

## ***SALTO INCLUSION URBAN STRATEGY***

### ***Why focus on urban youth?***

Europeans are increasingly an urban species. More than one in four of us now live in cities with a population of 250,000 or more.

Historically, cities have attracted young people with their prospects of education, employment and opportunities. Many of Europe's urban areas continue to act as magnets for the young. Major cities like Paris, Berlin, London and Barcelona continue to be youth hotspots. Migration rates to these cities remain high, and big city populations are younger and more diverse than the EU average. In fact, in many European cities the proportion of inhabitants aged under 25 exceeds 20%.

However, for a growing number of urban areas – particularly in central and Eastern Europe, the problem is the opposite. There, the challenge is how to retain young people, and how to address the challenge of the shrinking city?

The youth unemployment crisis affects both of these city types, and few urban areas are immune to the problem of finding jobs for young people. In Greece and Spain youth unemployment rates exceed 50% whilst even cities with more stable economies are wary of this threat. In the summer of 2012 Copenhagen found its youth unemployment rate had doubled, whilst in Berlin – widely regarded as Europe's youth capital – the youth unemployment rate was double the German average at 13%.

But this is not just about jobs. Finding work is important, but is still only one element of the transition to adult life. The urban disturbances across Europe since the summer of 2011 have widely involved young people. Unemployment has been identified as an important factor in this unrest, but the analysis suggests that other issues are also in play. Disconnection from the wider community; Low education and skill levels; Distrust of the authorities – all of these have proven to have had a role.

Partly in response to these developments, SALTO Inclusion is developing an Urban Strategy. This will cover the period 2012-2013 and it will build on previous work – such as its youth unemployment strategy.

### ***The development of SALTO Inclusion's Urban Strategy***

The development of the SALTO Inclusion Strategy has taken shape during the course of 2012. It evolved from discussions between SALTO Inclusion and the National Authorities for the Youth IN Action programme. , In particular there

was a constructive dialogue with the UK NA, the British Council, in the wake of the 2011 summer riots in English cities.

The development process has been extensive and highly participative. It has included the production of an evidence base through research activity, and the organisation of a number of key events. In addition, SALTO Inclusion has maintained a dialogue with Youth In Action National Authorities throughout the process. The key milestones in the process have been:

- A Inclusion Colleague Support Group with National Agencies held in Budapest in March, 2012
- A major transnational workshop held in Birmingham in May, 2012
- Research activity culminating in a major publication – Urban Solutions – published in September

### ***What does the Urban Solutions analysis tell us?***

The Urban Solutions report provides a snapshot of the European urban landscape for youth in 2012. Based on primary and secondary source evidence, it confirms the diverse range of issues facing urban youth today. It also clearly outlines the features of effective interventions with young people. Although these are widespread, they are by no means universal.

There are a number of overarching messages in this work, as follows:

- Our society is pervaded by negative perceptions of urban youth. Although young people face problems, they reflect wider society and the recurring deficit focus is unhelpful. **It is important to reframe this debate – placing greater emphasis on the talents of young people and their positive attributes**
- Too often, others make important decisions for the young. This can fuel a sense of disempowerment. Young people want to take responsibility and they want their voices to be heard. **There is a real need to improve collaborative platforms with young people, so that they can play an active role in the decisions that affect their lives.**
- There is less public money available to support young people. However, the total resource remains significant in most cities, if we look across traditional departmental structures. The challenge is to make better use of these funds. **Organisations working to support young people in cities must raise their game, through improved leadership and co-ordination.**
- Although there are challenges in supporting urban youth, we do not start with a blank page. The core components of good practice are already widely understood, and across Europe there are wonderful examples and

the Urban Solutions report highlights some of them. **But we need to get better at sharing these examples, and transferring their key features. This should happen as part of a major capacity building initiative across Europe.**

### *The implications for the key actors*

The Urban Solutions research notes the wide range of actors involved in supporting young people in our cities. At the operational level this includes youth workers, teachers, police officers and local authority officials. Supporting their activities are support bodies and programmes like Youth In Action, channeled via the National Agencies.

The study – and the Birmingham seminar linked to it – highlighted the scope to share practice more effectively, and to provide collaborative spaces where transnational exchange and learning can take place. The event also showed the extent of demand amongst front line staff working with young people for such opportunities.

SALTO Inclusion has an important role to play in this process. Located in the heart of Europe and well-networked throughout the continent, it occupies a key position in relation to this urban capacity building agenda.

### *Suggested elements for SALTO's urban strategy*

We foresee a number of important elements that might form part of the strategy. These include:

- The **promotion of the key messages** emerging from the research, via a series of transnational events that bring National Agencies and representatives of the key players together. This could include conferences, seminars, round tables and workshops with a specific focus on themes in the report – such as “Managing cultural diversity in the cities” (*Multicultural urban training course - May 2013, Poland*), “Giving youth a voice” (*Urban solutions seminar 2 on participation of young people in (sub)urban areas - October 2013, Greece*), “Engaging with employers” (*Stakeholder seminar on EVS & employability – December 2013, Macedonia*) and so on. This would include cross-cutting events for all stakeholders, as well as sessions targeted at particular sectors – e.g. youth workers, social work staff, etc
- The **development of an urban youth support toolkit** for agencies supporting young people's transitions. This would consist of a scorecard that cities could use to assess their capacity under the core themes contained in the report. These scorecards would identify capacity gaps and areas for future improvement.

- The **participation in urban events and supporting city to city exchanges** which use peer-to-peer methodology to identify ways to improve services. This would bring together ‘microcosms ‘ of practitioners from within each city – youth workers, educators, police staff, NGOs etc – with a view to promoting peer-learning *within* each city.
- The **mobilization of a major exchange and learning programme** aimed at front line staff, which will include training events, staff exchanges and work shadowing opportunities. SALTO Inclusion has an established track record in training and capacity building. The Urban Solutions research underlines a series of effective approaches which might form the basis of a new capacity building programmes, which could include:
  - Working effectively with families
  - Co-production tools for work with young people
  - Effective engagement with employers – the Hi 5 model
  - Building intercommunal understanding

The new programme could mobilise the expertise contributed to the strategy development process, including the case study organisations featured in the research. It could be offered at both the international and national levels

- The **organisation of an international “Show and Tell” seminar** to improve communication flows and collaboration between European agencies tackling the youth agenda. The aim would be to avoid future duplication of activity, to explore synergies and to improve the sharing of intelligence. SALTO Inclusion could facilitate this event, and examples of other participant agencies could include Youth on the Move, URBACT and Eurocities.