

# YOUTH POLICY MONITORING AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

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## Abstract

*The social capital of youth as a social segment is a major resource to contribute to any country's social sustainability. Social sustainability requires active youth participation in solving the issues that are important for local communities and education as a main source for youth knowledge, skills and opinions. Youth policy is a tool, which enables the state and municipalities to work with youth and stimulate their interest to participate. Ongoing research activities concerning youth policy significance for developing social sustainability usually are prepared at a more global scale, although, there is also a need at local municipality level. Scientific experience indicates that youth policy monitoring contributes to wider understanding of youth needs, as well as possible participation forms in solving the topical issues for local society. Additionally, youth policy monitoring that is based on youth knowledge and opinions brightly demonstrates the results of the previous and areas for the future educational work with youth. In Latvia, to date, youth research has been fragmentary and still has not gained the position of an independent discipline. Additionally, there is no sufficient experience in youth policy monitoring at municipal level. The aim of the article is to analyse youth policy at municipal level and provide feedback for municipality and non-formal education that is more flexible and allows to realize youth policy and may support needs of each municipality. A case study in one Latvian municipality is presented as an example, which includes a youth policy monitoring, a survey conducted among 401 respondents using eight major youth policy fields as stipulated in the European Union's Strategy for Youth. Results from the obtained data, recommendations are proposed for a more effective implementation of youth policy, understanding fields for more active educational work for promoting social sustainability in a local community. The results and discussed approach for youth policy monitoring can be applied practically at the level of local municipality for planning educational work with youth.*

**Key words:** youth policy monitoring, "youth policy implementation index", social sustainability, local municipality, education.

## Introduction

A framework of social sustainability foresees that each new generation is simultaneously an object interacting with the previous generations and a subject of change and proponent of innovation. The social capital of youth is a major resource to contribute to any country's social sustainability. Forming of social capital of youth is the task of educational institutions. Social sustainability of any region in the world will hinge to a great degree on the efficacy of the policy for promoting a comprehensive involvement of youth in the local and global social development processes and for sponsoring the employment of youth as a most socially active part of society. In turn, youth knowledge, skills and opinions about necessity and possibilities to be involved is a result of educational work, which may occur in a framework of formal education or in a framework of non-formal education, including also youth policy implementation at municipal level. Taking into account the current diversified needs of each territory and youth interests,

flexibility of educational process is of high importance. Thus, the main accent should be put on non-formal education that is more flexible, which allows realizing youth policy and may support needs of each municipality.

The various impacts of global development and the diverse character of youth's day-to-day life present a great challenge to youth policy makers. A successful policy planning and implementation is largely determined by the accessibility of knowledge, data and information about the direct and indirect target groups involved in the process and capacity of non-formal education that is available in each territory.

Special attention within youth policies has to be paid for youth activities that are devoted to the solving of the issues that are important for society. Such activities are constantly scrutinised by researchers of social processes and youth policy makers (Council of Europe 2010; United Nations 2015; Eiropas Komisija [European Commission] 2010; Ministru Kabinets [Cabinet of Ministers] 2009; Rexhepi, Filiposka, Trajkovic 2018; Planas, Soler, & Vilà 2014; Miedema & Bertram-Troost 2015; Brunold 2015; Bell 2016; Kravale-Pauliņa & Oļehnoviča, 2015). In Latvia, although statistical research of youth-related issues is represented (e.g. Koroļeva et al. 2009; Klāsons, Sīmansone & Laķe 2013; Kravale-Pauliņa & Oļehnoviča 2015; Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2013, 2015), to date, youth research has been fragmentary and still has not gained the position of an independent discipline.

The only regular research, which currently targets and analyses the youth target group of 13 to 25 years-olds at large is the annual monitoring by the Ministry of Education and Science of the quality of young people's lives, their experience in voluntary activities, the opportunities for spending leisure time, engagement in social, community and political activities, the accessibility of information and information sources, as well as the topical issues for youth, carried out since 2008 (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2013). The annual nature of this monitoring allows for evaluation of the transformations in youth target group over the period of several years.

The ongoing debates indicate that there is a need for a broader understanding of the role of youth, resources and forms of participation in solving the current issues for society (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya 2005). Nowadays, researchers are looking for innovative approaches, how to involve youth to participate in solving of topical issues of local society (e.g. Rexhepi et al. 2018). Broader understanding and searching for innovative approaches that can be realized and included in educational processes are possible through monitoring of youth policy. As Planas et al. (2014) indicate, the evaluation of youth policy makes it possible to identify and prioritize the needs of the youth, as well as to identify areas previously neglected. Moreover, results can be applied practically in municipalities, also through educational process. However, despite the fact that involving youth in community-based issues in municipalities is widespread and also is reflected in learning process, in practice it is less common (Timmerman 2009).

Although in recent years youth research in Latvia has enabled development of information- and data-based state policy, it has to be owned that the implementation of youth policy is a local challenge for each municipality and depends on various factors: funding, accessibility of environment, the number of young people, employment, availability of non-formal education etc. So, it can be concluded that a successful youth policy relies on full cooperation of all the stakeholders involved and on a common understanding of the needs of work with youth. The authors of the article, having monitored the youth policy will analyse a case in a local municipality in Latvia. Results from the obtained data, recommendations are proposed for a more effective implementation of youth policy, understanding fields for more active educational work, thus promoting social sustainability in a local community. The results and discussed approach for youth policy monitoring can be applied practically at the level of local municipality and in educational institutions.

## Youth Policy Monitoring as a Tool for Developing Social Sustainability

### *Youth Policy for Social Sustainability*

In the EU youth policy planning documents, youth is defined as a priority from the social perspective, by emphasising the need to care for them as the future human capital. A testimony to the importance of youth for social sustainability can be found in the “Sustainable Development Goals” (United Nations 2015) that highlight the necessity to substantially not reduce the proportion of youth in employment, education or training (Target 6 of Goal No. 8) what discovers interest of all the stakeholders involved in successful on sustainability oriented youth policy (e.g. see Braziene, Mikutaviciene 2013 for the importance of youth policy during youth transition from education to labour market).

In general, youth policy is a tool, which, when used properly, will result in an effective output (social sustainability), which is why youth policy is implemented on the grounds of various documents that encompass the experience accumulated by the European Union member states and other countries. Drawing on the national experience of member states, including the municipal level, can ensure the sustainability of the process, by forging cooperation on all levels, conducting scientific research, involving experts from various levels and, certainly, by establishing a non-mediated, direct dialogue with youth. As scientific research discovers youth’s awareness of future changes, contributes to sustainability in development (e.g. Iliško, Skrinda, Mičule 2014). Thus, active educational work with youth on sustainability concepts, on the one hand, prepares youth to action, on the other hand, makes them interested to participate in youth policy activities.

When emphasising the idea that youth policy planning documents drafted by the European Union are, in essence, rather more analytical and recommendatory in their nature, one must not forget that the duty of each member state in planning and implementing youth policy is to consider the most significant common standpoints to such a degree that it may effectively ensure implementation of youth policy priorities in the respective country and at municipalities’ level, in accordance with the aim to ensure social sustainability.

The spectrum of “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” (Commission of the European Communities 2009), a document drafted by the Commission of the European Communities, encompasses a broad range of youth policy areas that influence young people’s day-to-day life and its quality and seriously contribute to social sustainability. Youth policy can be successfully implemented if the sectors are effectively coordinated. Moreover, implementation of youth policy can be beneficial to other spheres of social sustainability such as children and family policy, education, gender equality, employment, housing and health care. Cross-sectorial cooperation ought to be developed by involving local and regional participants who have a crucial role in the implementation of strategies for youth (e.g. Eiropas Savienības Padomes 2015.gada 27.maija secinājumi par starpnozaru politikas sadarbības pastiprināšanu, lai efektīvi risinātu sociāli ekonomiskos izaicinājumus, ar kuriem saskaras jaunieši [Council Conclusions of 27 May 2015 on Enhancing Cross-Sectorial Policy Cooperation to Effectively Address Socio-Economic Challenges Facing Young People] Nr. (2015/C 172/02)). The open method of coordination is underscored as key to strengthening the links with policies that are incorporated in the “European Youth Pact of the Treaty of Lisbon”, which draws attention to three stands: (1) employment, integration and social advancement, (2) education, training and mobility, and (3) reconciliation of family life and working life (Ministru Kabinets [Cabinet of Ministers] 2016).

### *Youth Policy Monitoring*

A well-considered and evidence-based youth policy requires specific monitoring tools, which provide the planners and implementers of the process with adequate feedback and promote a greater understanding of the direction of this process. The current tools, for instance,

the Eurostat data, national reports, the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCY), the EU research framework and the three-year report on the European youth are only part of the necessary scope of youth policy monitoring. It is essential to create cooperation networks among researchers throughout Europe, to conduct comparative research and more widely disseminate its results, as well as to introduce regular youth Eurobarometers (Commission of the European Communities 2009). Additionally, one would like to see regular youth policy monitoring at municipal level for better solving of local issues and for improving the certain spheres in educational process. The wide attention usually is paid for monitoring results presented at global level, although, monitoring results at local level also are of high importance, because they indicate strengths and weaknesses of the certain areas in education, especially non-formal, that provides youth with knowledge, skills and influences their opinion about role in local society. It is logically that each activity included in youth policy will be successful in case, if youth understand, accept and is able to participate. Such readiness to see the necessity and possibilities offered by youth policy implementation mostly depends on educational process offered in municipality.

The youth policy of the Council of Europe and its achievements, as well as the basic standpoints, approaches, methods and tools for the policy making of the future, have been comprehensively analysed in the strategic document “AGENDA 2020: On the Future of the Youth Policy of the Council of Europe” (Tittley 2008).

One of the documents to analyse the youth policy is “Quality Youth Work” (2015), which depicts how quality relates to the proposed goals and preconditions for reaching optimal results, and how this process is affected by the chosen work methods. In addition, the document discusses the indicators – what are they and how could they function as grounds for quality development, by proposing general recommendations that pertain to youth work at all levels (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture 2015).

Analysis of the above-mentioned European Union youth policy planning documents yields a conclusion that the legal framework of youth policy on the EU level is under constant development and is complemented and modified on the grounds of youth priorities, life style and the dynamics of prevalent goals, thus attempting to adapt to the topical needs of youth and the situation in the labour market. Yet, it has to be noted that the EU youth policy-planning documents are to a great extent conclusive and full of propositions that, on the grounds of best practice examples, provide member states with recommendations on how the implementation of youth policy could be improved.

Only the latest documents more expressly underscore the need for an inter-comparable indicator-based monitoring system for implementation of youth policy, which could provide a comparatively adequate picture of the actual situation, not disregarding the concession that the reality in various member states could differ considerably.

In Latvia, an acknowledged success in identification, supervision and inter-comparison of the results achieved by youth policy initiatives was achieved through elaboration of a system of indicators on the grounds of the regulation for “Calculation of the Youth Policy Index at Municipalities Designed during the Annual Monitoring for Evaluation of the Quality of Young People’s Lives” (Ikgadējā monitoringa ietvaros izstrādātā jaunatnes politikas indeksa aprēķināšana pašvaldībās jauniešu dzīves kvalitātes novērtēšanai. Nolikums [Calculation of the Youth Policy Index at Municipalities Designed during the Annual Monitoring for Evaluation of the Quality of Young People’s Lives. Regulation] 2014). The indicators, which are presented in the form of mathematical scales, present a set of comparable statistical data, which directly or indirectly illustrate the actual situation in certain fields of youth policy (European Commission 2011).

It is noteworthy that the choice of indicators for evaluation of sustainable development in local communities for better results should take into account both development objectives and stakeholders’ opinions, as well as provide possibilities for monitoring (e.g. Valtenbergs et al. 2013). In process of selection of indicators using stakeholders’ opinion, one should take into

account their motivation level (Valtenbergs et al. 2013). In the context of the present research, education should ensure the certain motivation level both for youth and for their teachers.

Research is one of the many ways, which permits to better understand the versatile aspects of youth policy, especially by engaging the young people themselves to the utmost extent in this evaluation process. Youth research enables the analysis of transformations in young people's views, everyday practice, values and attitudes under the influence of these tendencies. Meanwhile, a more in-depth analysis, information and data serve as grounds for a knowledge-based youth policy that meets young people's current and long-term needs.

A system of indicators for youth policy monitoring is of high importance. The data about the direction of youth policy in general are obtained by using the already existing European tools for survey and statistical aggregation – Eurostat, Eurobarometer, as well as the data from the European Parliament and other trans-national survey or research results.

To ensure the achievement of the objectives in the fields of action stipulated by the EU Strategy for Youth (Commission of the European Communities 2009), alongside a general improvement in the policy of the European Commission decreed that it is necessary to design a way of overseeing the achieved results. Such results would not only ensure a regular monitoring of the policy direction, but would also provide common, uniform and comparable information about the aspects of youth policy in various European Union member states as well as in the European Union in general. The indicators elaborated by a group of experts encompass the eight major youth policy fields as stipulated in the EU Strategy for Youth (Commission of the European Communities 2009) – education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; social inclusion; creativity and culture; participation in civil society; voluntary activities; youth and the world. The indicators are set as statistical measures, expressed in a mathematical form through specific scales that directly or indirectly point at the actual situation in the above-mentioned youth policy fields.

The EU indicators are summarised according to certain age groups, on the grounds of a stipulation by the EC that the category of youth involves young people from 15 to 30 years of age. This stipulation does not conform with the definition of youth in the legislation of the Republic of Latvia where youth is defined as a person aged from 13 to 25 (Jaunatnes likums [Law on Youth] 2008).

In Latvia, supporting the idea that the efficacy and results of youth policy are directly dependant on the opportunities to evaluate the process of its implementation, the Ministry of Education and Science in 2012 initiated elaboration of a “youth policy implementation index” and conducting of a first pilot research. In 2014, index measurements were carried out in more than ten Latvian municipalities. Given the fact that Latvia has 119 municipalities, the outline of the situation and the obtained data, obviously, can only be considered representative of a limited part of youth. On the other hand, the results obtained in each municipality provide valuable experience and knowledge for planning the future work with youth, including educational process.

In Latvia, the system of indicators for youth policy implementation is based on the eight EU fields of youth policy, considering them as eight dimensions of the youth policy implementation index (education and training; participation in civil society; voluntary activities; creativity and culture; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; social inclusion; youth and the world). Yet, the data gathering method is not grounded in summary on the statistics and previous research findings. Instead, it uses the survey method, which allows for an exploration of the subjective situation and the experience of youth in relation to various policy aspects. All in all, the index – a numeric, mathematically calculated indicator – provides a comprehensive answer to the question: how do young people estimate their acquired skills, wishes and the availability of different opportunities when preparing for an independent, high-quality life in the society? (European Commission 2011; Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2012).

The “youth policy implementation index” is a multi-dimensional indicator, which provides for an opportunity to carry out an evaluation of the results of youth policy implementation

within various thematic aspects: education and training; participation in civil society; voluntary activities; creativity and culture; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; social inclusion; youth and the world.

The “youth policy implementation index”, which was designed in Latvia, permits to assess the opportunities that young people have in various spheres of life, as well as their practice and readiness to make use of these opportunities. Although such an index is, to a great extent, a subjective measurement of young people’s opinions, it provides a chance to evaluate the effectiveness of youth policy implementation from the perspective of its direct target group. With time, by supplementing this measurement with additional objective indicators (statistics, international assessment, etc.), the index can be further elaborated into an innovative and comprehensive instrument for evaluation of the policy implementation that could also be used in other policy fields.

## Methodology of Research

### *General Background*

An issue on youth policy monitoring has gained wide recognition in Latvia as far as youth policy is considered as a key element for development of social sustainability. In 2012, The Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with TNS Latvia (survey company) elaborated methodology for assessment youth policy implementation both at country’s level and at municipal level through calculation of “youth policy implementation index” (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2012). Later in 2014, this methodology was applied widely to several local municipalities through competition held by the Agency for International Programs for Youth in order to support local-scale situational monitoring and to calculate “youth policy implementation index” for evaluation of the quality of young people’s lives (Jaunatnes starptautisko programmu aģentūra [Agency for International Programs for Youth] 2014). Daugavpils city municipality of the Republic of Latvia also took part in this competition. In Daugavpils funding was granted for Association of Education for Sustainable Development (Asociācija izglītība ilgtspējīgai attīstībai (AIIA)), where one of the authors of the paper Māriete Kravale-Pauliņa is the member of the board. Researchers were granted funding for organizing respondent survey and calculating “youth policy implementation index” in the Daugavpils city municipality within the framework of the project “Calculation of the Youth Policy Index at Municipalities Designed during the Annual Monitoring for Evaluation of the Quality of Young People’s Lives in Daugavpils city municipality”.

The research in the present paper goes beyond and focus on concept that social sustainability that has to be reached through youth policy implementation requires complex assessment in context of education. Thus, viewpoints, attitudes and knowledge provided by the youth during the survey discover not only their quality of life, but also the quality of educational process in municipality, mostly non-formal.

The survey carried out in Daugavpils city municipality in 2014 included questions about the eight dimensions - education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; social inclusion; creativity and culture; participation in civil society; voluntary activities; youth and the world according to the eight major youth policy fields as stipulated in the European Union’s Strategy for Youth (Commission of the European Communities 2009) for assessment of the quality of young people’s lives in a municipality (Ikgadējā monitoringa ietvaros izstrādātā jaunatnes politikas indeksa aprēķināšana pašvaldībās jauniešu dzīves kvalitātes novērtēšanai. Nolikums [Calculation of the Youth Policy Index at Municipalities Designed during the Annual Monitoring for Evaluation of the Quality of Young People’s Lives. Regulation] 2014). The total figure of the index provides an answer to the question: how do young people evaluate the skills they have acquired, their wishes and the availability of different choices in preparation for a high-quality social life? In general, in the framework

of this paper, youth's viewpoint about their knowledge and skills provided during the survey discovers feedback for education provided in municipality and discovers direction for the future active educational work with youth.

### *Sample Selection*

The participants of the survey were young people from Daugavpils city municipality of the Republic of Latvia aged from 13 to 25 including pupils of comprehensive secondary schools and vocational education institutions, students and the unemployed. To ensure the representativeness of data, respondents from all these groups were included in the survey sample. The sample was made by using the combined sampling method: probability sample – certified random sample; non-probability sample – “snowball” sample and quota sample. Thus, 406 respondents were selected for taking a part in the survey. Finally, calculation of “youth policy implementation index” according to methodology elaborated by The Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2012) was based on 401 correctly filled questionnaires. Such a sample fully provides for the representativeness of the general sample. For the sample to include not only Latvians but other nationalities as well, the questionnaires were made not only in Latvian but also in Russian, and the respondents could choose the language as they wished.

### *Instrument and Procedures*

The survey was conducted in Daugavpils in 2014 in a written form including closed and semi-open questions about demographic information, information about the behaviour, knowledge and, crucially, attitude and opinions using both Likert and Guttman attitude scales. The Likert scale was made of a list of statements with envisaged pre-defined evaluative answers, while the Guttman scale included a string of statements with possible formulations to illustrate the respondent's attitude, ranging from absolutely positive to absolutely negative. To ensure an accurate calculation of the index, the data were processed in a certain system, which is more broadly described in the “Index Weight Card” (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2012). It included processing of primary results when in total eight dimensions were obtained. However, all dimensions have the same “weight”, that is, all dimensions are equally important to young people – employment and entrepreneurship are just as valuable to them as voluntary activities what precludes a direct and unequivocal comparison of the results from various municipalities and permits to consider the “youth policy implementation index” as subjective indicator.

The result for each dimension was expressed on a point scale from 0 to 100. At the beginning of the pilot research, the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviews) method was used. However, having encountered certain passivity on the part of the respondents in completing the electronic questionnaires, during the basic research stage in almost 90% of cases the researchers opted for the PAPI method (Paper Assisted Personal Interviews), that is, printed questionnaires were used. On average, the respondents completed the questionnaire in 15 to 25 minutes. Quality control was enacted in all research stages (testing the programme, data cleaning and control). The margin of statistical error is +/- 4.2% with the probability of 95%, which indicates that the results are accurate, as the margin of error does not go beyond +/- 5%.

### *Data Analysis*

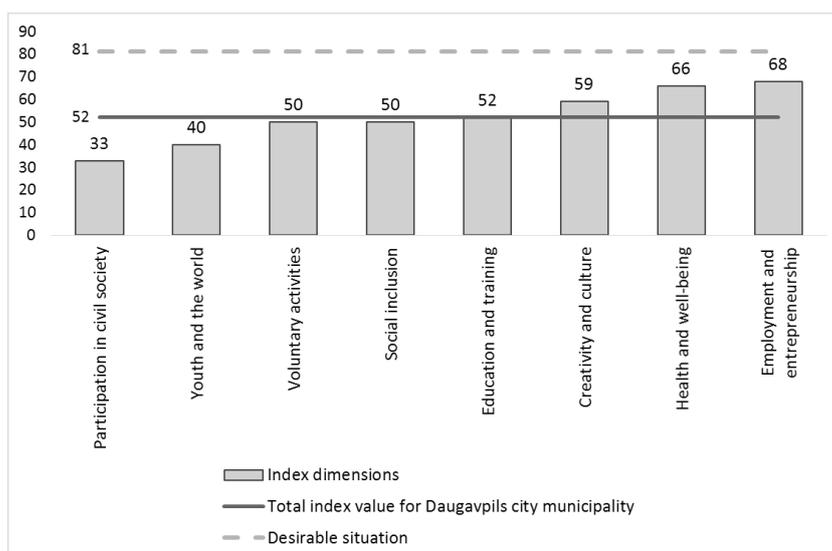
Analysis of the results was made by using an evaluation scale where the total evaluation of the situation was divided in five equal assessment groups (ranging every 20 points), each group having a numeric value and a corresponding description of the attributed assessment: (1) 0 to 20 points – low assessment; (2) 21 to 40 points – rather low assessment; (3) 41 to 60 points – average assessment; (4) 61 to 80 points – rather high assessment; (5) 81 to 100 points – high assessment (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija 2012). The resulting figure for each separate

dimension or the total index was considered very high if the index scored above 81 points. This result – at least 81 points – was thus also proposed as the desirable situation in the context of policy evaluation. Yet, it has to be noted that the index can only be improved gradually, for instance, the attainable improvement in the index over a year is at least 3 index points. To ensure the objectivity of the results and an equal measure of value for each of the youth policy dimensions in the total index figure, the total figure of “youth policy implementation index” was obtained by adding up the resulting figures of all eight dimensions and dividing it by the total number of dimensions.

## Results of Research

As far as youth policy implementation is supported by non-formal education activities and survey mostly focused on possibilities provided by non-formal education, values of “youth policy implementation index” and its dimensions provide basis for planning the future work with youth, especially in non-formal education. Young people’s quality of life in big extent ensures the level of social sustainability. Sustainable youth policy relies on full cooperation of all the stakeholders involved and on a common understanding of the needs of work with youth, including the level of local municipality. Education in this context is a tool that ensures youth’s readiness to be active and competitive in each of eight dimensions of social life. In this mean, education provides ability to recognize the issues that are significant for youth in everyday life and in the future. The data at the Figure 1 present values for “youth policy implementation index” and its dimensions and provide youth’s answer to the question: *how do young people evaluate the skills they have acquired, their wishes and the availability of different choices in preparation for a high-quality social life?* Answer to such question also indicates dimensions, where non-formal education already provided youth with sufficient possibilities, knowledge, skills, as well as discover areas that remained without attention.

The results obtained can demonstrate that areas, which should be taken into account during elaboration and correction of youth policy and non-formal education in Daugavpils city municipality.



**Figure 1: “Youth policy implementation index” at Daugavpils city municipality in 2014, based on survey results (n=401).**

Source: authors’ elaboration using data of “Calculation of the Youth Policy Index at Municipalities Designed during the Annual Monitoring for Evaluation of the Quality of Young People’s Lives in Daugavpils city municipality”.

The research data from 2014 indicate that the total “youth policy implementation index” in Daugavpils city municipality equals 52 points, which is valued as average. It means that young people in Daugavpils city municipality assess their acquired skills, wishes and the availability of various opportunities in preparation for an independent high-quality life in the society as average. At the same time, this indicates on overall non-formal education quality and flexibility in municipality as far as youth’s knowledge and attitude expressed during survey mostly are formed during educational process, as well as they are linked with educational process.

Social sustainability in Daugavpils city municipality bases on two main youth policy implementation areas as “Employment and entrepreneurship” (68 points), “Health and well-being” (66 points). All the areas mentioned are significant for providing youth with possibilities to develop their personality and to ensure their prosperity. That is why one can suppose that young people are mostly motivated to participate in activities that are related to “Employment and entrepreneurship”, “Health and well-being”. High value for the dimension “Employment and entrepreneurship” allows to suppose that non-formal education provided in municipality ensures the certain knowledge and skills that are necessary for inclusion in labour market or become entrepreneur. Thus, youth positively evaluate and in the certain degree rely on their future possibilities to become an active participant of economic processes. High value for the dimension “Health and well-being” also discovers positive contribution of education in youth’s readiness to be responsible for their health and well-being, because exactly the youth mostly is tended to pay less attention to health issues and prefer more risk in everyday activities and leisure.

In turn, such areas of youth policy implementation as “Participation in civil society” (33 points), “Youth and the world” (40 points) demonstrate lower values according to survey results. These dimensions allow supposing that non-formal education and education in general in municipality does not ensure sufficient level of understanding of importance to be informed, to be able to analyse and to have the own opinion about topicalities in the world. Moreover, this results in relatively low interest and insufficient understanding of necessity to participate in solving of local issues.

In the context of dominating and backward dimensions in the Daugavpils city municipality, one can discover important issue for both formal and non-formal education. It is of high importance to educate youth and to explain interconnectedness of all process that they understand as more or less important. Such dimensions as “Employment and entrepreneurship” and “Health and well-being” that in mind of Daugavpils city youth are more important are connected and dependent on tendencies in civil society and the world, which according to survey results are less significant for youth.

The low political activity of young people, which is demonstrated by the low interest in participation in the political activities of the local community, illustrates that the social capital of youth as part of a greater society, which is an essential resource in ensuring any country’s social sustainability, is not currently used in a sufficient manner. A comprehensive engagement of youth in the local and global social development processes will provide for the employment of youth as the socially most active part of the society, which in its turn, will essentially determine the social sustainability at both local and global level. Hence, on the state and municipal levels it is important to ensure youth participation in decision-making about topical issues for local community. On the other hand, this is possible only in case, when youth will be sufficiently educated in terms of civil society.

**Table 1: "Youth policy implementation index" in Latvia in 2014.**

	Education and training	Employment and entrepreneurship	Health and well-being	Social inclusion	Creativity and culture	Participation in civil society	Voluntary activities	Youth and the world	Total index
Latvia (on the basis of 10 municipalities)	55.5	68.0	64.3	46.6	56.4	30.4	49.4	38.9	51.19
Correlation coefficients (n=10)	0.791	0.279	0.247	0.375	-0.261	0.616	0.454	0.376	

Notes:

a) As part of data processing, the calculated values in each of the eight dimensions are added up and divided by ten, thus obtaining the mean values of youth policy indices that represent the general situation in the field of youth policy implementation in Latvia.

b) Correlation coefficients were calculated between total index and each dimension for 10 municipalities, which participated in the competition held by the Agency for International Programs for Youth in order to support local-scale situational monitoring and to calculate "youth policy implementation index" for evaluation of the quality of young people's lives (Jaunatnes starptautisko programmu aģentūra [Agency for International Programs for Youth] 2014). These municipalities are Daugavpils, Dundagas, Garkalnes, Iecava, Jaunpils, Krimuldas, Lielvārde, Madonas, Ogres, Tērvetes.

Source: authors' elaboration using data of "Calculation of the Youth Policy Index at Municipalities Designed during the Annual Monitoring for Evaluation of the Quality of Young People's Lives".

The data in Table 1 indicate that in Latvia in general the situation is similar as in Daugavpils city municipality. In Latvia in general, "Youth and the world" (38.9 points), "Social inclusion" (46.6 points), "Voluntary activities" (49.4 points), "Education and training" (55.5 points), "Creativity and culture" (56.4 points), "Health and well-being" (64.3 points), "Employment and entrepreneurship" (68 points). However, the general situation by municipalities that participated in youth policy monitoring differ, because correlation coefficients discover other accents than dimension values for Latvia and Daugavpils city municipality. "Education and training" and "Participation in civil society" are the dimensions that demonstrate average close linkage with "youth policy implementation index". In turn, dimensions "Employment and entrepreneurship" and "Health and well-being" demonstrate weak linkage with the total index. This one more time highlights the importance of non-formal education that is able to solve the issues topical for each municipality. However, balanced and equal significance of all dimensions in the mind of youth would be necessary and this also is the task for formal education that is less flexible but provides general foundations for youth knowledge and skills.

Taking into account that only 8% of Latvian municipalities have calculated "youth policy implementation index", it would be necessary to widespread and then to add new accents in both formal and non-formal education.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Social sustainability in local municipality that comprises active and wide youth involvement in development processes of regional importance is a complex phenomenon that requires combination of youth policy implementation as well as realization and improvements

of educational process with special attention to flexible non-formal education. In general, the “youth policy implementation index” that as a basis uses youth opinion is a relatively successful tool for evaluation of possibilities to develop social sustainability at local municipality level through clear understanding of the certain dimensions, where the future educational work with youth should be prioritized and activated. Numerical expression of youth’s attitudes to their knowledge and skills in eight major dimensions of social life is well-grounded foundation for improvements in both youth’s understanding of their significance for local development processes and teachers’ understanding of the fields, where this knowledge and skills should be improved. This tool can be applied continuously and can provide useful basis for better development of social sustainability in local municipality.

The case of Daugavpils city municipality and general situation in Latvia (using experience of available data of ten local municipalities) allow supposing that young individuals do not interconnect all eight dimensions in their understanding. Some dimensions are brightly ahead than others despite the fact that each of them can be considered as complimentary with other. Second, young people do not rely on themselves in the processes of participation in civil society and do not connect themselves with topical processes in the world. Such position of young people can hinder realization of their ideas in the future, desirable changes and improvements in local community and successful inclusion in social life. This can be solved through appropriate educational work with youth within youth policy implementation at the level of municipality. Clear understanding of dominant and backward dimensions is well basis for development of both youth policy and educational programmes. As far as changes in saturation of formal education cannot occur fast and cannot meet the needs of each municipality, the main accent should be put on non-formal education.

Having analysed the results of the case study in Daugavpils city municipality and understanding the general context according to available data for ten Latvian municipalities, some recommendations can be proposed with a view to improving youth’s understanding of their significance for local development processes and teachers’ understanding of the fields, where this knowledge and skills should be improved.

Recommendations:

- (1) When drafting short- and long-term youth policy planning documents, and specifically when defining the results to be attained, the planned activities and funding, it is essential to set comparable and measurable indicators that would illustrate to what degree the planned results have or have not been achieved and link them with educational process for ensuring timely motivation of youth to participate;
- (2) It is advisable to engage youth from the non-governmental or state sector in designing of youth policy planning documents, in other words, to involve the young people who would be the direct beneficiaries from the proposed services, alongside specialists from various spheres who are experienced in working with youth, especially teachers, who have wide experience and understand how to motivate and involve young people in the process;
- (3) when coordinating the work of youth affairs specialists, a clear common vision is required of working with youth at local municipality level, so that every young person could receive municipal services of identical quality and at the same time to educate young individuals that they need these services for better inclusion in social life;
- (4) it is advisable to organize more frequent experience exchange and learning activities for youth affairs specialists and officials responsible for youth policy at the municipality both on the regional and national levels, thus disseminating best practice examples from various municipalities also including sustainability concepts in teacher education for ensuring their readiness to adapt to the future work with youth;

- (5) the municipality ought to support the activity of a youth non-formal education centre, which is one of the best ways that could help young people to understand themselves, form new social contacts and acquire the experience of participation in the making of decisions that are crucial for the local community.

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