

Youth Partnership

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



Shaping youth policy in practice 2023-2024 Second residential seminar report



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17 April 2024

Faro, Portugal

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Summary and key points

The purpose of this report is to describe the second residential seminar of the Project [*Shaping youth policy in practice – A capacity-building project for strengthening youth policy*](#) – third edition, hereinafter referred to as SYP, that took place in Faro, a city located in the south of Portugal, on 17 April 2024.

The present document focuses on the results and achievements of each delegation regarding the SYP project as well as the lessons learnt from the implementation process and recommendations for future initiatives on this framework. It also includes a summary of presentations and activities held on the [first day of the Seminar](#). The following pages describe the work on youth policy developed by delegations from six countries over more than a year: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Portugal, and Ukraine. To record the event and carry out depth interviews, a media team was in the Seminar. This material will feature in the updated [Massive Open Online Course on Youth policy essentials](#). On the SYP webpage photo and video recordings are available as well as all the presentations.

National delegations reported the positive impact of the SYP project. The possibility of revitalising debates on youth policy, the involvement of participants from different sectors, in addition to the diversity of perspectives on the networking group were some of the aspects pointed out as relevant.

1. Conceptual note

The aim of the third edition of the project [*Shaping youth policy in practice – A capacity-building project for strengthening youth policy*](#) is to build capacities of those involved in youth policy in different countries and from different angles (governmental, non-governmental and research) to strengthen their youth policy work based on the know-how and principles promoted by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership and its two partner institutions.

The main objectives of this project were to:

- Share and use practice resources developed by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, notably the [Youth policy manual](#), [Youth policy essentials](#), [E-library on youth sector evaluation](#), [Massive Open Online Course on Youth policy essentials](#) and [T-kit on participatory youth policy](#), as well as the learning from previous editions of the SYP project: the [2017-2018 edition](#) and the [2019-2020 edition](#).
- Contribute to a culture of cooperation among different actors for supporting youth policies within each participating country.
- Create a space for in-depth peer exchange on youth policy.
- Accompany and build the capacity of national delegations to develop and implement a delegation plan within each country's national context.

2. The second residential seminar

This edition of SYP was launched in March 2023 in Chisinau, Moldova where the country delegations defined their policy plan focus, aims implementation and engagement.

The second residential seminar took place in Faro, Portugal on 17 April 2024. The seminar aimed to share the results of the work developed by each national delegation during the implementation months, to reflect on the lessons learnt, evaluate the entire process, and present recommendations. Ajša Hadžibegović and Zara Lavchyan were assigned the role of learning facilitators and mentors throughout the project and were the final seminar facilitators. [Marti Taru was rapporteur of the first residential seminar](#) and mentor for one delegation, Heili Griffith was mentor for two delegations. [Maria Carmen Pantea](#) made a keynote input at the first seminar, [Hilary Tierney](#), [Ilona-Evelyn Rannala](#) and [Dee Kearney](#) presented experiences from Ireland and Estonia in two separate webinars.

2.1 Youth centre visit

To welcome the participants on the arrival day – 16 April 2024 – a visit to Faro Youth Centre was arranged. This was an important opportunity, especially for delegations who are setting up youth centres, to learn from this model and discuss the youth centre’s potential. The visit was guided by the Algarve regional director of the Portuguese Institute for Sports and Youth (IPDJ), Custódio Moreno, together with Miguel Veiga, a youth worker of this Regional Directorate.

As its main purpose is to enable young people to develop their projects, Faro Youth Centre has a wide range of facilities and social responses targeting young people: the Auditorium, a cultural space where young people can present and disseminate their work; a youth information point ([Loja Ponto Já](#)); training rooms; associations hub; bureaus specialized in youth and sports programme management; and a Youth Health Office ([Cuida-Te +](#)) where young people can seek medical, nutritional and mental health support.

2.1.1 Youth centre’s quality label

In Portugal, there are two Youth Centres recognised by the Council of Europe with the Quality Label: [Lisbon Youth Centre](#) – the first Centre to be recognised, and [Braga Youth Centre](#) – recently awarded the Quality Label for Youth Centres. Faro’s Youth Centre intends to be the third Portuguese Youth Centre recognised by this Council of Europe’s label. To achieve this goal the team is soon to start close work with Fernanda Brito, co-ordinator of the Lisbon Youth Centre multidisciplinary team, who is also part of the SYP Portuguese delegation.

Considering the interest of various national delegation members on this topic, Fernanda Brito told the story of the Lisbon Youth Centre, which included some challenges faced and advice for future applications. In particular, the countries where there is no Quality Label Youth Centre yet can ask the Council of Europe to participate in the [European Platform for Youth Centres](#).

2.2 SYP consolidation and evaluation seminar

2.2 Welcoming message

“We do not work for young people; we work with young people” was one of the messages embedded in the welcoming discourse of Custódio Moreno. “What did you do today to make young people’s life better?” is a question Moreno usually ask his work team by the end of each working day.

After describing the IPDJ's mission and vision, Moreno shared the expectation for this Seminar as a starting point for a collective work in progress rather than a destination.

2.3 Participants

Five national delegations participated in the second residential seminar, with a total of 20 representatives from public sector organisations, the non-governmental sector, youth organisations, and research centres, as depicted in Table 1. It is noteworthy that despite the absence on this final seminar, Hungary delegation took part on all the stages of SYP project.

Table 1 Second residential seminar - representative per Organisation

Country delegation	
Country	Representative per organisation
Armenia	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of The Republic of Armenia
	Gyumri Youth Initiative (YIC) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)
	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of The Republic of Armenia
	National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia
	Armenian Progressive Youth NGO
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Youth Council of Federation B&H
	PRONI Centre for Youth Development
	Department for Administrative and Professional Affairs of the Brcko District Government
Portugal	Conselho Nacional da Juventude (National Youth Council)

	Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth / Federação Nacional das Associações Juvenis
	APPJuventude
	Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ)
	Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ)
	Lisbon Youth Centre, from IPDJ, I.P.
Republic Of Moldova	Youth Centre Ungheni
	Laboratory of Initiatives for Development “LID Moldova”
	Ministry of Education and Research
	National Agency for Programmes Development and Youth Work
	National Youth Council of Moldova
Ukraine	Council of Europe

2.4 Recap and reconnect

Twelve months after the first residential seminar, it was time for national delegations to reconnect and update the previous months' main findings on national youth policies. The main results from the mixed groups discussion were exhibited in a gallery where it was possible to find a wide variety of youth policy updates from each national context, see Figures 1. and 2.

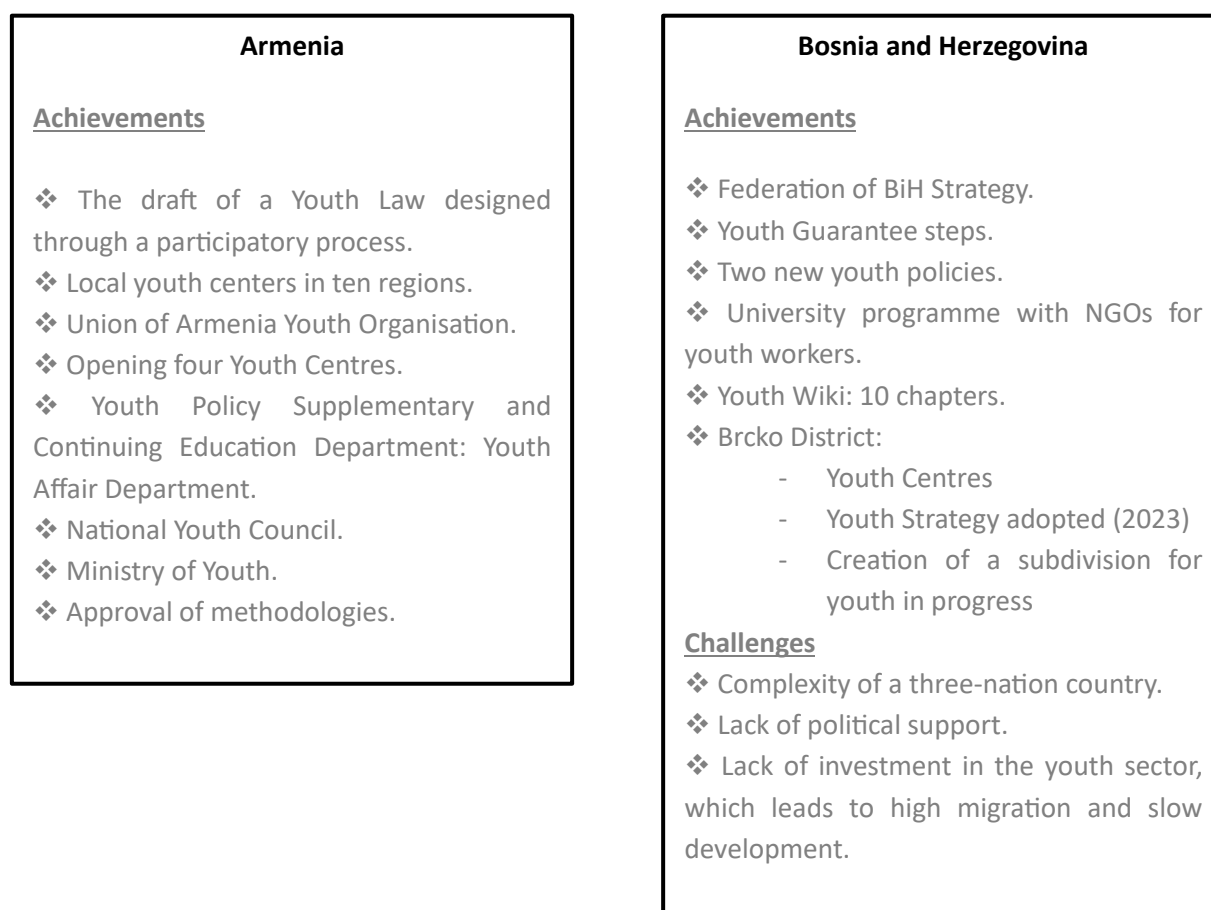


Figure 1 Youth policy national updates – Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

<p style="text-align: center;">Portugal</p> <p><u>Achievements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ministry of Youth and Modernisation. ❖ Second Quality Label Youth Centre. ❖ National Strategy for Youth Work and National Strategy for Youth Participation. ❖ Housing Policy. ❖ Fusion of Institutes (“Escolhas” programme joined IPDJ). ❖ Representative Commission (LGBT, Roma communities). ❖ Human Rights Education in National Youth Council. ❖ Youth Municipality Centres (local implementation). ❖ Youth NGOs (local to national). ❖ National Youth Council (representation and connection). <p><u>Challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Economic migration (job market, housing crisis, low democracy, high taxes). 	<p style="text-align: center;">Republic of Moldova</p> <p><u>Achievements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Youth worker specialist standard. ❖ Ten local/regional Youth Strategies. ❖ 24 regional youth centres. ❖ Approved National Youth Strategy (2023). ❖ Changes in Youth Law. ❖ National Center for Social Innovation. ❖ Recognition of youth work (occupational standard, validation). ❖ Funding, grants and programmes.
	<p style="text-align: center;">Ukraine</p> <p><u>Achievements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Annual programme on capacity development for youth workers. ❖ Ukrainian Youth Foundation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New manual for trauma-informed

Figure 2 Youth policy national updates – Portugal, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine

2.5 Results and achievements: delegation’s presentations and discussion

The second residential seminar of the SYP third edition is the consolidation stage of a process that began in March 2023 with assembling national delegations. This kick-off phase was initiated by a two-day residential seminar, followed by work of national delegations on a pre-agreed national plan, with mentorship and online meetings in the second half of 2023. Marti Taru’s [report](#) details each of these phases.

The consolidation phase covered in Taru’s report provided the framework to present and discuss national results, reflections and recommendations of each national delegation supported by a one-year journey to achieving their goals. Below is a description of each delegation’s main goal regarding this capacity-building process, what they expected when they started, some steps of the process and the results achieved so far.

2.5.1 Armenia

Aim

The ambition of the Armenian delegation was to design and develop a comprehensive Law on Youth Policy to regulate and facilitate emerging relations and interconnections among various actors during the implementation of youth policy.

State of art

Existence of the youth policy concept and developed Youth Policy Strategy.

Process

Reflecting a very active civil society, this was a participatory process which brought together several stakeholders of the Armenian community - in total 30 people. Youth groups, civil society organisations, international actors and public institutions were invited to be part of the process through various initiatives and working groups.

The Youth Law design process started with an assessment of the current situation in the territory and a desk comparative review of youth laws from other contexts. Throughout this process, the delegation met with several experts, researchers, and representatives of institutions, but also organised study visits to help understand how to achieve the goal and from where to start.

This preliminary stage led to a working group overseeing the drafting of the law. After well-attended and high-level representative discussion, the draft of the law was sent for comment and feedback within cross-sectoral structures of the state institutions. As a result, the recommendations were incorporated into the draft, which was followed by public discussions on a national level.

Results achieved

A draft version of the Law on Youth Policy was prepared. Rather than focusing on youth in general, this law focuses specifically on youth policy, addressing for the first time structure and terminology, and the State's responsibility for implementing youth policy measures.

Information sessions and consultation meetings are being organised by stakeholders in the 10 regions of Armenia, including youth, youth NGOs, local authorities, youth non-formal groups, and student councils - to present the Law and its main principles. These meetings are intended to reach 500 young people, which is an engagement indicator for the national government.

As youth issues are not mandatory for local municipalities, this Law is also important at this level. In addition, changes will be made to previous Acts because of this Law. The next steps will be to elaborate and submit legislative packages to the National Assembly for adoption.

2.5.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

Aim

The general aims of the BiH delegation are to: 1) Promote and encourage youth participation from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the youth mobility programmes 2) Improve and strengthen cooperation and better exchange of information on youth mobility programmes between different stakeholders in the youth sector in BiH. Specifically, they intend to: 1) Provide full access to Erasmus+ Youth – 2026 2) Provide full access to European Solidarity Corps – 2026 3) Provide full support to European Youth Card implementation – 2024 4) Provide full support to ERYICA in BiH – 2023 5) Offer activities to make the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH operational in order to boost interinstitutional cooperation in the youth sector in BiH – 2025.

State of art

The process to meet these goals is challenging by the complexity of the political landscape in the country, namely the absence of a central government, and the mindset that the state is not responsible for youth issues. These obstacles are also considered a reason why young people are leaving the country.

The difficulty in accessing the government and meeting with the members of the government is also reported as a barrier.

Process and results achieved

The SYP project has helped the delegation to revive the debate on national youth politics and a small number of meetings has taken place with important stakeholders. Those meetings are a relevant result considering the challenging political circumstances. The next steps will focus on gathering full support for the measures proposed. Some reflections were shared about the important role of the Youth Partnership and projects such as SYP, but also the need to create National Youth Agencies.

2.5.3 Republic of Moldova

Aim

To develop an intensive modular course (V to 30 ECTS) designed for training, instruction and qualification which enables both national and international certification and recognition of qualifications according to occupational standards. The course is conceptualised in modules that can be offered as Level IV micro-qualifications (post-secondary, technical education) and Levels VI-VII (tertiary education, bachelor's and master's degrees).

Why?

To offer youth workers professional qualifications; capacity building through methodologies and practical tools; and financial recognition.

State of art

Youth work is well recognised at national level, which can be confirmed by 108 specialists working with young people, in 60 youth centres, and around 400 young councillors in approximately 30 regional and 100 local youth councils. In addition, there are around 500 active youth workers in over 100 youth non-governmental organisations in Moldova.

Moldova National Youth Agency - an administrative authority under the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova – is responsible for the youth workers' training and development of youth programmes, youth work, research, and services in the youth field.

Even though Moldovan Youth Law includes the definitions of *youth worker*, *youth work*, and *specialist in youth work*, *youth specialists* in Moldova do not currently receive proper training.

Process

The National Youth Agency oversees the development and promotion of the courses within the framework of the Youth Strategy 2030. During the SYP implementation phase, the delegation had several meetings with representatives of public authorities, development partners, civil society, and experts in the field. These representatives will assist and offer recommendations in the process of developing the package of documents for the establishment of the micro-qualification specialist in youth work.

Results achieved

So far, the delegation has developed an occupational analysis to identify labour market requirements and developed and verified the occupational profile. From an eight-stage timeline, the Moldova delegation is currently working on the development, verification, and approval of the Occupational Standard.

The following stages regard development, validation, co-ordination and approval of the qualification standard; curriculum development (curriculum, syllabus and curriculum support); promoting the programme and identification of people for the first group of trainees; provisional authorization of the Adult Training Programme at the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP); and, finally, the launch of the adult education programme planned for December 2024.

2.5.4 Portugal

Aim

For the Portuguese delegation, the goal was to increase the qualifications of youth workers and improve the youth work field. This aim is intended to be in line with the Portuguese Youth Work agenda, but also with the Council of Europe Youth Work Recommendation (2017) and the Implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda Process. To fulfil this goal, the delegation has been working on the improvement and updating of the youth worker profile - level IV, and on the creation of the youth worker profile - level V.

Why?

To formally recognise the competencies of many young people who already work in Portuguese organisations but whose competencies are not yet recognised, and also to train people who are working in youth organisations without specific youth work competencies.

Specifically, to provide effective tools to equip youth work practitioners in supporting young people face a range of challenges and needs, especially aggravated by the pandemic and post-pandemic situation.

State of art

The youth worker professional profile was created in 2015 and was included in the National Catalogue of Qualification (ANQEP). Currently, Portugal provides a level IV youth work training that provides a two-way certification: 1) as a validation process – RVCC (Recognition, Validation, Competences Certification) – a lifelong learning recognition for those who already work as youth workers; and 2) a professional certification equivalent to higher education (three years of training).

Process

During the implementation process, several meetings took place with national and international experts, researchers, young people, ANQEP, National Youth Council, the Youth Workers' Association and other youth organisations. These meetings aimed to explore European experiences and collect updated information on the current state of the topic and different frameworks and curricula.

Results achieved

The level IV review is complete, awaiting ANQEP validation to be concluded. The level V competencies framework is also prepared. A pool of trainers is being prepared by IPDJ to teach some of the subjects of these certification courses.

This recognition process is evaluated by the delegation as a work in progress which is in line with the Portuguese Youth Work agenda as well as the Council of Europe Youth Work recommendation (2027) and the process of the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda.

2.5.5 Ukraine

Aims

To have a guide for obtaining professional qualifications and educational standards for youth workers.

State of art

Ukraine's government has a Ministry of Youth and Sport and is implementing the National Youth Strategy. In 2023, a Youth Foundation was created. There is a three-day state educational programme for specialised trainers. The All-Ukraine Youth Centre is running the programme. Due to their autonomy, some universities already have programmes in youth work, usually in the social work field.

Process

During the SYP implementation phase, the delegation analysed 214 educational programmes, developed educational activities with youth workers, and assessed specific needs through research projects.

Results achieved

In 2023 the occupational standard was adopted and the educational standards are being drafted. The National Agency has approved the curriculum of participatory youth policy (30-hour courses).

2.6 Council of Europe support measures

Starting by congratulating the national delegations for the work developed within the SYP project, Stephanie Burel, representative of the [Council of Europe's Youth Policy Division](#), presented mechanisms and support measures in the youth policy field. Capacity building activities, 50-50 trainings, rapid response mechanisms, peer advice and peer coaching, and youth policy advice missions were some of the important tools that could be accessed by the national delegations to continue this work. These mechanisms are important to prevent some activities from going into a vacuum the participating countries could make use of them. The

[European Youth Foundation](#) and specific calls for Ukraine were also referred to as opportunities for cooperation and local-based projects.

[Reykjavík Summit Declaration of the Council of Europe \(2023\)](#) was a landmark document opening a new path in the European youth approach. As a result of the 2023 Summit, it was declared that there is a need to include a youth perspective in all Council of Europe structures and policies. Cited as an unparalleled process, this is considered an opportunity to think about youth participation and its meaning as well as to consolidate and renovate how it has been regarded. It is an endless process in which the Seminar participants will be involved.

The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership is carrying out research to support the work on a reference framework to define the youth perspective. This framework will be presented at the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Malta in Autumn 2025.

2.7 Evaluation, recommendations and lessons learnt

The evaluation session was an important stage of the process to consolidate and reflect on lessons learnt. The outcomes described in Table 2 reflect lessons learnt for upcoming projects on youth policy which will enable participants to share practices and expertise, gain knowledge and network.

Table 2 Evaluation, recommendations and lessons learnt

Country	Evaluation, recommendations and lessons learnt
Armenia	<p>For the Armenian delegation, the involvement of participants from different sectors was an important asset in addition to different expertise backgrounds, shared values, devotion to the goal, openness, and readiness found within the national delegation.</p> <p>The steady guidance and support by the Youth Partnership team was recognised as an important contribution, although it was reported that there is a need for more residential meetings and mid-term residential supervision meetings.</p> <p>During the process, the interest of international organisations and other public institutions in Armenia was acknowledged.</p>

	<p>Throughout the journey, the delegation realised that it is important to consider different approaches and realities to reach a goal.</p> <p>As a recommendation for similar processes, this delegation suggests making processes as participatory and transparent as possible.</p>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<p>Having the opportunity to realise that other countries also face challenges was a positive finding for the BiH delegation. As lessons learnt from this process, the delegation reported the need for more support from the Youth Partnership and stressed the importance of working more on a local level and promoting further networking and collaborations among local and national partners.</p> <p>For future project editions, it was proposed to create a budget and/or a public call for institutions and organisations and to open pre-accession negotiations with European Union institutions.</p> <p>As a recommendation for similar projects, the delegation suggests the participants take the opportunity to network with other countries.</p>
Republic of Moldova	<p>From the process, the Moldovan delegation highlighted the co-ordinator role of the Moldova National Agency and the fact that their mission is linked with the ongoing objectives, processes, and public policies.</p> <p>The delegation composition was considered a positive aspect of the project, not only because of the balance between public authorities and civic society but also because each representative brought experience from a different field and showed flexibility in their opinions and ideas.</p> <p>For future capacity-building projects on youth policies, they recommend concentrating on the main objectives and results (not on the action plan), elaborating and fixing realistic steps for the process, and identifying the risks and potential solutions.</p>
Portugal	<p>As a result of the implementation process evaluation, the Portuguese delegation pointed out some external conditions and considered obstacles and advantages to fulfil the main objective. As obstacles, the lack of curricula uniformisation and the fact that a career as a youth worker is undervalued in the country. Having the National Catalogue of Qualification (ANQEP) in line with the delegation purposes is reported as an opportunity.</p>

	Diversity of perspectives on the networking group and reciprocal relationships between youth workers and young people were also shared as relevant findings from the project's implementation.
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