

Report of a Joint Meeting of the European Network of Youth Researchers and Correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy

20th – 21st January 2010

Club Fondation Universitaire Stichting, Brussels, Belgium

Rapporteur: Jonathan Evans

Introduction:

Summarised below is a brief narrative account of the meeting. It includes an edited account of the salient issues discussed and the key decisions taken. The list of participants who attended the meeting can be found in the Appendices.

Day 1: 20th January 2010:

Session 1: 9.30-11.00:

Participants were welcomed to the meeting by Ms Floor van Houdt (European Commission) and Mr Ulrich Bunjes (Council of Europe). The Panel, which also included Mr Finn Denstad (European Commission), introduced themselves. The session was addressed by all three panel members.

Ms van Houdt and Mr Denstad provided an overview of the European Union's *Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering* (see Appendices and/or link to PowerPoint Presentation). The background against which the strategy will be implemented includes such issues as demographic change, migration, the introduction of new technologies, various societal pressures, climate change and major challenges in the global economy in light of recent developments. The overall aims of the EU strategy between 2010 and 2018 are to:

- (1) create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and the labour market; and
- (2) to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity for all young people.

The present scenario offers both challenges and opportunities. Areas for work include: education and training; health and well-being; employment and entrepreneurship; participation; voluntary activities; social inclusion; youth and the world; and creativity and culture. The work plan in the coming period involves three work cycles of three years each. The 'Presidency Trio' will have set priorities for each cycle. In 2010-2011 (Presidency Trio: Spain, Belgium, Hungary) the overall priority is in the field of youth employment with more specific objective in relation to social inclusion, youth work and participation. General initiatives include: co-operation between policy makers and local and regional authorities; the encouragement and support of youth participation in policy making; high quality guidance and counselling services; youth information and outreach services; better knowledge about young people based on empirical research and evaluations of innovative or experimental projects; support for youth work; and the facilitation of easier access to EU funds. The implementation instruments for these initiatives include: knowledge-building and evidence-based youth policy; mutual learning; progress reporting; the dissemination of results; monitoring and reviewing via the EU Youth Report; consultations and structured dialogues (through youth events and online questionnaires); and the mobilisation of EU programmes and funds. Future developments, meanwhile, include the

post-Lisbon EU 2020 Strategy, the Youth on the Move initiative and the implementation of the youth strategy with enhanced emphasis placed on evidence-based policy-making.

Mr Denstad explained that evidence-based youth policy could be developed through a commitment to the following measures:

- youth reports being produced every three years;
- peer-learning exercises in which good practice and positive experiences could be shared across policy sectors and Ministries;
- and the launching of research studies (see below for details).

Three studies are planned:

1. New forms of participation, social networking and e-participation (2010).
2. The social and economic impact of youth work (2011).
3. The promotion of youth autonomy (2012).

It was reported that there are plans to promote research networks to inform policy development. Moreover a Working Group on Youth Policy Indicators would be established. The terms of reference and other details are set out below. Some passages are taken directly from the *Mandate for the Working Group on Indicators in the Field of Youth* (EAC/D/FD(2009)).

“The task of the working group will be to discuss, in consultation with relevant policy areas, existing data on the situation of young people and the possible need for development of indicators where they do not exist, or where no youth perspective is apparent....

The working group should propose a dashboard of already existing indicators in the areas of education, employment, social inclusion and health. This means that the working group must get an insight into the already existing indicators in these different fields, and agree on a selected number of indicators to be included into a dashboard.

Second, the working group should elaborate on an overview of possible new indicators in ‘core’ youth policy areas where they do not yet exist. These areas include youth participation, volunteering, creativity and culture, youth in the world and for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). In order to do this, it should explore already cross-country research on indicators and be presented with examples of good practice in different Member States.”

The Working Group will meet during the course of the year and report in December 2010. It will comprise:

- Representatives of all Member States (27);

- The European Youth Forum, including 4 National Youth Councils (5), AER Youth Network and Eurochild;
- A Pool of European Youth Researchers / Youth Research Network (3);
- The European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (2);
- DGs ESTAT, SANCO, EMPL, JLS, RTD (5);
- Secretariat of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth (1);
- Eurydice (1); and
- DG EAC D1 (3) and A4 (1).

Before proceeding to update colleagues on developments within the Council of Europe, Mr Ulrich Bunjes clarified the purpose of the meeting and highlighted certain aspects of the context within which it was taking place. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe were in the process of developing and implementing new strategies. It should be noted that this was also taking place against a background of staff changes.

The purpose of bringing together the European Youth Research Network and the EKCYP in a joint meeting was considered a rational response to the need to facilitate more effective dialogue between partners from the three points of the youth field triangle: policy, research and practice. Whilst the meeting was consultative in nature, it represented an important opportunity to explore ways in which the networks might be reconfigured and reorganised in future. The discussions that took place in this forum would be duly considered by those tasked with making decisions about the future shape of the networks.

Mr Bunjes moved on to an update on developments in the Council of Europe. The implementation of Agenda 2020 involved promoting human rights, democracy, social inclusion – including the protection and empowerment of the most disadvantaged sections of the community - and inter-generational dialogue.

The development of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy was regarded as being a very important vehicle for supporting the implementation of this agenda in terms of promoting good practice by spreading awareness of effective evidence-based policy in the above-mentioned areas. These standards of good policy and practice should also inform and underpin the work of Advisory Missions and International Reviews of National Youth Policy (the latest, in Albania, is due to be published imminently whilst the next one will be undertaken in Belgium).

Reference was made to the next Ministerial Conference which will take place in 2012 in Russia. A number of important agenda items were noted:

- the internet, cyber-crime and implications with regard to security;
- youth mobility; and
- the reform of the Council of Europe in light of changes brought about by the Lisbon agenda.

The Lisbon Treaty changes the legal situation giving the European Union a mandate in many areas until now covered mainly by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe therefore needs to reflect more deeply on its position within the wider European architecture. Given its history it should continue to cast itself as the guardian of human rights, democratic values and diversity. This role can clearly contribute to the ‘deep security’ of Europe. Within this wider role there should be a specific set of engagements around holistic, cross-sectoral European youth policy development and the promotion of good practice in youth work.

Given the above developments, it is important to reflect on how the relationship between the research community and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe (and by implication the partnership between the two institutions in the field of youth) could be improved. A more flexible and responsive relationship needs to be developed.

At this point the meeting’s participants introduced themselves and took the opportunity to comment briefly on developments in their own countries as well as other matters. Some of the issues of wider concern that were mentioned included the following:

- Whilst the introduction of youth policy indicators clearly brought positive benefits, this approach also had limitations (in terms of ill-considered targets having unintended and unhelpful practice consequences).
- Youth transitions should not focus exclusively on movement from education to the labour market, but also examine use of leisure time. This was especially important for those young people who were socially excluded and living in poverty.
- The relationship between children’s policy and youth policy has always been important. However, it is becoming increasingly important to develop synergies between these two policy domains. The obligations that member states have under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child offer a measure of protection to young people below the age of 18 years. There is a view, though, that those above the age of majority often experience a sense of policy abandonment.
- Young people who enter the criminal justice system are often neglected in the youth policy field. The criminalisation of children and young people for often minor offences is a concern, particularly in those cases drawn from vulnerable or socially excluded groups. It should be borne in mind that involvement in the criminal justice system can be one of the biggest barriers to social inclusion and can have a profound impact on successful youth transitions. It is therefore important that European Youth Policy addresses the issue of young people entangled in criminal justice processes.

Session 2: 11.30-13.00:

Mr Hanjo Schild (Secretariat of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth) gave a presentation on the comparative

youth strategies of the partner institutions. The full PowerPoint presentation is available in the appendices. Summarised below are the main points:

A brief overview was given of the Council of Europe's *Agenda 2020* document and the European Union's Council Resolution *A Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field*. Firstly, the Council of Europe's fields of action were delineated in the following terms:

- 1) Human Rights and Democracy
 - a. Human rights and human dignity
 - b. Equal opportunities / active participation
 - c. Gender equality / sustainable development
 - d. Information and counselling services

- 2) Living together in diverse societies
 - a. Cultural diversity / intercultural dialogue
 - b. Preventing all forms of discrimination
 - c. Conflict prevention and management
 - d. Work with young refugees and asylum seekers
 - e. Global solidarity

- 3) Social inclusion of young people
 - a. Reconciliation of private and working life
 - b. Non-formal education
 - c. Transition from education to the labour market
 - d. Intergenerational dialogue
 - e. Youth policy to include children

The approaches, methods and instruments of the Council of Europe can be summarised thus:

- 1) Youth Policy Development and Co-operation
 - a. Intergovernmental co-operation
 - b. Co-management
 - c. Partnerships
 - d. Policy Reviews / Advisory Missions

- 2) Youth work, education and training, and non-formal learning
 - a. Multilateral youth co-operation
 - b. Intercultural learning and dialogue
 - c. European Youth Centres

- d. European Youth Foundation
- 3) Youth research and knowledge of youth
 - a. Evidence-based youth policy
 - b. Dialogue between youth researchers and policy makers
 - c. Studies and publications
 - d. Development of the EKCYP

The aims of the European Union delineated in the EU Youth Strategy, meanwhile, are expressed as:

- 1) To create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market.
- 2) To promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

These aims are translated into the following field of action:

- Education and training
- Employment and entrepreneurship
- Health and well-being
- Participation
- Voluntary activities
- Social inclusion
- Youth and the world
- Creativity and culture

The approaches, methods and instruments deployed by the European Union are summarised below:

- Renewed Open Method of Co-ordination
- Knowledge-building and evidence-based youth policy
- Monitoring on the basis of indicators
- Mutual learning
- Consultation and structured dialogue with youth
- Mobilisation of EU programmes and funds
- Progress reporting
- Dissemination of results

Following this presentation the floor was opened for debate. Summarised below are the key points that were made.

- The nature of the relationship between the Council of Europe and the European Commission is changing. Given the expanding competences of the EU, the Council of Europe should certainly focus on Human Rights.

- The Youth Field is atypical in that it is a policy domain in which there is already a well-established level of co-operation. This is embodied in the EC-CoE youth partnership.
- Greater clarity is required in respect of the target group. How are youth to be defined? If a life-course perspective is taken, then those defined as children (i.e., below the age of 18 years) need to be given greater prominence. The possibility of identifying target groups based on the risk principle should also be considered.
- It is important to develop indicators. At the same time the risks of this type of approach should be acknowledged explicitly. Quantitative measures cannot capture fully the condition of youth nor calibrate precisely the impacts of specific policies on young lives. Qualitative research is also required in order to develop a deeper and fuller understanding of these issues. It was reported that this triangulated methodological approach is, indeed, accomplished successfully in at least one country (Sweden).
- The importance of International Reviews of National Youth Policy was highlighted. They represented a vital mechanism for peer review and the dissemination of good practice. It was suggested that a more systematic approach towards scheduling a programme of Reviews should be developed. While the spirit of voluntarism should not be lost (in terms of countries agreeing to take part in Reviews), an expectation that all countries should participate in the process should be created.
- It was pointed out that youth cohorts are not defined solely in terms of age, but also in relation to cultural identities. It was important to be aware of cultural diversity when conceptualising youth groups across Europe.
- The importance of aligning child and youth policy was emphasised. The significance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the role of Children's Commissioners / Ombudspersons was also highlighted.
- While a great deal of emphasis was placed on the discourse of evidence-based policy, it should be acknowledged that there was often political pressure on researchers to produce policy-based evidence. In other words, the political classes sometimes decided on a policy and wanted researchers to find the 'evidence' to support such a pre-determined position. In these circumstances how should evidence-based policies be championed? It was suggested that researchers have a moral obligation to 'speak the truth to power'. At the same time, though, academics should appreciate that the role of the policy maker is a challenging one. It is not always easy for politicians to press forward with evidence-based policies. On occasions they may be electorally unpopular or simply have to compete with other policy domains for scarce resources. The role of the researcher should therefore be that of an honest broker or critical friend. Peer review by member states (which includes Policy Reviews) is also helpful in this regard.
- The huge diversity that exists between the countries of the Council of Europe should always be recognised. This is represented in terms of different political and cultural traditions as well as disparities in wealth and resources. The difficulties for some countries to implement progressive youth policies should not be minimised. Nevertheless, there are member-states within the CoE that are a source of great inspiration to others. Moreover, the principles and models of

- practice developed by the CoE can be applied and embedded in even less well-resourced countries. The principle of co-management is just one example of good practice that can be adopted by member-states.
- It was pointed out that the European Union can, through the good offices and infrastructure of the Council of Europe, reach twenty countries that are currently not in the Union.
 - Youth mobility will be greatly enhanced by ongoing work on expediting easier access to visas. This is particularly important in the field of volunteering.
 - Agreement on common indicators has been achieved between European Union member states in such policy domains as employment, education, health and social inclusion. Notwithstanding the challenges involved, it should therefore be possible to achieve some degree of unanimity in the field of youth and volunteering.
 - It was reported that in the case of Romania a great deal of support had been provided by the Council of Europe in the field of children's policy. The result was that a great deal of progress had been made. The support in the field of youth had not been so great in the domain of youth policy with the consequence that it had not been possible to make so much progress. This is possibly because international conventions in the field of children's policy facilitate the application of more effective pressure in this area compared with that of the youth agenda. Where is the pressure to promote youth policy? Efforts to establish a European Youth Convention have thus far failed.
 - There need to be clearer lines of communication between the European Youth Research Network and the EKCYP.
 - The issue of communication was also discussed in relation to the EC-CoE youth partnership. This was regarded as highly successful. However, areas in which greater initial communication could have taken place between the two institutions in the youth field were cited: for example, in respect of the *Agenda 2020* (CoE) and *Investing and Empowering* (EU) documents. There were many overlapping and complementary themes as well as differences and new departures.
 - The development of common indicators would help provide a clearer framework for the International Policy Reviews.
 - It was noted that International Policy Reviews had assisted some countries with the process of acceding to the European Union. The Council of Europe is regarded by some as an ante-chamber to the European Union.
 - Policy indicators need to be linked to a performance management framework.

Session 3: 14.30-16.00

In this session further reports on institutional updates and developments were given by members of the EC-CoE youth partnership's secretariat. This then broadened into a wider, future-focused discussion on a new European Youth Knowledge Structure that involved networks, expert groups and tutorial systems. This latter discussion was facilitated by Mr Bunjes, Mr Denstad and Professor Williamson.

The first part of the session, which was devoted to institutional updates, can be summarised in the following terms:

- Knowledge and understanding of youth has been promoted by (i) the development of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy and (ii) the work of the Youth Research Network. The Network has undertaken work in a number of important areas of activity and some of these are described below.
- Thematic research seminars have been held. A research seminar on policy and practice in the domain of health and well-being was, for example, organised.
- The following expert seminars have been organised: the history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for today's youth work policy (Blankenberge, Belgium in May 2009); and Youth Research, Policy and Practice- young people and social change after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Budapest, November 2009).
- Reports and books based on these seminars have been produced. Those that have already been published include: Dolejsiova & Lopez's (eds.) *European Citizenship in the Process of Construction – Challenges for Citizenship, Citizenship Education and Democratic Practice in Europe*; Verscheden et al's (eds.) *The History of Youth Work in Europe and its Relevance for Youth Policy Today*; and Denstad's *Youth Policy Manual – How to Develop a National Youth Strategy*. Forthcoming research publications include: edited books on the subjects of youth employment and the future of work; equal opportunities; and health and well-being.
- A generic training course for trainers has also been started and will last until October 2010.
- European Citizenship training continued being organised in cooperation with the National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme.
- Regional work has been continued in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. This has involved capacity-building work through youth policy analysis and discussion between the key stakeholders (researchers, policy makers and practitioners). An important seminar was held in Slovenia on youth employment and unemployment.
- An important new regional pillar has been established in respect of relations between Europe and Africa (recent work being undertaken in the field of youth leaders).
- It was reported that an international conference on youth policy and research was held in Vienna in September 2009.
- The application for a grant for the MA in European Youth Studies has been approved within the Erasmus Mundus programme.
- Developments in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy were reported. On the negative side, the country information has not been completed in the case of all Member-States. On a more positive note progress has been made on gathering information (via questionnaire) on volunteering and participation. This will help to form the basis for developing policy indicators in the field. It was also reported that information could now be extracted on both a straightforward country basis and thematically. A discussion took place on the

need to be able to not only download the results of studies, but also be able to download raw data in order to conduct independent analyses.

- It is part of *Agenda 2020* that knowledge on youth needs to be developed. It is therefore important that it is placed high on the CDEJ agenda.

The plenary discussion on developing a new European youth structure was opened by Mr Finn Denstad (European Commission). The key points of his address are set out below.

- The key reference documents are *Agenda 2020* (Council of Europe) and *Investing and Empowering* (European Union). In both documents there is a commitment to the development of evidence-based policy.
- The architecture for European knowledge production in the field of youth involves three networks:
 - i. The EKCYP
 - ii. The European Research Network
 - iii. The European Network on Youth Knowledge (EUNYK)There are overlapping but also competing mandates in respect of these networks.
- The EKCYP has a clear mandate of feeding national information into a European database. The problem is that correspondents are somewhat isolated at a national level and often do not have a close relationship with the research community.
- EUNYK promotes the triangle of researchers, policy makers and government officials/national government Ministries.
- The mandate of the European Youth Research Network needs to revisit its terms of reference and think radically about how it might restructure. Could a new network of researchers be more flexible and respond more quickly on an *ad hoc* basis to the needs of the two partner institutions of the EC-CoE youth partnership? It was suggested that not all member-states need be represented in the new network.

Mr Bunjes made the following points:

- There are four major challenges that need to be addressed. These are:
 - i. How can we achieve a good match between the needs of the Council of Europe and the European Commission on the one hand and, on the other, the requisite competences that can be provided by expert networks? For example, if work is needed on the theme of Social Cohesion a large committee of experts is too unwieldy a structure with which to deal. A leaner, more flexible and responsive body of expertise is required. It would be helpful to have a mixed profile of selected experts whom one could consult on a range of different issues and projects. Expertise is required in such areas as evaluation, juvenile criminal law, Policy Reviews, Advisory Missions and specialist advice to statutory organs.
 - ii. What do we mean by youth research? It is a transversal academic discipline. As mentioned previously, researchers with different profiles from a wide range of academic disciplines are required. It is

not, however, simply a matter of different academic profiles being required for different tasks. In some cases it is necessary to commission work from either youth research institutes or individual academics embedded in institutions of higher education. In other cases free-standing academics are required.

- iii. How do we facilitate communication and appropriate interaction between the research community and European institutions?
- iv. How should communication and interaction be organised on a national level? At the present time, for example, the EKCYP is generally isolated from the research community at national level. How can it be supported properly?

Professor Williamson (European Youth Research Network) shared these comments with the meeting.

- A brief history of the research network was given. This, to some extent, accounted for the sense of drift that has subsequently occurred in relation to the Network's terms of reference. Nevertheless, it was important to recognise that it had made an important contribution to the development of youth policy.
- Researchers were influential but often invisible. The example of rapporteurs on Policy Reviews and Advisory Missions was mentioned.
- The view was expressed that despite high levels of input to the youth policy process, the researchers were often under-represented when compared with policy makers and practitioners. The triangle was therefore far from being equilateral. This was an imbalance that needed to be addressed.
- A knowledge centre was a good idea, but it had been inadequately resourced. Inadequate resources were also an issue for researchers. There was need for serious investment.
- It was pointed out that, increasingly, there was little incentive for youth researchers to engage with European institutions: the level of income generation was not great, publications arising from such work were not of a sufficiently high status (peer-reviewed journal articles being more prestigious) and there was now little prospect of professional advancement as a result of such involvement with the Council of Europe or European Commission.

Mr Denstad acknowledged that resources were important, but believed it was imperative to look at ways in which existing resources could be used more efficiently. Were there areas of duplication? How can resources be reorganised in such a way as to enhance and maximise productivity?

In the plenary discussion that ensued, a number of points were made.

- Given the asymmetrical shape of the EC-COE youth partnership, is a full sense of shared ownership really possible? There are 47 countries in the Council of Europe

- and 27 in the European Union. There is a significant disparity in material resources between the two institutions (the latter being far wealthier than the former).
- Is there really positive support by the European institutions for the research agenda or is the commitment simply to promoting academic support for the policy agenda?
 - It was confirmed that researchers fail to receive proper professional recognition for much of the work they undertake for European institutions. This is a major issue and may hinder the recruitment of good young or early career youth researchers.
 - There is an imbalance between objectives and the means of achieving them.
 - The dialogue between social scientists, policy-makers, practitioners and young people remains central to the whole project. How that dialogue and knowledge management should be facilitated is the key issue.

Session 4: 16.30-18.00

The debate about the future shape of the European Youth Knowledge Structure was taken into five discussion groups. The findings of the Groups were then shared in the plenary session. These are represented below.

Group 1:

- European institutions need researchers to service their organisational objectives in terms of developing programmes. In such circumstances ‘quick and dirty’ consultations and policy advice require a degree of flexibility and swiftness of response from the research community. Whilst this is understood, there is concern that new Network members would be treated rather like short-term contract researchers who can be hired and fired. Researchers, meanwhile, have an interest in developing knowledge and making sense of youth issues and wider social phenomena. It is very important that any new Network performs the dual functions of (i) servicing the European institutions’ more focused organisational objectives and needs whilst also (ii) allowing researchers to access data and liaise/collaborate with colleagues across Europe. This second function is very important because it allows academics to develop deeper understandings of social phenomena and wider contextual knowledge of the European scene. This will also enable the cultivation of a critical but supportive peer culture across the continent which will ultimately also benefit the Council of Europe and the European Union. A two-tier structure for the new Network is therefore proposed.
 - i. A Youth Research Network with representatives from all 47 countries.
 - ii. More focused *ad hoc* task groups established to respond to the shorter-term needs of the European institutions. Presumably advice on the composition of such task groups could be provided via the elected officers of the full Network.
- Closer collaboration and mutual support between Knowledge Centre correspondents and Research Network members at national level.

- Raw data from research studies as well as policy-relevant data need to be uploaded to the Knowledge Centre. This will enable researchers to analyse data independently. Such a move will also incentivise researchers to collaborate more closely with Knowledge Centre correspondents.
- Commitment to uploading relevant data will be reinforced if this is made a performance indicator.
- Thematic research and expert seminars should be retained.
- Publications based on research seminars should continue to be produced.
- EUNYK should be disbanded and resources transferred to an enhanced Youth Research Network that covers all 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

Group 2:

- Not all three Networks are needed.
- Researchers are not properly recognised at European level.
- The work of the EKCYP does not receive proper recognition at European level. A higher profile is required.
- The research network should be consulted at European level on matters of policy.
- Youth research should be promoted in the countries where it is under-developed. This could be reinforced by holding some meetings of the Network in such countries.
- There should be a closer connection between the Research Network and the Research Directorate/s of the European institutions.
- The agendas of annual meetings should not be dominated by items concerning policies of the EC-CoE youth partnership institutions.

Group 3:

- No more than one Research Network is needed.
- The aims of the Research Network should include:
 - i. A map of research being undertaken in each country. This should be produced and shared.
 - ii. National research should be promoted in each country.
 - iii. The preparation of a toolkit for developing research in countries where it is currently underdeveloped.
 - iv. Regional Research Networks should be established within the wider Network.
 - v. Participation in Policy Reviews.
- The EKCYP needs more support.
- EUNYK has a clear mandate, but not everyone wants to be involved in this network. Is it duplicative of the work undertaken by the wider Youth Research Network?

This presentation stimulated discussion within the plenary and the following recommendations were duly made:

- There was scope for research mentoring in countries where research capacity was under-developed.
- The possibility of research exchanges should be explored.

Group 4:

- The European Youth Research Network is clearly identified and well-established. It also has a wide mandate. EUNYK, by contrast, doesn't function properly. A common pool of research advisors is required by the European institutions. In the circumstances the two Networks should be merged.
- It is important to facilitate a bottom-up approach. Currently, the agenda is being set for researchers.
- There needs to be more opportunity for networking. Currently this only happens informally.
- Sometimes people feel invisible in the Youth Research Network. They can be members for over a decade and never be consulted or invited to do anything other than attend the annual meetings. There have been two brief moments when the Network has been consulted: the White Paper process and the Youth in Action programme. Perhaps researchers need to be more proactive.
- The need to mentor and promote young researchers is urgent. The MA in European Youth Studies is a good opportunity to identify and encourage the potential researchers of the future.
- The Research Network should plan a publications programme.
- The Research Network should participate in the Policy Reviews.
- The Research Network should assist with the process of developing appropriate policy indicators.

Group 5:

- Who uses the EKCYP database? Who are the visitors?
- Stronger leadership is required with regard to the EKCYP.
- It was pointed out that Correspondents are not incentivised (in terms of financial remuneration, for example) to upload data to the EKCYP.
- Quite a lot of time is wasted on translating material for the EKCYP (including questionnaires). In some cases it is very difficult to translate certain words and concepts.

Day 2: 21st January 2010

Session 5: 9.30-11.00

It was suggested that two thematic groups were formed. Group 1 would focus on the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. It would consider the Centre in terms of (i) contexts, structures and functioning and (ii) the creation of national knowledge structures. Group 2, meanwhile, would focus on the development of indicators.

Before the parallel thematic groups met, Mr Boetzelen gave an overview of developments in the past year. It was reported that in January 2009 there had been 10, 804 visits by 8, 713 different visitors to 38, 993 pages. By November 2009 the number of visits had risen to 26, 345 by 19, 596 visitors to 75, 225 pages. This upward trend was welcomed. There followed a discussion around the need to ask some qualitative questions about who was visiting EKCYP and for what purpose. Moreover, what information was being collated and for whom? It is hoped, of course, that the main users are young people, researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of statistics, it was also recognised that such data are important; not least for use in youth policy reports.

One cause for concern was that some of the research evaluations that were uploaded to EKCYP had not been peer reviewed. The robustness of the research could therefore not be confirmed. It was suggested that a Quality Assurance group (whose membership should be drawn from the Research Network) be established in order to pass judgement on the veracity and methodological integrity of the research being uploaded.

Session 6: 11.30-13.00

The two thematic groups met in parallel and subsequently reported their findings. The summaries that follow also incorporate some of the discussions that took place in the plenary session.

Thematic Group on Indicators:

- Many of the issues that had already been mentioned in previous discussions were developed in more depth. It was pointed out that it is not simply a question of data collection. Indicators are socially and politically constructed, representing organisational priorities. They are context-sensitive, informed by the institutional frameworks within which they are developed and therefore need to be ‘read’ critically. It is also especially difficult to reach conceptual consensus on indicators across national boundaries.
- Can indicators be taken as a measure of government competence? Employment is an area in which one should be cautious before rushing to judgement because many of the causes of unemployment are beyond the government’s competence.
- The areas in which indicators need to be developed are in the youth policy domains of employment, education, health, social inclusion, participation, volunteering, youth work, and culture and creativity. In some of these areas Eurostat data can be used to collect the relevant information: education, employment, social inclusion, and health and well-being are four examples. Information on such areas as volunteering and participation cannot be collected from this source, however. There are, indeed, real challenges in collecting data in this area as returns will be sent by well-established organisations, but self-organised activities, spontaneous forms of street engagement such as protest

- events and informal volunteering will not appear on the radar. Online networking is also very difficult to monitor.
- Despite the above comments, it was pointed out that the Council of Europe has been grappling with the question of indicators since 2003. There were tentative suggestions about the type of indicators that might be adopted in such areas as participation. These included:
 - i. The percentage of municipalities with active youth councils.
 - ii. The existence of a youth parliament.
 - iii. The existence of a National Youth Council.
 - iv. The number of NGOs and the number of young people who are members of these organisations.
 - v. The number of voluntary activities by young people.
 - vi. The number of youth information services.
 - vii. The number of young people accessing information services.
 - viii. The number of young people voting in elections.
 - The view was taken that only a small number of indicators should be developed in these initial stages.

Thematic Group on the EKCYP

- There is a need to build up the Network at a national level by engaging with Ministries, researchers and NGOs.
- A clearer mandate needs to emanate from the CoE and EU. A clear instruction to engage with the Knowledge Centre needs to be communicated from the European institutions to their Member States.
- Correspondents and researchers should be given a higher profile.
- The questionnaires need to be structured around the indicators.
- A network of tutors and/or a reference group should be established in order to support and complement the role of the Correspondents. (The composition of this group could be drawn from Researchers and other Correspondents). Apart from Correspondents needing feedback on their work, the establishment of such reference groups will also facilitate more effective thematic analysis at national and European levels (e.g., in areas such as social inclusion). Such a development will make it easier to discern trends across nations, regions and the whole continent.
- There is a clear need to develop qualitative as well as quantitative datasets.
- The current position of many Correspondents was difficult, particularly in those countries where there is a shortage of reliable statistical data.

Information on the Priorities and Plans of the Spanish Presidency

A presentation was given on this subject (please see PowerPoint Presentation).

Session 7: 14.30-16.00

This session was devoted to information exchange.

A New Provision on Youth Participation in the Lisbon Treaty

Mr Finn Denstad opened his remarks by making direct reference to a pertinent passage of the Treaty; namely,

“encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.”

(Point 5, Paragraph 2 of Title XII, Article 165, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 115/120; 9.5.2008)

Although this is primarily a national competence, there is an added value to working at the European level. Accordingly, a study on youth participation will be launched later in the year. A call for tender will be issued in due course. The terms of reference have yet to be drafted, so any ideas were invited. Summarised below are some of the main comments.

- In-depth interviews with active young people. Use of the internet should also be considered.
- Structured themes should be developed.
- In-depth interviews with young people who are not active.
- The point was made that participation does not only occur within institutional frameworks.
- The phrase ‘democratic life’ is very important.
- Cultural issues should be included in the analysis.
- The relationship between politics and wider civil society needs to be considered.
- Reference was made to the Norwegian Youth Survey (13-19 years old) within which social issues were discussed. It would be useful to consider this piece of research as some helpful lessons about methodology might be learned.
- Protest, including violent demonstrations, needed to be included in the terms of reference.
- A conceptual distinction needed to be made between individualistic/self-serving, cultural and social forms of participation.

MA in European Youth Studies

Charles Berg provided some background to the development of the discipline and the specific history of the MA in EYS. He reported that the MA in EYS had received approval and funding. Details of the MA in EYS can be found at:

http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/about/MA_presentation.html

The establishment of a Masters degree that integrates the study of European Youth Policy and Practice, European Youth Research and Theoretical Perspectives for a cohort of some 30 students was welcomed. A series of questions were asked, particularly in

relation to funding and bursaries (the concern being that it should not simply recruit the socially advantaged). It was acknowledged that there remained much work to be undertaken in connection with this dimension of the programme. Active efforts were being made to attract donations from wealthy benefactors.

Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action in Europe

A presentation was led by Dr Hristo Hristozov on a web-based piece of comparative evaluative research on the Youth in Action programme. This evaluation tool is of great interest to researchers and could have wider applications to other research projects. The lessons learned from translating concepts and questions into different languages are also of particular interest.

Report on Developments in Austria:

This report was delivered by Dr Manfred Zentner. Summarised below are the main points:

- 1) Sadly, the Austrian Institute for Youth Research was closed at the end of 2009 by the owners. This was the result of financial pressures.
- 2) The 6th *Report on the Situation of Youth in Austria* has recently been produced. A group of experts from the fields of research/science, youth work and youth aid selected contributors for specialist topics. They duly provided Reports and papers. This will be edited and published in due course.
- 3) Research undertaken in the past year includes:
 - a) An overview of youth policy as a horizontal topic (collection of legal texts, qualitative research in all Ministries and on the regional level; and statistical measures from research projects concerning young people).
 - b) Youth and health (promotion).
 - c) Social Exclusion.
 - d) Preventative work in the field of extracurricular youth work.The above evidences the broadening of the concept of youth research and youth policy and movement in the direction of a transversal/horizontal approach.
- 4) In September 2009 a conference of the International Network of Youth Researchers (INYP) took place. It was combined with a meeting of the ICNYP (International Council on National Youth Policy).

Report of Developments in Romania:

This Report was delivered by Dr. Octav Marcovici and Dr. Sorin Mitelescu. The main points are set out below.

- *Institutional Updates.* Under the current reorganisation of governmental structures, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is being disbanded and its functions taken over by the newly established Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports - MERYS (successor to the Ministry of Education, Innovation and

- Research). A National Authority for Youth, responsible for youth policy, is envisaged. This will be established under the auspices of MERYYS. Meanwhile the youth research function will be taken over directly by MERYYS. It is likely that this will be accommodated within the Institute of Educational Sciences.
- *Analytical and comparative reflections on youth strategies.* It was pointed out that the two strategies are, to a large extent, complementary and consistent with one another. The EC-CoE youth partnership should therefore build further on these common objectives and synergies.
 - *Information Exchange.* A project has been financed by the European Social Fund. It is entitled *Building up the Institution of the Youth Worker in Romania*. The project is just commencing but is based on best practice.
 - i. It has been developed and is being implemented in partnership. This includes the governmental entity responsible in the matter (the former National Agency for Supporting Youth Initiatives), a national platform of Youth NGOs and a private consultancy firm.
 - ii. Youth researchers have contributed to the project design and are expected to play an important role in its implementation.
 - iii. It is going to rely on best practice from other European countries that are more experienced in the field of youth work. This will be a good opportunity to take advantage from both the Youth Researchers' Network and the EKCYP Correspondents.
 - There are some anxieties about the rather unstable situation of the Youth Ministry following the presidential elections and the establishment of a new government.
 - It is proposed that there should be closer monitoring of youth policy in the Eastern countries, which includes Romania.
 - It is proposed that some regional and thematic research/resource centres should be established in this part of Europe. Such a development would enhance the work of the Research Network in the region.
 - It has been proposed that more feedback should be invited from visitors to the project's website/forum.

Forthcoming Youth Work Events:

Mr Hanjo Schild reported on the following upcoming youth work events:

- *Empowering Youth Work: youth work experts' workshop* in Rotterdam.
- *The History of Youth Work Conference and 1st European Youth Convention* in Ghent.

Calls for these events will be publicised shortly.

Session 8: 16.00-17.00

This session was an opportunity for participants to reflect on the work that had been undertaken during the course of the meeting and offer some evaluative comments.

Mr Finn Denstad was very positive about the meeting and detected developing synergies between the two Networks. There was some very useful feedback from the working groups on how to proceed with the reorganisation of the networks. Frustrations were recognised, but it was felt that a new momentum to move forward was now possible with the adoption of the new youth policy strategies.

These positive comments were met with a measure of agreement, although there were some dissenting voices. The agenda was right and the need for reform widely accepted, but certain elements in the process that had preceded the meeting were flawed. This had left some researchers feeling under-valued. The manner in which the date and venue of the meeting had been changed without proper consultation was, for example, considered inappropriate. These more critical comments appeared to be supported by a number of participants.

Notwithstanding the above comments, overall it was felt that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile. It was always good to meet colleagues face-to-face. Moreover, on this occasion some important discussions about the future had taken place. Everyone was thanked for their contribution to the event.