



1. The Young People's Parliament program

The Young People's Parliament is an institutional initiative of the Assembly of the Republic that is carried out, since 1995, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (via the respective Regional Directorates for Education), the Regional Secretariats responsible for overseeing education and youth in the Azores and Madeira, and the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sport, via the Portuguese Institute for Youth. The programme is developed throughout the school year with schools from all over the country wishing to participate and ends with two Sessions at the Parliament, held in April and May:

- One Session aimed at students from the 2nd and 3rd elementary school cycles (10-15 years old).
- One Session aimed at secondary school students (over 15 years old);

2. Goals of the programme

- a) To promote the interest of youth for civic and political participation;
- b) To underline the importance of their contribution to solve questions affecting their individual and collective present and future, through the dissemination of their proposals at the political bodies;
- c) To publicise the significance of the parliamentary mandate and the decision-making process of the Parliament, in its capacity as representative body of the Portuguese citizens;
- d) To encourage the development of argumentative skills to defend ideas based on the respect of values such as tolerance and the majority's will.

3. Participants

Any public, private and cooperative school may register, from the 2nd elementary school cycle onwards, in order to participate in the Young People's Parliament; the schools may be from the Continent, the Autonomous Regions and the constituencies of Europe and outside Europe. The Secretariat of State for the Portuguese Communities is responsible for promoting the adhesion process in order for Portuguese young people living abroad to also participate in this initiative.

The act of registration is decided by the Executive Council of each school, in consultation with the Pedagogical Council; the registration is formalised after the on-line registration form is sent.

4. Stages of the Programme

The Young People's Parliament programme will be developed in several stages, throughout the school year; those phases will be similar for both the elementary and secondary education Sessions. The programme will be developed as follows:

- **Theme Discussion** at school, involving as many students as possible and the educative community; the school may invite Members of Parliament from its constituency to attend the debate;
- **Electoral campaign and elections** in which the students have to organise themselves in lists and defend their recommendations about the theme of their Session;
- **School Session** with the elected students, in order to approve the Draft Recommendation of the school and elect their representatives to the District or Regional Session;
- **District or Regional Session**, with the presence of a Member of Parliament, to approve the decisions of each electoral constituency and elect the school members of parliament to the National Session of the Young People's Parliament;
- **National Session of the Young People's Parliament** at the Assembly of the Republic; Committee and Plenary meetings take place during 2 days.

Members of the Parliament preside to the Committees and participate in a "question time" during the Plenary meeting. The President of the Parliament opens each Session.

6. Coordination of the programme

The general coordination of the programme is the responsibility of a Project Team of the Assembly of the Republic (dependent of the Secretary General) and is made in accordance with the guidelines defined by the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Science.

The partner entities, namely the Regional Directorates for Education and the Portuguese Institute for Youth, via their regional delegations, have a particularly important participation during the preparatory stages of the National Sessions of the Young People's Parliament.

All the information is available at the internet:

<http://www.parlamento.pt/webjovem2008/index.html>

7. Themes under debate in the school year 2007/2008

In this school year, the Assembly of the Republic decided that young people discuss in their schools the following themes:

2nd and 3rd elementary school cycles: "Alternative energies and the protection of environment".

Secondary education: "The European Union: participation, challenges and opportunities".

Coordinator of the Project Team – Maria José Silva Santos

CONTACTS