

KEY MESSAGES OPEN UP!

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO SOCIETY!

OPEN UP! is an initiative by youth- debate- human rights organisations, debate coaches, artists and young people. OPEN UP! partners work together to connect young people with fewer opportunities to society through logical, creative, and action oriented debate education methodologies. The International Debate Education Association in the Netherlands (IDEA.NL) has established the OPEN UP! network since 2012.

OPEN UP! is active in more than 9 European countries. OPEN UP! debate coaches collected key messages addressing policy makers, politicians, school managers, youth welfare, and the business sector at all levels in Europe from young people with fewer opportunities. Those messages are:

1

YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE HEARD and authorities should give due weight and feed back to the points of young people (UN Convention for the Rights of the Child, Art. 12). Realising this important right to participate will enable citizenship building at an early age.

- All young people, including people with immigrant backgrounds have the right to participate in decision making processes AT ALL LEVELS about points relevant to them.
- Young people need, and have the right, to be educated about citizenship and political processes as well as about institutions. Civic education should get a much stronger position in the educational sector to ensure that young people are able to think critically and participate in society. This is also in line with the Implementation of the PARIS Declaration, adopted by All Ministers of the Commission for Education Youth and Sport, from May 2015.
- Young people need to be educated and enabled to vote, preferably at 16 years of age.

2

Empowerment and INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

When you start excluding people from society, for example young people at an early age, silencing their voices and giving them the feeling that they should not be heard, they find other channels and ways to express themselves, most often that is through negative activities that benefit no-one. After the long process of being bullied, ignored and sidelined, they just want to find someone who believes in them. And yes I believe in them, I listen to I give them the chance to constantly thrive. This is the only way we can defeat the negative networks that are spoiling their lives.

(OPEN UP! PARTICIPANT DURING TRAINING IN NAPELS, SEPTEMBER 2016)

2a. Youth in general with a specific focus on young people with fewer opportunities

- **Provide equal access** to education and scholarships until university for all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities in the EU.
- **Empower the youth with fewer opportunities** to SPEAK about their problems and to debate solutions.
- **Create bridges** between specifically youth with fewer opportunities and other stakeholders around the issues the youth identifies, and co-create platforms to solve those issues jointly. This should happen at all levels.
- Empowerment of vulnerable **young people at an early age via non-formal Education**, for instance debate education and participation in mentoring programs. This creates resilience when they enter adolescence.
- **Engage parents; especially young parents!**
- Extra focus on **Roma youth**, as one of the most marginalized group of young people in Europe.
- **Teach and apply diversity and intercultural communication** that would provide understanding via **history, language, and culture** in formal and non-formal education.
- **Support non-formal education workers**, especially youth workers who work directly with young people who have fewer opportunities.
- **Develop and sustain extra support network**, both formal and non-formal, to young people above 18th who lived in residential settings but have to live on their own when they turn 18.

2b. Provide greater opportunities to young people to access the labour market. This should be focused specifically on those with fewer opportunities.

- Upturn the terms of nonimmigrant-immigrant youth; all (young) people want to develop and this needs to be facilitated by the state.
- Fair Integration and future perspectives for all people who live and grow up in European Countries including refugees, immigrants and youth with fewer opportunities as accorded in various Human Rights Conventions so that their provisional basic rights as well as the right to participate and to be protected are realised.
- Access to school for all – including youth from lower classes, with immigrant background that may not afford higher education- they all have the right to develop, go to university and blossom their talents. All youth should be approached equally in this area to ensure development and peace.
- States should listen more to young people from diverse background to understand the emotions of young people towards migrants. Especially, youngsters that come from second or third generation immigrant families understand the difficulties of refugees nowadays. **Hear their key message that the state should provide equal scholarship for immigrants too.**
- Respect for diversity of identity **and the opportunity to see it as a new possibility for Europe to make use of each other's talents and cultures.**

2c. Provide (especially the ones with fewer opportunities) more opportunities to young people to access the labour market

- Develop and improve (the already existing) mechanisms for vocational guidance and counselling to enable young people with fewer opportunities to find a job.
- Promote fairly awarded volunteering among young people with fewer opportunities as a tool for better access to the labour market. For instance ensure a large scale volunteering website that shows all opportunities in the area the potential volunteer wishes to volunteer.

PREVENTING THE RADICALISATION OF YOUTH

- **Recognize bullying and hidden or open discrimination**, organize campaigns and include ALL stakeholders to team up to tackle this problem.
- Teach young people to **think critically and to debate**; Debate education provides them with skills to raise their voice and to develop self esteem, as well as to be connected with their society.
- **Governments and other relevant stakeholders should devote more time to young people**, including those with fewer opportunities.
- Governments and other stakeholders should **invest more energy into closing the gap** between young people and politicians, as well as to appreciating the diversity in the (youth) society.

- Organize and enable a **constructive network of care takers with children and young people in the middle** like youth workers, coaches, role models and teachers around the youth. Those local multipliers 'are local heroes' which should be celebrated.
- Involve parents and build bridges between the youth and the parents, **support and TRUST this intergenerational dialogue.**
- **Empower school teachers, youth workers and parents to stimulate critical thinking and to give mutual respect to opinions and voices of young people**, starting at a young age. MORE Training in this field is required to enable young people to develop resilience and critical thinking.
- **Improve the recognition and validation of non-formal learning on European level.** Recognize NON Formal Education as an important competence for ALL young people. It delivers soft skills as Leadership, critical thinking, team work and intercultural understanding.
- **Start with NON FORMAL Education at an early age!**

DEBATE EDUCATION, INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES, IS ONE OF THE ANSWERS TO ADDRESS THESE PROBLEMS BECAUSE:

- It supports **public speaking** in a confident way
- It creates a platform and **positive networks** for young people compared to negative tendencies in their development.
- It **offers various perspectives on a problem**, which deepens understanding and provides solutions on how to deal with everyday problems in a diverse and complex context.
- Through public debates we bring **different stakeholders together on certain issues** analyzing them from different perspectives, but it also gives an opportunity to include all stakeholders relevant for that problem.
- It **offers young people the feeling to be heard** which would eventually result with inter-connection between young people with different backgrounds.
- It **creates understanding about democracy and stimulates civic engagement** so that all young people-regardless of their backgrounds are heard.
- It creates a **safe space to discuss issues** of relevance to young people.
- **Skills for work and positive future like:**
 - a. Self confidence
 - b. Self esteem
 - c. Team work
 - d. Leadership
 - e. Critical thinking
 - f. Analysis
 - g. Pitching your goals
 - h. Intercultural communication
 - i. Development of arguments
 - j. Speaking and presentation
 - k. Active listening
 - l. Research

Key messages are developed by the OPEN UP! partners who aim to contribute to a world where dignity of all people on our planet is respected. The partners are:



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