

History of the Youth Inspires Politics project

The foundations for the Youth Inspires Politics project were laid during the YouthMetre project, specifically during one project's conference, where Thomas Grau, representing Children and Youth Parliament Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, met with Martin Maška, back then representing European Youth Press. Both of them took care of supervising local study groups in Germany and Slovakia, whose purpose was to test results of YouthMetre, provide recommendations for improvements, and use those results further (EU youth indicators dashboard and map, training materials, map where ideas can be published). Even though the project was finished in 2017, Thomas and Martin agreed to continue in their good collaboration and soon started thinking about concrete next steps. Thanks to this, both study groups are the only ones that work beyond the lifetime of the YouthMetre project (the others were for example in the Czech Republic or Croatia).

Since active citizenship and civic engagement of young people was not a topic on the agenda of the European Youth Press, it seemed to be quite impossible to establish a real collaboration with the CYP. Moreover, Martin Maška left EYP at the end of 2019. However, he has been also involved with the European Dialogue, organisation behind study group Slovakia, since 2016. Therefore it made more sense to establish a cooperation between CYP and ED, with European Youth Press as a partner and organisational link with YouthMetre at the beginning. This cooperation was supported by Thomas Juhl, the then supervisor of the CYP.

In 2018, Thomas Grau and Martin Maška wrote project Youth Inspires Politics, which was funded by the Erasmus+ programme through IUVENTA – Slovak National Agency. The third partner of the project was NISI from Lithuania, which unfortunately didn't actively contribute to the project. Despite that, young Lithuanians also attended project's activities. First of them was a kick-off meeting in Trnava in July 2019. It brought together 7 participants from each partner country to get to know each other, work of partners related to youth participation, topic of youth advocacy, YouthMetre materials and tools, and relevant good practices from Slovakia (participatory budget in the Trnava Region, support of youth in the city of Trnava). They explored details of eSPOONE and story-pooling method, met representatives of the Trnava Region and city of Trnava. Participants also worked on design of their own advocacy campaign to put their theoretical knowledge in practice.

Second activity was meeting in Brussels in October 2019. It brought together 5 participants from each partner country to get introduced into diplomacy, learn more about history of the European integration, and meet with representatives of UNEP (regional office), Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the European Union, and European Commission. They also worked on elaboration of their ideas.

Third activity took place in Berlin. It again brought together 5 participants from each partner country. They gained more insights into the CYP, met with representatives of Bundestag, Abgeordnetenhaus of Berlin, and city district of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf. Hence they had an opportunity to discuss with decision-makers from three geographical levels: local, regional, and federal. During other meeting they discussed with representatives of Deutscher Bundesjugendring. They also explored details of eSPOONE and story-pooling method during meeting with Christian Meysing at the OSZ Handel I. Last but not least, participants attended meeting with mayors of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf and Polish town of Meseritz and learnt about their cross-border collaboration. Part of the meeting was also ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the MERLIN Box, which has been created by youth from Meseritz (second one, created by youth from Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, is placed in Meseritz).

Due to coronavirus pandemic, it was not possible to organise the last event, which was supposed to take place in Vilnius. CYP and European Dialogue stayed in contact and regularly updated each other on their relevant activities. The cooperation has been supported by Pietro Deligio, current supervisor of the CYP.

CYP members have been using YouthMetre dashboard and map and working on review of the EU youth indicators. Already in February 2019, CYP proposed a motion to implement EU Youth Strategy and use EU youth indicators in the city district. This motion was unanimously adopted by the Bezirksverordnetenversammlung Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf. Thanks to that, the indicators are used to plan, monitor, and evaluate youth-oriented actions in the district. AG Europa at the CYP also discussed creation of new indicators that could be used in whole EU and participated in consultations on creation of the current EU Youth Strategy.

Members of the European Dialogue contributed to drafting of the new Strategy for the youth sector (2021 – 2028), attended first plenary session 2020/21 of the CYP, posted opportunities related to youth participation on Facebook and Instagram, and organised webinar „How to strengthen voice of youth in the society“ on November 16, 2021 (for Slovak participants, but it was attended by representatives of CYP as well). Thomas Grau, Martin Maška, and Christian Meysing also agreed with authors of YouthMetre map – Rafael de Miguel from University of Saragossa and Karl Donert – to have access to the management tool and thus be able to update the map with new data on youth well-being.

The last event was eventually replaced by series of online discussions on December 15 and 16, 2021. The participants met with representatives of good practices – Youth parliament of city of Bardejov, CYP, and Active Youth Lithuania – and young politicians – members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. They also discussed ideas related to three topics: recommendations on what could make work of youth parliaments or councils better, ideas on other initiatives (that would help engage youth in decision making), and other ideas (e.g. what they would like to change in their community). They also had an opportunity to share their ideas after the event and get consultancy from the European Dialogue.

European Dialogue was happy to use eSPOONE to organise both online events and to provide feedback on functionality of the tool, and refers to CYP as the best children and youth parliament in Europe. That's also the reason why CYP was included among good practices on the interactive map on the EURvoice platform.

CYP is one of the most important and long-standing partners of the European Dialogue. Their cooperation has been very fruitful and therefore their representatives are keen on continuing this cooperation: develop new projects, work together on new ideas for better Europe, update YouthMetre map, and support each other when it comes to activities related to active citizenship, youth participation, and advocacy, e.g. providing support letters or sharing expertise, contacts, and materials.