



## **ACCESS CITY REVIEW**

### **City of Helsinki, FINLAND**



This project is carried out with funding from the European Union



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations (OIM)  
Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)



## INTRODUCTION TO ACCESS

Active Citizenship: Enhancing Political Participation of Migrant Youth' (ACCESS) project aimed to empower migrant youth to become politically active citizens on a local, national and EU-level. In the context of this project, political participation of youth does not only imply to formal participation, which is traditionally associated to the narrow form of participating, but consists of a more comprehensive approach engaging youth in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies which concern them.

Active participation entails taking part in youth parliaments, initiating events, actively advocating issues to decision-makers, and civic involvement which develops the youth's sense of belongingness and sets the foundation for further involvement in the society. Throughout the project, migrant youth are encouraged to go for more non-institutionalized ways of expressing opinions and initiating activities which are not examined enough in the current institutionalized structures of youth participation.

Through the Peer Review process, the project evaluates current policies and practices in the municipality and provides concrete advice and tools for authorities in involving youth in the planning, implementing and monitoring of questions concerning them. In the context of this study, the project will develop an online self-assessment tool to serve the purpose of knowledge-sharing of innovative ways for migrant youth to engage in local policy-making. The Online Self-Assessment Tool allows the user to evaluate their own practises and gain valuable feedback on good practises identified in the peer review findings.

This multi-stakeholder project was co-funded by the European Commission and implemented 2013-2015 in close cooperation with organizations and institutional partners in the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Romania, and Spain.

## PEER REVIEW

The Peer Review is a methodology which gives an opportunity for shared learning and multi-methodological assessment on practices and evaluates policies based on a set of objectives. This multi-methodological approach allows peers to distinguish individual qualities and shortcomings, and provide comprehensive recommendations for improvement.

The Peer Review allows for a deepening of the learning experience and enhanced knowledge-sharing, and an opportunity for self-improvement and self-evaluation. It also offers a platform for discussions between practitioners and other relevant stakeholders who partake in the reviews. The review process opens up new perspectives and ways of working, and creates discussion. Furthermore, involved peers will reflect the practises to those in their own working environment, thus increasing knowledge across countries. The reviewing peers evaluate practises and policies as an external authority, which enables a critical and valid evaluation for the host organisation.

The reviewed organization gets comprehensive feedback on practises and policies. It will provide them with realistic and practical measures that can serve as foundation for future improvement on areas which need to be developed.

## ACCESS PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The Peer Review was developed and tailored for ACCESS project objectives and partner countries need. The aim of the peer review was to increase partnering municipalities' awareness of the benefits and limitations of their practices, programmes and policies of involving migrant youth in decision-making processes, and as a result, enable municipalities to work towards more profound ways of engaging migrant youth.

The peer review methodology covers five key factors, complying broad set of ideals concerning active participation of migrant youth.

The five key factors are:

- 1) Participation
- 2) Impact
- 3) Motivation, trust and belonging
- 4) Capability and knowledge
- 5) Strategy

Ideals in this instant reflect to the objectives of the project and serve as indicators in the analysis. The peer review teams consist of municipal partners and migrant youth involved in each project countries. The combination of peers was selected based on their familiarity on youth participation and thus brought their own perspective and expertise into the discussion.

The methodology included a large variety of interviews with 20 internal and external stakeholders from the partner country. The teams of 8 peers in the three day review visit conducted the interviews, produced analyses based of each interview, and analysed and discussed their findings to draw a joint conclusion about the reviewed municipality. In addition, the project thematic youth groups analyzed and commented on the findings, and provided further suggestions on how take actions on the suggested recommendation in their cities.

In the initial phase, reviewed municipalities carried out an extensive desk review and compiled factual materials on young residents and migrants in the municipality as well as on the existing participation structures. This information, together with the list of interviewees, was presented in the Municipal Background Material circulated among the evaluators prior to the review.

As part of the Peer Review, in each city peer advisors organized an “excursion” for the visitors, showing them various parts of the city and places central for young people living in that area. The planning and implementing of these tours was organized by peer advisors and thematic youth teams in that particular city.

#### ACCESS – Peer Review Schedule:

- 1) 20.-22.10.2014 in the City of Helsinki, Finland.
- 2) 26.-28.11.2014 in the City of Barcelona, Spain.
- 3) 15.-17.12.2014 in the City of Marseille, France.
- 4) 14.-17.01.2015 in the City Cluj Napoca, Romania.
- 5) 09.-11.02.2015 in the Municipality District 14, Prague, Czech Republic.

In the context of this review, a case study was analysed. Here, a case study means a process, which had actually taken place, had a beginning and an end, a process in which some young persons with migrant backgrounds were actively involved and in which could be seen as an example of political participation, keeping in mind all forms of political participation.

Cross-nationality of the study throughout the process created new networks for exchanging ideas and offered the participants immense potential to uncover new and innovative approaches. This Peer Review Report is intended for project municipalities to improve and further develop their practices based on the recommendations given.

Building upon the peer review findings, an Online Self-Assessment Tool will provide a concrete working tool for municipalities, and it incorporates best practices that may be replicated in different municipalities across Europe.

## CITY OF HELSINKI - PEER REVIEW

The City of Helsinki has 603 968 inhabitants and the largest share of migrants in the country with 12 per cent of foreign-language residents (in 2013). The largest migrant groups based on mother-tongue are Russian, Estonian and Somali. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the number of foreign-language residents in Helsinki has more than doubled and is estimated to grow by 2030s to make up over 20 per cent of Helsinki's population. Among the 10-17 year old migrant youth, half are foreign nationals and 40 per cent were born in Finland.

The peer review focused on evaluating the City Helsinki Youth Department and their existing structures and practises for youth, and particularly on migrant youth participation. The Youth Department asked the peers to conduct the evaluation based on their target group of 10-17-year-old youth.

Ruuti is the participation system for young people of Helsinki aimed to support 13-20-year-old youths in becoming active citizens. The model uses participative democracy as a tool for strengthening local democracy. The key objectives are to enhance youth understanding of public resources, decision making, and allow participatory practises to distribute resources targeting youth. It allows youth to take part in the conversations and municipal planning, and to have meaningful engagement in decision-making beyond the traditional channels. In addition, it provides a structure for decision-makers, officials and other stakeholders in the city to effectively listen young people in matters concerning them.

Peer Review in Helsinki was conducted in 20.-22.10.2014 by the following Peer Review Group:

- Christophe AMALRIC, City of Marseille, France
- Katerina BATUEVA, Peer Advisor, Czech Republic
- František BRADÁČ, Municipal District Prague 14, Czech Republic
- Anahid CEYHAN, Peer Advisor, France
- Natalia ERMICIOI, Peer Advisor, Romania
- Ramon MORELL, Barcelona City Council, Spain
- Adrian RAULEA, City of Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- Gor VASILYAN, Peer Advisor, Spain

The Peer Review Group conducted 19 interviews with internal and external stakeholders of the Helsinki City Youth Department. This report presents comprehensive analysis of peers' observations, findings and conclusion of the review in City of Helsinki. In addition, local ACCESS youth teams elaborated the findings and gave concrete suggestion for future improvement. The Peer Review Programme is attached in Annex A.

# STRENGTHS AND GOOD PRACTICES OF HELSINKI

## PARTICIPATION

The city of Helsinki uses various tools to collect the opinions and initiatives of residents, and especially those of the youth, and take them into account when drafting decisions. Residents can participate in the decision-making processes especially at the planning and preparation stages. Opinions and proposals are gathered through the “tell it to us on the map” – service, resident meetings and town hall meetings. Student boards in all schools are provided by the law. Student boards provide a forum for idea-sharing, experiences and knowledge for the youth involved. It aims to strengthen the teacher-student relationship and allows students to participate in the planning and development of the activities for students, and formulating recommendations for decision-makers in the school. Aloitekanava is a youth initiative website offering a direct channel for taking part in municipal decision-making. It a platform for young people to submit initiatives and comments throughout the decision-making process, and monitor the decision-making process.

Ruuti is a participation system for the young people of Helsinki aiming at empowering young people; it is funded directly by the youth department. The Ruuti concept comprises of various channels for sourcing youth opinions and initiatives such as the Ruuti.net website, activity groups and student associations in schools. Initiatives made by youth in Helsinki are collected and presented on the website as well as during the annual youth exhibition RuutiExpo. Furthermore, the Ruuti system also includes online “ideas channel” for young people’s initiatives (ruuti.net). The democratic process of annually electing 20 young representatives to Ruuti Core group deserves specific mentioning. The election is conducted through electronic voting, during which all 13- to 17-year-old residents of Helsinki are entitled to vote and be voted. Furthermore, participatory budgeting for the Ruuti-Budget in 2014 gave direct financial budget and activity planning powers for young residents in two districts of Helsinki.

## IMPACT

The National Youth Act obliges municipalities to listen to the youth before and during the processes of decision-making. Youth must be given opportunities to take part in the handling of matters concerning local and regional youth work, youth policy and all other matters concerning them. The Ruuti system makes it possible for every youth in Helsinki to have a positive experience of participating in decision-making. Youth initiatives are heard, taken seriously, and youth are considered as experts in their own districts and in planning activities for youth. The Youth Department supports and gives resources also for youth groups who are not registered or formally established. In the annual “Päätäjämiiitti”, youth present their initiatives to the decision-makers.

Young people, political decision-makers and city officials first discuss the initiatives, then develop a common action plan and agree on the city officer who will take responsibility for the proposed plan. Aloitekanava is a youth initiative website offering a direct channel for taking part in the municipal decision-making. Youth can receive feedback and follow initiatives submitted via Aloitekanava, during annual the events of RuutiExpo and Päätäjämiiitti in round-table discussions with decision-makers as well as through youth workers of the Youth Department.

## **MOTIVATION AND INCLUSION**

The Youth Department facilitates and promotes civic interaction through local youth work. In the annual RuutiExpo and Päätäjämiiitti, as well as in the Lord Mayor's Student Association Days, young residents in Helsinki, politicians, and municipal officers meet to discuss initiatives raised by the youth. The City of Helsinki promotes equality at all levels. In practice, this means that migrant and native residents have equal possibilities to participate in activities, decision-making processes and municipality planning.

There is easy access for youth to share opinions through TV, radio and newspapers. Furthermore, the extensive network of youth centres, with different types of activities ranging from arts to sports and from video gaming to dance courses, has an important contribution in engaging youth in Helsinki. There are several NGOs working with migrant youth in Helsinki at different levels, groups such as community-led groups as well as formal institutions specialised in wide-ranging ways of involving and integrating migrants into the society.

## **CAPABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE**

The Youth Department provides information and counselling services through internet as well as courses provided for youth between 13-to-25-years-old. There is information available for the youth on education, employment, sports, social services and healthcare. Additionally, the civil society implements projects to offer free-of-charge courses for migrants to improve their language skills as well as courses on cultural information and life management skills.

Established participatory systems in schools have been in place for more than 20 years, enabling pupils to learn and participate in decision-making process through the establishment of school boards. The City of Helsinki sources and stores information on its residents and the city through the Urban Facts Department. In addition, the Youth Department also publishes various publications on diverse youth related issues.

## **STRATEGY**

The City of Helsinki has a city-wide strategy implemented on all levels and throughout each department. The departments follow the same objectives, adjust their operations to be in line with the strategy decided and endorsed by City Council for each council term. Youth have a special role in the strategy in terms of education, employment and participation possibilities, which are constantly improved and implemented throughout each department. The Youth Department has allocated staff, premises and other financial resources to provide quality services for youth in Helsinki. There are over 90 youth centres and more than 400 youth workers around Helsinki to provide opportunities for the youth to get involved.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF HELSINKI**

### **PARTICIPATION**

The City of Helsinki provides multiple ways for young residents to participate. Yet, only 10 per cent of youth in Helsinki are politically active. Reviewers evaluated that opportunities were given mostly for youth under 18-years, resulting in young adults having less possibilities for political and civic participation activities organized by the Youth Department.

ACCESS youth teams agreed on these weaknesses as being real, however, young residents under 18-years are less likely to be interested in political participation. There is a need for outreach campaigns, which specifically target and encourage migrant youth to participate. Campaigns raise awareness amongst migrant youth on the possibilities to practise their active citizenship and gain more social networks. There is a greater need for strengthening youth understanding of existing channels, for tools and activities that can be used to initiate and raise their concerns. Those migrant youth most marginalized and disenfranchised in the job markets are those that have the least amount of networks, friends, and a lack of understanding of the societal structures. This leads them to a more vicious cycle of exclusion in their adulthood. Therefore, investing in awareness-raising activities and promoting the Youth Department's activities to all will have a positive impact especially on migrant youth.



## **IMPACT**

The Peer Review Group analysed that the Ruuti system is considered solely a consultative body without any decision-making powers. The review group analysed that the Ruuti system is not taken that seriously by youth nor politicians or the decision-makers in Helsinki. The review group pointed out that with certain issues and cases, youth are not consulted or listened to at all. Nevertheless, the reviews considered that the Youth Department takes youth initiatives seriously, and youth are considered as experts in their own districts and planning of youth activities. The commitment of the Youth Department is seen in the continued support and resource allocations made for youth groups who are not registered or formally established. An example of the case study of summer job subsidies is a good example of a non-formal group initiative. As a recommendation, the Youth Department should continue the long-term strategy of collaboration between different actors, involving youth through subordinate structures such as schools and kindergartens to enable youth of all ages to feel more engaged from an early stage in its activities, youth centres and services. It allows more youth to participate, find opportunities and spread the positive example of engagement even further.

## **MOTIVATION AND INCLUSION**

The Peer Review Group pointed out that there are many officers working with a top-down approach, which results in residents' opinions being neglected during decision-making processes. Furthermore, it was noted that there is small engagement of migrant youth within initiatives and decision-making processes.

ACCESS youth teams agreed that migrant youth are fairly well engaged in initiatives; however, they are mainly engaged in initiatives that have set migrant youth as a specific target group. Youth teams wanted to see more migrant youth engaged in activities and decision-making not directly related to them, but in a way in which they would be placed in an equal position when dealing with issues concerning the environment, politics in general, city planning and administration. It is evident that youth are able to participate in singular planning processes but that their understanding of their possibilities to also contribute in the drafting of youth strategies and migration policies is low.

The Peer Review Group recommended that emphasis should be placed on promoting existing examples of active migrant youth; more advantage should be taken of their connections and understanding on how to address migrant youth. In addition, there should be more targeted initiatives that tackle social segregation, violence and substance abuse among youth with migrant background.

Youth teams gave concrete examples of how to engage active migrant youth and encourage others to get involved and participate in activities organized by the Youth Department. This would allow participants to act as role models and motivators as well as benefitting the young through their experience and expertise. Youth teams were disappointed that reviewers singled out migrant youth as a group that has problems with substance abuse or violence. However, youth teams recommend concrete actions through an initiative that aims to research the root causes of social segregation among the youth in Helsinki.

This initiative should strive to be inclusive with an emphasis on gender and cultural sensitivity. To address the issue, field activities including training on social segregation, violence and substance abuse of youth, should be given resources in schools, in the civic society and migrant communities. Furthermore, there should be a website in multiple languages that pools information and concrete advice for youth and their parents. Awareness-raising activities would include training and information sessions for parents and youth. The initiative would ideally be led by the Youth Department in cooperation with the police, migrant civic society, and migrant communities.

## **CAPABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE**

The Peer Review Group commented that schools do not have enough capacity and understanding to embrace and promote the Ruuti system among the pupils. Additionally, the civic society should be encouraged to have a more visible presence in educational institutions and in implementing activities for enhancing active youth participation in schools. It was noted that youth do not have enough time to join activities in their spare time. The reviewers suggested for the City of Helsinki to establish a one-stop-shop for youth seeking further information on services offered by the municipality and state.

Youth teams suggested that the schools in Helsinki should offer a platform and reserve a formal time slot for civic society and youth organizations in schools. Youth teams proposed introducing an “Action for Participation”- concept, through the Ruuti system, which would be implemented throughout schools in Helsinki leading up to the annual RuutiExpo-event. Civic society in cooperation with the Youth Department and the Educational Department would ideally be the organizers. The objective of this action week would be that those attending the RuutiExpo-event would disembark into schools around Helsinki to arrange workshops, interactive seminars and other activities for pupils. During this week pupils in different schools would have the possibility to develop different ideas and recommendations, and to prepare themselves for the upcoming RuutiExpo-event, which would be ideally compulsory.

Youth teams urged the City of Helsinki to incorporate the Ruuti system into all schools in Helsinki. Preparatory classes for migrant youth should especially be targeted and encouraged to participate in the activities and events arranged by Ruuti. Because teachers play a significant role in this, the teams suggested the Youth Department arrange compulsory training for teachers on Ruuti and a compulsory requirement for pupils to attend the RuutiExpo-event. Migrant civic society and communities should be empowered and offered training on possibilities for migrant youth to participate and initiate and join the Ruuti system. Networking through recreational organizations and other institutions where youth spend their free-time is also important.

Many youth not involved in youth organisations are involved in sport organisations and in other recreational activities. To improve visibility, both the review group and the youth teams suggest to translate brochures and web-based information, and to provide personal guidance on Ruuti in other languages than just those accessible now.

In order to tackle language barriers, migrant youth need more support in their homework. It is evident that there is a need for overall educational programs in schools, which support all pupils in understanding and getting further information on educational paths, careers, youth centres and leisure activities. Although information is accessible through the Internet, it is, however, not understandable. To tackle this, youth teams suggest establishing a “one-stop-shop”, a service centre where youth in Helsinki can find information regarding the municipal system and which would provide guidance in the following areas:

- Career counselling and job-hunting support
- Information on application procedures to schools
- Information on how to be engaged in participatory systems
- Information on how to join Ruuti, other projects, or how to develop one’s own initiative
- How to study languages (courses, language trips, au pair programs, etc.)
- Social services.

## **STRATEGY**

When evaluating the strategy, the review group noted that the municipal structure is large and complicated even for its employees to grasp, not to mention for the youth. There are, however, ongoing plans to make it more open and accessible to the general public. Additionally, the municipality should consider the Ruuti Core Group decisions and proposals more seriously. If politicians and decision-makers are convinced that youth participation is high in their strategic agenda, they should reserve time slots from the schools curricula or provide alternatives for the youth to get compensated for their active involvement.

# Programme

# Annex A

	Day 1	Day 2				Day 3				
08:00 – 09:00	Travel to host city on 19 Oct CZ, ES  Travel to host city on 20 Oct RO and FR (Arr. 12:10)									
09:00 – 10:00		5 Interview Kirsi Uusitalo (D / NGO)	6 Interview Tommi Laitio (G +C / OFC+CAS)	7 Interview Melis Ari (D / NGO)	8 Interview Tuomas Haapasalo (A/YNG active)	17 Interview Irma Sippola (G / OFC)	18 Interview Riikka Nenonen (D / NGO)	19 Interview Markku Toivonen (B / YCL)	20 Interview Sari Tuominen (G / OFC)	
10:00 – 11:00		Writing notes and analysis				Writing notes and analysis				
11:00 – 12:00		9 Interview Jussi Pajunen, City of Helsinki Mayor (G / OFC)	10 Interview Liisa Pohjolainen (G / OFC)	11 Interview Anil Erdem (A/YNG passive)	12 Interview Min Lee (D / NGO)	Working on comparative analysis (pairs)				
12:00 – 13:00		Writing notes and analysis				Lunch				
13:00 – 14:00		Team get together Confirm the programme Meet the city coordinator	Lunch				Team working on conclusions Feedback			
14:00 – 15:00		Host municipality introduction	13 Interview Kristiina Toivikko (D / NGO)	14 Interview Amir Benatia (B / YCL)	15 Interview Timo Kontio (F / POL)	16 Interview Aleksj Fedotov (F / POL)				
15:00 – 16:00		Recap of the methodology How to use recorders	Writing notes and analysis				Return Travel 15:00			
16:00 – 17:00		1 Interview Halima Abdel Kawy (A/YNG active)	2 Interview Okko Karvonen (C / CAS)	3 Interview Abdirahim Hussein (E / MCO)	4 Interview	Group discussion and joint reflection time				
17:00 – 18:00	Writing notes and analysis									
18:00 – 19:00	Group discussion and joint reflection time	Excursion with the host peer advisors following with self-paid working dinner 18:00 – 22:00								

❖ Czech

❖ France

❖ Spain

❖ Romania

A. Young persons (YNG) active / passive

B. Persons involved with Ruuti system (YCL)

C. Persons involved with case (CAS)

D. Youth Organisations (NGO)

E. Migrant NGOs / communities (MCO)

F. Politicians (POL)

G. Municipal officers (OFC)