



# Shaping youth policy in practice

A capacity-building project for strengthening youth policy



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Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

## Youth Partnership

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



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## Current social-political context and its influence on shaping (youth) policies

- Keynote speech -

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**Youth policy: a dynamic process**

**Political/social tensions**

**Conservative tendencies**

**Covid-19**

**War**

**AI and the new tech**

# Who are 'young people'

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Political/social tensions

Age, gender, location, class, ethnicity, education, (dis)ability etc  
urban vs. rural → degrees of urbanisation

Conservative tendencies

Crisis of representation  
'organised' young people as 'representative'

Covid-19

...*hard to reach*, privilege, creaming, tokenism?

War

*How are the absent voices framing policy making processes?  
How can CEE and EaP (re)shape the understanding of youth policies?*

AI and the new tech

## ... and how are they seen?

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Political/social tensions

'Problems to be fixed/ controlled'

'The future'

Conservative tendencies

'A resource' (for whom?)

'A social group in its own right'

Covid-19

policy-making approaches:

regulation  $\leftrightarrow$  emancipation

prevention  $\leftrightarrow$  intervention

proactive  $\leftrightarrow$  reactive

problem oriented  $\leftrightarrow$  opportunity focused

paternalistic  $\leftrightarrow$  open (Williamson & Hofmann-van de Poll, 202

War

AI and the new tech

*What cultural regimes on youth are at play in your country?*

## Youth policy: a dynamic process

### Political/social tensions

**Aim:** to create conditions for **learning, opportunity** and **experience** (Youth Partnership, 2018).

### Conservative tendencies

### Challenges:

### Covid-19

- Good policy requires powerful states (see the tax revenue losses)

### War

- Institutional home?
- Youth mainstreaming: overly-ambitious/ unrealistic?

### AI and the new tech

- Short institutional memory in youth organisations. CB

# Make other sectors aware they DO youth policy

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Education, employment, health, housing, civic participation.

Political/social tensions

Young people claim a say in:

climate, energy & environment, justice, countering corruption, AI, urbanisation, transport, de-colonisation movements.

Conservative tendencies

Covid-19

**Extension**, but also **revision**/ interrogation of policy discourses:

‘More jobs’

‘Youth guarantees’ (Williamson, 2022)

‘Universal Basic Income’

‘Labour force’ → YP as economic subjects (focus on skills)

War

AI and the new tech

WEF in Davos declared 2023 “the year of the polycrisis”: **the coming together of multiple crises**

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Climate, energy crisis, populism, revived Russian militarism, social unrest, financial instability, food insecurity, social justice concerns.

Political/social tensions

Conservative tendencies

**Do young people in CEE have a different agenda?**

F4F not that present & *a different profile* in CEE

Covid-19

Industrialization and the Western growth model

Increased concern for political integrity and transparency from decision makers, core-periphery dynamics.

War

‘pollution havens’ + exploitation of timber by Western logging companies (Chiodi and Epis, 2022)

AI and the new tech

Decline in the state of democracy, shrinking space for civil society, Euroscepticism, polarisation of the political and social space, economic crisis and precarity

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Low trust in political institutions, disengagement.

Decline in youth participation in institutional politics

Civic spaces threatened by illiberal trends

Grassroots activist organisations in increasingly illiberal environments

Donor-driven agendas

*Mission drift* from advocacy & watchdog roles → service-provision

(Deželan et al., 2023).

***What types of activism are CEE and EaP countries willing to accept?***

Covid-19

War

AI and the new tech



**Youth policy: a dynamic process**

**Political/social tensions**

**Conservative tendencies**

**Covid-19**

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**AI and the new tech**

- Each country has its own mixture of conservative tendencies: misogyny, racism, antiypsism and other forms of intolerance.
- Diversity as a contentious issue
- Covid-19 strengthened conservative values
- Gender norms & fractured the emancipatory routes outside family, experimentation with independent living.
- Education, NGOs expansion of horizons of possibilities → conventional routes available in the close family & community
- Strengthened of social class inequalities
- Worldwide, 1 in 5 girls are married before 18 (UNICEF, 2022).

***Cultural traditions & youth policy making. An uneasy relationship***

# Impact on the young people

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Political/social tensions

Conservative tendencies

Covid-19

War

AI and the new tech

- Educational but also **societal losses**.
- **Health transitions:** *How healthy are today's young people?*  
Enabling circumstances for health – focus on **choice**
- Silent angers, increased stress and poor health outcomes
- established narratives: victimization OR celebration of resilience
- *Immobility turn* (Cairns and Clemente, 2023)

*How we can use Covid-19 as a window for bringing health transitions closer to the youth policy agendas?*

# Impact on the youth sector

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Political/social tensions

Conservative tendencies

Covid-19

War

AI and the new tech

- Orientation towards '**Covid topics**' (Deželan & Yurttagüle, 2020)
- Recovery plans: **service-provision**
- Diluted notion of **disadvantage**
- Rights-based approaches
- Brain drain & NGO's **survival**

Speaking the language of rights increases legitimacy when standing for young people.

Youth policy: a dynamic process

Political/social tensions

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AI and the new tech

- Young people have complex relationships with war (as victims, fighters, survivors, refugees, concerned observers, peace activists, humanitarian aid volunteers).
- Expectation from the youth sector to engage with direct and indirect traumas
- War as a generational and intergenerational experience (children of those fighting today)
- Support young people from Ukraine and the young activists in Russia and Belarus
- NGOs from under-resourced countries learning on the go
- The youth sector to resist the *normalization* of war and propaganda

**Calls for youth policies to integrate young refugees, in countries without such experiences.**

**Deterministic** approach: AI as an external reality. *Robots coming.*

But AI and tech are **policy-mediated**

AI and tech as **enablers**

Policies **lag behind**

YP want policies holding big tech companies accountable, increased transparency and ethics

The online as **substitute** of physical interaction → dangers for **democracies**

Online, but need for **physical spaces**

Gamification is cool, by YP need to speak the **policy language**

Beware **tech-solutionism** or solution driven policies.

The social impact of AI is too high to be left to engineers alone.

Youth policy: a dynamic process

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AI and the new tech

## Resources:

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**Thank you.**