



By Hanjo Schild

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# 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Youth Partnership: past achievements, future perspectives

Since 1998 the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the youth field has taken the form of consecutive agreements or “Covenants” between the two institutions focusing during a first stage on “European Youth Worker and Youth Leader Training” (“Training Covenants”).

In 2003, the “Training Covenant” was complemented by two further Covenants, one on “Euro-Med cooperation” and another one on “Youth Research”. All three Covenants expired during spring 2005. From then on, both partners agreed to strengthen cooperation, to replace the existing partnerships by one single umbrella agreement and to sign a Framework Partnership Agreement covering first the period 2005 – 2006, followed by a second one for 2007-2009. In autumn 2008 the Partnership celebrated its 10th anniversary, an excellent occasion to look back to the major achievements and to look ahead to further perspectives and challenges.

## ► The political background

The general philosophy on Cooperation and Partnership is formalised by the Joint Declaration between the Council of Europe and the European Commission of 3 April 2001. It is summed up by the following: “The Council of Europe and the European Commission share the same values and pursue common aims with regard to the protection of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. These common aims have led the Council of Europe and the European Commission in recent years to develop a number of joint programmes for cooperation... we confirm our determination to deepen our partnership and enhance our cooperation taking into account recent developments in our continent and the evolving priorities in our respective activities”.

Invited by the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State or Government in Warsaw 2005 the Prime Minister of Luxem-

burg, Jean-Claude Juncker submitted a report on the relationship of the Council of Europe and the European Union. This report highlights the achievements made in various policy sectors and in the youth field it appeals for increased cooperation between the two partners, which already has a long tradition. “In the youth field, the Council and the EU are pursuing almost identical policies, admittedly with different resources. There are a few bridges, however. For example, three youth programmes are being conducted under partnership agreements... (they) expire at the end of 2006 and have not been renewed for the period from 2007 to 2013. This is an opportunity to think about new joint initiatives, which would give the idea of a Europe without dividing lines more substance...”

A further - and for the moment last - step was taken in May 2007 by signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union. It underlines that the two partners “will strengthen their cooperation in the youth field by developing and taking part in programmes and campaigns to empower young people to participate actively in the democratic process and by facilitating youth exchange”.

10 years ago, in the youth field itself, the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe was not welcomed by everybody in the European landscape of youth work and youth policy, within the institutions and outside. Some of the stakeholders doubted that a formalized cooperation would produce an added value to the field and lead to a substantial progress in the work of the two institutions. However, at the political level the will for cooperation was evident and had – already before it came to the formal agreement in 1998 - a long history in the youth field.



“Both, the Council of Europe and the European Commission are perfectly able to competently run their different youth programmes autonomously. To replace their good punctual cooperation of the past with a long-term cooperation project within a legally defined framework and thus mutually give up part of their autonomy in the implementation of youth worker training programmes needs a motivation which has to go beyond the political opportunity of the day.”

Today, the cooperation between the two partners is obvious and based on formal decisions and agreements:

The Committee of Ministers in its Resolution on the Youth Policy of the Council of Europe, adopted in spring 1998, regards “the development of cooperation to stimulate a balanced development of youth structures in all member states” as a priority and recommends to adapt existing structures with a view to “making Council of Europe youth activities more coordinated, cooperative and coherent” and to “improving cooperation with the European Union and with other international organisations”.

The European Commissions’ White Paper on Youth (2001) explicitly refers to the Council of Europe and its achievements in the area of youth and suggests improving cooperation and networking, particularly in the area of greater understanding and knowledge of youth. The Council Resolution of November 2004 invited the Commission to set up, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, a European Network of Youth Knowledge. One of the general objectives of the European Unions’ YOUTH IN ACTION programme is to promote European cooperation in the youth field and article 7 stresses that “the Programme shall also be open to cooperation with international organisations with authority in the field of youth, in particular the Council of Europe”.

### ▶ The “historical” development of Partnership activities

Consequently the first covenant on youth worker training started on 1 November 1998 for an initial period of nine months only, followed by a second phase of another 11 months until 30 June 2000. The third covenant was signed for a period of nearly four years and the fourth one until spring 2005. As of 2003 two further covenants were signed on youth research and on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Based on the positive evaluations of all these phases the two partners decided to run in the future one single partnership agreement overarching the earlier pillars. Since then two Framework Partnership Agreements have been signed, for 2005-06 and currently for 2007-2009.

### ▶ A new generation of Framework Partnership Agreements

Since 2005 the work programme of the single Framework Agreements set the following priorities:

- European Citizenship
- Intercultural dialogue and human rights education
- Quality in youth work and training
- Recognition and visibility of youth work
- Better understanding and knowledge of youth
- Youth policy development
- Diversity and the fight against discrimination

<i>November 1998 to July 1999</i>	<b>First Covenant on Youth Work Training</b>	Together nine Training courses were run on a variety of subjects. The first T-Kits were published. “All reports present positive ideas for the continuation of the partnership agreement and indications about the training and publications’ offer for the future. They concern the continuation and adaptation of the training offer, the clarity of the target group, the necessity for a long term commitment from the side of the institutions and in general, the wish to provide an adequate framework for continuous assessment of the Partnership agreement”.	
<i>August 1999 to June 2000</i>	<b>Second Covenant on Youth Work Training</b>		
<i>July 2000 to February 2004</i>	<b>Third Covenant on Youth Work Training</b>		
<i>March 2004 to May 2005</i>	<b>Fourth Covenant on Youth Work Training</b>	Focus on training on European Citizenship and Long term training course for trainers. Activities also included ATTE, Bridges for Training (2001) and Bridges for Recognition (2005), further T-kits and Coyote.	
<i>May 2003 to April 2005</i>	<b>Partnership on Euromed Youth Cooperation</b>		
Focused on intercultural learning and cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries and the Member States of the EU and the Council of Europe. The aim was to provide further quality training and learning opportunities for youth workers and youth leaders active in Euro-Mediterranean youth projects. It was a joint project of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the Directorate of Youth and Sport.		The goal was mainly to collect and to provide detailed research knowledge of the situation, needs and lifestyles of young people in order to inform European youth policy and educational practice. In the very heart of this first phase stands the development of the “European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy” as a state of the art online knowledge management system.	

May 2005 to December 2006	<b>First Framework partnership agreement</b>	Aim of today's' partnership is to provide a framework for the joint development of cooperation and a coherent strategy in the field of youth, particularly in the area of European citizenship & human rights education, intercultural dialogue & cooperation, quality in youth work & training, recognition & visibility of youth work, better understanding & knowledge of youth, youth policy development. Main activities are training sessions, seminars and network meetings. The results of the Partnership are disseminated through the transfer of training modules, the Partnership website, newsletters and research publications, e.g. a series of thematic T(raining)-Kits and the Coyote Magazine, the joint magazine published twice a year. The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) plays a very special and crucial role in the information strategy of the Partnership.
January 2007 to December 2009	<b>Second Framework partnership agreement</b>	

### ► The management of the work programme

Today, the Partnership secretariat consists of 8 full and part-time posts. With regard to the management structure there are three main bodies:

- The “Partnership Management Board” composed of representatives of both partners and the staff of the partnership secretariat. It meets twice a year.
- The “Partnership Sectorial Group” meetings are held for the three thematic areas “European Citizenship, Quality and Recognition”, “Euro-Med, Human Rights Education and Intercultural Dialogue” and “Better Understanding of Youth and Youth Policy Development”; they contribute to the definition of content and operational management.
- The “Partnership Consultation Meeting” gathers once a year all members of the Management Board, the Sectorial Groups and other interested parties for an exchange of information with the aim to increase synergies among stakeholders involved.

A specific information strategy aims at making the results of the partnership more visible and enhancing the multiplier effect by dissemination of results. From the very beginning activities were documented and results processed to publications and training material.

### ► Some Conclusions and future perspectives

Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe consider the Partnership as a very useful tool to build on the strengths of each institution and to enhance cooperation between the two institutions in the field of youth. Since the very beginning the partnership led to a dynamic process with a positive reputation in the field and a wide range of achievements and high quality results. The future scope of activities is not limited to the current working priorities and to the regional areas actually prioritised. The period 2010-2013 will be open to further needs and expectations of the whole sector within Europe and beyond. The future role of the partnership lies in its capacity of innovation, trend- and standard setting linked with the provision of high quality work delivered in cooperation with strong networks of stakeholders.

In general terms future activities should focus on democracy and civil society development, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and inclusion. Working priorities could be:

- Training of youth workers and youth leaders.
- The strategy for a better formal and social recognition of youth work and of non-formal / informal learning.
- Better understanding and knowledge of youth.
- The role and position of the youth field in the Third Sector.
- The political priorities of the youth sector in the European Union and the member states of the Council of Europe.
- A specific regional cooperation in youth policy development within Europe (Eastern Europe and Caucasus, South East Europe) and beyond is needed, particularly with the Euro-Mediterranean region, Africa and Asia as direct neighbours.
- Mainstreaming youth into other cross-sectorial policies, including employment, education, social inclusion, health and well-being. ■

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#### Contact :

joachim.schild@coe.int