

Analysis of the first session of the Working Group "Youth and Sport" of GAMCON – Gagauzian Modernization convention

The working group in Komrat, Gagauzia was very diverse - present were people working and teaching at the university, representatives of local government and also Gagauzian experts on working with youth. But one thing all of these groups have had in common is their shared interest in developing the youth of that region.

The meeting started with introducing ourselves and with presentation of the agenda for the meeting. After first part of the meeting I was asked to share about working with youth in Slovakia. I presented all my prepared materials. The audience seemed very interested in what I had to say. They were nodding, answering my questions and being active. It was clear that they are really invested into problematics and want to work on improving the situation of youth work in their region.

I really appreciate that everyone of them had a unique perspective on what should be done regarding the problematics. We heard the ideas about improving sport opportunities for young people e.g. football clubs, working with disabled youth, cycling etc. The prevailing problem that all of them felt is the lack of finances. They seemed to think that more money would be solution to all of the problems they are facing and that without money there is nothing that can be done to improve their situation. Even though their attitude is completely understandable and it is true that without sufficient funding we are limited, the core of working with the youth does not lay on enough financial resources. I was trying to explain that also in Slovakia there are not many resources put into working with youth, but the work is still possible. My recommendation for further discussion would be to approach this topic without regard for money. In my opinion the helpful thing for the working group would be to agree on goal when working with youth in Gagauzia and then on strategy. I would also encourage them to think creatively and as last problem tackle the money issue.

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The second biggest issue that arose in discussion were the volunteers and key leaders. Of course, the main problem the group saw was again in funding. I explained that in Slovakia volunteers are people who work with youth and they do it for free - in terms of money (because there is other satisfaction in it - like contributing to society, being a part of something bigger than myself, feeling of worth when you are able to help others,...). After answering this issue, the working group had several question about how to find volunteers and how to invest to key leaders. I tried to emphasize that when we work with youth, our focus can not be short term, but long term. It takes time to see the new generation grow.

In general, the level of discussion was high. People were asking questions and seeking for answers in their context. It would be great if there was someone among that group who would be a natural leader and a unifying element for all of the present. Someone who could take all the ideas further, initiate new discussions that could result in some tangible changes.

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