



Youth policy-making in Umbrian (Italy)

In recent years, youth policy issues have been at the centre of debates in Umbria, both in terms of political perspectives and operative intervention strategies. In the wake of the approval of Law n° 285/97, there have been some interesting developments on the matter of social aggregation of young people and their participation in civil society thanks to the creation of youth forums.

Since 2008, the Framework Program Agreement *“Young people are here”* has been introduced, leading to the subsequent agreement between the Region of Umbria, the governmental Department for Youth Policies and Sports and the Ministry for Economic Development. Structural interventions aimed at promoting the rights of young people between the ages of 14 and 30, have been launched at regional level. The subsequent initiative dates back to 2010 and its purpose was to overlook the distribution of the *“National Youth Policy Fund”* by prioritizing the various areas of interest and defining the modus operandi and monitoring modalities of the various regional and local programs. Many initiatives have already been undertaken in the field of leisure activities, associations, housing, urban planning, civic education, social inclusion and youth programs, social and health issues, youth information programs, culture and sport. These initiatives have been implemented in collaboration with municipalities, schools and tertiary sector operators. Though some elements of criticism were indeed raised, these initiatives became the basis for the initial framework for the elaboration of the regional youth policy draft proposal.

Following a 2013 initiative, the “adult” promoters of youth policies at a local, institutional and private sector level, held a full day of debates and discussions entitled *“Let’s Gov – Promoting opportunities and civic involvement”* on February 26th 2014 at the Umbrian School of Public Administration in Perugia. During the day, young people and representatives of regional Umbrian institutions were able to confront their views on the matter of youth policy-making. 120 young socially aware Umbrians between the ages of 18 and 27 were able to take part. Debates were punctuated by short interventions by professionals specialised in the matter, designed to direct the participants towards the most urgent and relevant questions, as well as to underline positive experiences and good practices. The main topics for discussions were as follows:

- a. Achieving autonomy – education, training, employment and housing.
- b. Civic awareness and involvement in civil society – participation, inclusion and legality.
- c. Lifestyle – health, lifestyle choices and wellbeing.
- d. Being part of the community – leisure, social aggregation, culture and creativity.

The day’s conclusions were later presented to the various institutional entities.

On the 14th of April 2014, the young participants were able to meet with the president and local representatives of the Regional administration and present ideas and solutions for the most urgent questions at hand in view of implementing a future regional plan.

In December 2014, a subsequent phase entitled *“LexGov: Participate, Ponder and Propose”* consisting of 3 days of debates (or *“hackathons”*) held in the various Umbrian provinces, in view of the elaboration of the regional youth policy draft proposal. 150 people took part, among whom: public administrators, young association members and Umbrians from different social backgrounds. During the debates, the results of the previous Let’s Gov were analysed and new ideas and propositions were brought forward, resulting in the elaboration of the current regional draft proposal.

The regional Forum for young Umbrians also took part in the elaboration process. The Forum brings together many different associations and representatives of Umbrian civil society as well as the student association *“Altrascuola – the Umbrian middle and secondary school pupils’ network”*, bringing forward the question of the right to study.

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The drafting of the proposal entitled “draft proposal for regional youth policy legislation” (as indicated in Vice President Carla Casciari’s Regional Government notice n°2014/99 of 18/11/2014), was completed between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015. With DGR (Regional Government Deliberation)n°235, the legislation bill was pre-adopted and on March 13th 2015, was presented to the various public and private institutions, municipalities , youth and student organizations, as well as other private bodies, under an initiative entitled “Let’s Show”, which brought forward certain observations, later included in the bill, as indicated in DGR n° 308 of March 16th 2015, entitled “Youth policy regulations”.

Following further alterations, the bill was successfully approved by the Umbrian Legislative Assembly and was enforced as regional legislation n°1 on February 1st 2016, comprising “youth policy regulations – additions to r.l. 16/02/2016 n°14 (regional institutional participation – legislative referenda, the right to petition and participate in consultations)”. The enforced legislation includes the need to encourage young people to participate in civil society . Art.1 in particular, states that young people are an essential resource for the regional community ; art.2 section f, states that the Region *“must promote the civic and political involvement of young people and encourage them to become active in the community, participate in the various decision-making processes, create associations and volunteering organisations, participate in youth associations, including online, informal associations and committees, and encourages community service projects and the creation of more community centres, as well as cultural and artistic spaces;”* and art.5 states that municipalities must “encourage the active participation of young people and create bridges between them and the rest of civil society through forums, open municipal council debates and innovative forms of consultation.”

Art.14 extends the right to vote in regional consultative referenda to over-16 year olds who are non-Italian nationals and residents in Umbria, as well as their right to petition local government and their right to participate in the decision-making processes of local consultations.

Finally, Art.24 officialises the regional youth council board, which, among other duties, will be presenting its stance regarding the triennial and annual planning of regional youth policy.

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