



Seminar on Youth Policy Development in South East Europe

Final Report

Belgrade, Serbia, 22-24 September 2008



SALTO-YOUTH
SOUTH EAST EUROPE
RESOURCE CENTRE



2

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Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia
Bld. Mihaila Pupina 2, 11 000 Belgrade, Serbia
Tel/fax: + 381 11 21 42 450
Email: www.mos.sr.gov.yu

SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre
MOVIT NA MLADINA
Dunajska 22, SI – 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Tel.: +386 1 430 47 47,
fax: +386 1 430 47 49
Email: see@salto-youth.net

and

Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe Partnership Secretariat
c/o Council of Europe
Directorate of Youth and Sport
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
fax: + 33 3 88 41 27 77
Email: youth-partnership@coe.int

The final report was produced by the three organising bodies.

Author: Finn Yrjar Denstad

Proof-reading: Dr. Jonathan Evans
- Senior Lecturer, Centre for Criminology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd CF37 1DL, Wales, UK

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Notes about the author

Finn Yrjar DENSTAD has experience of working in both the governmental and non-governmental sectors of youth policy at national, regional and European levels. He has advised several governments in Europe on the development of national action plans on youth policy and is the author of the Youth Partnership publication, *The Youth Policy Manual – How to develop a national youth strategy* (2008).

Contact address:
finn.denstad@gmail.com

Introduction

This seminar, organised in Belgrade between 22nd and 24th September 2008, was the second such event devoted to the development of youth policy in the region of South-East Europe organised by the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and the SALTO SEE Resource Centre. It built upon the initial groundwork undertaken at the first seminar held at Trogir, Croatia in September 2007. A sense of thematic continuity between the two seminars was ensured by using the conclusions from the final report of the Trogir event as the basis for some of the discussions in Belgrade. The fact that ten of the participants attended both seminars enhanced the process and strengthened the direct relationship between the two events.

The shared aim of both seminars was to promote dialogue between different partners involved in youth policy development in all of the countries in the region.

The Belgrade seminar was co-organised and hosted by the Republic of Serbia's Ministry of Youth and Sport. Locating the seminar in Serbia could not have been more appropriate: the Ministry, only established

in May 2007, was in the concluding stages of developing a national youth strategy in September 2008. It should be noted that this strategy incorporated the most extensive consultation process conducted with young people in Serbia in recent times. Consultative activities were organised in every municipality across the country. Many youth organisations and several

thousand young people were involved directly in this comprehensive programme of consultation.

The seminar, which brought together more than 40 participants from all of the countries in South-East Europe apart from Slovenia, was opened formally by both the Minister of Youth and Sport for the Republic of Serbia, Ms Snežana SAMARDŽIĆ-



4

MARKOVIĆ, and the Special Representative to Serbia of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Constantin YEROCOSTOPOULOS. In her greeting, the Minister emphasised the importance of applying a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy and underlined the commitment of her government to addressing the challenges involved in creating opportunities for young people. She also stressed the significance of the event as a regional activity and highlighted the need for close and continuous cooperation between the countries of South East Europe in order to realise the aim of improving the condition of a new generation.

The Council of Europe's Special Representative outlined the strong commitment by his organisation to promoting youth policy development in the region of South East Europe. This started in earnest with the chairmanship of the Working Group on Young People within the Stability Pact for South East Europe between 2000 and 2003. The importance of the cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union through the Youth Partnership was emphasised. The significance of these two organisations working together to promote the development of youth policy in the region could not be overestimated.



Opening of the seminar



Opening of the seminar



Discussion on the boat

Objectives

After the formal opening of the seminar, a more informal mode was adopted in the working session that followed. Mr Hans-Joachim SCHILD, the co-ordinator of the Youth Partnership, located the event in a wider context by outlining the nature of the previous consultative meetings on youth policy development in Sofia (2005) and Athens (2006). Subsequently the Youth Partnership assumed responsibility for following-up youth policy developments in the region on behalf of the two European institutions it represents. This, of course, led to the first Youth Partnership seminar on youth policy development in Trogir, Croatia, and the seminar in Belgrade a year later.

Ms Zora KRNJAIĆ, Special Advisor for the Minister of Youth and Sport in the Republic of Serbia, reaffirmed the points made by Mr Schild. She emphasised the significance of bringing together government officials, youth researchers and representatives of non-governmental youth organisations. Involving all of the key youth policy stakeholders in this way was in itself an example of best practice. She added that the key aims of this event included: the identification and analysis of key issues in youth policy; the

dissemination of examples of good practice in South East Europe; and the promotion of regional co-operation and development in the policy field.

The stated **aims** of the seminar were summarised in the following terms:

- To share examples of good practice concerning youth policy development and/or implementation;
- To encourage dialogue about youth policy development and implementation among the main stakeholders in the youth field in the SEE region; and
- To identify the actions that should be taken at international level in order to develop youth policy in the SEE region.



The Status of Youth Policy in South East Europe

6

The first main plenary session focused on recent youth policy developments in the different countries of South East Europe. The main focus of the session concerned those developments that had taken place since the youth policy seminar in September 2007. The country-by-country

overview included presentations by participants from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo¹, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. The following is a synthesis of some of the

information provided in these presentations. It will be noted that some countries are referred to more often than others in the summary below. This simply reflects the fact that some presentations contained more detailed information.

Youth populations in the region

It was stressed by several of the presenters that the youth population occupies a position of significance in many of the different countries of South East Europe. In a majority of these countries young people (aged 15 - 30 years) represent between 20 % and 25 % of their countries' total national populations. In Serbia the percentage of youth in the same age category is approximately 20 %, whilst in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia the estimated figures are 23 % and 25 % respectively. At the other end of the spectrum, however, there is Albania with a reported 50 % of the population younger than 25 years old. In Kosovo,

¹ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



meanwhile, 60 % of the population is aged between 15 and 29 years, with half below the age of 24. Turkey, with an estimated population of 70 million, has 12 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This represents some 17 % of the total population. In absolute terms this makes Turkey one of the youngest of the OECD countries.

The condition and social circumstances of young people in SEE

Young people in South East Europe are facing a number of common problems and challenges within their respective societies. It has to be acknowledged that in many respects their condition and social circumstances have not improved significantly in recent years. High rates of *unemployment among young people* are common to all countries in the region. In Kosovo 41 % of the unemployed are aged 15 to 24 years and 88 % of

the unemployed are first-time job seekers. In Bosnia-Herzegovina 45 % of young people are unemployed, which is two and a half times higher than the rate for the population as a whole. Whilst figures were not presented for the other countries, it was confirmed that the issue of un/employment for young people remains one of the crucial challenges facing contemporary youth policy in the region.

Young people not in education, training or paid employment often fall into the category of 'unemployed'. However, a UNDP Human Development Report on Turkey (2008) illustrates that the lived experience of such young people can actually be quite diverse. As has been mentioned previously, in Turkey there are 12 million young people aged between 15 and 24 years. Given that almost 40 % of this age group are not in education or paid employment, some

commentators describe them as 'invisible youth'. It is important to recognise, though, that such a label conceals a complex picture. Two brief examples illustrate the diversity of experience to which reference has already been made. Firstly, this population includes approximately 2.2 million young women who remain at home without a paid job. Some of these young women raise children whilst others await marriage. Such young women are largely excluded from mainstream social life. Secondly, there is a significant population of 650 000 physically disabled youth.

Reforming an outdated system of *higher education* is another pressing item on the agenda of most South East European countries. It is a complex issue, but one that affects many young people across the region. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, a staggering 80 % of young people reported in a nationwide survey that they were dissatisfied with their education system. Moreover, in terms of progress on the reform of higher education, the country ranks second from last amongst European countries.

The difficulties faced by young people in the region over the last 10-15 years have led to a situation where highly educated and skilled young people leave their country of origin in pursuit of better opportunities abroad. This is commonly described



Small group work

as the 'brain-drain' problem or syndrome. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to a 2008 survey presented by the Youth Information Agency (OIA), 73 % of young people wish to leave the country for better opportunities abroad. When UNDP asked young people the same question in a survey conducted in 2000, 66 % indicated their desire to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina. The results of the most recent survey therefore would suggest that the trend has not been arrested in the last eight years. Indeed, there would seem to be a significant increase in those wishing to emigrate for work and other opportunities. The 'brain-drain' issue was mentioned in relation to other countries in the region, most notably in the report presented by Albanian participants at the Seminar.

Development of youth policy and national youth strategies

It is worth recalling that only a few years ago the concept of national youth action plans or youth strategies was virtually foreign to the region. The Stability Pact Working Group on Young People (2000 – 2003) helped change this by making the development of national youth action plans the central theme of its work at the outset. This contributed to the development of the first such document by the Government of Romania in 2001.

Since then the region of South East Europe has witnessed positive youth policy developments at a rapid pace of change. Most of the countries mentioned above currently have national youth strategies or action plans on youth policy, and some countries are currently

in the process of revising their strategies or developing new ones to replace existing policy documents. The most recent countries to develop such strategies are Montenegro (2006), which is currently developing an additional five-year plan; Albania (2007), which has adopted a strategy lasting until 2013; and Serbia (2008), which in addition to a youth strategy is also developing a medium-term action plan (to be implemented from the beginning of 2009). Furthermore, national processes are currently taking place that will hopefully lead to the development of new national youth strategies in Bulgaria (2008 – 2018), Croatia (2009 – 2012), the federal level of government in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2008 – 2013) and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (to be adopted in 2009).



Seminar organisers from the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia

Despite these recent positive developments, it should be emphasised that there are also enormous differences between the various countries in the region. The Republic of Serbia received much praise for developing its strategy, which involved 15 different government ministries and a comprehensive round of consultations with youth, civil society and stakeholder groups throughout the country. Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, is still experiencing how a massive and complex government structure can hinder development in the youth field. Whilst in Republika Srpska there is a Ministry responsible for youth and sport, a government youth strategy in place and youth legislation on the statute book, there are no parallel developments in the other entity (the Federation). At the federal (nation-state) level there is a Commission for the Co-ordination of Youth Issues which reports directly to the Committee of Ministers, but it is still unclear if the Federal Government will adopt a youth policy strategy later in 2008.

Another country which admitted to facing challenges in the youth policy field was Turkey. The awareness of the importance of focusing on youth issues and the development of a national youth strategy was raised dramatically in Turkey in the spring of 2008 with the publication of the UNDP Human Development Report on Youth. This publication triggered a wide debate on the conditions facing young people in the country. The responsibility for addressing youth issues in

Turkey rests with the General Directorate for Youth and Sport (GSGM), which reports to the Prime Minister. However, the annual budget of GSGM is only 0.2 % of the state budget. It should be noted that only 1 % of the GSGM budget is allocated to the Department of Youth and Services, which is the only GSGM body not related to sports. The UNDP Human Development Report called for the development of a national youth strategy in Turkey, but at the time of the Seminar this was still not under active consideration by the government.

While national youth strategies have been established in almost every country in the region, local youth strategies generally remain rather under-developed. There are, however, some good examples of local action plans, but it is still not possible to speak of an upward trend in the development of policy at this important 'grassroots' level (with the exception of Croatia, where more than 100 local action plans have been developed as a result of the first national youth action plan for the period 2003-2008). Another challenge to general youth policy development in the region is the prevailing view that youth policy should in essence constitute a set of preventative measures that 'save' young people from various dangers and risks. This represents an essentially problem-oriented, rather than opportunity-focused, approach to youth policy. Several presentations mentioned that there is a lack of understanding within government of what 'youth

policy' actually means. This leads to a lack of co-ordination between different governmental bodies responsible for youth policy issues. Consequently, young people's issues often tend to be approached in a rather ad hoc manner.

Structures of policy implementation

The ways in which various governments in South East Europe address the diverse youth policy issues outlined above can differ quite markedly. This is also the case in terms of the different structures designed for policy delivery and implementation. In the Hellenic Republic of Greece the responsibility for youth policy rests with the General Secretariat for Youth and an infrastructure of local agencies across the country. A great deal of attention is given to the issues of employment and entrepreneurship. While the General Secretariat supports and co-operates with the Hellenic National Youth Council, ESYN, the development of local youth councils is promoted throughout the country.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its complicated system of governance, established a Commission for the Coordination of Youth Issues in 2006 as a standing body under the Council of Ministers. The Commission consists of 10 young people and 8 representatives of different governmental institutions. However, the future role of the Commission remains uncertain as it is still unclear whether the federal level of government has authority over the entities

in the field of youth policy. The country comprises two entities: Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation. While the RS has a well functioning infrastructure in the youth sector - with a Ministry of Youth and Sport, youth legislation, a youth strategy and a regional youth council - the same cannot be said for the Federation. This is partly because much of the latter entity's political power has been devolved to the cantons.

In *Turkey* the General Directorate for Youth and Sports (GSGM), placed under the authority of the Prime Minister, is responsible for issues relating to youth. Its infrastructure consists of Directorates in all 81 provincial capitals. The Department of Youth Services is the body responsible for providing young people with enriching opportunities to occupy their leisure and spare time. As part

of its function, the Department administers a system of 113 youth centres across the country. These centres offer activities and training for children and youth. However, GSGM's dominant focus is on sports, with only 1% of its budget allocated to the Department of Youth Services.

In *Albania* the Directorate for Youth Policy is located within the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport. The Directorate has a national youth action plan (2007-2013), and administers a network of 12 youth centres across Albania. The Ministry maintains a close, active and open dialogue with youth. It also often includes youth delegates in international delegations.

Montenegro adopted its national youth action plan in 2006, after which a Steering Committee of Youth Issues was

established by the government to oversee the implementation of the plan. The members of the committee come from the youth NGO sector. A Secretariat for Youth and Sport is also involved in the implementation of the youth policy strategy.

A Ministry of Youth and Sport was established in the *Republic of Serbia* in May 2007 and focused immediately on the development of a national youth strategy. As a central element of the implementation of youth policy, the Ministry has encouraged the development of local offices for youth at the level of municipalities across Serbia. By September 2008 42 local and 3 regional youth offices have been established. The expectation is to have 80 such offices in place by the end of 2008. The goal is to eventually have local youth



Howard Williamson – sharing knowledge

offices in place in all 167 municipalities in the country.

In *Romania* the co-ordination of youth policy implementation is the responsibility of the National Authority for Youth, which is connected to the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth. It is in charge of the National Agency for Supporting Youth Initiatives, the Agency for Supporting Students, the Student Cultural Centres and Youth Departments in all 42 counties.

The Ministry of Family, War Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity is the government body in *Croatia* responsible for youth policy development and implementation. A cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial Youth Council of the Government was established in 2003. It consists of 21 representatives, of which four come from non-governmental youth organisations. Regarding legislation, a newly adopted Act on Youth Advisory Boards (2007) makes it obligatory for all municipalities and cities to have a Youth Advisory Board. The boards consist of young people (15-29 years old) from registered youth associations and the youth wings of political parties. Pupil and student councils are also represented. Representatives are elected for a two-year period of office.

The main co-ordinating body for youth policy development in *Kosovo* is the Youth Department within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. Its policies and programmes are implemented through five Directorates in the five largest municipalities in *Kosovo*. Youth projects are funded

by the World Bank and a number of other international organisations. It is worth noting that several youth centres have emerged around *Kosovo* in the last few years².

In the *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the governmental Agency for Youth and Sport is responsible for youth policy development. The agency was established in 2004³.

Similarities in youth policy

In the presentations and the group work sessions that followed, it was noted that there were many similarities and common themes to link the countries of the region. For example, young people in different countries often experience the same social circumstances, problems and challenges. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the youth policies of the various nation-states consequently share many of the same features. Such commonalities, along with other areas of agreement, can obviously provide the basis for future regional co-operation. Some of the common experiences and issues identified at the Seminar are summarised below:

- First initiatives to develop youth policy originated in the youth NGO sector;
- The methodology used in youth policy development (for example the active involvement of non-governmental youth organisations);
- Policy areas that are addressed in the youth action plans (e.g. education, unemployment, youth participation, delayed adulthood);

- The level of co-operation among NGOs is relatively poor and, with some notable exceptions, so is the communication between NGOs and government;
- There is a low level of development in respect of local action plans in municipalities;
- The institutional level (ministries/agencies/directorates) is unstable and subject to change, whilst inter-ministerial bodies rarely exist;
- There is a low level of awareness concerning the role of NGOs in strengthening democracy as they are only recognised through their more functional activities;
- Most countries in SEE do not have representative national youth councils (the exceptions being Greece, Croatia and Romania);
- The use of the term 'non-formal education' in youth policy discourse in SEE is problematic because the concept is largely unknown and the term cannot be translated literally into the local languages of the region. There is a clear need to find another term that is meaningful to the people of the region;
- The importance of government ownership of policy development is very relevant in all of these countries, especially in light of the strong presence of international organisations in the region.

² UNFPA (forthcoming). *Counting on Youth (country reports on the situation for young people in 15 countries in Europe and Central Asia)*, pp. 247-248.

³ UNFPA, pp. 114-115.

Some Examples of Best Practice

One of the stated objectives was to share examples of best practice in youth policy development. Examples were highlighted in the country presentations mentioned below⁴.

Association of municipal youth officers in Bosnia-Herzegovina

An Association of Youth Officers has been established in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), consisting of youth officers in municipalities around the country. 1/3

of all municipalities in BiH have now appointed youth officers. The association provides an important forum for networking, sharing experiences and the exchange of best practice.

Furthermore, several training modules have now been developed in BiH. This provides certified training in cooperation with a recognised professional institution. The training programmes have been developed with the support of the German Association for Technical Assistance (GTZ). Youth officers in the various municipalities are targeted for recruitment to such training.

Wide consultation of youth in the process of developing a national youth strategy in Serbia

In summer 2007 the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Serbia launched a process to develop a national youth strategy. It was duly adopted by the Serbian Government in May 2008. The process

⁴ It should be emphasised that the examples mentioned here are not a representative list of best practice examples from the South East Europe region. They just happen to be the examples presented at the seminar.



was exceptional in the manner in which it involved non-governmental youth organisations and in how it involved young people in the consultation process. Youth associations participated actively within different working groups, serving as local resource centres responsible for organising activities and reaching out to young people and stakeholders at the municipal level. The process also included two consultation phases with young people. The first phase included roundtables and hearings in all 167 municipalities in the country, while the second consisted of 7 regional conferences and 30 public events. More than 16 000 young people were directly involved in the process.

Following an open call, the Ministry of Youth and Sport also awarded the equivalent of

€1.85 million to youth projects managed by non-governmental youth organisations. This represented a serious effort to involve youth NGOs directly in the implementation of the youth strategy.

The Youth Information Agency (OIA) in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Youth Information Agency in Bosnia-Herzegovina has played a significant advocacy role in the development of youth policy in the country. Being run by young people themselves, OIA aims to empower young people through peer education on such subjects as youth activism, youth policy and leadership training. It has set up several youth information centres, deals with media (TV and radio) production, and administers the largest non-commercial website for young people in BiH (www.mladi.info). This website has more than 300 000 hits per

year, has been ranked among the top 500 Bosnian websites and hosts the largest database of non-governmental youth associations in BiH (more than 300 entries).

Central European Initiative Youth Forum in Sofia 2007

The 7th CEI Youth Forum was a successful event held in Sofia in November 2007. It brought together young participants from all CEI member states around the theme 'Development and implementation of youth policy at European, regional, national and local levels'. The next CEI Youth Forum will be held in Chisinau in November 2008. This forum was mentioned as an example of best practice because of its scope, size and success as a complementary subsidiary event at a governmental conference promoting regional cooperation.



Mission accomplished - the organisers and stakeholders

External Input

One session at the seminar was allocated for external input. Two individuals from outside South East Europe, but with extensive experience in youth policy development in the region and other parts of the continent, provided participants with food for thought.

Howard WILLIAMSON has been central to the international youth policy

review process of the Council of Europe and is currently Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of Glamorgan in Wales, UK. In his presentation he elaborated on the 'five C's' and 'four D's'. These, he explained, are useful concepts with which to increase people's understanding of youth policy and the manner in which it can be developed effectively.

The five C's of youth policy

Youth policy is not a pre-defined list of issues to be addressed by government. Individual issues are an important part of policy and there will be some features that are unique to each country. Nevertheless, there are also other important dimensions that need to be considered in relation to youth policy. Howard Williamson duly reflected on what he described as the five dimensions, or components, of youth policy:

- Coverage (geographical area and social groups that are covered, plus policy domains);
- Capacity (the role and relationship of government with youth NGOs);
- Competence (the question of training and qualifications);
- Co-operation, coordination and coherence (vertically and horizontally);
- Cost (the financial and human resources required).

The four D's in the cycle of youth policy development

Some experts present the process of youth policy development in terms of a horizontal and linear time-line which goes from start to finish. Howard Williamson, however, argued that there



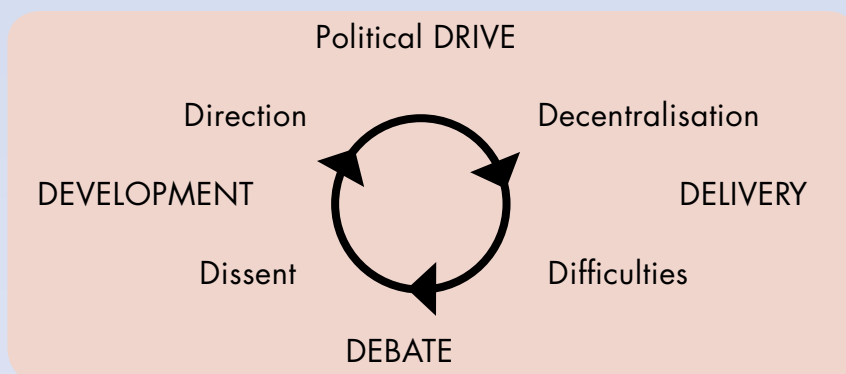
should actually be a cycle of youth policy development. It is possible to enter into the cycle at any given point or place, and the process will still lead eventually to a youth policy strategy. The cycle, as represented in this diagram, runs clockwise as presented (see picture 1):

In this cycle youth policy is developed through elaboration, debate and dissent. The finalised youth policy strategy then points out a direction for action, which leads to a political drive for implementing the strategy. The next step is then to clarify which actors will implement which parts of the policy strategy (decentralisation), followed by the actual implementation or delivery. As the implementation of the strategy will eventually experience difficulties (since policy is never developed in a static environment, there will always need to be changes), this will generate a new debate that will eventually lead to a revision of policy or the development of a new strategy.

Four key issues in youth policy development

Finn Yrjar DENSTAD has experience of advising several governments in the development of national action plans on youth policy. More recently he evaluated the process of developing a national youth strategy in Serbia. He focused his input on four essential areas that need to be addressed when developing a national youth strategy.

Picture 1:



- **Youth participation**
The active involvement of young people and youth NGOs should not simply be a matter of choice or convenience for governments. It is essential in policy areas that affect young people. It is also outlined in international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a result the principle of youth participation is increasingly regarded as the norm in this area of policy development. Indeed, youth participation is now standard practice within the Council of Europe and the European Union.

- **Ownership**
Developing the widest possible ownership of the national youth strategy is arguably the most important – but also the most difficult – element in the policy development process. It is essential that government authorities, and not international institutions or organisations, play the leading role. It is, therefore, important that the various governmental bodies assume their share of responsibility for the implementation of the strategy. An effort must also be made to encourage young people and their organisations to 'own' the process as they will

also be important actors in the implementation of the strategy.

- **Process versus goal focus**
One must not forget that the process of developing a national youth strategy may in many ways be as important as the final product. The process is a capacity-building exercise for both the governmental and non-governmental sectors. As such it can foster good working relations between the different actors and stakeholder groups as well as creating an enduring sense of mutual trust.

- **Confidence-building measures**

A good process will improve mutual confidence and good relations between the different stakeholders involved in the process. In order to build a partnership based on trust, it is essential to ensure genuine youth participation. It is also necessary to maintain openness and transparency throughout the process of developing the strategy. Finally, accountability: the act of standing firm and adhering to the political promises that have been made to the relevant constituencies. This key confidence-building measure is essential to the process of developing a successful national youth strategy.

Presentations of International Actors in the Region

A number of actors present in the SEE region and active in the youth field were invited to the Seminar in order to present their accounts of their activities. Focusing on the activities of the international community in the youth field in Serbia, the presentations gave the participants a good

overview of how international organisations involve themselves in the field. It also provided an opportunity for participants to establish some useful contacts. The following organisations gave presentations:

- German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) – offices in BiH and Serbia

- UN Country Team on Youth
- National Democratic Institute (NDI) Serbia
- OSCE Mission to Serbia
- USAID Serbia

In addition, participants were introduced to the *European Youth Forum (YFJ)* and the *Advisory Council of the Council of Europe*, both of which had representatives among the participants at the Seminar. YFJ is the European umbrella association of more than 90 national youth councils and international youth organisations in Europe. It promotes the interests of young people in relation to European and other international institutions. In particular it is concerned with the development of youth work and youth policy in Europe. The Advisory Council is one of the statutory organs of the Council of Europe youth sector and consists of 30 representatives of international non-governmental youth organisations in Europe. Together with the Intergovernmental Steering Committee for Youth, it is part of the co-management governing structure in the youth sector of the Council of Europe⁵.

⁵ Learn more about the Steering Committee for Youth at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp. To learn more about the European Youth Forum, go to <http://www.youthforum.org>



Potential for Future Cooperation and Partnership

During the last day and a half of the Seminar, participants spent more time concretising their ideas for future cooperation on youth policy issues in South East Europe.

Greek participants presented details of a proposed initiative to establish a *Youth Policy Development Centre for South East Europe* in Thessaloniki, Greece. It is envisaged that it will form an integral part of the Greek government's General Secretariat for Youth.

The proposal was discussed in a working group with seminar participants. Some critical questions were raised during a constructive discussion, including issues related to the proposal's conceptual development, the added value such a centre could potentially offer and the need to ensure that strong links with existing structures are duly forged. It was also stressed that if it is an objective to widen the sense of ownership of the project, a close and ongoing dialogue with the key actors will be necessary.

In the interests of ensuring a continuation of the discussion on potential future projects in the SEE region, the ideas

and proposals presented at the 2007 seminar in Trogir were revisited. These are summarised below:

1. Create a more stable structure for governmental cooperation and exchange examples of best practice;
2. Develop an online platform for the exchange of information, youth policy and research-related issues; the translation of documents; and the publication of research findings;



3. Promote dialogue between key actors in the domains of policy development, practice and research;
4. Find ways of increasing the visibility of activities in the region;
5. Identify youth researchers in the region; and
6. Organise annual meetings on youth policy development in SEE.

A brainstorming session followed this review and led to a number of additional proposals; namely:

7. Organise meeting points in SEE on (i) specific topics and themes; (ii) cross-sectoral issues; and (iii) potential areas of cooperation;
8. Organise study visits that focus on 'examples of best practice' (Balkan – Baltic cooperation);
9. Conferences should be opened up to people outside our narrow circles: politicians, different ministries, etc.;
10. Promote 'common road maps' between policy-makers, practitioners and researchers; and
11. Organise training on how to attract the attention of the media.

Based on these ideas, four specific proposals were developed in working groups:

Proposal to develop common benchmarks and indicators

In order to promote youth policy development in the

region of South East Europe, there is a need to develop quality indicators and benchmarks. Considering the common history and shared realities of young people in the region, this should be undertaken as a joint SEE project. In order to achieve this there should be a common SEE initiative to invite European experts to undertake study visits. Some time should be set aside to promote this co-operative venture at events and activities that have already been scheduled. This will negate the need for a special conference requiring additional resources.

Proposal for increasing visibility of youth issues in the media

The media are generally not particularly knowledgeable about youth policy. Indeed, insufficient importance is attached to issues that relate to youth policy or young people. Attracting media attention is also an important element in efforts to raise the profile of youth policy items on the agenda of governments. Study visits should therefore be organised for journalists in the countries of the region.

Proposal for organising thematic events in the SEE region

Youth conferences and youth policy related activities usually generate a plethora of policy issues. However, very often such events fail to allocate sufficient time

and space to address the issues at the level of detail that is really required. If the policy challenges are to be met and the means of effecting positive change are to be identified, then more focused events are necessary. It is therefore important to organise thematic events that afford the opportunity to delve deeper into specific issues such as employment, entrepreneurship and health (along with any other matters requiring close analysis). Governments in the SEE region should therefore organise annual thematic meetings. In order to be successful, it is vital that there is effective inter-sectoral cooperation that involves the participation of researchers and representatives of youth organisations. Youth unemployment was highlighted as an issue of particular relevance and urgency for the region, and the working group suggested organising a seminar on this topic in 2009.

Proposal to promote mobility

There is a need to increase the volume of study visits and youth exchanges in order that different realities can be experienced and examples of good practice explored both within and outside the SEE region. Job-shadowing should also be introduced as a method of conveying and sharing experiences in youth policy development in the region.

Closing Remarks

At the end of the seminar representatives of the stakeholders that had organised the seminar took the floor to thank participants for their contributions. Mr Guy-Michel BRANDTNER, Head of Department for Information at the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, underlined the importance of close cooperation with the European Commission through the Youth Partnership in the field of youth policy development. Participants were also reminded of the specific activities of the Council of Europe in promoting youth policy development in the region: the report of the national youth policy review of the Republic of Moldova is due to be published soon and a review of the national youth policy in Albania will take place in 2009.

Mr Hans-Joachim SCHILD, coordinator of the Youth Partnership, emphasised the connection between this seminar and forthcoming events where youth policy development in Europe is on the agenda:

- The 8th European Youth Minister's Conference in

Kiev in October 2008 and the adoption of a document (Agenda 2020) that will define how the Council of Europe will promote youth policy in Europe in the coming years; and

- The online consultation process of the European Commission, which is in the process of defining

new priorities and common objectives for European youth policy.

Participants were satisfied with the guarantee that all proposals that had been developed at the seminar would be considered when planning is undertaken on the future work of the Youth Partnership and the SALTO SEE Resource Centre.



Annex 1: Programme of the seminar

21/09		22/09	23/09	24/09
9:30		Opening and introductory session Welcome words	Introduction to the day Youth policy principles – contributions by Howard Williamson and Finn Yrjar Denstad, discussion	Introduction to the day Working groups on cooperation initiatives – continuation or new topics
11:00		Break	Break	Break
11:30		Presentations of national good practice examples	Presentations of initiatives of the various international stakeholders in the region Reflection on implications for future actions	Working groups' reports Conclusions Evaluation Official closing
13:00		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14:30	Arrivals	Presentations of national good practice examples continued	Working groups on future cooperation initiatives ⁶ : 1. Resource Centre for Youth Policy Development 2. research and policy makers cooperation 3. policy makers and NGOs cooperation 4. mobility of young people	Departures
		16:00 Break	Break – flexible, decided by each working group	
		16:30 Working groups – lessons learnt from the national level (similarities, differences, aspects important to take up later)	17:00 Presentations of the working groups' results, questions, discussion	
18:00		Concluding and closing of the day	Concluding and closing of the day	
19:30	Dinner	Dinner	20:00 Dinner out	

Walk in the city

⁶ The proposed topics of the working groups result from the working group of SEE Governmental Representatives and Representatives of European Organisations, who discussed Enhancing Youth Cooperation in the South Eastern European Countries – implementation of concrete measures during a conference during a conference "Western Balkan Youth goes in Action – cultures and stereotypes" 27-28 June 2008, Athens, Greece.

Annex 2: List of participants

Argyrina Jubani

Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport
Albania
Postal address: Rr. Budi, P. 85/4, Ap. 5, Tirana
Email address: ajubani6@hotmail.com
Telephone/Mobile: 0035693247557
POLICY MAKER

Blendi Dibra

"Young Intellectuals, Hope" (IRSH)
Albania
Postal address: L:"Qemal Stafa", RR:"Daut Borici",
874, Shkoder, Albania
Email address: irsh_centre@yahoo.com
Telephone/Mobile: +355 222 48811 / +355
682065568
PRACTITIONER

Martić, Ante

European Youth Forum
Belgium
Postal address: 120 Rue Joseph li, B-1000 Brussels
Email address: ante.martic@youthforum.org
Telephone/Mobile: +32 2 230 64 21
POLICY MAKER / PRACTITIONER

Rubeena Esmail-Arndt

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Postal address: Splitska 14, Sarajevo
Email address: rubeena.esmail-arndt@gtz.ba
Telephone/Mobile: + 387 33 443 992
TECHNICAL ADVISOR

Nedim Sinanović

GTZ Youth Project BiH
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Postal address: Splitska 14, Sarajevo
Email address: nedim.sinanovic@gtz.ba
Telephone/Mobile: +387 61 488 458

Živorad Kovačević

Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Postal address: Vilsonovo šetalište 10, 71 000 Sarajevo
Email address: zika12@gmail.com
Telephone/Mobile: 00387 65 924 360
POLICY MAKER

Žarko Malinović

Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Postal address: Vilsonovo šetalište 10, 71 000 Sarajevo
Email address: malinovic.z@gmail.com
Telephone/Mobile: 00387 66 118 118, 065 609 334
POLICY MAKER

Jan Zlatan Kulenović

OIA - Youth Information Agency Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Postal address: Branilaca grada 19 B, 71000
Sarajevo, BH
Email address: jan@oiabih.info
Telephone/Mobile: +38733209753/+38761139588
PRACTITIONER

Dragan Kuprešanin

Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Postal address: Trg Republike Srpske 1, Banja Luka
Email address: d.kupresanin@mpos.vladars.net
Telephone/Mobile: +387 51 338 332
POLICY MAKER

Igor Sekulić

National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Postal address: Vuka Karadžića 2, Banja Luka
Email address: igorsekulic@yahoo.com
Telephone/Mobile: + 387 65 792 192
POLICY MAKER

Hristo Hristozov

Civil Institute
Bulgaria
Postal address: 1000 Sofia, 5th Dondukov, Blvd., entr.
III, fl. VII, appt. 27
Email address: hristo@civilinstitute.org
Personal: hristo@hristozov.com
Tel/fax: +359-2 986 66 91
Mob. +359-887 991 663
RESEARCHER

Emina Buzinkić

Croatian Youth Network - Mreza mladih Hrvatske
Croatia
Postal address: Trg zrtava fasizma 13, 10 000 Zagreb
E-mail address: emma@mmh.hr
Telephone: 00385 99 6655 446
PRACTITIONER

Ms Linda Athanassouli

General Secretariat for Youth, Department of
International Cooperation
Greece
Postal address: 417, Aharnon str, 11143 Athens
Tel. 00302102599373
Fax 00302102599302
E-mail: l.athanassouli@neagenia.gr
POLICY MAKER

Ms Zacharoula Tourali

General Secretariat for Youth, Director of Information,
Public Relations and International Cooperation
Greece
Postal address: 417, Acharnon str, 11143 Athens
Tel.00302102599401
Fax 00302102599302
E-mail: z.tourali@neagenia.gr
POLICY MAKER

Ema Stefanovska

Agency of Youth and Sport
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Postal address: 34, Franklin Ruzvelt, 1000 Skopje
E-mail address: stefanovskaema@yahoo.com
Telephone: +38970263248
POLICY MAKER

Petre Mrkev

Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency - SPPMD
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Postal address: Bel Kamen 49, 1430 Kavadarci
Email address: *pmrkev@sppmd.org.mk*
Telephone/Mobile: +389 43 412 947 / +389 75 595 495
PRACTITIONER

Dragan Drobnjak

Ministry of Sport, Culture and Media
Republic of Montenegro
Postal address: Novaka Miloševa 28, 81 000 Podgorica
Email address: *sportcg@mn.yu*
Telephone/Mobile: +382 81 232 167; mob. +382 67 246 418
POLICY MAKER

Igor Milošević

ADP - Zid / National Youth Steering Committee
Republic of Montenegro
Postal address: p.o.box 370, 81 000 Podgorica
Email address: *igor_milosevic@cg.yu*
Telephone/Mobile: +382 20 602 720; +382 20 602 722 (dir)
+382 69 073 381 (office mob)
+382 67 273 381 (mob)
POLICY MAKER

Mirela Rajković

Association for democratic prosperity - Zid
Republic of Montenegro
Postal address: Bratstva Jedinstva 57/1, 81000 Podgorica
Email address: *evropazamlade@cg.yu*
Telephone/Mobile: +382 20 602 720, +382 68 512 395 (mob)
PRACTITIONER

Georgescu Radu

Organization.National Authority for Youth
Romania
Postal address: Vasile Conta street nr.16,sect2 Bucharest 020954
Email address: *ant.international@yahoo.com*
Mobile 400726751536 or 400788059281
POLICY MAKER

Sorin Mitulescu

National Agency for Supporting Youth Initiatives
Romania
Postal address: Dem I Dobrescu 4 -6, Bucharest, Romania
Email address: *sorin.mitulescu@ansitromania.ro*
Telephone/Mobile: + 4 021 312 63 20, +4 0740 251 463
RESEARCHER

Ivana Stepanović

Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
Serbia
Postal address: Čika Ljubina 18-20, 11 000 Beograd
Email address: *istepano@f.bg.ac.yu*
Telephone/Mobile: +381 63 777 07 41
RESEARCHER

Suzana Ignjatović

Institute of Social Sciences
Serbia
Postal address: Kraljice Natalije 45, 11 000 Beograd
Email address: *suzanaig@eunet.rs*
Telephone/Mobile: +381 64 32 99 442
RESEARCHER

Suzana Krstić

"Hajde da..." Group
Serbia
Postal address: Kneza Danila 12/84
Email address: *suzana@hajdeda.org.yu*
Telephone +381 11 3240425 Mobile: +381 64 1771167
PRACTITIONER

Violeta Stevović

Educational center - Kruševac
Serbia
Postal address: Birčaninova 26, 37000 Kruševac
Email address: *eta@ec.org.yu*
Telephone/Mobile: +381 62 291984
PRACTITIONER

Aleksandar Jovanović

Advisory Council
Serbia
Postal address:
Email address: *alex@youthserbia.org*
Telephone/Mobile: +381 63659 537
PRACTITIONER

Tanja Azanjac

Civic Initiatives
Serbia
Postal address: Simina 9/a, 11 000 Belgrade
Email address: *tanjaa@gradjanske.org*
Telephone/Mobile: +381(0)62.599.487
PRACTITIONER

Sever Džigurski

Government of the Republic of Serbia, GOP project / All different - all equal campaign in Serbia / Commission for YAP Vojvodina implementation
Serbia
Postal address: Topličin venac 29/32, 11000 Belgrade
Email address: *sever@neobee.net*
Telephone/Mobile: +381.63.551874
PRACTITIONER

Marijana Rodić

Centre for Youth Work
Serbia
Postal address: Maksima Gorkog 42 21 000 Novi Sad
Email address: *mayarodic@yahoo.co.uk*
Telephone/Mobile: +381 63 650 171 , +381 64 32 499 42
PRACTITIONER

Elise Drouet

Local Democracy Agency of Kosovo
Kosovo
Postal address: St Madlin Olbrijt, 60010 Gjilan /Gnjilane
Email address: *centre_gjilan@yahoo.fr*
Telephone/Mobile: 064.083.22.10
PRACTITIONER

Gulsen Ulutekin

General Directorate for Youth and Sport-Youth Services
Department
Turkey
Postal address: Genclik ve Spor Genel Mudurlugu,
Genclik Hizmetleri Daire Baskanligi
Suleyman Sirri Sok. No:3 Kat:5 Yenisehir - Ankara
E-mail address: uluslararası@genclikhizmetleri.gov.tr
Telephone: +90 312 430 33 78
Fax: +90 312 430 33 79
POLICY MAKER

Finn Yrjar Denstad

Norway
Postal address: Åsensvingen 4a, N-0488 Oslo
Tel. +47 46 66 00 85
E-mail: finn.denstad@gmail.com
EXPERT

Howard Williamson

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University
of Glamorgan
United Kingdom
Postal address: Pontypridd CF37 1DL, Wales
Email address: williamsonhj@yahoo.co.uk
Telephone/Mobile:
EXPERT

Hanjo Schild

Partnership between the European Commission and the
Council of Europe in the field of youth, c/o Council of Europe
France
Postal address: G - B6.22.V
1, Quai Jacoutot
F - 67000 Strasbourg
Email address: Joachim.Schild@coe.int
Telephone/Mobile: Tel. +33.390.21 56 31 /
+33.669 620106
ORGANIZER

Marta Medlinska

Youth Partnership, c/o Council of Europe
France
Postal address: Agora, B6.26.V, 67075 Strasbourg
Cedex
Email address: marta.medlinska@coe.int
Telephone/Mobile: +33 390 21 4916
ORGANIZER

Zora Krnjaić

Ministry of Youth and Sport
Serbia
Postal address: Bul. Mihaila Pupina 2, 11 000 Belgrade
Email address: zora.krnjaic@mos.sr.gov.yu
Telephone/Mobile: + 381 64 87 10 206
POLICY MAKER

Aleksandra Mitrović

Ministry of Youth and Sport
Serbia
Postal address: Bul. Mihaila Pupina 2, 11 000 Belgrade
Email address: aleksandra.mitrovic@mos.sr.gov.yu
Telephone/Mobile: +381 11 2142 450, +381 64 87
10 214
ORGANIZER

Jelena Knežević

Ministry of Youth and Sport
Serbia
Postal address: Bul. Mihaila Pupina 2, 11 000 Belgrade
Email address: knezevic.jelena@mos.sr.gov.yu
Telephone/Mobile: + 381 61 13 14 101
ORGANIZER

Mirjana Arsić

Ministry of Youth and Sport, Sector for Youth
Serbia
Postal address: Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 2, 11 000 Belgrade
Email address: mirjana.arsic@mos.sr.gov.yu
Telephone/Mobile: office: +381 11 2142 450, +381
64 8710 230
ORGANIZER

Ivana Vujić

Ministry of Youth and Sport
Serbia
Postal address: Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 2, 11 000 Belgrade
Email address: ivana.vujic@mos.sr.gov.yu
Telephone/Mobile: +381 11 311 7296; +381 63 340 116
ORGANIZER

Sonja Mitter Škulj

SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre,
MOVIT NA MLADINA
Slovenia
Postal address: SI - Dunajska cesta 22, 1000 Ljubljana
Email address: sonja.mitter@mva.si
Telephone/Mobile: 00386 – 1 430 47 47 (tel office)
ORGANIZER

SPECIAL GUESTS

1. **Guy Michel Brandtner**, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe
2. **Ivana Kovačević**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Republic of Serbia
3. **Snežana Klašnja**, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Republic of Serbia
4. **Tom Kelly**, National Democratic Institute
5. **Marija Radovanović**, GTZ Serbia
6. **Hannelore Valier**, Head of Democratization Department, OSCE Mission in Serbia
7. **Christina Davis**, Senior Advisor for Minority Issues, OSCE Mission in Serbia
8. **Judita Raichenberg**, UNICEF Director, Serbia
9. **Roslyn Waters Jensen**, USAID, Serbia
10. **Martha Jo Braycich**, Director, Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia

OPENING SPEECHES

1. **Snežana Samardžić Marković**, Minister of Youth and Sport, Republic of Serbia
2. **Konstantin Yerocostopoulos**, Head of Council of Europe Office in Belgrade

Youth-Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Commission

In the last ten years the Council of Europe and the European Commission have developed a close co-operation in the youth field. Since 1998 the Partnership between the two institutions has focused on 'European Youth Worker and Youth Leader Training' and, from 2003, 'Euro-Mediterranean Youth Co-operation' and 'Youth Research'. In 2005 these three separate covenants formed one single Partnership Agreement with the aim of providing a lasting framework for the joint development of a coherent strategy in the field of youth worker training, youth policy and youth research.

The four general aims of the Partnership which the European Commission shares with the Council of Europe are:

- Citizenship, participation, human rights education and intercultural dialogue
- Social cohesion, inclusion and equal opportunities
- Recognition, quality and visibility of youth work and training
- Better understanding and knowledge of youth and youth policy development

The activities of the Partnership mainly address the needs of young people, those with responsibilities for resources and key youth policy actors in the member states of both partners. The nature of the regional focus of the Partnership means that there may also be engagement with countries covered by the European Neighborhood Policy. Likewise there may be countries which, for a variety of reasons, may be the subject of priority co-operation by both partners.

The main activities of the Partnership are training sessions, thematic research seminars and network meetings on the above mentioned themes, issues and topics. These events involve youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, researchers, policy makers, experts and practitioners. The principal aims are to facilitate a structured dialogue on salient issues and exchange examples of good practice in the field.

For more information please consult the Partnership website: www.youth-partnership.net

SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre

The SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre is one of eight SALTO Resource Centres established by the European Commission to support the implementation of the Youth in Action programme in different priority areas. The acronym SALTO stands for Support Advanced Learning And Training Opportunities.

The SALTO-YOUTH SEE RC aims to facilitate and increase the participation of the Programme's neighbouring partner countries of South East Europe in the Youth in Action programme. The Centre offers support and training for Youth in Action National Agencies and project organisers to promote co-operation and improve the quality of Youth in Action projects between Programme countries and the region of SEE. The Centre's main activities include: contact making and training activities organised in cooperation with National Agencies; training of volunteers in SEE within the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme; accreditation of EVS project promoters in South East Europe; and various support publications.

The Centre works with the support of a network of 12 Youth in Action Contact Points in the countries of SEE.

More information is available on the SALTO-YOUTH SEE website: www.salto-youth.net/see

