

Linking youth or hot potatoes?

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The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

As a child did you play the hot potato game? No? It's very simple, first you draw ovals, or potatoes, all over a sheet of paper. Now number them in a random manner and you then have to draw lines linking 1 with 2, the next person links 2 with 3 and so on. The challenge is that you cannot cross or touch any line drawn earlier. Whoever touches or crosses a line needs to fulfil a task given by his/her co-players, or the game ends, but that is less fun. You may pass through other potatoes though, use them as 'gateways'.

When thinking of youth policy and youth work, I remembered that game. Shall we play?

There are many potatoes – different key issues in youth policy¹:

- youth legislation
- financing for youth activities
- structures and networks for youth policy delivery, for example:
 - youth research
 - youth information
 - ...
- challenges of transition from childhood to adulthood
- youth participation at local, regional and national levels
- citizenship in democratic life
- the fight against social exclusion and promotion of inclusion
- drug and alcohol prevention, healthy lifestyles

- disabled youth
- multiculturalism and minorities
- youth work and non-formal education/learning
- mobility and voluntary service
- support to creativity
- support to entrepreneurship
- equal opportunities
- security (especially violence prevention)
- sustainable development
- ...

Which potatoes are dealt with by youth work? Choose 'your' potatoes and add others, the list is in no way exhaustive! Does your neighbour have the same?

Prioritise your potatoes – give them numbers from 1 to ... you decide, let's say N.

Link the numbers from priority 1 to N with lines not crossing or touching each other. Do not hesitate to pass through other priorities/potatoes to get across!

So what do the links look like? And in reality? Are there any links?

Can you see any 'hot potatoes' that nobody takes care of?

Or maybe they are not youth work's business?



Leisure,
lifestyle
and youth
culture



Health



1. Adapted from *Supporting young people in Europe, Volume 2*, Howard Williamson, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, April 2008.
2 Ibid.

I then imagined another step of this game. Shall we try to put things in order? Shall we put the potatoes into baskets symbolising youth policy domains?²

Education and training
Youth employment
Health (and well-being)
Housing
Social protection
Leisure, lifestyle and youth culture

Cultural policy
Juvenile justice and delinquency prevention
Military and/or civil service
Equality
Youth research
...
...

Do you have potatoes that fit in several baskets? That's fine, even better! Just draw arrows from your potatoes to the baskets where you think they belong. And there are surely potatoes and baskets that are not really touched, aren't there? Does anyone else deal with them? Who? How? Would it make sense to join efforts? Do you know examples of co-operation between youth workers and e.g. a health service, school or police? What are the challenges and what are the benefits?