

LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL

PARTICIPATORY HANDBOOK

A GUIDE FOR NEW LOCAL
YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL
MEMBERS

NOVEMBER 2013

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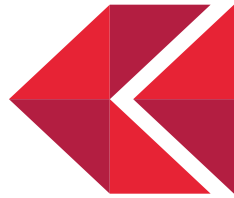


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ACRONYMS

AI	Administrative Instruction
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CYAC	Central Youth Action Council
LLSG	Law on Local Self Government
LYAC	Local Youth Action Council
MA	Municipal Assembly
MCSC	Municipal Community Safety Council
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport
MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OMiK	OSCE Mission in Kosovo
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PFC	Policy and Finance Committee





INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of this handbook?

The legal framework can be confusing and at times unclear on how legally established participatory bodies, such as the LYACs, should function. As a result, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) has put this handbook together to help incoming LYAC members with a basic understanding of the role, function and responsibilities of the council according to the legal framework, as well as to share already established good practices.

How was this handbook written?


OMiK, through its Field Teams across Kosovo have been closely working with the LYACs to help them fully achieve their roles as the advocates/representatives of youth issues to the municipalities. In this process, a number of good practices were identified, and with the aim to share them between LYACs, OMiK conducted a series of best practice exchange workshops in 2011 and 2012. Due to the popularity of these workshops, OMiK decided to formalise these 'best practices' in this handbook. Participatory workshops were conducted in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Pejë/Pec, Prishtinë/Priština and Prizren from May to June 2013 to solicit the best practices provided in this handbook. These were then put together, reviewed by our regional project managers, and combined with the legal framework and good governance principles to serve as a single 'Go-To Guide' for LYACs.

For whom is this handbook written?

This handbook is written for the 15 - 24 year old members of the LYACs, which according to article 10 of the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, are the local networks that represent youth and youth issues to the institutions of local government and advise them on their interests.

How should you use this handbook?

Recommendations for action provided in this handbook are based on the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth (Law on Youth) and the AI for the Responsibilities and Procedures of the Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Council in Kosovo (AI) that regulate the work of the LYACs. Throughout the handbook, boxes will highlight recommendations for action that promote increased efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and participation in the work of the LYACs. These actions are based on LYACs' good practices identified by OSCE Field Teams across Kosovo and will help your LYAC become more successful. Be sure to consider each of these and adapt them to the needs of the municipality



The principle of equality and equal participation for all guides the right for youth to self-organise

- Article 11, Law on Youth

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The model for engagement of youth that sets the groundwork for the establishment of LYACs is the Law on Youth.

Why is the Law on Youth important?

The Law on Youth gives the legal basis for the establishment of the LYACs that allow participation of youth at both the central and local levels, through the CYAC and the LYACs.

The Law on Youth defines the municipality's obligations to provide support to the LYACs in article 7.1. Concretely, the municipalities are required to provide LYACs with financial resources and public space; support for informal education and other activities initiated by youth; and the development of the municipal youth policy in consultation with the LYACs.

Responsibilities come along with these Rights

Since the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport (Ministry) recognised the capacity of LYAC, it expects these youth networks to become partners in shaping youth-related policies on the local level (Article 10). Thus, while the Law created a model for the engagement of youth, the Ministry issued the Administrative Instruction in 2010 that give LYACs a central role in the creation of common vision for youth in each single municipality with the preparation of a youth action plan and cooperation with other youth organisations (Article 10.1, AI 9/2010 For Responsibilities and Procedures of the Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo).

How to make you make your LYAC a successful advocate on youth issues?

In order to ensure that your LYAC qualifies as a legal entity, which will grant your group the rights mentioned above, you must be register with the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA). This is because as a network of youth CSOs, LYACs are subject to respecting the registration procedures prescribed in the Law on Freedom of Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (Article 9, Law on Freedom of Non-Governmental Organisation).

1. Apply for recognition by your respective municipalities through a written request, by addressing the youth section within the department of culture youth and sport (or its equivalent) and delivered to the Citizen Service Centre of your municipality.

In 2009, the Assembly of Kosovo recognised youth activism as a cornerstone for the development of youth by passing the Law on Youth. This founding document was adopted with the goal of improving the quality of life of youth and their social status and promoting participation of youth in the decision making process.

- Article 1, Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth



Respect municipal procedures

LYAC members that follow the municipal procedures for communication with municipal officials have reported a smoother registration process. Be sure to establish contact with your municipal officer prior to any contact with the director of culture, youth and sport, or equivalent positions when requesting registration.

2. The municipality should confirm recognition within 30 days if all conditions are met according to article 13.3 of AI.

3. A detailed list of required documents needed for your request for LYAC recognition to the municipality can be found in article 13.4 the AI.

4. It is your responsibility to communicate any such changes in the LYAC membership to the municipality within eight days of any change (Article 13.6, AI).



What is the Citizens Service Centre?

These offices serve as a link between resident seeking municipal services and the respective departments, found in the municipality building.

Which rules and structure define your LYAC?

Each LYAC should draft a statute as its governing document to define its internal structures and rules. Include a description of the purpose of the organisation, criteria for membership, composition of members, rules governing the boards of directors, etc. MPA has issued guidelines for the development of statutes for NGOs on their website and instructions for NGO registration¹ (in Albanian only). Each statute should be specific to the needs of your LYAC and the particularities of your municipality.



Extend the mandate of the LYAC president from one to two years in the LYAC statute. This will enable a term with sufficient time for the president to fully understand his/her role and responsibilities and apply them accordingly.

Appoint the candidate with the second-most number of votes as LYAC deputy president. This avoids any disruption to the work of the LYAC in the event of the resignation of the LYAC president. Include a clause in the statute that grants the deputy president to resume the leadership of the resigning LYAC president until the next elections if less than one quarter of the mandate remains.

Appoint civil society representation in the LYAC for greater transparency and equal participation of youth CSOs. Include an article in the statute requiring each youth CSO to appoint a delegate to the LYAC board through the LYAC secretary at the beginning of the mandate or upon the establishment of a new youth CSO in the municipality.

How can LYACs obtain a budget to conduct activities?

Remember that according to the legal framework, the municipality should cover all costs that result from the organisation of the LYAC Assembly and could cover other expenses if the municipality has financial means (Article 16, AI). In order to obtain sufficient funds from the municipality for the election of the LYAC, as well as additional financial support for LYAC activities and the implementation of the municipal youth action plan, LYAC members should ensure that their advocacy efforts for funding of projects and activities coincide with the municipality's budget planning process.

¹ Ministry of public administration, Department of registration and liaison with NGOs, <http://map.rks-gov.net/sq/Page.aspx?id=18> (accessed 20 August 2013).



Secure a budget

Coordinate the preparation of the youth action plan! Work closely with the youth department on the preparation of the three-year LYAC youth action plan. If you are able to keep the municipality involved in your plans, and this drafting coincides with the municipal budget planning process, your chances to get funds from the municipality will be greater.

Regulate LYAC funding through advocacy with the municipal assembly. Some municipal assemblies have passed regulations on the establishment and functioning procedures of the LYACs that foresee four sources of funding for the councils: membership fees from organisations represented in the LYACs; subventions from municipal owned source revenues; subventions from the central level and international organisations; donations and other subventions from individuals and other organisations.

Advocate for a budget code for youth within the municipal budget. Work closely with the municipal department of youth, culture and sport and with the support of the MCYS to achieve this step that would make it easier for municipalities to directly allocate funds for youth issues.

Know the budget process! The municipal budget process is governed by the Law on Public financial management and accountability. In September of each year, municipalities are obliged to adopt an annual budget for the next year (OSCE Report 2012 Budget Development Process in Kosovo Municipalities: An Assessment, pg. 3). The budget is formulated between the period of 1 April and 30 June. In order for the budget to reflect the needs and priorities of municipal residents, the municipality will ask for contributions from the public and different key stakeholders through public meetings. A second round of public meetings is foreseen before the submission of the municipal budget proposal to the municipal assembly by 1 September, for the purpose of reviewing and understanding the proposed budgets from municipal departments (Pg. 8, Ibid).

The LYAC is encouraged to actively participate in the budget planning process by attending public budget meetings, and holding individual meetings with relevant municipal officials, such as the youth officer and the director of culture, youth and sport, or equivalent positions.

Who leads the LYAC and how are they elected?

LYACs are recommended to hold elections according to the timeframe specified in its statutes, since regular elections are necessary to guarantee that the LYAC board is composed of members representing the voice of the majority of the youth CSOs active in the municipality. The LYAC should ensure internal democratic functioning in accordance with international standards and following the fundamental freedom of association in nongovernmental organisations (Article 13, Law on Freedom of Association in Non-Governmental Organisations).

To follow the good governance principles of transparency and accountability, the LYAC is also recommended to announce the date, time and location for the LYAC board election to the municipal youth officer, the municipal department of culture youth and sport, and any other relevant organisations at least one month in advance. The LYAC could further invite the municipal department of youth culture and sport or any established consultative committee dealing with youth to monitor the election process in order to avoid any allegations of election irregularities.

Although not foreseen by the legal framework, LYACs have established LYAC boards along with election of LYAC president and other functions. These LYAC boards meet on a regular basis, discuss relevant issues and sometimes take decisions through voting.

What is the handover process between incoming and outgoing LYAC leadership?

A handover between LYAC presidents is key to preserving the institutional memory and level of functionality of the councils.

A proper handover is highly recommended after elections are carried out to ensure an easy transition from one LYAC president to the next. The handover should include written or verbal information about the functioning of the role of LYAC president as well as the materials/assets belonging to the LYAC.

A detailed description of the process of the handover should be included in the LYAC statute, including the place for handover, the LYAC member (i.e. secretary/president) in charge of the process, as well as a list of documents and items to be handed over. This list could include but is not limited to:

- Statute of the LYAC;
- Youth action plan;
- LYAC stamp;
- Certificate of registration with the MPA;
- Inventory registry;
- Memorandums of Understanding;
- List and contact details of NGOs part of the LYAC;
- List and contact details of LYAC volunteers;
- Youth strategy;
- Recognition letter by the municipality;
- Bank account authorisation and details;
- Contact details of NGOs and international organisations.



Conduct a handover

Organise a handover retreat after the election of the new board. At the retreat prepare the new board on the nature of the work, issues and challenges that they may face during their mandate. Don't forget to discuss the technicalities of day-to-day work of the LYACs such as drafting agendas for meetings, conducting meetings, relationship with the municipality, and the use of the LYAC stamp.

Alternatively, have a period where both the incoming (new) and outgoing (old) boards can run parallel. The outgoing board can shadow the incoming board (or vice-versa) before fully taking over to allow for advice giving and continuity in leadership.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LYACS AND MUNICIPALITIES

The Law on Youth defines the relationship between LYACs and municipal authorities by stipulating the rights and responsibilities of both sides, which are further outlined in the AI. The relationship can be divided into three parts: the responsibilities of the LYACs towards youth, the obligations of the LYACs towards their respective municipalities, and the obligations of the municipalities toward the LYACs.

LYAC's responsibilities towards youth:

- To strengthen youth organisations within their respective municipalities and building a common vision for youth;
- To prepare a municipal youth action plan to achieve that common vision;
- To promote the vision and developed youth action plan to the municipality and other organizations that address youth issues in the municipality;
- To promote, coordinate and exchange good experiences with other youth organizations;
- To cooperate on youth related matters with public and private institutions (Article 10.1.1-10.1.5, AI).

Obligations of the LYACs towards municipal authorities:

- Upon establishment, LYACs are required to issue a request for recognition by their respective municipalities;
- To represent the youth organizations operating in the municipality before the local authorities;
- To address youth issues of the municipality to municipal institutions, as well as with other public bodies and private persons;
- To provide opinions and advise bodies and municipal institutions on planned actions involving youth in the municipality;
- To present views on legal and other documents on youth issues in Kosovo;
- To participate in the design, implementation, evaluating and policy direction on matters of youth in the municipality;
- To participate and contribute towards the development of the youth action plan and the drafting of petitions and resolutions for youth;
- To organize an annual Youth Conference, in cooperation with the municipality;
- To participate and contribute towards the drafting of the annual municipal budget related to youth;
- To plan youth voluntary work activities and other activities for youth. (Article 10.2.1-10.2.9, Law on Youth).

Obligations of municipal authorities towards the LYACs:

- To issue a decision on the request for recognition of the LYAC within 30 days of receipt of written request (see subchapter 2.2);
- To cover all the costs and expenditures incurred for the organisation of the LYAC Assembly (Article 16.1, AI);
- To provide adequate public space where youth can plan, manage and develop their youth activities in consultation with the LYAC (Article 7.1.2, Law on Youth).

How can your LYAC influence municipal youth policy?

In addition to the rights granted by the legal framework for youth participation, LYACs have certain responsibilities and obligations to youth and municipal authorities as just described. Every LYAC should regularly contribute toward the work of the municipality by representing the youth perspective through meetings with relevant municipal officials and regular participation in various municipal meetings. This is not limited to youth issues, but also refers to all policy issues discussed in the municipality, but from the youth perspective. For example, how does the lack of street lighting on roads affect youth who walk in that area? Or, how does the possible construction of a building on a public space used as a playground affect youth?

Which meetings should LYACs attend as youth representatives?

Public meetings are opportunity for the LYAC members to have direct contacts with high municipal officials and present an opportunity to voice their opinion about matters of youth in their respective municipalities. These meetings are required to be held twice a year (Article 68.1, Law on Local Self Government) and are open to any person or organisation with an interest in the municipality.



Participate in public budget hearings

Play an active role in the public budget hearings and public meetings. Present facts and arguments that support your requests, which has been successful to other LYACs in securing funding for youth-related proposals, such as investment for a sport facility, environmental campaigns and youth programmes.



Facilitate municipal meetings

One LYAC organised and facilitated a number of public meetings after the mayor realised the added value of LYACs in increasing public participation at these event. Propose similar initiative to your municipality with the aim of increasing participation and municipal transparency.

Public budget hearings are foreseen to take place to gather the opinions and inputs of residents in the municipality over how the municipal budget should be allocated during the drafting of the municipal annual budget (Article 61.2, Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability). Public budget hearings can be utilized by the LYAC as part of its responsibility to participate and contribute in drafting the municipal annual budget for youth (Article 10.2.8, AI For Responsibilities and Procedures of the Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo). More information about the municipal budget process can be found above under “How can LYACs obtain a budget to fund activities?”



Youth mainstreaming

Harmonise the youth action plan with municipal departments' work. Work closely with municipal officials in developing the youth action plan, and for further review by other officials such as the human rights and gender officer. Solicit feedback from the mayor and individual assembly members as a way to encourage municipal ownership of the document. Ultimately, when presented to the municipal assembly for review, the youth action plan will not be a foreign document but rather something the municipality already has a stake in approving.

Create youth-friendly policies with municipal officials. Be sure to discuss policies affecting youth with youth officers, directors of culture, youth and sport as well as other directors and be clear about the role of LYACs in realising that policy.

Establish municipal coordination meetings to maintain regular contact with municipal counterparts. Hold these coordination meetings on a monthly basis with the youth officers and be sure to discuss upcoming activities and any other relevant issues.

Consultative committees are participatory mechanisms, made up by residents and representatives of CSOs to enable the participation of the public in the decision making process of the municipality and are required by Article 73 of the Law on Local Self Government (LLSG). Consultative committees can submit proposals, conduct research and provide opinions on municipal assembly initiatives in accordance with the municipal statute (Article 73, LLSG). In municipalities where consultative committees are functioning, the LYAC is encouraged to apply for membership and actively participate in committees dealing with youth issues. In municipalities where these committees do not yet exist, the LYACs should advocate with the municipality for their establishment.

The **Municipal Community Safety Council (MCSC)** is an advisory body on security issues with a wide representation of the community of a given municipality. The purpose of the council is to raise awareness of the nature of crime, disorder and violent behaviour in the local community, to identify the local concerns regarding public safety and security, and to recommend action plans to address those concerns locally through the co-operative efforts of municipal authorities, local communities and the police (Article 7, Law on Police). As a consultative body representing the voice and concerns of youth, the LYAC is encouraged to apply for membership and actively participate in these councils.



Advocate for a safer environment

Start regularly attending the MCSC, bring the concerns of youth to the attention of the council and make recommendations.

One LYAC successfully addressed the issue of soft drugs at their school and the municipality responded by increasing police presence and conducting an anti-drugs campaign.

Another LYAC raised the issue of lack of sidewalks and street lighting on roads used by students. The response by municipal officials was to install both!



Regularly monitor the assembly meetings

Disseminate minutes from assembly sessions that are of significance to youth due to the discussion of youth issues, or other issues that affect youth. For example, change of timetable for bus schedule, security issues, construction, education reports)

Assess the performance of the assembly. Regularly monitor the assembly, produce a report with your findings and make recommendations for improvement, especially in public participation and youth involvement. Make your report public.

One LYAC even monitored all assembly sessions and kept track of the number of times the word youth was mentioned. They produced a report with their findings and shared it with assembly members and the media, which resulted on youth issues being more prominently discussed at the municipal assembly.

The **policy and finance committee (PFC)** reviews policy, fiscal and finance documents as well as drafts municipal regulations prior to sending them for approval to the municipal assembly. Requests, draft-regulations, draft decisions and strategic documents are reviewed at the PFC and processed for further approval in the succeeding municipal assembly sessions upon majority vote by the PFC members. It is composed of the chairperson of the municipal assembly and a representative number of political entities from the municipal assembly (Article 52.2, Law on Local Self Government). The meetings are open for the public to monitor.

The **municipal assembly (MA)** is the highest legislative body at the local level, and is obliged to hold at least ten meetings per year (Article 43, Law on Local Self Government). Members of the public are permitted to follow and participate in meetings of the municipal assembly according to each municipality's rules of procedure (Article 45, Ibid). LYAC members are encouraged to regularly monitor the municipal assembly sessions in their municipality, in order to better understand the decision making process and the unique issues that the municipality is handling at any given time. The LYAC can use the forum to participate in the discussion of agenda items concerning youth, by following the rules of procedure of the municipality. Meanwhile, active monitoring of the sessions will increase LYAC's visibility and ability to understand the current developments in the municipality, provide it with necessary information to constructively participate in discussions, and propose topics related to youth to municipal authorities.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LYAC AND CENTRAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS

What is the CYAC and what does it do?

Similar to the relationship between LYACs and their respective municipalities, the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) is responsible to represent the voice of youth to the central level institutions (mainly the MYCS). This includes but is not limited to representing youth organisations in front of the government, offer recommendations on issues and legislation that affects youth, as well as participate in the drafting of the Kosovo Youth Action Plan and the annual budget for youth on the central level (Article 3, AI).

How should the LYACs and CYAC work together?

The cooperation and the representation of LYACs with the CYAC are defined by the AI, in which the CYAC guarantees equal representation of all youth organisations by applying the principle of equality and non-discrimination (Article 4.1, Ibid). Each LYAC is represented in the General Assembly of the CYAC through two representatives.

The relationship between the two bodies has developed in such a way that the CYAC co-ordinates meetings on a regional level to inform LYACs about upcoming activities, as well as collect ideas and recommendations for its work. Meanwhile, in varying degrees, LYAC members have been making individual visits and contributions to the work of the CYAC. Further communication and cooperation between the CYAC and LYACs is encouraged, while the LYACs could consider establishing individual relationships with the CYAC board, as well as to advocate on issues through their regional representatives.

Can the LYAC cooperate with the Assembly of Kosovo?

Cooperation with the Assembly of Kosovo is possible through the facilitation of the CYAC, which has the responsibility to highlight issues related to youth across Kosovo to central level institutions. The main partners of the CYAC and the LYACs on the central level are the youth caucus of the Assembly of Kosovo, as well as the Committee on Youth. The youth caucus has organized several visits to the Assembly building for LYAC members and facilitated LYAC participation in the work of the Assembly committees.



The CYAC should support LYACs'...

- **Recognition, by assisting in compiling the required documentation for LYAC recognition by the municipality, and to promote the added value of LYACs in front of municipalities that are hesitant to grant recognition.**
- **Information, on calls for proposals and other funding possibilities.**
- **Drafting municipal regulations, by sharing existing regulations and good practices.**
- **Relationship with municipal officials, by sending official letters to departments of youth in the event that the municipality has not fully complied with the legal framework on functioning of LYACs**

What can the Ombudsperson Institution do for LYACs?

The role of the Ombudsperson Institution is to protect fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and legal entities from unlawful and irregular actions or inactions of public authorities (Article 1, Law on the Ombudsperson Institution). LYAC members have requested support from this institution in several cases when it appeared that human rights of young people were breached.



LYACs have solicited the opinion of the Ombudsperson Institution in one case about the right to access to education regarding a municipality's decision to refuse a girl's entry to the secondary school that she was attending as long as she wore a headscarf and in another case about another municipality's refusal to allow a group of students from a neighbouring municipality to attend that municipality's secondary school.

PARTICIPATION

LYACs as participatory groups, should be inclusive

The guiding principle of all LYACs should be the principle of equality and equal participation for all (Article 11, Law on Youth). The role of the LYAC, in addition to serving as the voice of youth in the municipality, is also to empower youth by giving them the confidence and the opportunity to participate in the decision making process. As a result of their participation in the LYACs, women, members of communities in numerical minority at municipal level, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups across Kosovo are being empowered and given the opportunity to participate in the local decision making processes

How can a LYAC increase the diversity of youth?

There can be various problems in securing a broad representation of youth within the LYAC, as well as the participation of different categories of youth in activities organized by the LYAC. At times, these obstacles can have a technical aspect, such as holding meetings in locations where persons in wheelchairs have difficulties to access. Other times, cultural aspects play a role, for example, parents being reluctant to allow their underage children to participate in activities far from home. In many municipalities, language barriers between different communities can add another barrier towards inclusive and equal participation.

To make it possible for young people with disabilities to attend events organized for youth and to participate as equal members in the LYACs, those organizing events and meetings are encouraged to keep the specific needs of people with disabilities in mind. For example, the location of the event should be easily accessible; therefore, buildings without access ramps or meeting rooms higher than the first floor without a functioning elevator should be avoided. The LYACs could also consider appointing a member for each meeting, who would be in charge of assisting any persons with disabilities attending the meeting, depending on need.

What type of events should a LYAC conduct to increase participation in general?

Organizing attractive events can increase the visibility of the LYAC, broaden its membership and be a venue for reaching out to young people in the municipality. As it is a responsibility of the LYAC to plan youth voluntary work activities and other activities for youth (Article 10.2.9, AI),



Increase the participation of different youth

Villages/Rural Areas

Establish youth clubs in villages and rural areas with the support of the municipality. Conduct outreach visits to secondary schools of those villages where LYAC members have identified active young people who can be invited to LYAC events. Organise meetings in the villages where youth clubs have been created and invite these members to attend LYAC meetings. Regular communication between the LYAC and the youth clubs could also be developed through social media. Additionally, hold LYAC board meetings in different villages in the municipalities, especially remote villages and invite local youth and youth leaders to take part in the meeting.

Communities

Include community representation on the LYAC board to reflect the community representation in the municipality. Assign a language focal point from within the LYAC to enable the participation of other communities. Finally, encourage community participation by conducting outreach meetings and invite them to participate on the LYAC board.

Women

Appoint female members to the LYACs when the LYAC has a predominately male composition. Establish a gender quota for the LYAC board to ensure female membership in the decision-making positions within the LYAC structure, in the spirit of gender laws (30-40%) Establish links with the municipal informal women's caucus or encourage female LYAC members to join the informal women's caucus to represent youth issues from within. These links play in favour to both groups who benefit from joint advocacy initiatives and the members themselves are often better informed.

LYACs can consider organizing activities such as:

- Sports tournaments (with opportunities for male and female participants)
 - Concerts with youth performances
 - Workshops for development of skills/informal education
 - Excursions of environmental, cultural or historical sites
 - Celebrations of international days (International Youth Day, Earth Day, etc.)
 - Voluntary activities
- ...and many others!

“Volunteers are not paid - not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless”

-Author unknown

VOLUNTEERISM

Why is it important to volunteer?

Volunteering is a way for people to make a contribution to their neighbourhood, community or municipality. The Law on Youth states that voluntary work of young people shall be considered important and beneficial for society... and will create perspective for them, by giving them practical experience that improves their professional skills (Article 14).

LYACs across Kosovo offer many good examples on volunteering, as participation in the LYAC itself is a voluntary experience, while LYAC members also organize and participate in volunteer activities on a regular basis. The engagement of LYACs in arranging voluntary activities varies from coordination of one day actions to more detailed and structured activities. Some good practices follow:

Municipal regulations on volunteerism

In August 2010, the MYCS issued an Administrative Instruction on the volunteer work of youth, with the purpose of regulating the rights, obligations and procedures related to voluntary work of youth (Article 1, Administrative Instruction for Volunteer Work of Youth). Based on this instruction, municipalities have passed regulations for Empowerment and promotion of volunteerism as of October 2013. This has been done with the active engagement of the LYACs and support of international organizations.

These regulations are similar in their format and content, as they provide key terms of volunteerism, and explain how the municipality benefits from voluntary work as well as the promotion of such. The regulations list duties and responsibilities of the municipal youth officer and the mentors of the volunteers. They also grant symbolic incentives for active volunteers in the municipality, such as certain free public services.



Create volunteer opportunities. Find events to organise that appeal to youth in your municipality.

Recruit new volunteers. Expand the network of volunteers across municipalities by organising roundtables to initiate discussions on volunteerism and organise trainings for new potential volunteers

Mobilise volunteers. The 2012 Clean up Kosova event gathered over 9,000 participants by reaching potential volunteers through media outlets, social media and word of mouth. Find a donor to award the group with the best participation with a prize to attract interest.

Volunteer in your community. When the municipality does not have the funds, fill the gap by volunteering. One LYAC successfully ran a tourist information centre when the municipality lacked the funds

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

How can a LYAC use media to promote its events?

The LYAC can use various mass communication outlets to convey information on activities and advocacy efforts. Depending on the intended effect, the LYAC can inform a broader audience by highlighting previously achieved results, sharing news of on-going initiatives, and by promoting future activities. When promoting and pitching a specific LYAC activity to a media outlet, it is useful to keep in mind that events will garner media attention in cases when the stories are appealing and relevant for a large number of readers and/or viewers. As working with media requires commitment and professionalism, an efficient way to establish working relationship with media outlets would be to appoint an information focal point who would establish and maintain these contacts (Manik Begolli, Public Relations Advisor, Deloitte Consulting, Prishtinë/Priština).

Advocating for youth-related issues through media

There are two types of media coverage that the LYAC can engage in for the purpose of its work - proactive and reactive. Proactive media coverage pre-empts a certain event or act, and informs the public about a certain group's position on an issue, while reactive media coverage takes place after an event, to recall what occurred. When advocating for a change in youth policy, a proactive approach is advisable, while taking into consideration the following:

Core message - A core message is the foundation of any media outreach campaign when trying to gain public support. The current situation must be clearly described (background problem), and a solution proposed to the officials to remedy the problem. The LYAC should include information on the mandate, mission, or cause for which it is advocating.

Framing the message - To avoid that the media does not unintentionally focus on the "wrong" element of an event, the LYACs could consider 'framing their message,' by drafting talking points to be presented by LYAC members to the media, and distributing them as hand-outs at the event. Talking points written in advance of an event allows media representatives to focus on the desired message.



Use local radio
broadcasters to
reach out to youth
from rural areas.

Timing the message – Issues of importance at the local level are often overpowered by news from the central or international level. Several steps could be taken in order to ensure that events and conferences receive the desired media coverage. One way is to relate the story or issue to big news. For example, if dealing with an inter-ethnic dialogue activity, it would have a higher relevance when linked to the on-going broader political context. Connecting a local news story to a special occasion or well-known international day will also allow for greater news coverage. For instance, when a LYAC carries out clean-up activities in villages, it will be more news-worthy when carried out on Earth Day. Also, be aware of and follow media's own internal reporting deadlines, i.e. if they are going to print/edit by a certain deadline, the event should be timed in such a way that allows sufficient time for processing prior to print or broadcast. Finally, make sure to avoid big news days such as high-level visits, political events or elections that will overpower a more local story or issue. (Coalition for the International Criminal Court, "NGO Media Outreach: Using the Media as an Outreach Tool, http://www.amicc.org/docs/NGO-media_training.pdf, 2 September 2013).

How can LYACs use social media for their events?

Social media is currently one of the most widely used means of interaction where information can be created and shared in a fast and economic way. LYACs across Kosovo have established themselves on the internet and used various web-services to promote their events and activities to their peers.

What do you need to prepare for a successful press conference?

A press conference is an efficient tool designed to generate news and publicity for an organization or event. In the past, LYACs have, for example, held press conferences after their youth action plans and municipal regulations on voluntarism were approved by their municipalities.

Things to keep in mind when preparing for a press conference:

- Define the message that you want to pass. Three to five clear points;
- Schedule the date and time. Try to avoid conflicting with other press events;
- Pick up a suitable venue that relates to your organization, such as the youth centre;
- Train and coordinate the participants. Remember, they are the face of your organisation;
- Contact the media in a timely manner and coordinate with municipal public information officer;
- Follow up with media and make sure that they will attend the press conference;
- Consider developing a press kit, equipped with photographs for written media, press release and i.e. copy of publication (Manik Begolli, PR Advisor, Deloitte Consulting, Prishtinë/Priština).



Use the net. Facebook, videos on YouTube, written blogs and Twitter and post photos from events on Instagram and Flickr to attract attention.



Include the youth officer and municipal information officer in the planning of the press conference to ensure wider media coverage

What should be included in a press release?

When the LYAC is reaching out to the public through a press release, it could consider include the following elements:

- Your organization's name and logo;
- Contact information of experts for further information;
- The date;
- A headline that reflects the main message;
- A sub-headline that adds a second, forward-looking theme;
- A lead paragraph that explains the problem and gives key information;
- A background paragraph that gives the context to the problem;
- At least one quote from an expert on the subject;
- A suggested solution and a call for action;
- A brief organizational description (a mini-mission statement at the end of the document).” (Coalition for the International Criminal Court, “NGO Media Outreach: Using the Media as an Outreach Tool, http://www.amicc.org/docs/NGO-media_training.pdf, 2 September 2013.)

How can the awareness raising campaigns be run?

LYACs can distribute messages and take part in actions through the use of campaigns. In the past few years, LYACs have organized and taken part in a number of campaigns across Kosovo. Campaigns are a series of messages that share a single idea or theme that appears in different media outlets in the foreseen duration of a specific time. When taking the decision to organize a campaign, the LYAC should allocate sufficient time to find an attractive or innovative way to present the idea or theme, which will represents the main message to be communicated to the audience (Manik Begolli, PR Advisor, Deloitte Consulting, Prishtinë/Priština).

SO GET TO IT!

Remember, as LYACs you have a legally authorised right to participate in the municipal decision making process by attending public meetings, meeting with directors on issues affecting youth and organising events in the municipality. With those rights, however, is the responsibility to exercise the role as representatives of the youth by taking an active part in municipal affairs and working towards youth mainstreaming. Be sure to seek out good practices from LYACs, in addition to those identified in this document, and create some of your own!

