly about issues.
- Encourage young people to participate.
- Come with an open mind and willingness to listen.
- Share the ideas and inspiration gained from the visit in your own networks.
- Intergenerational learning is important. Young people learn from adults and adults learn from young people.
- The youth council representative: information provided by other young people is important also for the youth councillor.
- During the visit, a teacher or instructor of the group is responsible for the group's behaviour and participation.
- The organiser of the function opens the event and in the end gives a vote of thanks.



Vocabulary

Initiative – a written proposal put forward. A local resident's initiative can be put forward by a resident of the municipality and the initiative regards the municipality. A citizens' initiative, on the other hand, can be put forward by a Finnish national entitled to vote. Initiatives are Finnish citizens' direct way of influencing legislation, and requires a minimum of 50,000 approved signatures to be submitted to Parliament for consideration.

Democracy – power held by the people. In accordance with the Constitution, the powers of the State in Finland are vested in the people, who are represented by the Parliament. In Finland, the powers of the State are for most part arranged as representative democracy: the people elect from amongst themselves the persons for decision-making. The powers of the State include individual's right to participate in and influence the development of society and their environment.

Disinformation – is false or misleading information or communications.

The Finnish Parliament – the body exercising legislative and budgetary powers in Finland. Parliament consists of members of the parliament elected by Finnish nationals entitled to vote. Parliament enacts all legislation in Finland and approves the Budget. Parliament also elects the Prime Minister and oversees the Government. Moreover, Parliament ratifies international treaties and influences European Union matters.

Member of Parliament – an elected member of the parliament. Parliament consists of 200 members, who are elected every four years. Finland is divided into 13 electoral constituencies in compliance with the regional division. A number of representatives proportional to the number of Finnish citizens residing in the electoral district in proportion to the number of all Finnish citizens living in Finland, are elected from each electoral district. However, from the electoral district of Åland, one representative is always elected.

Municipality's elected official – a local councillor or a deputy local councillor, a member elected to a joint municipal authority decision-making body or a deputy member, or a person elected to a position of trust in the municipality. However, where local government officers and employees of a municipality are elected as members of a municipal decision-making body on the basis of their duties, they shall not be considered elected officials of the municipality.

Municipal executive – is responsible for the administration and financial management of the municipality and for all preparatory work and execution of council decisions and for oversight of their legality. The local executive oversees the municipality's interests, represents the municipality and exercises its right to be heard.

Local council – decision-making body vested with the highest decision-making authority in a municipality. The members of the local council are elected for a four-year term in local elections. In cities it may also be called city council.

Member of a local council – an elected official in the local council. In a city, the councillor is called city councillor.

Local authority committee – preparatory and expert body. In Finnish municipalities, local authority committees are subordinate to the local executive. The committees prepare cases for the local executive, but they have also independent discretionary authority. The structure and mandates of local authority committees other than the local authority audit committee and election board can differ from one municipality to the next.

Media literacy – an ability to read media (the Internet, tv, radio, newspapers, social media) and understand it. Competence in media literacy means, for instance, the ability to evaluate the target group of a certain type of an advertisement or how the advertiser tries to influence the recipient.

Critical media literacy – an ability to perceive content published in the press or other media with critical thinking. Understanding that everything you see, hear and read is not necessarily true.

Youth council – non-attached group for young people to participate and exert an influence in the municipality for the best interests of young people.

Political party – an association entered in the Party Register maintained by the Ministry of Justice. Political party is a voluntary association, whose main purpose is to influence the handling of the affairs of the state. Membership is usually gained through the party's local association.

Fake news – information which is not true. Fake news is composed in the same style as genuine news because the aim is to mislead readers. Very often financial or political self-interest lies on the background.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: make a Difference cards

Appendix 2: Follow-up for the initiative


Appendix 1: Make a difference cards




HOBBIES



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CONSUMER CHOICES



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SURVEY



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TALK



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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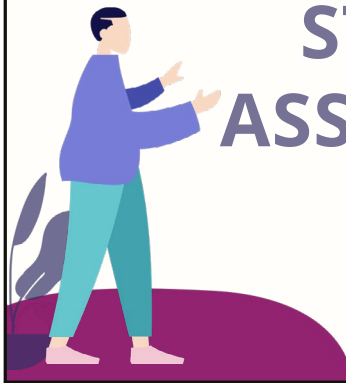
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INITIATIVE

local resident's initiative
citizen's initiative

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FEEDBACK

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LOBBYING

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Appendix 2: Follow-up for the initiative



Follow-up for the initiative

Phases	Notes	Date when it is done
Title of the initiative		
The idea and content of the initiative (Comments, arguments)		
Where or to whom will you leave your initiative? (Name of a person, an office, a service etc.)		
Follow-up: how your initiative is processed?		
Decision (accepted/rejected, reasons of the decision)		
How the decision affects in practice? (Follow-up)		

SCHOOL OF POLITICS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The School of Politics for Young People is a Democracy Trials 2020 Project funded by the City of Oulu and Sitra. The idea and vision was to increase young people's knowledge and abilities relating to the workings of society and how to make a difference in one's environment. The goal of the School of Politics for Young People is to find different ways of influencing for young people. Politics as a word may be slightly intimidating and give rise to a number of mental images. After all, politics really are about simple things: how we work together with other people. For instance, when you discuss home-coming times and come to an agreement - that is politics; you discussed various points of view and in the end reached consensus on the matter. Politics are, in other words, about making an impact on common concerns.

The School of Politics for Young People is challenging young people to do politics in their everyday life, to understand their opportunities to influence and be involved. There is no one right way to act, but everyone will find the way to make their mark. This educational material contains tips and advice on how to develop democracy education in order to support the work carried out among children and young people. The material in the guidebook is intended for persons working with young people.