



European Commission and Council of Europe
Partnership on Youth

EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE CENTRE FOR YOUTH POLICY CORRESPONDENTS

5^h Annual meeting

*European Youth Centre Budapest
5-6 March 2009*

Report

I. Participants

25 members of the network of EKCYP-correspondents participated at its 5th meeting. The correspondents of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom were present. In the case of Hungary and the Slovak Republic the correspondent was represented by a close collaborator. (Participants list attached as Annex 2).

Karin Lopatta-Loibl attended the meeting on behalf of the European Commission and the Youth Partnership (which was the organiser of the meeting) was represented by Hanjo Schild, Carole Schnitzler (CS) and Philipp Boetzelen (PB).

II. Tour de table (Presentation and reporting)

Following welcome words and presentation of the agenda by Hanjo Schild (HJS) and Karin Lopatta-Loibl (KLL), the participants were invited to briefly introduce themselves and to give some information on the state of arts regarding their contribution for EKCYP and the support structure for this duty on the national level. According to the presentation of the correspondents the breadth of their contribution depended to a large extent on the support received on the national level. For some correspondents the contribution to the EKCYP was part of their regular tasks within a national youth institute and fully supported by their hierarchy (e.g. The Netherlands, Germany, UK, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Sweden). In other cases the correspondent was working in the Ministry and therefore in a good position with regard to the gathering of information and awareness raising for EKCYP (Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania). For correspondents who worked as researchers the support provided varied considerably: some enjoy full support and are associated to national reporting exercises on youth (Flemish Community of Belgium, Austria) and others have been promised support but are still struggling for it (Malta, Turkey) or do not get sufficient or no support so far (Croatia, Hungary). These correspondents carry out their contribution for EKCYP on a purely voluntary basis.

Awareness with regard to the importance of reporting to EKCYP has to be raised among the national governments of the respective countries by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in order to guarantee that the goals for this year will be accomplished. Most countries are in between one of the three samples presented above.¹ Following the tour de table HJS noted that the description of an ideal supportive youth structure as example of good practice could be a useful support tool to be given to national authorities by the Partnership (additionally to the country visits that have been offered previously). Karin-Lopatta Loibl thanked the correspondents and underlined the importance of existing good practices concerning a supportive national youth structure as it was the case in a number of countries. She also reminded that EKCYP was set up in 2005 in accordance with the EU member states requirements on a better understanding and knowledge of youth, gathered through the [Open Method of Coordination](#) (OMC)..In the follow-up Member States committed themselves to improve knowledge on youth at European and national level.

II. Update on EKCYP activities and state of play concerning correspondent's contributions

Philipp Boetzelen updated the participants of the meeting with regard to:

¹ For further information on the correspondents working conditions please see a comprehensive report based on correspondent's descriptions of their working situation.

- the number of EKCYP correspondents:

Currently the network consists of 40 correspondents; new nominations had been received in 2009 from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

- the correspondents' knowledge provision on 2007 (see Annex 3):

exceptionally the deadline for the provision of questionnaires for the year 2007 was extended until December 2008; all questionnaires that had been received after that date would be made available in the section for 2008. The Partnership had received questionnaires from 20 countries and country sheets from 25 countries; PB notified that even if there were still a relevant number of countries missing, the contributions in 2008 reflected a positive trend as they largely exceeded those of the previous years. Additionally, 12 countries contributed to the data collection on transversal youth policy themes that had been commissioned to Turku University;

- the working schedule for 2009:

the revised deadline for contributions on the four WPY priorities (based on the existing "questionnaires") for the year 2008 was end of March; the individual country sheets should be updated whenever necessary. The next meeting of EKCYP-correspondents was scheduled for October 2009;

- EKCYP quality group 2008:

Three members of the EKCYP-correspondents network participated in the last meeting of the EKCYP-Quality Group where the relevance and increase of user generated content (library, good practice etc.), the cooperation with other actors and the improvement and completion of the section country information had been discussed. As a follow up activity of the Quality Group the Partnership drafted a strategy paper on the EKCYP which has been sent to the Partnership stakeholders for further consideration. The next meeting of the Quality Group was foreseen for November 2009; correspondents who would be interested in participation could raise their interest during the 2nd annual meeting of correspondents.

III. Update on European Commission expectations with regard to EKCYP and EKCYP-correspondents

Karin Lopatta-Loibl updated the participants with regard to the political developments in the European Commission: at present the EC was analysing the feedback from the Member States (MS) on the White Paper priority "better knowledge and understanding of youth" and the results of a public online consultation on youth policy carried out end of 2008. The feedback of Member States was the last report from MS on the implementation of the four WP priorities agreed under the OMC and concluded a cycle of youth policy development which started in 2001. The evaluation of the feedbacks will be published as an annex of the new Commission Communication "*Youth: Investing and empowering*" to be adopted after Easter. In the future, the priority Better Knowledge would be absorbed by the major strategy of evidence based youth policy and should become a tool instead of being treated as a detached priority theme.

The attitude of the MS (included in the feedback on the WP priority Better Knowledge) towards EKCYP was generally positive but expectations were high concerning its further development. Following a mini-assessment of this tool by the European Commission, it was decided to give it a new dynamic; the takeover of this file by Karin Lopatta Loibl could be interpreted as a positive sign in this

respect. However and as it was stated in the last meeting of the EKCYP Quality group, the Commission was missing information on transversal youth policy issues, comparative research and a broader knowledge base. To give an example, KLL stated that at present EKCYP could not be used in a satisfying manner for briefings as information contained is not complete.

She proposed the following improvements to be achieved in 2009 and 2010:

- the section country information (questionnaires on WP topics and country sheets) should be completed by all countries before the end of spring 2009²
- the section country information should be extended by four new policy areas further to the European Youth Pact (employment, living conditions and lifestyles, social inclusion and attitudes) before the end of 2009; the Partnership will outsource the interpretation of the raw data delivered by an external provider at the end of 2008
- more (comparative) research should be provided in the EKCYP-database (to be achieved in 2010)
- The availability of correspondents should be enhanced.

Correspondents should discuss these objectives within their structures in order to be given the necessary support by their institution. Having said this, KLL called upon the correspondents to upload research documents, especially research with a comparative European focus. Complementary to the uploading by users and correspondents she mentioned cooperation with Eurostat as suitable strategy for providing more European wide research data. Moreover cooperation with European Commission think tanks as [BEPA](#) could be of added value in this respect. In the field of education EURYDICE could be a valuable partner for further knowledge provision.

VI. Discussion on best ways to achieve the expected results

Several correspondents reacted to the input given by KLL:

- Jasmin Jasarevic mentioned that an overview about available questionnaire information/research studies in form of an excel document would be useful;
- Manfred Zentner (MZ) confirmed that further cooperation with other information providers would be of added value but that it was not the role of correspondents to address the relevant institutions on European / international level (i.e. Eurostat). He argued that comparative research was interesting and useful but very cost intensive and therefore not widely carried out. He added that at the beginning of its existence the network of researchers had already drafted several trend reports on youth.
- Jon Sigfusson promised to contribute to EKCYP by uploading the results of a study on youth which was carried out on a yearly basis and available in English.
- According to Stefania Rota, the correspondents should be provided with a password for Eurostat by the European Commission or the Partnership as it was subject to fees. She saw this as a helpful support measure for the correspondents.

² Taking into account that according to the different political framework commitment of CoE member's states remains on a voluntary basis.

- Pink Hilvedink (PH) emphasized that in cases where this was necessary, the Ministries should be reminded of their obligations by the European institutions as EKCYP-correspondents were already doing it. Regarding the correspondents contribution to the Youth Pact priorities she reminded that as they were treated by another Ministry it was difficult for the correspondents to get access to relevant data. And with regard to comparative studies she added that beyond the question of funding such studies would depend on the interest and needs of each country. Cooperation with the network of researchers could be a suitable means for the development of comparative studies.

Manfred Zentner added that at the beginning of its existence the network of researchers had already drafted several trend reports on youth.

- Edgar Bajaruns asked about further guidelines with regard to the need of information related to the Youth Pact; he mentioned that MS were asked for Youth Pact related information in 2007 but no follow up had been received on this by the MS.

In a reaction to correspondents inputs KLL stated that solutions to these problems should be indicated. With regard to the missing funding for comparative research on youth she referred to the funding made available by the European Commission Framework Programmes. From side of the correspondents it was stated that obtaining a grant from the EC FP required a huge investment in terms of time; given the runtime of FP 6/7 research projects (3 years) they were not seen as the appropriate tool to find out more about European trends rather than for deepening knowledge about long term tendencies.

V. Presentation and discussion of country fact sheets on transversal topics

Carole Schnitzler presented the layouted version of country fact sheets on transversal youth policy topics (Social Inclusion, Living conditions & life styles, Attitudes, employment) and the way they will soon be displayed on the website [see at: <http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/Countryinformation2>]

P. Boetzelen informed that at present the data delivered by an external service provider (Turku University of Applied Science) were undergoing a general check and would then be published on the EKCYP. Moreover the interpretation of data should be outsourced to experts familiar with the respective topics. Following a short discussion it was decided that the update of Turku data would be done by the Partnership in cooperation with external experts, whereas the correspondents should deliver a synoptic introduction to the data provided in the country fact sheets. It was seen as necessary to improve the usability of this information; according to Manfred Zentner it would also contribute to visibility of EKCYP on the national level. However, he questioned the feasibility and necessity of a yearly update of the data on transversal policy themes.

VI. Extension of the country information by new priority topics of the European Commission

With the upcoming Commission Communication *Youth: Investing and empowering* new fields of action will be added to the current priority topics and should be reflected in the EKCYP, especially the section country information. However, discussions at that stage how information on the new topics could be provided would be premature because the content of the Communication was still in development.

MZ argued that he felt nevertheless that it was an issue to be discussed by the correspondents as the EKCYP in his opinion ought to be more than an instrument for providing knowledge about EU youth policy topics, especially taking into account that the network also consisted of CoE member states.

HJS agreed but said that as this meeting was already quite charged and that the further proceedings should be rather discussed in the autumn meeting. Already now documents could be uploaded on the new priorities and the network members should think about steps to provide further knowledge on the new topics.

VII. Discussion on role of EKCYP-correspondents:

HJS clarified the future contributions that were expected by the correspondents. According to priorities these are:

- a) Contribution to the section country information comprising the country sheet on youth policy and underlying structures, the filled questionnaires on the WPY priorities, and providing further data and an introduction³ (to be validated by the Ministry) for the country fact sheets on transversal youth policy issues
- b) Uploading of relevant research and policy documents on the EKCYP database
- c) Completion of the expert portfolio
- d) Contribution to other features of EKCYP (Database of good practice, discussion forum)

He underlined that the Partnership was aware of the limits concerning the time available for contribution to EKCYP and emphasized that a political solution (consisting in more support for the correspondents) needed to be found to remediate this situation.

Several correspondents reacted to the expectations laid down by HJS and required that a more formal request concerning the time to be spent by the correspondents on EKCYP could be communicated to the Ministries together with the EKCYP-correspondents job description. It would clarify better the expectations with regard to contribution from the national level via the nominated EKCYP-correspondent.

Johan Lycke (Sweden) raised the question if an every year reporting on the WP topics would be realistic given that there were new topics expected?

According to KLL this meeting would be the proper occasion to anticipate how the correspondents duties could be fulfilled in the future and if needed discuss necessary modifications, as for example the shortening of questionnaires.

Edgars Bajaruns (Latvia) wondered about how Council of Europe priorities as for example Human Rights could play a bigger role in EKCYP in the future. HJS explained that the Council of Europe did not play a strong role in the development of EKCYP but that this might well change as with the Agenda 2020 there are new guidelines for Council of Europe youth policy.

³ Introduction to cross sectorial data on employment, Living conditions and lifestyles, social inclusion and attitudes reflecting the situation on the national level

Following the question of several correspondents if yearly answering of questionnaires was meaningful, Philipp Boetzelen supported the proposal of modifying the rhythm of annual reporting with regard to the questionnaires as in most countries relevant data were not collected every year and therefore not available for the correspondent.

HJS confirmed that there could be an update of the questionnaire answers every two years unless anything relevant would change before. The Partnership in cooperation with correspondents should be checking the questionnaires on which questions might need to be updated more often. With regard to missing data he stated that awareness should be raised on themes to be studied/ investigated by the national authorities; additionally the EKCYP-correspondents and members of the researchers network should dedicate some time in their next meeting to identify the gaps and discuss how these could be filled. In view of the upcoming additional policy priorities the present questionnaires might need to undergo another simplification. New ones might need to be developed on the transversal youth policy topics (see point V).

PH asked if there were any standard setting guidelines with regard to answering questionnaires; P. Boetzelen underlined that guidelines on the questionnaires had been prepared in 2006 and would need to be updated according to the latest version of the questionnaires.

VIII. Role of correspondents with regard to other features

Carole Schnitzler showed the features of EKCYP which were not part of the section country information (Documents database, News, Good Practice, Expert database) and explained how correspondents could contribute to these features. HJS announced that the Good Practice database should be extended by other priority topics, notably the transversal youth policy priorities. With regard to the definition of good practice for the EKCYP there are some criteria available online http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/goodpractices_1. Experts are expected to assess and decide autonomously if their proposed project fulfils these criteria. Projects which have been recognised as good practice on the national level could as a rule also be classified as good practice for the EKCYP. Concerning the expert database HJS could imagine to further develop this tool into a “Who is who in European Youth policy” where relevant experts in the fields of European youth policy research and training could be represented.

IX. Cooperation with other national/international partners/institutions related to the further knowledge provision in EKCYP

HJS informed that cooperation was already on the way or in construction with the following international actors:

- European Youth Forum (YFJ): YFJ has always been invited to the Quality Group meetings, has uploaded YFJ policy documents on EKCYP and will further contribute to visibility by raising awareness among national youth councils.
- International Network on Youth Research (INJR): The organisers of INJR have expressed their interest to use EKCYP for preparation and follow up of their next meeting; in that context there should be also an open forum for discussions around a chosen youth policy priority. According to HJS, such a use of EKCYP as a resource could be a model for cooperation with other actors.

- EURODESK: Cooperation with Eurodesk should be strengthened; so far Bob Payne, the (former) director of Eurodesk had been invited to the Quality Group meetings of EKCYP and the Partnership was present at European events on youth information (co-)organised by Eurodesk.
- Asia-Europe foundation (ASEF): Discussions have been started with ASEF on how cooperation could mutually benefit both sides.
- North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (NSC): with the youth activities of the NSC being administered by the Partnership as from 2009 there should be a stronger link between the Partnership website/EKCYP and the NSC activities.

Following the presentations of cooperation activities under way PH asked if there was any cooperation agreement with ERYICA and MZ proposed that EKCYP-correspondents could be in contact with the national member of ERYICA.

KLL encouraged correspondents to strengthen cooperation partners on the national level and lobby for a link to EKCYP on their institutions website in order to contribute to its notoriety.

X. Working groups on working time and promotional activities:

As several correspondents had judged that it was important to specify the working time in communication with national authorities it was decided to split in four working groups for the exchange on the amount of time needed for the correspondent's duties (a) and on how the EKCYP could be further promoted (b).

The results of the working group with regard to the correspondent's **working time** were as follows:

- a) EKCYP-correspondents working time:
 - working time invested by correspondents varies strongly, from 1 week - 2,5 month a year
 - working time depends if the correspondents works alone or can rely on one or several contributors (case of Sweden)
 - in the first year of joining the EKCYP the working time is considerably higher as answers to all questions have to be gathered, contacts need to be established and sources of information to be found; in the following years the work is mostly limited to updates (unless new topics are added).
 - The size of the country and availability of data influence the amount of time to be invested and goes up to two months for the preparation of a country sheet.
 - The meetings of correspondents have to be included; they account for 3 working days/meeting.

The results of the working group with regard to **promotional activities** were as follows:

- b) Ideas for fostering promotion of EKCYP
 - Branding of EKCYP on publications; if a research publication is published logo of and links to EKCYP features could be placed including a short text on the feature and it's added value
 - Translation of leaflets was seen as useful for some countries; however main information provided on the website would remain in English
 - EKCYP should be added to correspondents E-mail signature
 - The national country sheet could be published on the website of EKCYP-correspondents institution

- Awareness raising to national authorities, e.g. through official letters with reports on the EKCYP-correspondents meetings and their results. Authorities should be aware about meeting as and discussions
- Spread of information within national research networks and across different international research networks and conferences
- Using posters to raise attention and informing about the tool in face to face communication
- If information about a country is provided there should be a hint/link to the EKCYP country information
- A printed publication going beyond the leaflet and explaining in detail the use of the tool would be useful
- Articles to be published in journals or newsletters on the national level.

Generally further information about the users and their use of EKCYP would be useful for targeting promotion activities

XI. Information exchange on projects and developments concerning the provision of knowledge on youth on national and on pan-European level:

- Italy: Stefania Rota presented a telephone survey among young people on (European) elections.
- Lithuania: Aurelija Reinykite informed about the construction of a national researcher network with a grant of the European Social Fund.
- Latvia: Edgars Bajaruns showed the new national youth portal of Latvia which provides as a remarkable element a Google map on youth centres and youth information centres in the country ([see good practice entry in EKCYP](#)).
- Estonia: Marti Taru presented three research projects:
 - Evaluation of Youth in Action Programme (part of an evaluation study conducted in 10 countries)
 - Estonian Youth monitoring report
 - Evaluation of youth work in Estonia (aiming at development of a quality management system)
- France: Jean Claude-Richez informed about
 - a study carried out on young people and technology
 - a qualitative research on participation at the local level
 - a forthcoming youth values report (carried out every 5 years)
- Belgium: Nicole Vettenburg said that her institution had applied for funding from 7th Framework Programme for two projects related to European citizenship.

Conclusions and closing of the meeting

In her closing words Karin Lopatta-Loibl thanked the correspondents for their proposals concerning promotion and further development of the EKCYP and confirmed that further awareness raising with regard to the added value of EKCYP was necessary in the European Commission as well as on national

level. There were new challenges ahead for the EKCYP and the correspondents should take part in the further discussions.

Hanjo Schild pointed out that the meeting had been fruitful and positive, not only with regard to the number of participants but also with regard to the quality of discussions. He said that it was also up to this group to further motivate the countries with regard to participation in EKCYP.