

# **Youth in Action** **Quality in European Youth Work**

**Bonn meeting, 4 – 6 July**

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There is a need to bring youth priorities – like participation, diversity, inclusion - and the political discussion related to these priorities closer to youth workers and young people.

This is not a one way process: While the policy discussion can widen the focus of specific youth work activities and can contribute putting them on a broader basis, one of the preconditions for a functioning policy debate is that it reflects the every day experiences and concerns of youth workers.

Training activities are the channels to foster the dialogue between stakeholders in youth work and youth policy, to exchange experiences and to develop a common language and understanding.

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The **Youth in Action** Programme Guide will focus on **4 priorities**:

- participation of young people
- cultural diversity
- European Citizenship and
- inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

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**Why do we have these priorities and what are their most important elements?**

## **PRIORITIES**

### **Participation of young people**

- Elections: Elections at national and European level have shown a relatively low turn-out. Low participation in elections puts not only political systems under strain but also the values related to them.
- Demography: At current trends, the proportion of young people as part of the total population will decrease over the next few decades.
- Unemployment: Not only is the number of young people in society decreasing but youth unemployment in Europe is double as high as adult unemployment. The situation is especially critical for young people in countries where the overall unemployment rate is very high.

- In the consultations for the White Paper “A new impetus for European Youth” in which the European Commission asked various stakeholders about their priorities for a future development of youth policies, young people pinpointed increased participation at local, regional and national level as one of their main priority fields.

The priorities mentioned in the White Paper are:

- participation
- information
- voluntary activities
- greater understanding and knowledge of youth (research)

These priorities are strongly inter-related.

What is being done in the policy field in this respect?

- The Council has adopted a new Framework of Cooperation in the youth field. Part of this framework is the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) which was established for the 4 priority fields of the White Paper. The OMC is a kind of exchange of good practice between Member States. Standardised questionnaires of the Commission are being answered by the Member States on what they do in the priority fields of the White Paper on youth. The European Commission evaluates the answers to these questionnaires and proposes common objectives which are then discussed and adopted by the Council and implemented by the Member States.

- A so-called “structured dialogue” is being established: In the run-up to the meetings of Director-Generals and/or Ministers in the field of youth which take place on a regular basis under each Presidency, so-called “Presidency events” establish a dialogue between policy makers and ‘organised’ as well as ‘unorganised’ young people. These dialogues have a potential direct impact on policy making. Germany will take over the Presidency for the first semester 2007 and mainly focus on social inclusion and diversity. It is coordinating its approach with its partners in the so-called “Team presidency” which includes the following two Presidencies, Portugal and Slovenia.

- By setting up new information and discussion forums like the European Youth Portal, both young people and policy makers react to the new electronic forms of communication increasingly used by young people.

### **Cultural diversity**

- The widening and deepening of the European Union and Europe bring with it a shift of identities. The relation between regions and Nation States, between Nation States and Europe and also the role of minority groups (e.g. cross border minority groups) continuously changes. Each of these entities has the challenge to redefine itself in a modifying environment.

- EC Treaty, Article 13 calls for “appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation”. The combat against discrimination is of continued relevance. People are being stilled harassed in Europe for

having another colour or belief, there are examples of discrimination of Jews, Muslims, Roma, gay or lesbian people in different parts of Europe, there are immigrants that die from mistreatment.

The role of the European Union in the world changes. Since a few years, for example, the European Union includes a human rights clause in third country contracts, which means that if a third country acts against human rights, parts or all of the contract can be cancelled.

- Against the backdrop of these developments, diversity will not only be a main priority of the Youth in Action programme but a horizontal priority for all DG EAC Programmes 2007 – 2013.

This priority will be reflected in many of the activities planned for the next few years, for example:

2007 will be the “European Year of equal opportunities for all – towards a just society”. DG Employment will be responsible for this year and will focus it on rights, representation – participation of under-represented groups and recognition – celebrating diversity and respect.

2008 will be “Year of intercultural dialogue” (DG EAC)

- Cultural diversity is also a horizontal priority in the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth. Both institutions cooperate in the Council of Europe’s campaign “All different – all equal” which has just been launched.

- DG Employment is currently running a campaign called “For diversity – against discrimination”. It deals mainly with diversity in the field of employment but has also a specific focus on youth.

In our engagement for diversity and respect we should try to show how cultural diversity contributes to enriching our lifestyle patterns and our ability to find our place in the framework of globalisation and increasingly interdependent societies.

### *European Citizenship*

- One of the underlying convictions in the debate about participation and European Citizenship is that best possible results in society can only be achieved if everybody is involved in decision making processes to the best possible extent especially in those areas by which she or he is concerned.

Involvement is a precondition for commitment and participation. It is not limited to elections but can take place at different levels, e.g. in schools, municipalities, regions, States and the European Union. For a European Citizenship to become a reality, it needs a European space for dialogue at the broadest possible level.

- At centralised level, within the framework of the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, European Citizenship courses have been developed. Originally long-term courses for a limited number of people, these courses have first been

shortened also with the aim to involve a larger number of stakeholders and are now – in 2006 and 2007 – decentralised to further increase the multiplier effect.

- In 2003 and 2004, two Calls were published for participation projects. A total of 47 projects were selected. An evaluation conference will take place in autumn this year.

### **Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities**

Many of the things the European Commission does can be attributed to two big challenges: competition (e.g. single market) and cohesion (e.g. European Social Fund). These two elements are strongly interdependent: only a cohesive society can be competitive, and competitiveness enables society to develop their full potential of cohesion.

Giving access to all young people will be a challenge also for the new Youth in Action programme.

At political level, the European Youth Pact was adopted in 2005 by the European Council (on the initiative of the Heads of State of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden) as an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy against the backdrop that youth unemployment is on average double the adult unemployment rate. The Pact involves concrete targets such as to reduce the number of early school leavers or to raise the number of young people with upper secondary qualifications.

## **TRAINING**

- **We work with a relatively high number of stakeholders. Suggestion to**

- invite to meetings stakeholders from the various training segments (as already done in TCP meetings), project promoters, staff from the Partnership, SALTOs, National Agencies

- perhaps even widen the range of stakeholders and to include, where appropriate e.g. researchers, policy makers, while making the expected results from meetings even more concrete

- **We work with limited resources. Suggestion to**

- use all the synergies we have by continuing with the staff and stakeholder meetings we have;

- make our communication easily available and digestible and to reduce complexity of information

- increase the focus on visibility and valorisation and to use institutional stakeholders (municipalities and regions) and address media, where possible

**training can serve as  
feedback system from policy to project and from project to policy**

**training is necessary in both directions**

**Enjoy the meeting J**