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ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION AMONG YOUNG MEMBERS OF THE SLOVENE MINORITY IN ITALY

How to develop the active citizenship dimension among the younger generations? Which are the influencing factors and which changes are needed in the rich framework of social actors, organisation and institutions to make them more attractive for youngsters? For an ethnic minority that is coping with the negative effect of the demographic trend and assimilation pressure, the active involvements of the younger generation is of vital importance and represent a big challenge.

The case study was carried out among the Slovene minority in Italy, that has a structured and rich network of cultural, sport and other organisations. The active participation of young people in the minority organisations and their active involvement in the executive bodies is a way of developing the active citizenship dimension on an individual level, as well as developing these network and preserving the ethnic affiliation to the minority itself.

The paper will present the outcomes of an empirical research made among the population of the high school students attending the Slovene medium schools in Trst-Trieste and Gorica-Gorizia. The research was implemented because of the need to have an overview on young active participation in the cultural, sport and other activities offered by the Slovene organisations in Trst-Trieste and Gorica-Gorizia, on the attitudes, needs and expectations of the youngsters towards the minority organisation system and on the extent of their active involvement in it. On the other hand the results show how do young minority members experience their ethnic affiliation and which are their attitudes towards the majority members.

Data shows that a high percent (almost 70%) of the student population is attending an spare time activity. Among these half in the Slovene organisations. The level of engagement in Slovene organisations is higher among students that has indicated Slovene as their ethnic affiliation. But half of these that has indicated a mixed ethnic affiliation (Slovene and Italian) are active only in the Slovene organisations. The higher level of participation is registered in the sport field, follows culture organisations and youth organisations.

20% of the population is actively involved in leading the organisation they belong to, mainly Slovene. The percentage is higher among high school leavers. Students whose parents were engaged in the civil society are more involved in the leading positions.

A set of statements analyse the influence of key factors such as: the relation with older generation of members, the advantages and disadvantages of active participation, the suitability of the actual minority organisation to the future challenges.