

FOSTERING CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Policy Recommendations – EmpowerYOUTH Project

Education Agency For Development And Innovation - Idea Not-For-Profit Sp. z o.o.

Youth from rural areas face a number of challenges that are unique to their situation. These difficulties include limited access to training and education, significant unemployment rates, and a lack of basic amenities like as healthcare and transportation. Furthermore, rural youth frequently experience social isolation as well as a lack of opportunity for personal growth and development. Throughout the lifetime of the projects, there has been collected data that helps to state policy recommendations in the field of fostering access to education and employment, strengthening environmental awareness in rural areas and promoting local agriculture.

Recommendations for fostering access to education and employment:

- Ensure access to the labour market for young people in rural areas - jobs in rural areas are lower paid and less accessible than in urban areas.
- Tackling communication and transport exclusion. Young people in rural areas have limited access to education, work, culture and even sport due to the lack of transport links (rail, bus, etc.). Without financial resources, a driving licence and access to a car, they cannot realise their aspirations. People from families with poorer material conditions have a worse start.
- Access to language learning - young people in rural areas have a significantly lower level of language competences, as shown by the results of examinations after primary school. Providing access to foreign languages is key to development and opening up new opportunities.
- Providing access to high-speed Internet, without which there can be no access to education, new technologies, an innovative economy and even agriculture in rural areas.
- Promoting deliberative democracy through public consultation.
- Enchanting social citizenship and raising public awareness of fake news.
- Promoting knowledge sharing about the EU.

Proposals for strengthening environmental awareness in rural areas:

- Access to innovative agriculture, which will reduce the use of fertilisers, plant protection products and antibiotics thanks to new technologies.
- Rational water management, water retention, water reuse and water efficiency.
- Implementing renewable energy sources to reduce atmospheric emissions, lower the price of energy and conserve natural resources.
- Rational waste management: favouring waste sorting and recovery, the use of reusable packaging and a circular economy.
- Protection of soils, promotion of new plant types, natural diversity and sustainable and organic farming.

Recommendations promoting local agriculture and food production:

- Promote small-scale processing, the production of local products and the sale of these products directly from the farm - shortening supply chains and eliminating the excessive number of agents who drive up prices and lengthen the time from field to table.
- Supporting the creation of producer groups - sales groups that guarantee high quality at an affordable price and traceability of the food source.
- Supporting food co-operatives which will guarantee that the food produced is collected directly from the producer.
- Supporting regional brands and products.
- Appropriate labelling of local and quality products for the benefit of producers and consumers.
- Ensuring generational change in agriculture. Without systemic support and tailor-made programmes for those interested in taking over farms, adequate financial support, in farm management and access to development funds, there will be no motivation for generational change in agriculture. Guarantees are needed to give financial and social stability in the first years of farming.

The policy recommendations aim to foster access to education and employment, strengthen environmental awareness in rural areas and promote local agriculture. The proposals listed above should be put into practice in order to provide a better start for young people from rural areas and give them equal opportunities as their peers from urban areas.

