



A WIND OF CHANGE FOR THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FIELD!?

Possible implications of
the EU Youth Strategy
'Investing and Empowering'
on the practice of
youth work in Europe

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EU





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FOREWORD

FOREWORD

The weather forecast for the European youth field until 2018 is here: On the 27th of November 2009 the Council of Ministers responsible for Youth in the member states of the European Union adopted a resolution endorsing the 'EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering'. Based on extensive consultations and research findings, this strategy is intended to be the focus for the European youth field for the years 2010-2018. It creates a range of opportunities and challenges for many stakeholders on different levels.

How can we, various actors and stakeholders in the youth field, put into practice the European youth policy objectives set out in this Strategy? Which possibilities, potentials and challenges does the Strategy create, especially with a view to the opportunities provided by the European Youth in Action Programme? This publication showcases some examples of good practice and offers some challenging ideas and suggestions, especially in the areas of education, training, employability and entrepreneurship.

The reflections put forward in this publication are based on the 'SALTO-YOUTH Firework 2010: The Power of Non-formal Learning in Education, Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship', which was held on 25-28th May 2010 in Paris. This event aimed to respond to the new EU Youth Strategy and inspire reflection on what implications this policy framework could have on current and future youth work practices. It gathered over 140 stakeholders in the European youth field, including representatives of National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme, the SALTO Resource Centre network, ministries, researchers, youth organisations, trainers, youth workers and other European institutions in the field of youth. The stakeholders were from 50 different countries of the EU and its neighbouring countries. The event was organised by the network of SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres jointly with their hosting National Agencies and the National Agency of Portugal. The event also paid tribute to the tenth anniversary of the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centre network.

While encompassing a wide variety of fields of action, (e.g. participation, social inclusion, health, etc.), 'Investing and Empowering' places particular emphasis on education and training as well as employability and entrepreneurship. Being also the areas which are relevant for the SALTO-YOUTH network as a whole, these areas were the thematic focus of the event.

This publication was born out of the 'SALTO-YOUTH Firework 2010'; it brings together existing practices, ideas, dedication, and future ambitions of all the people who participated in this event. Many thanks to all of you!

It is clear that the steps taken today, in the first year of the European Youth Strategy, are just a start. We hope you will enjoy reading, learning, knowing, and doing!

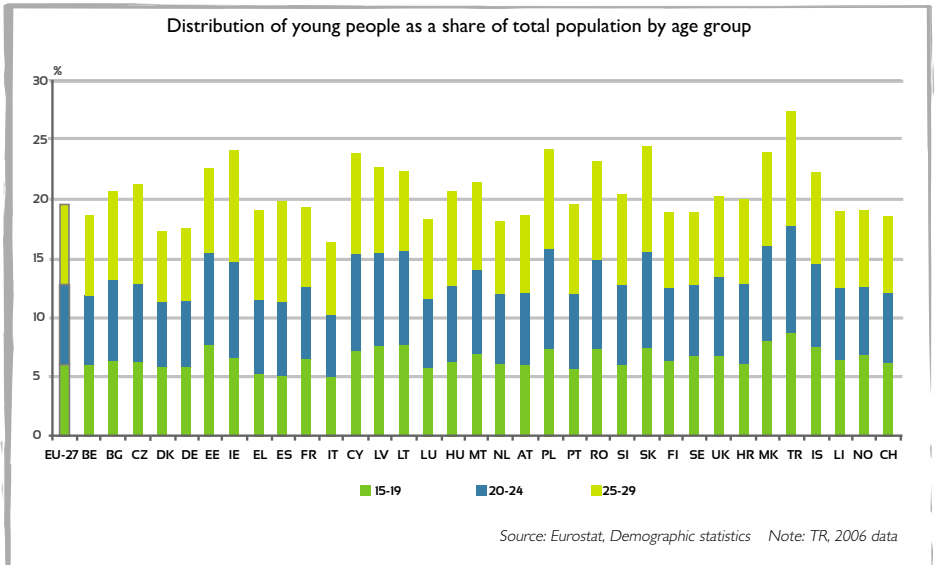


IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE



It's All About Young People

The 'wind of change' blowing over the European youth field concerns various aspects and all stakeholders in the youth field. First of all, it concerns young people, about 96 million young people aged 15-29 live in the European Union, making up 20% of the total population.¹



In recent years, youth research has contributed a lot to knowledge about young people in Europe. The first EU Youth Report and the 'Youth in Europe – A Statistical Portrait',² are great sources of pan-European level statistics. In addition, there are many other research initiatives that are more specific in their thematic and/or geographic scope. However, mere statistics are only one step towards a better understanding of young people. Who are these young people? What do they do? What challenges do they face? What do they think and dream about? What are their aspirations? Youth work and youth policy must be based on a deeper, fuller knowledge about young people.

¹ EU Youth Report (2009). European Commission.

² Youth in Europe – A Statistical Portrait (2009). European Commission.
http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/news_129.html

Low fertility rates and longer life expectancy will lead to a further decrease in the youth population in the next decades, and the younger generations will face the consequences of the subsequent social and economic changes. What will this development bring, and how can the younger generations be supported in order to cope better with the future challenges? These are just some of the questions youth research is trying to answer.

Many young people are 'living on a shoestring', to use the term used by some researchers.³ One out of five young people aged 18-24 lives at risk of poverty, 15% leave school after lower secondary education, and more than one third of young people aged 15-24 are not engaged in either education, training, or employment.⁴

At the same time, young Europeans are more educated and mobile than ever. They also tend to be more optimistic than their elders when picturing their lives in 20 years' time: half of 15-24 year olds expect their life to get better. Young people also believe that work opportunities for men and women will become more equal and that access to education will be easier in the future.⁵

The fact that young people are a rather vulnerable population in Europe today and expect a more positive future are an inspiration for action both by youth field practitioners and policy makers. In 2009, the Council of Ministers responsible for Youth in the member states of the European Union adopted a resolution endorsing the 'EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering' for the years 2010-2018, (later referred to as EU Youth Strategy).⁶ Is this the right political response to the challenges young people are facing today?

³ *Youth in Europe – Statistics Explained* (2009). European Commission, Eurostat. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Youth_in_Europe_4/5 *ibid*

⁶ Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, (2010-2018).

⁷ Pierre Mairese changed jobs immediately after the conference and is now director for Lifelong Learning, horizontal policy issues and 2020 strategy at the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

"The new youth policy strategy is not a purely reactive approach to the current crisis and related challenges. We could have continued with the core of the youth sector in leisure time... but the thinking behind the political choice was the following: the pre-conditions for being an active citizen are to have a job, decent life conditions etc. So instead, with its focus on employability, participation and citizenship, the new strategy takes a very anticipative, future-oriented approach."

Pierre Mairesse

Director for Youth, Sport and Relations with the Citizen at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture⁷.

Let us take
a closer
look
at this
EU
Youth
Strategy.



EU YOUTH STRATEGY



Great Ideas
and so much
more about
the structure & dialogue
under meeting
in College from UK & EU

Let's to look
at ALL UNEMPLOYED
IN EUROPE OR
YOUTH ISSUES

EMP & YOUTH WORKSHOP
GILES'S TOUR
MILAN

Next Friday was in spirit
Thinking the picture of future
EDUCATION + Employment
AS it FITS so well with
My own BELIEF.



EU Youth Strategy - A New Format Weather Forecast for the European Youth Field

It could be said that the forecast for the European youth field until 2018 is now here. According to the EU Youth Strategy, European co-operation in the youth field needs to:

- * create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market
- * promote active citizenship, social inclusion and the solidarity of all young people

In the light of these objectives, the strategy foresees eight fields of action:

- * education and training
- * employment and entrepreneurship
- * health and well-being
- * participation
- * voluntary activities
- * social inclusion
- * youth in the world
- * creativity and culture

For each of these fields, both the European Commission and the Member States are expected to take up initiatives. At the same time, the strategy promotes the idea that all policy areas affecting young people - such as education, employment, social inclusion, participation, etc. - should be better integrated into cross-sectoral youth strategies. Together with specific initiatives in the youth field, these cross-sectoral strategies will form a dual-approach supporting the implementation of the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. The work is foreseen in periods of three-year cycles, each with its specific priorities.

The Youth Strategy introduces several instruments to reach its goals:

- * renewed open method of coordination between the Member States and European Commission to support learning from each other. It aims to support the development of national policies in line with certain common objectives
- * creation of more knowledge about young people through research
- * increased levels of peer-learning
- * better mobilisation of EU programmes and funds
- * structures to support continuous dialogue between young people and decision makers by creating respective support mechanisms on different levels, (national working groups, European Steering Committee)

The EU Youth Strategy identifies a wide range of possible measures, which would need to be strategically and sensitively integrated into different contexts. While underlining the diversity of youth work practices in Europe, the Youth Strategy also makes a step forward in defining youth work. "Youth work is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature, both by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of 'out-of-school' education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and is based on non-formal learning processes and on voluntary participation."⁸ By defining youth work on a European level, the EU Youth Strategy paves the way for better recognition of youth work.

With this policy document, young people and youth work have gained a more prominent position on the European political agenda than ever before. But the developments in the youth policy arena do not stop here. In 2010, the European Commission launched the 'Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,' which sets a vision on how the European Union can be turned into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Its flagship project 'Youth on the Move' aims to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market by improving the performance of all education systems, incl. non-formal education and has a lot of relevance for the youth field. Another landmark is the preparation for the next generation of the European youth programme from the year 2013 onwards.

⁸ Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, (2010-2018), pg.10.

All these political developments bring along a 'wind of change' for the practice of youth work and its respective actors. All these actors are important partners in supporting the implementation of policy objectives and in taking further steps forward.

How can we respond to the (new) political priorities? What new possibilities does the strategy open? Where are the potentials and bottlenecks? The next chapter elaborates on some key ideas and suggestions.



**ALWAYS
WANT
FOR LINKS
BETWEEN
POLICY
AND
PRACTICE**





A Weather Vane for Links between Policy and Practice

What could be effective ways to put these European youth policy objectives into practice? Who are the stakeholders in this process? What kind of support is needed for that? And what is the role of the Youth in Action Programme?

This chapter reflects on some needs and possible approaches. It presents some examples of good practice concerning the different stakeholders: youth workers, trainers, staff of National Agencies, youth researchers, policy makers, and young people. In short, we invite you to reflect on how to:

- * encourage interest and build up competencies on European youth policy among different stakeholders as a first necessary step
- * support further strategic developments of youth policies and their implementation on national, regional, and local levels, while taking into account already existing good practices and enforcing cross-sectoral co-operation
- * identify the needs for new measures and actions which can be launched to address the policy objectives and changing needs of the youth population

In the following section, the focus is on two key areas of the EU Youth strategy: education and training, and employment and entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, we hope that the reflections can also inspire initiatives in other content areas of the EU Youth Strategy, such as participation, inclusion, health, and well-being.

Towards a better understanding of European youth policy and its relevance for youth work and its different stakeholders

It would seem of key relevance that all stakeholders in the youth work field know and understand the core of European youth policy and its links to their field of impact. How can you take an active part in relating youth policy and practice? How can you get other key stakeholders involved as well? How is all that linked to the development of youth work?

The immediate target group for the implementation of youth policy are the youth workers and others working directly with young people. However, many practitioners do not automatically see the links between their every-day work and the youth policy dimension.

“Before, I thought that I am not involved in youth policy I just do my work! But I have now realised that yes, I am actually actively working on and contributing to policy! It is important to ask yourself: what is my field of influence and impact? That depends a lot on my position, my own awareness and interests. That is why we also need more meetings to discuss all this.”

Mieke Neven McMahon, youth worker and trainer, Ireland

Thinking point

For youth workers and others working with young people;

- * **What is the EU Youth Strategy about?**
- * **What influence might it have on my work?**
- * **How could my work help to put youth policy objectives into practice?**
- * **Which initiatives could I take up to support this?**

Maybe it would be interesting to invite colleagues to read the EU Youth Strategy, and then sit together to reflect upon its content and discuss ways of transferring it into your work reality? Or could it be helpful to participate in some training or seminar dealing with this question? Not enough events on this topic? Why not organise one with your own organisation in the frame of the Youth in Action Programme? Or make a job-shadowing visit to some organisation with strong youth policy competence? Looking deeper into European youth policy might help identify new opportunities for your practical work with young people and thereby enlarge the potential impact of your work beyond the direct target groups.

The main target group and central actors of youth policy and practice are the young people. The involvement of young people is therefore of the utmost importance.

“One of the critical factors is how to make sure that participation is not only possible for the ‘elite of young politicians’ but to any young person who is willing to contribute to their local community.”

*Federica Demicheli and Fatima Laanan,
SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres Network*

Which activities could help foster the participation of young people in implementing youth policy? There is certainly a strong need for events aimed at reflecting on European youth policy, its relevance and implementation on local, regional, national and European levels. Possible formats can be trainings, campaigns, seminars or workshops. The Youth in Action Programme offers other relevant tools, such as youth democracy projects, youth initiatives, or the European Voluntary Service (EVS). Why not develop an EVS hosting project involving volunteers to work in the area of youth policy together with other young people? What other activities can you think of?

Importantly, youth policy issues concerning young people need to be ‘translated’ into a language which young people can understand and feel comfortable about. There are a huge number of potentials for co-operation with other actors in the youth field whose work has a more direct policy dimension. For instance: Can you imagine setting up a working group with representatives of the local, regional or national governmental authorities, National Agency and youth organisations to produce material about (aspects of) European youth policy? And to do this in such a way that is also reader-friendly for those who are not that familiar with policy jargon? These kinds of initiatives could also bring different stakeholders closer to each other and support co-operation in a wider framework.

It goes without saying that reflection on European youth policy and its impact on practice is also relevant for actors whose position has a direct policy dimension, in particular the National Agencies and government officials.

Funds from the Youth in Action Programme as well as other existing local/regional/national level programmes can support the implementation of projects aiming to raise awareness on youth policy and involve different stakeholders, (as in the examples above).

You might also want to consider setting up an internal youth policy working group in your National Agency, for instance, to discuss how to strengthen the policy dimension. Maybe that would help to better promote some of the Actions of the Programme, like youth democracy projects or youth seminars? Or help you use your Agency's Training and Co-operation Plan more effectively to support the wider promotion and development of competence in European youth policy? For inspiration, take a look at the example of practice from the Slovak National Agency as described in the following sub chapter.

Discourse on youth policy opens possibilities for critical reflection on the current and future objectives, content and role of youth work

The priorities set by the EU Youth Strategy suggest that now is a crucial time to re-define and strengthen the identity of youth work. It is moving from a leisure-oriented sector towards a well-recognised resource, contributing to combating some of the key challenges faced by the youth population in today's societies.

In this time of economic crisis that Europe is facing, employability has risen to being 'the priority of priorities'. However, some youth workers have expressed concern that the focus should not be too strongly economically driven and that youth work should continue to address the potentials and needs of young people to develop their human and social capital. New priorities aiming at 'smart growth' or 'sustainable growth' of our societies should not displace some other issues which have been at the core of youth work. These would include; human rights, equal opportunities, social inclusion, youth participation, and citizenship, etc. These are the areas which some practitioners expect the European youth programmes to continue to cover in the future.

Thinking point

- * As a youth worker; what is your personal understanding of the role of youth work in today's society? And where do you see your role and the role of your organisation in this context?
- * As a policy maker; how do you situate the role of youth work in the context of your (national/regional/local...) youth policy? Which further developments in the youth field should be supported in the future?
- * As a researcher; what does the research tell us about the societal needs and expectations towards youth field?



Reflection on European youth policy and its relevance for different stakeholders can serve as a ground for developing a more strategic approach for its implementation. An important part of it is to further develop youth policy itself, at different levels and in different contexts. Let us take a look into this in the following pages.

Towards strategic development and implementation of youth policy at different levels and in different contexts

How can youth policy developments on national, regional or local level benefit from this European level youth strategy? Is policy development and implementation only of concern for governmental institutions? What could be its relevance for a youth organisation aiming to position itself and its work more clearly in relation to policy? How can one support the development and implementation of policy at different levels and in different contexts? What is the role of youth research in it?



This time, let us start with an inspiring example.

“In 2008, the National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme in Slovakia organised a pilot project to support developments of youth policy on a local level. During a period of 18 months a series of seminars was run for municipality representatives in different regions of the country to introduce the basics of national and European youth policy, as well as to promote some tools for developing local youth policy. In addition to these seminars, some trainings and a study visit for local municipality representatives to Sweden were organised in order to learn from their practices in policy development, as well as to find partners for future co-operation.

As a result of this pilot phase, 7 local authorities adopted a local youth policy concept and several others are in the process of doing so, also some I.3 and 5.1 project applications are being prepared. The project has helped to inspire new participation measures for young people, giving impetus to cross-sectoral approaches on local level and helping create links between youth policies on local-regional-national-European levels. One of the success factors was also the co-operation between the ministry and the National Agency, which has helped to link the local policy development with the European level. It also introduced European funding tools for development and implementation of local youth policy, in addition to local and national support measures. As part of the project a series of public consultations were held with young people and experts, and as result of this a youth report has been given to the Slovak parliament which has contributed to youth being put more strongly on the agenda.”

*Marcela Hajitmankova, National Agency of Slovakia &
Eva Masarova, Ministry of Education of Slovak Republic*

The example above is outstanding because of several aspects: it shows how European level initiatives and support measures can bring added value to local level policy development. It also demonstrates the broad achievements of the initiatives taken thanks to the co-operation between different key-players, such as the ministry, National Agency and local governments.

Thinking point

- * What can you say about youth policy in your local/regional/national context?
- * Do any initiatives or partnerships like those presented in the above example exist at all?
- * Is there room for further development, and if yes, who could be the partners involved in those developments?
- * What role could you or your organisation/institution take in these further developments of youth policy?
- * What kind of support would you need for that, and who could be of help for you in this respect?

Setting up more strategic approaches and links with a policy dimension can also take place on the level of an organisation working on a practical level in the youth field. The following two examples illustrate this in their own way.

“Our organisation is running four projects which present an integrated strategy for participation, employability and entrepreneurship on a local level. This combines a youth democracy project from Youth in Action to set up a youth peer-to-peer network; a project financed by the ministry of Urban Development to research how participation can be developed as part of the city development and to set up a meeting space in abandoned premises; a project under the European Social Fund to support young unemployed people to start up their own business; and the project ‘Founderslab’ which is a kind of open lab for business concepts, open for job-shadowing and study visits. So, the way we work is actually an example of cross-sectoral approach on a local level and we are convinced that (political) dialogue and networking is vital. One of the additional values is that our work is supported by the University of Erfurt with impact research. For example, in the project where we support young unemployed people to learn about running their own business, 80% got a job afterwards or started their own enterprise.”

Steffen Praeger, Platform e.V. Erfurt, Germany

"JONG is a youth social-work NGO in Gent, which is running a project called 'Jobfixers', consisting of empowerment trainings for young people with fewer opportunities to strengthen their employability. It also provides trainings for those who work with this target group, as well as coaching and consulting. The project is carried out in strategic partnership with the employment office and is funded by the European Social Fund.

The empowerment training module consists of seven thematic sessions, which can be modified, depending on individual needs and interests of participating young people. It is a step-by-step process, where peer education is one of the core approaches. The idea as such is transferable; there are similar initiatives also in Finland and Sweden.

How could Youth in Action be of support? Some steps of this kind of project could for sure be supported and further developed in the frame of Youth in Action, for instance setting up youth initiatives to work out local models that fit the best to that reality, or supporting exchange and learning between similar initiatives, (Action4.3 or Training and Co-operation Plans of National Agencies). Furthermore, the culture of 'stealing' good ideas and implementing them in different environments with good adaptation to local circumstances could be promoted and used more for developing strategic approaches for certain challenging work areas."

From a presentation by Ann Hendriks, JONG vzw, Belgium-Flanders

Both of the above examples bring forward two important issues which can be of benefit when aiming to develop better links between the policy and practice: stronger cross-sectoral and knowledge-based approaches.



The EU Youth Strategy sets a vision of youth policy implementation in a cross-sectoral and transversal manner on all levels. This would require the youth field to take a proactive role to explore and establish more links, dialogue, and strategic co-operation with other sectors: formal education, the business sector, etc. Depending on the specific objectives and context, the range of partnerships could be significantly broadened by bringing together for example; non-formal education institutions, schools and companies; National Agencies and employment institutions; National Agencies of different European/national programmes and local-regional actors; involving the co-operation of other institutions who have expertise in working on specific issues, such as the European Youth Forum on entrepreneurship!

Thinking point

- * Take some time and map your main partners.
- * As a next step, you could map all the actors who have relevance for young people in your work context, local, regional, national or international level. Compare these two mappings:
- * How diverse are your partnerships in terms of different sectors linked to youth?
- * What formats of cross-sectoral partnerships are you already involved in – sharing information, common strategy or policy development, projects, etc.?
- * Where are the potentials for further networking?

Potentials for cross-sectoral co-operation are very varied, from developing a cross-sectoral youth policy strategy on different levels, (like the above example of policy development at local level from Slovakia), to building up specific projects on a local level (like in the above example of Platform e.V. Erfurt from Germany).

In addition, cross-sectoral cooperation could efficiently address some of the obstacles to effective implementation of policy objectives. These could include the limitations to free movement and mobility or double taxation. At the same time it could promote developments in the field of social guarantees, legalisation of social entrepreneurship, and simplification of starting up business initiatives, etc. These issues still present challenges in many countries, and even more so when in co-operation with countries outside the European Union, regardless of their importance as actors in partnerships in the youth field.

Thinking point

* A specific area where stronger cooperation between the formal and non-formal education sectors has been suggested is the competence development of youth workers. If you support this idea:

- * What could be done in your context to set up, or further develop training programmes in cooperation between academic institutions and actors from the non-formal training field?
- * If you hold a position of responsibility for training in the youth field; do you see opportunities for bringing together different stakeholders and supporting the launch of some pilot actions in this direction?
- * If you work for a National Agency; do you see an added value that cooperation with academic institutions could bring to your training activities?
- * What would be the ways to foster co-operation?
- * If you are a trainer; could you set up some pilot initiatives in this respect? The following example of good practice might give you some ideas.



“The idea of the project started in 2003 from exploring different practices of youth worker training in different countries, as part of the long-term training of trainers on a European level. Based on the need to reinforce intercultural learning and European awareness in youth worker training, we started by running respective international trainings for representatives of universities/vocational schools from different countries. Some years later the partnership agreement was signed by some of these universities who had participated in the courses several times, and with the support of the Life-Long Learning programme, each year a 2 week international seminar is organised, bringing together a group of 10 students and some teachers from each of the participating universities (while also the group of universities is enlarging with the years). Though it started as an initiative for youth work, (social-cultural animation), curricula, it has now enlarged to other faculties. Besides, this is an example of how different European programmes can work together for common aims (in this case YIA and LLP).

It is worth noting that on a conceptual level we have not really faced any difficulties or fundamentally different views about non-formal education, etc. However, the learning process between the trainers from non-formal training background and academic institutions has been mutually very enriching. It is a pity that despite the long experience, there is still no (long-term) impact study on the effectiveness of this training programme. But there is a lot of informal feedback and information about how participants have been able to use what they have learned.”

Pieter-Jan Uyttersprot, trainer, France

It goes without saying that for establishing a truly cross-sectoral working culture, the will of the youth sector on its own is not enough. It is also important to work towards better visibility and dissemination of practices and results of youth work. This will lead to greater social and political recognition of youth work and the recognition of youth work actors as important partners by other sectors.

How can we support reflection on, and dissemination and transferability, of existing good practices? Measures like peer-learning, coaching and mobility have been identified as successful approaches. Practitioners have suggested further expansion of these possibilities in the frame of the Youth in Action Programme and beyond.

Thinking point

- * How do you find out about existing practices that could give you inspiration for your work? How do you share your own practice? How do you support the sharing of or transferring of good practice of other actors in the field?
- * Are you familiar with the new EVE Platform established by the European Commission to disseminate the results of projects supported by the European Commission in the fields of education, training, culture and youth? Have you used your own networks to learn from the practices of others and promote your own achievements? Have you used job-shadowing or other such opportunities for this purpose?
- * If you are a National Agency or an organisation/institution providing support for others in the youth field, have you created opportunities to support learning through good practices at national or local level, for instance on your web-site, through specific publications or meetings of project beneficiaries?

Effective learning from different practices is only possible if the impact of the different practices can be properly identified and demonstrated. Here, strong links with the research sector can bring an added value to help work out indicators for assessing the implementation of policies and to make the impact of current practices more evident.



Thinking point

- * **As a youth leader or youth worker;**
 - ▭ Do you have any links with youth research(ers) in your activities? If yes, how do you link up? Do you follow the research findings when setting up your strategies or projects? Is research somehow integrated into your activities, for example for impact evaluation?
- * **As a youth researcher;**
 - ▭ How much do you think you are familiar with practice in the youth field? How much are you familiar with policy developments? Do you have any regular contacts with youth field practitioners and/or policy makers?
- * **For all:**
 - ▭ Could you contribute and benefit more from mutual cooperation? Where do you see the main challenges? (Finding contacts or common ground for co-operation, lack of funding etc.) How could you overcome these obstacles?

One of key thinking points related to youth research is the question of areas where future research is most needed. Taking the example of the Youth in Action Programme, it is evident that even though evidence-based approaches are increasingly and more frequently used, there are still many areas where there is the need for future research.

“Speaking of Youth in Action achievements in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship, education and training, one could mention support to participation and citizenship, orienting young people’s future and openness for mobility, integration of youth at risk, encouraging entrepreneurial spirit and raising employability, development and recognition of key competences, training for youth workers...”

*Hans-Georg Wicke, director of the German National Agency &
Koen Lambert, director of Belgian Flemish National Agency*

Having said that the Youth in Action Programme has contributed to development and recognition of competences of young people, what is the specific role of the different Actions in this context, such as youth initiatives, European Voluntary Service etc.? Or, if youth work raises the employability of young people, how exactly and to what extent does this happen? Youth research can play an important role in exploring these, and similar questions.

Thinking point

- * **As a youth worker or trainer;**
 - ▮ Which are the youth issues that you would need to understand better? Where could you find research-based data on these issues? If you think there is not yet enough research on certain issues, how could you make this need more visible and to whom could you address this need (in your organisation or through your networks, on local level, to the university in your neighbourhood, etc.)?
- * **As a researcher;**
 - ▮ Where do you see most needs for future research in the youth field? How could you address these needs? Who could be the partners in this process?
- * **Working in a National Agency;**
 - ▮ How much is research integrated into your work? Have you set up contacts and co-operation with youth researchers in your country or on a European level? If you would like to develop this cooperation, could you benefit from the practices of some other National Agencies who have already developed some experience?

Last but not least, expanding youth research is not an aim in itself and could rather be seen as an additional resource, feeding into the implementation of policy and the practice of all stakeholders involved in the youth field.

“To illustrate the Youth in Action Programme as an instrument to implement the renewed European youth policy, I could use an old Estonian proverb which in translation would be something like, ‘Don’t spit into the old well before you have built the new one’. I think this old saying fits well to the current situation where we are in the middle of the programme and investigating its benefits for society and young people in particular. For sure, there are quite some outcomes which fit perfectly to the new framework of youth policy. Also, there is obviously still a lot to do, for which the strategies will need to be built up to make use of the full potential of the programme and to develop it further.”

Reet Kost, director of the Estonian National Agency

Following the logic that is expressed in the quote above – in a circle of moving from implementation to impact research and from there to setting new directions - we will finally take a brief look into some areas where the implications of the EU Youth Strategy seem to urge most for new initiatives.

Potentials for innovation and new measures

Looking at the areas tackled in the EU Youth Strategy and following the reflections of the previous chapters, one can conclude that there are some issues which could be more strongly addressed. What seems to be missing today?

Thinking point

- * **When reading the EU Youth Strategy, where do you see a need, and a potential for new measures?**
- * **Being a youth worker or trainer;**
 - Would you like to set up new projects to support some field of action mentioned in the Strategy? Would you be able take an action that does not exist so far but could be a valuable initiative? Where could you find support? Could the Youth in Action Programme be of help? Or any other European or local funding scheme?
- * **Being a government official;**
 - What potential does the EU Youth Strategy open in your fields of impact? Which are the areas that are currently less addressed by existing structures and measures? What measures could be launched at local, regional or national level in order to support innovation in the youth field?
- * **Being a staff member in a National Agency and considering the variety of fields the Youth in Action Programme is already covering today;**
 - Where do you still see a potential for supporting further developments in the youth field? Could some Actions of the Programme be promoted for new ambitions of the European youth field? What support actions would be needed? Could you launch a support action through your Training and Co-operation Plan? Could you develop an exciting idea about how your Agency could take a more active role in supporting policy implementation on national level?

Where are the potentials for cross-sectoral approach, added value through co-operation with the research field, learning through existing practices and other approaches discussed previously?

Hopefully, reflection on the questions raised above can encourage creativity and innovation in the youth field which respond to the needs of the youth population as well as directions reflected in the EU Youth Strategy.

Without pretending to be able to cover all the possible issues, especially considering the wide variety of practices in the youth field in Europe, there is one area which we would like to highlight by way of example. This area is also raised because we recognize here a clear need for launching new support measures. The issue is; 'opportunities for developing (social) entrepreneurship among young people.'

In the past ten years, the percentage of young entrepreneurs has not really changed, being below 5% in the age group of 15-24 years and below 10% among those who are 25-28 years old.⁹ While there are some suggestions that the potential for entrepreneurship is limited in the population, there is still room for further efforts to support an entrepreneurial spirit and pro-activeness among young people.

To start with, as illustrated by the quote below, it is important to further discuss the meaning of, and potentials for youth entrepreneurship and its relation to the youth field in different socio-political and cultural contexts.

"There are regional culture-based differences: young people in ex-socialist and South-European countries tend to have a more 'paternalistic' attitude, whereas young people in Northern Europe can rather be defined as 'competing liberals'. Thus there are different levels of entrepreneurship and trust in the state and democracy. The question is, if and how can a common European strategy work in the light of these cultural differences and what kind of actions are needed in order to make it work? Adaptation of a European strategy to national, regional and local realities as well as individualised action plans could be some of the answers..."

Bence Ságvári, researcher from Hungary based on the comparative European level study on values and attitudes of young people

⁹ Presentation of Miriam Teuma, (Malta University, Department of Youth and Community Studies), at SALTO-YOUTH Firework conference, May 2010.

Thinking point

- * What does youth entrepreneurship mean for you? How do you see the role of youth work in it? Do you understand it more as support to develop entrepreneurial spirit and pro-activeness of young people or as support for young people to start up their business? Or both? And what about social entrepreneurship?
- * What support measures for youth entrepreneurship exist in your work context today? What measures or actions could be launched to strengthen the support existing today?

Initiatives like establishing more micro-funds, laboratories for (social) entrepreneurship, support for job-shadowing or youth initiative projects, career guidance, apprenticeships and internships could bring along a new wave of entrepreneurial spirit. Importantly, support measures should as far as possible be available at various levels, from local to international. Also a greater amount of training programmes to help young people get inspired and develop competences for entrepreneurship and creativity could offer relevant support.

Keeping in mind the suggestions for further development advanced in this publication, it would seem that the minimum condition for initiating and supporting further developments in the youth field is coherence between political ambitions and budgetary allocations to the youth field. While expectations from policy makers might be rising, the youth field has faced significant budgetary cuts on different levels in many European countries. After all, new ambitions in the policy arena need to be viewed also in the light of their financial implications.

ARE YOU
READY
FOR THE
WIND OF
CHANGE?



Are You Ready For The Wind Of Change?

In the preceding chapters we have argued that there is room for further efforts in order to bring change to the European youth field, especially in some areas.

“What does youth work in Europe need? Training and international mobility; quality development and professionalism; recognition of competences and competence profiles; platforms for exchange and other European-wide shared tools; networks and functioning triangles of research-policy-youth work.”

Hans-Georg Wicke, director of the German National Agency & Koen Lambert, director of the Belgian-Flemish National Agency

In the frame of the Youth in Action Programme and beyond, various tools have already been developed that can be employed further to respond to needs and priorities put forward by the new EU Youth Strategy. In addition, we will hopefully see the launch of some new support mechanisms in the near future.

After all, maybe the main question is not, what the renewed European youth policy strategy will bring to the youth field BUT what the youth field can do in order to contribute to the key areas of the lives of young people, as they are described in the policy document.

We hope that this publication has given you some inspiration for new ideas and wish you good luck in finding your own role in contributing to the current developments in youth policy and practice in Europe!

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING



References and Further Reading

In addition to the resources quoted and referred to throughout the text, the following materials might be valuable in order to explore more about the Youth in Action Programme, the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres and European youth policy:

- * Youth field of the European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm
- * EU Youth in Action Programme
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc74_en.htm
- * EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 'Investing and Empowering'
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc1687_en.htm
- * European Commission's 'Youth on the Move' initiative
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/news1786_en.htm
- * Declaration of the first EU Youth Work Convention
<http://www.youthetrio.be>
- * SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres
<http://www.salto-youth.net>
- * Lehto, M., Albrecht, M. (2010). SALTO-YOUTH: Ten years of Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities. ISBN 978-961-6826-02-0
www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2059/

WHAT IS SALTO-YOUTH?

What is SALTO-YOUTH?

SALTO-YOUTH is a network of eight Resource Centres working on European priority areas in the youth field within the European Union's Youth in Action Programme. It is part of the European Commission's Training Strategy for this Programme. SALTO stands for 'Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities'.

SALTO-YOUTH provides various youth work and training resources and tools. It organises training and partner-finding activities to support organisations, youth workers and National Agencies responsible for the implementation of the Youth in Action Programme. SALTO-YOUTH works in synergy with other partners in the field.

www.salto-youth.net

European Training Calendar: www.salto-youth.net/training

Toolbox for Training: www.salto-youth.net/toolbox

Trainers Online for Youth in Action: www.salto-youth.net/toy

Otlas - Partner Finding Database: www.salto-youth.net/otlas-partner-search

Youthpass: www.youthpass.eu

SALTO-YOUTH Newsletter Service: www.salto-youth.net/newsletter

What is the 'Youth in Action Programme'?

The Youth in Action Programme is the programme the European Union has created for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue. It encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background.

Young people can participate in various activities supported by the Programme, such as youth exchanges, youth initiatives, training and networking activities, and the European Voluntary Service.

<http://ec.europa.eu/youth>

Youth in Action Programme Guide:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc443_en.htm

Notes about the author:

Ülly Enn has been involved in the youth field since the mid 1990's, working in the Estonian National Agency with European Youth Programmes, the European Social Fund and with SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre. In addition to her work in these institutions, she has a background as a trainer, consultant and writer on a national and European level. Her volunteer commitments in youth work have taken her to places as far afield as Russia and Japan.

Based on her experiences in youth work practice, she has been a strong contributor to youth policy development in such areas as the Youth Work Act, and 'youth strategy and youth workers professional standard as landmarks of the Estonian youth policy field'. She has been involved in different research projects, as part of her academic studies in social work and on youth inclusion issues. She is a true believer that the quality of life of young people is significantly dependent upon favourable conditions created through greater coherence between youth work, policy and research. While this idea as such is not new, she welcomes that the EU Youth Strategy creates some new perspectives for this

"Before I thought that I am not involved in youth policy I just do my work! But I have now realised that yes, I am actually actively working on and contributing to policy! It is important to ask yourself: what is my field of influence and impact? That depends a lot on my position, my own awareness and interests. That is why we also need more meetings to discuss all this."

Mieke Neven McMahon, youth worker from Ireland

"I am really happy that youth research, the real data, is used to build upon the strategies. That's the normal thing how it should be. But what I see as a real challenge is to find a common language between the policy makers, practitioners and researchers. We are talking about the same issues, about the same problems but often in slightly different, or sometimes even in very different terms. And sometimes there are even different interpretations of terms among the same group of stakeholders."

Bence Ságvári, researcher from Hungary

"Talking about where could be the biggest challenges to put European youth policy into practice on national level, I think the cross-sectoral approach presents one of them. How to identify the other areas that could have use of the youth issues but also where we, the youth field, could try to find ways to influence other areas? This is a bit difficult for many countries, for Sweden as well."

Johan Lycke, expert in the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality in Sweden

"The main implication for me when I reflect on the new EU youth policy document is that I realise the need to try harder to show the value of what I do, because there are so many good practices, achievements and innovations we create all together but these are not known beyond our own 'Republic of Youth in Action'".

Laimonas Ragauskas, trainer from Lithuania

"To illustrate the Youth in Action Programme as an instrument to implement the renewed European youth policy, I could use an old Estonian proverb which in translation would be something like 'Don't spit into the old well before you have built the new one'. I think this old saying fits well to the current situation where we are in the middle of the programme and investigating its benefits for society and young people in particular. For sure, there are quite some outcomes which fit perfectly to the new framework of youth policy. Also, there is obviously still a lot to do, for which the strategies will need to be built up to make use of the full potential of the programme and to develop it further."

Reet Kost, director of the Estonian National Agency

In November 2009 the Council of Ministers responsible for Youth in the member states of the European Union adopted a resolution endorsing the 'EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering'.

In May 2010, over 140 representatives of the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme, the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres, ministries, researchers, youth organisations, trainers, youth workers and European institutions in the field of youth came together for the 'SALTO-YOUTH Firework 2010'. This was a conference to discuss the implications of this new youth policy strategy for the youth field, and to pay tribute to the 10th anniversary of the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres network.

Ten years of work as an enlarging network of now 8 Resource Centres, situated in different European countries, supporting thematic priorities and geographic co-operation with neighbouring regions within the European youth programmes and beyond, it is a long and colourful story. Over the course of these years, some significant changes have taken place: Enlargement of the European Union; changes in generations of European programmes in the field of youth; changing priorities of the youth area and policy; and changes affecting the lives of young people.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, SALTO-YOUTH is proud to recognise its achievements and continuously growing know-how in all key areas of the European youth field, while looking at a future full of new opportunities and challenges. This publication results from the 'SALTO-YOUTH Firework' conference and presents a contribution to the further implementation of European youth policy.

Published by SALTO-YOUTH

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Editorial team: Sonja Mitter, Rita Bergstein, Tony Geudens

Copy-editing: Nik Paddison

Design and lay-out: miXst, info@mixst.be

Photos: SALTO-YOUTH

Printed by: NewGoff, Belgium

December 2010

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