

## Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



## Getting Across

*A peer-learning seminar on cross-sectoral youth policy*

*in the Western Balkans*

*Budva (Montenegro), 26-27 October 2016*

## Concept Paper

### Background

The main conclusion of the event "[Beyond Barriers: a youth policy seminar on social inclusion of young people in vulnerable situation in South East Europe](#)", which took place in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015 was that **in the Western Balkans there is a need to put in place sustainable youth policy implementation cycles and to develop innovative responses to the changing realities young people experience.**

The report from the Mostar [seminar](#) states that **representatives of youth civil society organisations, practitioners, researchers and decision makers** agree on the need for **cross-sectoral cooperation** in tackling youth exclusion.

Moreover, the Mostar seminar's participants agreed that there is **a need to collect, analyse and disseminate concrete good practice** of cross-sectoral approaches and implementation in the region, focusing especially at the local level. The importance of adopting an **integrated** youth policy and **cross-sectoral** collaboration was also emphasised and considered as crucial as focusing on long term efforts in order to empower young people to participate fully in the society.

However, it was also realised that the **capacities** of the governmental structures to establish meaningful cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation are **relatively low** across the region,

which makes youth mainstreaming highly challenging, also considering the administrative limitations for **inter-ministerial financial management** (e.g. fund allocation).

The **recommendations stemming from the 2015 seminar**, therefore, point out to the fact that “successful youth policy implementation in South East Europe requires good **cross-sectoral coordination**, linked with established mechanisms for horizontal and vertical communication and peer-learning among stakeholders”. In addition, “understanding the essence of the **cross-sectoral principle** is crucial, and should be based on the idea of **mutual contribution to the same goal** in order to establish the ground for implementation, based on cooperation and mutual commitment”.

From what one can observe, moreover, many advisors and donors are active in the Western Balkans, and the respective policy development might become **donor driven and scattered rather than holistic**.

The present "Getting Across" peer-learning seminar is included in the workplan of the EU-CoE youth partnership for 2016, under the horizontal objective "Cooperation with a regional focus", with activity 3.1<sup>1</sup>.

In sum, this event will stem directly from the conclusions of the 2015 seminar “Beyond Barriers” and the 2014 and 2015 reflections on cross-sectoral youth policy. It will **look concretely at the reality of cross-sectoral cooperation in different countries in the Western Balkans and offer opportunities to share good practice amongst policy makers from national, regional and especially local level, in a peer-learning framework**. The seminar will focus on the development of a youth friendly infrastructure, implying the adoption of a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy and the effective cooperation of policy makers from different sectors as well as service providers and civil society organisations, with a special focus on the local level.

## **Institutional Context**

The **strategic priorities** and expected results of the 2016-2017 biennial programme of the **Youth Department of the Council of Europe**, as defined by the Joint Council on Youth (the central co-managed political body of the youth sector within the Council of Europe) are

- supporting young people and member States in increasing the participation of young people in democratic processes;
- supporting member States and youth NGOs in the implementation of Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights (ENTER recommendation);
- supporting the promotion of inclusive and peaceful societies, especially through the extended No Hate Speech Movement and the Roma Youth Action Plan.

This seminar final aim is to provide young people in the Western Balkans with more and better opportunities for receiving integrated support of cross-sectoral, integrated youth services, enabling active participation of young people in the society and reversing the marginalisation of those more

---

<sup>1</sup> “Visible seminars focusing on cooperation, peer learning and capacity building, involving institutions, researchers, practitioners, youth organisations and policy-makers on topics addressed under the partnership addressing specific issues in a given region. These events should pay particular attention to building capacities of youth actors across the whole of Europe and in neighbourhood regions”, youth partnership workplan 2016.

in need for support towards their social inclusion. In this respect, Getting Across will support the first two priorities of the Youth Sector of the Council of Europe.

Furthermore, this activity directly supports the mandate of **Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe** which states, *intra alia*, that priority should be given to

- promoting young people's active participation in democratic processes and structures;
- promoting equal opportunities for the participation of all young people in all aspects of their everyday lives;
- facilitating the access of all young people to information and counseling services;
- further encouraging the development of sub-regional youth cooperation in Europe and beyond;
- supporting the integration of excluded young people;
- ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life, particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning;
- supporting young people's transition from education to the labour market (...);
- supporting young people's autonomy and well-being, as well as their access to decent living conditions;
- ensuring young people's equal access to cultural, sporting and creative activities.

**With regard to the European Union, mainstreaming youth** is one of the two main approaches in achieving the objectives of the **EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018)** (the so-called dual approach): cross-sector initiatives that ensure youth issues must be taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other fields with a significant impact on young people, such as education, employment or health and well-being.

The **EU Youth Report 2015** strongly emphasises that the **principle of cross-sectoral youth policy** has special relevance in meeting one of the priorities for the next three years, especially in helping young people undergo an **easier transition from education into the labour market**. In this regard, no single policy could be efficient in responding to complex issues and young people's challenges in order to create the best possible opportunities for them to grow up in inclusive, open and democratic societies. In their respective areas of competence, the EU and its Member States need to mobilise all policies that can help improve young people's prospects<sup>2</sup>.

Although nearly all EU Member States have institutionalised mechanisms to ensure a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy, such as inter-departmental structures and regular inter-ministerial meetings, **candidate countries from the Western Balkans need substantial support in advancing national youth agendas and cross-sectoral cooperation**, backed by relevant evidence, inter-governmental cooperation, institutional frameworks and exchanges of experience.

The importance of the youth in policy dialogue with and among Western Balkans countries was underlined at the Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting at Brdo (23 April 2015) with the Joint Statement on the **"Positive Agenda for Youth"** which stated that *"educated young professionals with positive approach towards their personal future and future of their societies could importantly help achieving lasting political, economic and social stability in the region. EU education and experience would also provide the region with experts equipped to assist in EU negotiation process"*.

---

<sup>2</sup> EU Youth report 2015, Foreword of the European Commission, Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

During the **Western Balkans Summit** in Vienna (August 2015), the Prime Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>3</sup>, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have signed a "**Joint Declaration on the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans**" (RYCO), in which they agree to **further step up regional cooperation among youth and youth dedicated institutions** and ensure implementation of joint programmes for young people with the focus on the principles of **democratic governance, sustainable economic development, education and innovation**.

The recent **Paris Summit** (4 July 2016) resulted in discussing the roadmap for the regional development of cooperation on youth including the enforcement of a **closer regional integration through enhanced interregional economical exchange, and the facilitation of mobility of the people (including youth)**. The signature of the RYCO statute was a symbolic highlight of the summit.

The Paris Summit was preceded by the **Western Balkans Youth Conference** (also 4 July 2016), which was hosted by the French Government, in close cooperation with the European Commission, the European Youth Forum and SALTO South East Europe<sup>4</sup>. In the presence of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics, young people developed recommendations for youth policy makers which were communicated to the Heads of State and Government and other participants in the Paris Summit, highlighting the focus on young people within the framework of the **Berlin Process**<sup>5</sup>.

It is envisaged that SALTO South East Europe organises a follow-up event to the Western Balkans Youth Conference in Ljubljana/Slovenia, by the end of September 2016 to develop an **Action Plan** for youth cooperation in and with the Western Balkans addressing both policy makers and youth organisations.

As regards the Programme level, under the **Erasmus+** Programme's Key Action 2, which fosters cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice and, more specifically, capacity building in the field of youth, the **Western Balkan Youth Window** promotes the sustained development of youth organisations in the region and the practice of youth work using non-formal learning, but also **cooperation** activities that foster networking between **civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions active in youth** field to strengthen their capacities, establish or reinforce their cooperation on a trans-national cross-border basis within the region, and with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme Countries<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> This designation is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/>

<sup>5</sup> The Berlin Process was launched in 2014 at the Berlin Conference as an inter-governmental initiative with the aim to "demonstrate strong political support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans" and to "create a positive momentum for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans". Core stakeholders in the Berlin Process are the governments of the Western Balkans countries, Croatia, Slovenia and the countries also organising the follow-up conferences: Austria (August 2015), France (July 2016) and Italy (2017). Within the Berlin Process, people-to-people dialogue and, more specifically, youth cooperation are elements in a broader political framework covering also e.g. the rule of law and good governance, the fight against extremism and radicalisation, migration, transport and energy connectivity and market integration.

<sup>6</sup> INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020 MULTI-COUNTRY Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus+

While organisations from the Western Balkans can participate in Western Balkans Youth Window as applicants and/or partner organisations, they can also participate, as partners, in Erasmus+ Key Action 1 "Mobility projects for young people and youth workers" and in Key Action 3 "Structured Dialogue: meetings between young people and decision makers in the field of youth".<sup>7</sup> In 2015, more than 18,400 young people and youth workers from Western Balkans countries and Erasmus+ Programme Countries were involved in these projects.

## Cross-sectoral Cooperation

By the beginning of the 21st century, Europe has set out to increase effectiveness of public policies targeting young people. Essentially, the pursuit of more coordination and collaboration in the youth field is perceived as the key to success. Cross-sectoralism is one of most cherished principles of public policy. Hence, **the essence of youth policy is to coordinate policy measures developed and carried out in other sectors so that the concerted action would be more efficient in providing support to young people and addressing problem situations they are encountering.**

This need arises from real life:

- In young people's lives, "things" happen at the same time, thus youth policies must take the different combinations of overlapping and accumulation of social conditions into account.
- "Things" happen for conjoint reasons, thus youth policies must be multidimensional and dynamic.
- "Things" happen really fast, thus cross-sectoral youth policy must be able to react fast.<sup>8</sup>

Arising from these elements and driven by the need to support young people in their daily lives, cross-sectoral youth policy has been called to enter into the public policy scenery.

The **European Commission's White Paper on Youth (2001)** defined youth policy as an "integrated cross-sectoral policy aiming to improve and develop the living conditions and participation of young people by encompassing the whole range of social, cultural and political issues that affect them as well as other groups in society".<sup>9</sup>

In May 2014, the Ministers on Youth of the European Union adopted the first **EU Work Plan on Youth (2014-2015)** as a tool to develop a strategic vision of European youth policy and as an implementation tool of the EU Youth Strategy. Cross-sectoral youth policy was one of the central topics of this Work Plan<sup>10</sup>. In that framework, the Youth Ministries from Latvia and Luxembourg, in their role as 2015 Presidencies of the Council of European Youth Ministers, decided to jointly organise and host a **peer-learning exercise** on this topic, supported by the EU-CoE youth

---

<sup>7</sup> Further information is available in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide:

[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Nico, M. (2014). LIFE IS CROSS-SECTORAL WHY SHOULDN'T YOUTH POLICY BE? Overview of existing information on cross-sectoral youth policy in Europe, <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1668203/Life+is+cross+sectoral-Nico-2014.pdf/39468800-2096-4ff0-8138-4db46e6c3f31>.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2001) The White Paper "a new impetus for European youth", p. 73.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 20 May 2014 on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015.

partnership. The report of the first part of this exercise is available on the [website of the EU-CoE youth partnership](#). The final overall report will be available soon.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, as stated in the [final declaration](#) of the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, which took place in Kyiv, Ukraine on 10-11 October 2008 “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020” in formulating youth policy measures in the context of this institution it must be considered “the cross-sectoral dimension of this policy and the importance of involving young people in its formulation, implementation and follow up”.

Cross-sectoral cooperation was broadly considered on the occasion of the youth policy reviews undergone by expert teams already in 2002. In the [report](#)<sup>12</sup> summarising the conclusions of the first seven reviews, it was already stated that “Governments have placed a lot of faith in the capacity of cross-sectoral and interagency partnerships [...] to respond to the joined up problems caused and experienced by young people. Once again, it is a difficult argument to rebut, but it is an even more difficult task to put into practice. The rhetoric of partnership is an appealing one, but rarely converts easily into reality”. The current reality does not appear to be easier, especially in the Western Balkans.

## Objectives

“Getting Across” will provide participants with opportunities to

- analyse at the reality of cross-sectoral cooperation in different Western Balkans countries, and thus **to learn from and share** stories of success or challenges, in the regional context;
- listen to and interact with **experts and researchers in the field of cross-sectoral (also referred to as “intersectoral” or “interagency”) cooperation**;
- learn from the results of the **desk research on the reality of cross-sectoral youth policy** in the Western Balkans commissioned by the EU-CoE youth partnership and its earlier work on the topic;
- contribute to the development of a cross-sectoral youth policy cooperation at local level, especially by fostering networking of participants in view of constructing partnerships or coalitions for a better integrated youth policy design and implementation (especially at local level);

## Expected Outcomes

- Peer-learning on cross-sectoral youth policy development with a focus on building youth friendly infrastructures at a local level is achieved;
- Actors from different sectors working with young people in the region will strengthen their cooperation at regional, national and local level;

---

<sup>11</sup> Taru, M. (2015) PEER LEARNING EXERCISE ON CROSS SECTORAL YOUTH POLICY. 2 seminars in the frame of the European Union Work Plan for Youth (2014-2015). Luxembourg 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Riga 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Report.

<sup>12</sup> “Supporting Young People in Europe, Principles, Policy and Practice”, H. Williamson 2002.

- Results of the previous work of the EU-CoE youth partnership on cross-sectoral youth policy will be shared and made visible.

## **Profile of Participants**

“Getting Across” will gather 35 participants with profiles designed to trigger a multiplier effect:

- local or regional administrators in the field of youth policy: 50% of participants;
- young people, users of youth services at local level;
- representatives of national youth councils;
- representatives of national associations of local authorities and municipalities;
- representatives of national administrations in the field of youth policy;
- youth workers;
- experts and researchers in the field of cross-sectoral cooperation in the youth field;
- representatives of the partner institutions, SALTO South East Europe and of the European Training Foundation.

Gender balance and adequate country representation will be considered in the selection process.

Some participants will be selected through an open call, while some others will be invited directly as current key actors in the field. Special attention, during the selection of participants, will be paid to invite new actors who will benefit more from peer-learning compared to those who are already part of a well-established network.